NUTMEG COMPOUND IS COOLER THAN MINTY MENTHOL

Menthol makes your mouth feel cool as it triggers a cold-sensitive ion channels. A compound in nutmeg is the most potent activator of these ion channels yet found in nature. Its cooling effect lasts up to thirty minutes, compared to ten minutes for menthol.

HOW PLANTS RELEASE FRAGRANT MOLECULES DISCOVERED

It was previously thought that the volatile compounds that give plants their aromas and attract pollinators simply diffused through cell membranes. New research shows that protein transporters in the cell membranes actually help control release of the compounds.

POLYMER STRIP ‘WORM’ CRAWLS IN RESPONSE TO UV LIGHT

A new polymer strip can crawl in response to UV light, matching the speed of a caterpillar, and can also carry objects. It works thanks to dye molecules which switch between geometric isomers in UV light. It may have future applications in self-cleaning surfaces.

LASER TECHNIQUE IMPROVES DETECTION OF TRACE POLLUTANT GASES

A new technique increases the accuracy with which atmospheric gases can be detected by amplifying the signal of the currently used method. It allows detection of gases at a parts per quadrillion level (a million billion), and would allow continual detection of trace gases.

CLAIM THAT SEABIRDS MISTAKE PLASTICS FOR FOOD DISPUTED

A 2016 study which suggested plastics giving off dimethyl sulfide (DMS) might make seabirds eat them has been criticised. Another team claims the findings were based on questionable data, and there was insufficient evidence to link plastic consumption to DMS.