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Subject: [EXT] [MARKETING] Cracking a 30-year-old chemistry problem
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January 14, 2026

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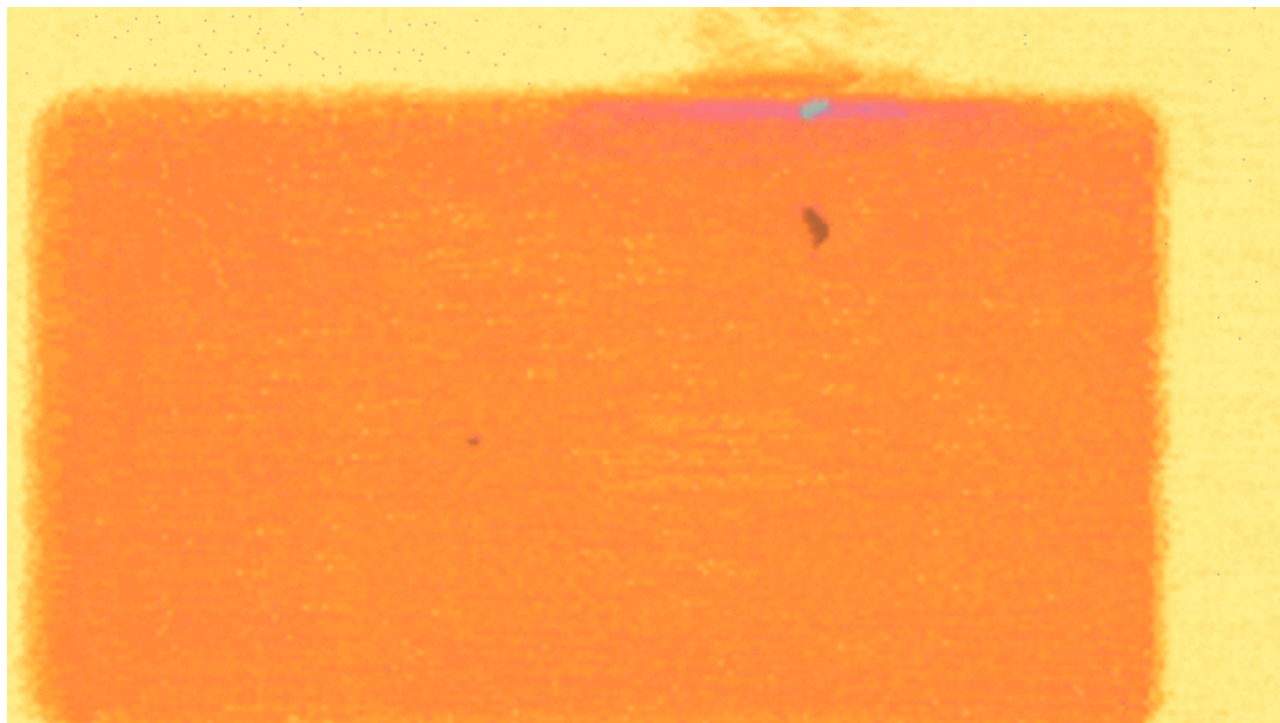
Dear readers,

Welcome to C&EN's revamped newsletter—*Elements*! I'm Tiffany Chen, your newsletter editor, and I'm thrilled to be in your inbox and sharing our refreshed look for the new year. We've been tinkering behind the scenes and are exploring ways to improve your experience. Our goal is to keep you on top of the chemistry world!

Today we learn how researchers solve a nearly 30-year-old chemistry problem, face chemical hazards in K-12 science labs, and meet 15 ACS presidents who shaped the development of one of the world's largest science societies. Check out the quirky science behind [scratch-and-sniff stamps and lickable parcels](#). Now, the news.

Newsletter Editor,
Tiffany Chen

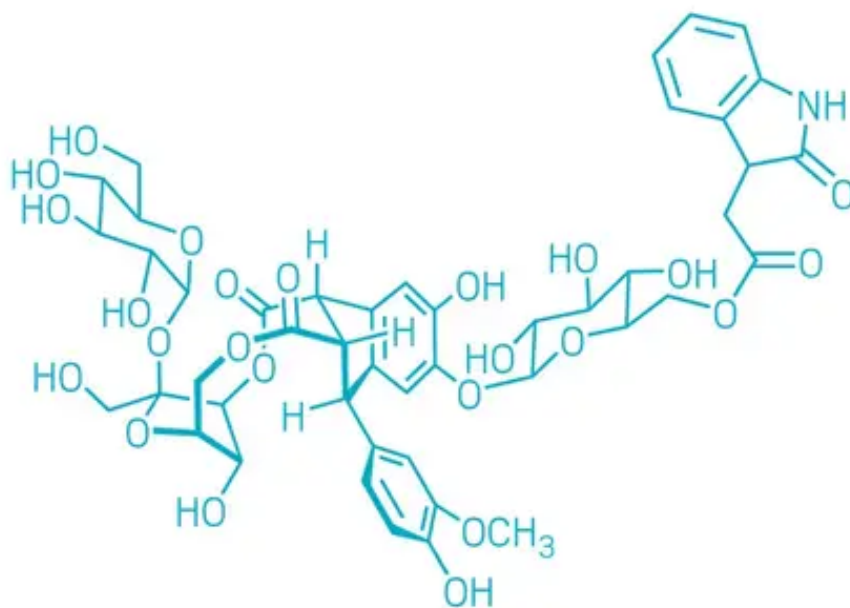
 **Color- and shape-shifting film from an octopus's playbook**



- **Cephalopod-inspired:** Researchers mimic the animal's skin by controlling polymer swelling via cross-linking, changing texture and color on demand. The findings has potential in advanced display and robotics.
- **Bigger picture:** Other studies have been [mimicking the vibrant hues](#) found in animals [and plants](#) due to structural color, which arises from the interaction of light waves with tiny nanostructures.

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📐 At last, stereochemical secrets cracked



Secalosides A and B

- **The tale began in 1997:** After almost 30 years, chemists fully decipher the structures of a pair of natural products first extracted from rye pollen: secalosides A and B.
- **What's more:** Researchers can now synthesize these compounds, which are potent tumor cell killers in mice, opening doors for further biological studies.
- **In other chemistry news:** Scientists repurposed [algae enzymes to produce diazo compounds from hydrazones](#) under milder, greener conditions than traditional methods.

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◻ 15 of ACS's most consequential presidents



- **ACS is turning 150:** C&EN recalls just some of the society's illustrious roster of presidents and scientists—including its first leader John Draper in 1876, Nobel laureate Glenn Seaborg, and the first woman president Anna Harrison.
- **The takeaway:** From founding journals to advancing global reach, these presidents made decisions that continue to shape one of the largest science societies. ([ACS publishes C&EN.](#))

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◻ Hazardous chemicals pile up in K–12 science labs

- **The problem:** Labs are filled with aging, unlabeled, and unstable chemicals that are waiting for someone to notice and dispose of them or else setting the stage for a dangerous incident.
- **Help is on the way:** Educators, nonprofits, and local governments are stepping in with cleanup programs and safety trainings. Start with [these safety practices](#) to protect the classroom.

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Europe's 'one-stop shop' chemical data platform

- **Key details:** The European Chemicals Agency is building an open platform to consolidate chemical data from multiple agencies and laws, part of its push for transparency and resource efficiency. The platform will include data on chemical hazards, exposure, sustainability, and regulatory information.
- **What's next:** The agency aims to release the system in 3 years. Meanwhile, a French ban on [persistent chemicals](#) was enacted on Jan. 1.

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Sabic to sell US, European assets on the cheap

- **The deal:** The Saudi Arabian petrochemical maker SABIC has agreed to sell its European petrochemical business and its engineering plastics business in Europe and the Americas in transactions valued at less than \$1 billion overall.
- **Troubled operations:** The company will focus on its core Saudi petrochemical business after the deals. Last summer, SABIC announced it will [permanently close an ethylene cracker in Teesside](#) and it shuttered an ethylene line in Geleen in 2024.

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Stone Age humans hunted with poisoned arrows

- **Uncovered:** Chemical analysis finds poisons on 60,000-year-old arrowheads. Researcher says it's the earliest evidence of poisoned arrows—and perhaps the earliest direct evidence of humans deliberately using poison.
- **What's their choice of poison?** Buphanidrine and epibuphanisine from plants. Check out their chemical structure in the story.

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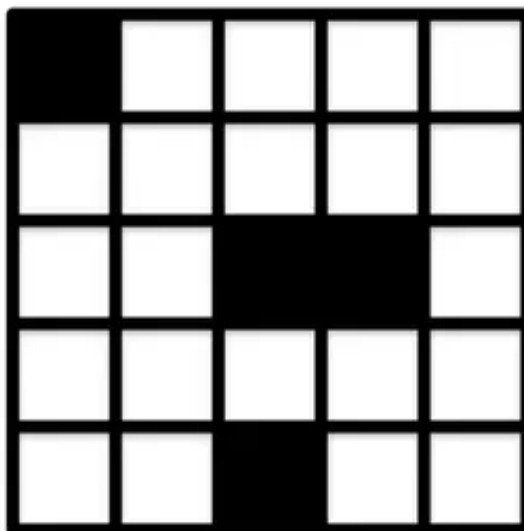
[Powerful GC performance in a rugged, compact design](#)

Shimadzu's GC-2050 delivers stable, consistent performance, easier operation, and maximum uptime.

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Crossword: Quantum leapers

Quantum leapers



C&EN hopes that readers will appreciate being reminded of the paradigm-shifting advances in physics that have had lasting [implications for the chemical sciences](#), including applications recognized by a [Nobel win in 2025](#).

[Solve the puzzle](#)

Before you go

Business Watch: Plants close in Brazil and the UK; Lilly to pay \$1.2 billion for Ventyx.

Policy Watch: EPA moves to regulate perchlorate, 5 phthalates; a federal appeals court rejects a move by the NIH to put a 15% cap on indirect cost rates.

Last chance: [Submit your Talented 12 nomination](#) by January 20! The recognition can help early-career chemists gain visibility, secure funding, and find collaborators.

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