

THIS WEEK IN CHEMISTRY

17TH MAY - 23RD MAY 2015

MAKING FLOWER BLOOMS LAST LONGER WITH UREA

Scientists experimenting with different treatments to extend the life of flower blooms in vases found that combining urea with salicylic acid and malic acid extended bloom time by up to a week. The urea is a nitrogen source, whilst acids prevent bacterial contamination.



RESEARCH RAISES 'HOME-BREWED HEROIN' FEARS

Yeast has been engineered to perform the first part of the pathway turning simple sugars into morphine. It could lead to cheaper painkillers – but there is concern that it will only be a matter of years before a single yeast strain can be made to produce heroin.



IRON LEVELS IN BRAIN MAY PREDICT ALZHEIMER'S

Australian researchers have found that levels of an iron-containing protein in the brain, ferritin, were negatively correlated with cognitive performance in 144 test subjects, and also predicted Alzheimer's diagnosis. The findings could lead to better diagnosis & treatment.



ELECTRONIC DEVICES THAT SELF-DESTRUCT WHEN HEATED

Researchers paired magnesium circuits printed on thin, flexible materials with microscopic droplets of weak acid coated in wax. When heated, the wax melts, allowing the acid to react with and destroy the device. It could help devices break down in landfill.



OCTOPUS SKIN CONTAINS LIGHT-SENSING MOLECULES

New research has found that a species of octopus contains light-sensing proteins called opsins, usually found in eyes, on its skin surface. They allow the skin to detect and respond to changes in light, without involving the brain or central nervous system.



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