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(54) **METHOD OF WRAPPING A POT WITH A CONFORMABLE SLEEVE**

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Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 10/165,971, filed on Jun. 7, 2002, now Pat. No. 6,571,536, which is a continuation of application No. 09/746,383, filed on Dec. 21, 2000, now Pat. No. 6,418,698, which is a continuation of application No. 09/189,033, filed on Nov. 10, 1998, now Pat. No. 6,185,904, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 09/080,771, filed on May 18, 1998, now Pat. No. 6,182,395, which is a continuation of application No. 08/606,957, filed on Feb. 26, 1996, now abandoned.

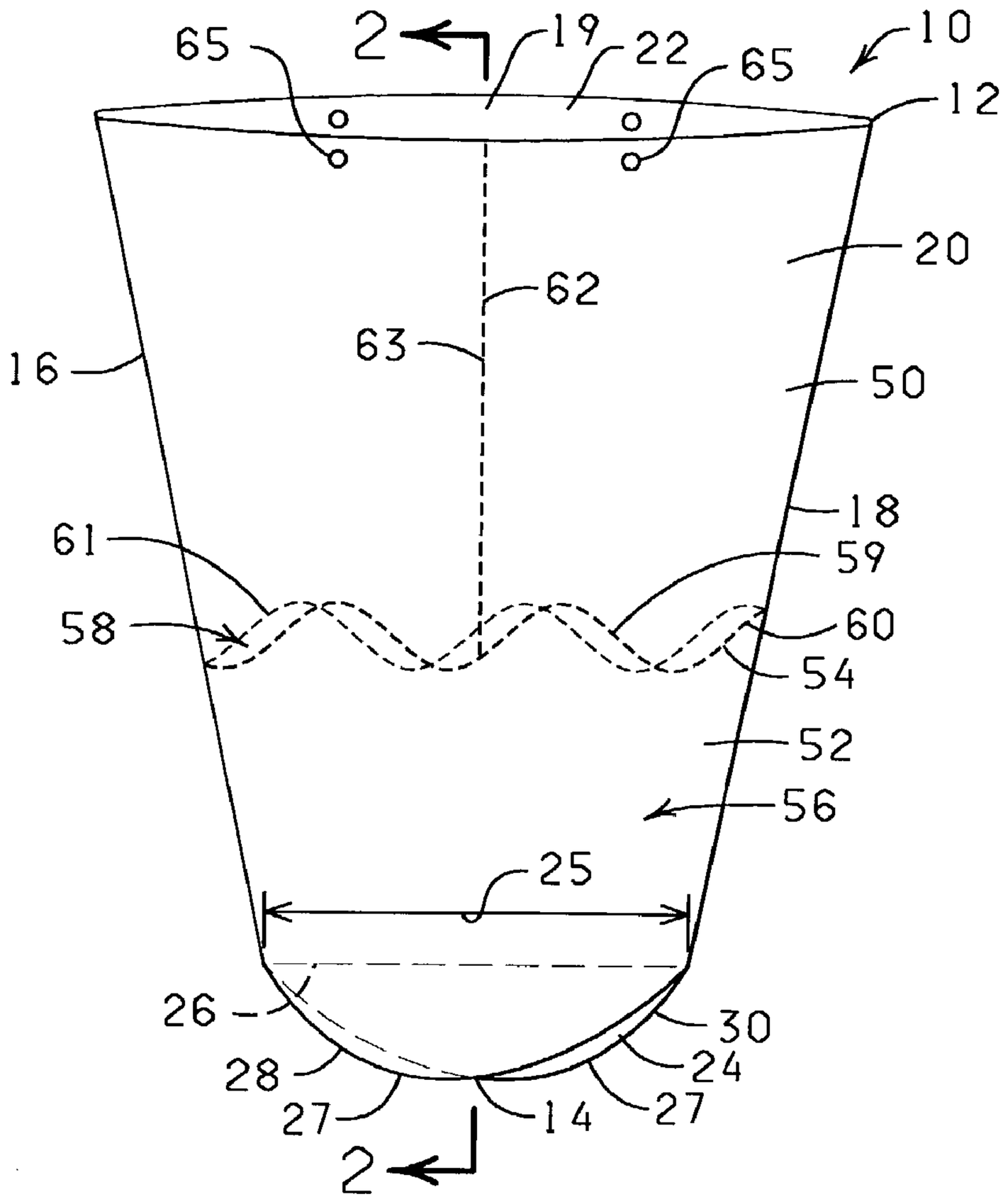
Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **B65B 25/02**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **53/397**; 53/412; 53/459

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A sleeve used to wrap items such as potted plants or comestibles. The sleeve has a closed curved bottom. The sleeve may also have an expansion element such as a gusset, pleats, random folds or elastic material for enabling the lower portion of the sleeve to conform to the shape of the pot, thereby providing a decorative cover about the pot. The sleeve optionally has a detachable upper portion.



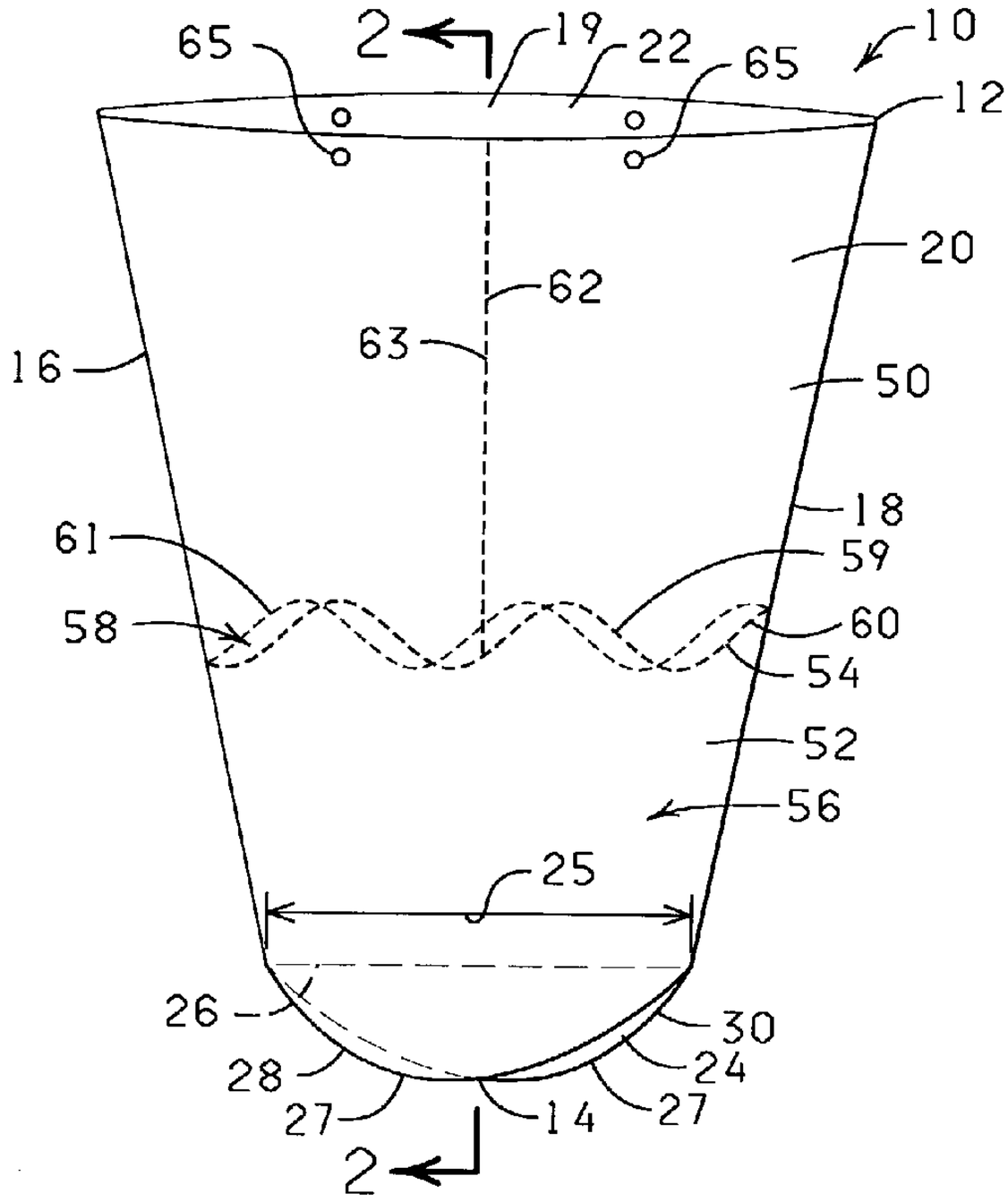


FIG. 1

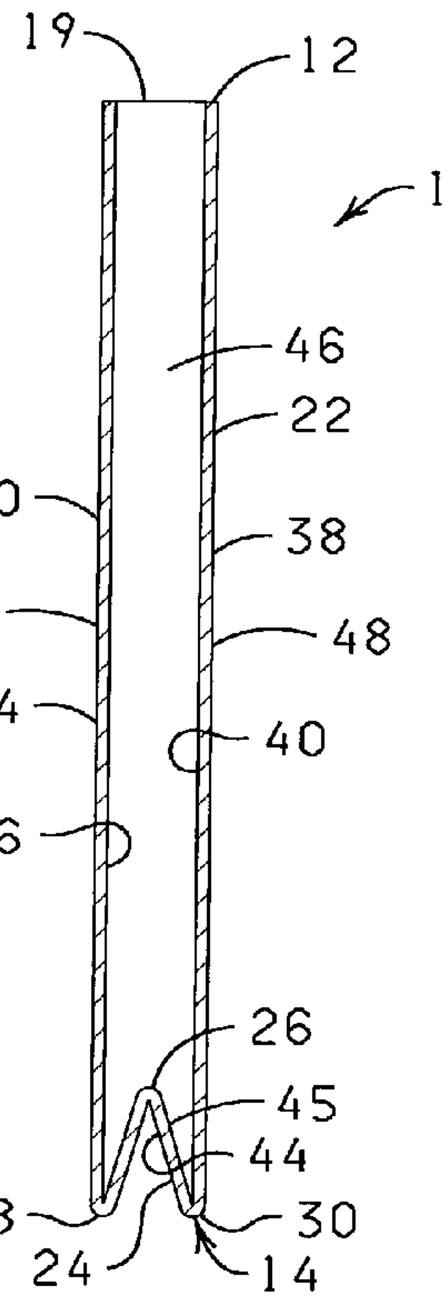


FIG. 2

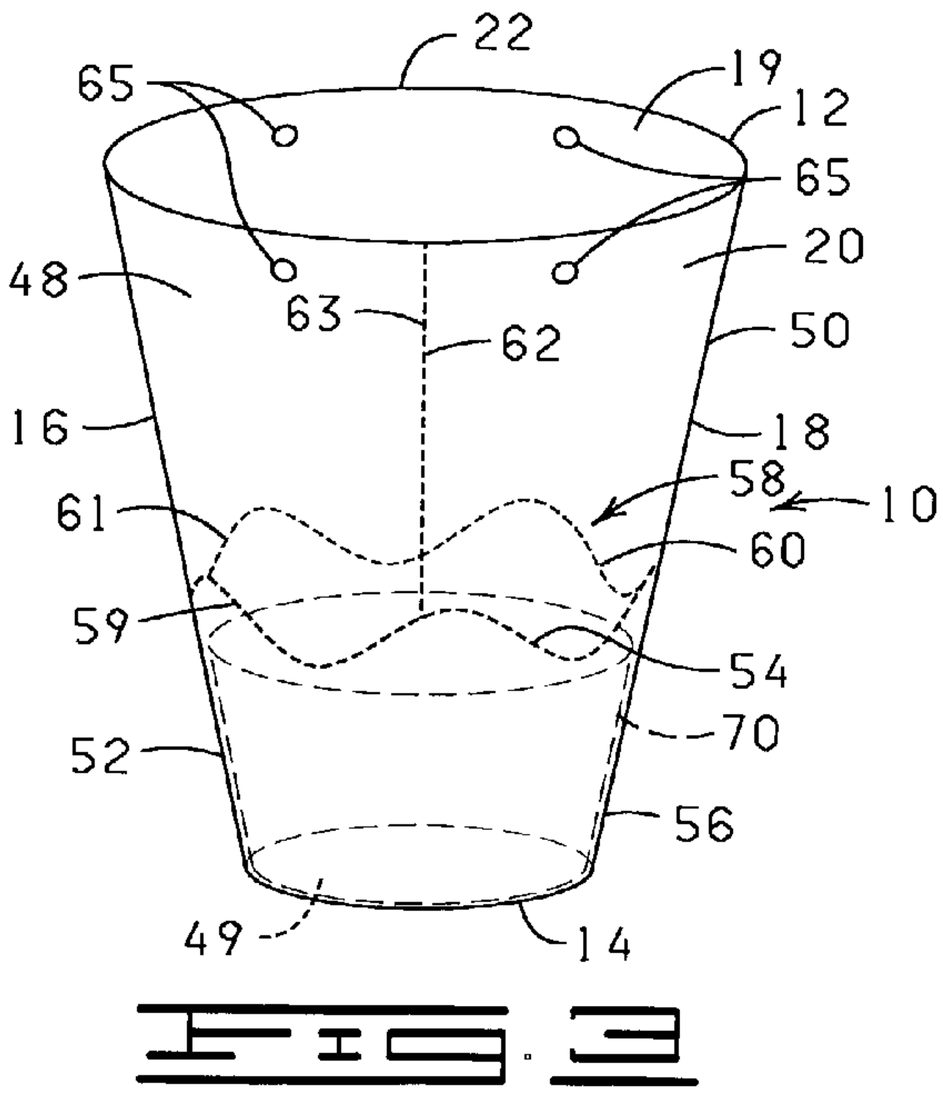


FIG. 3

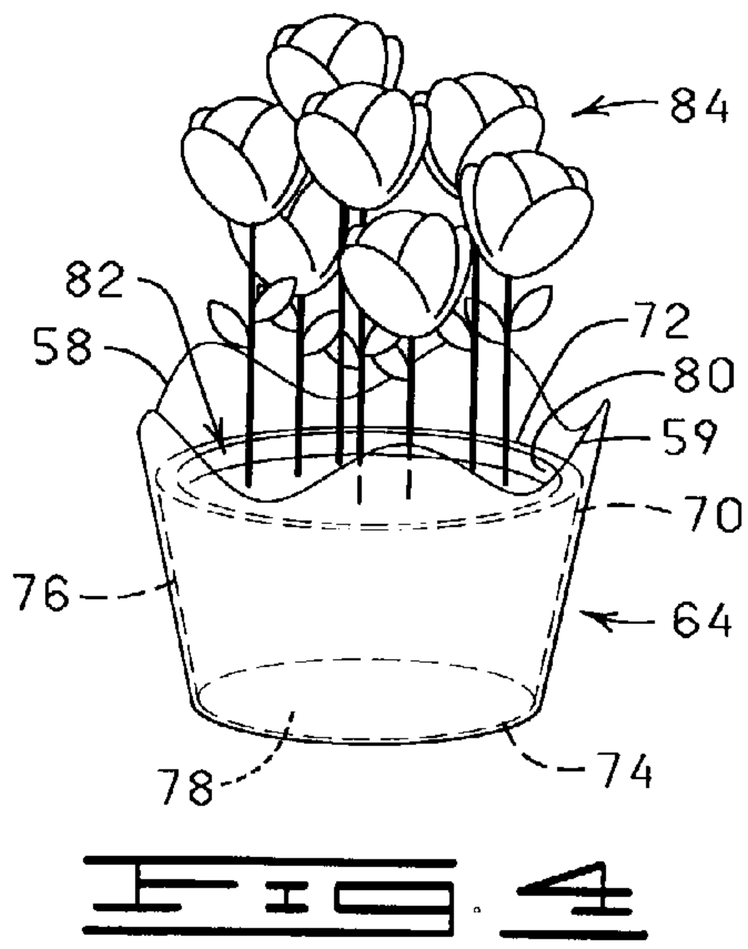


FIG. 4

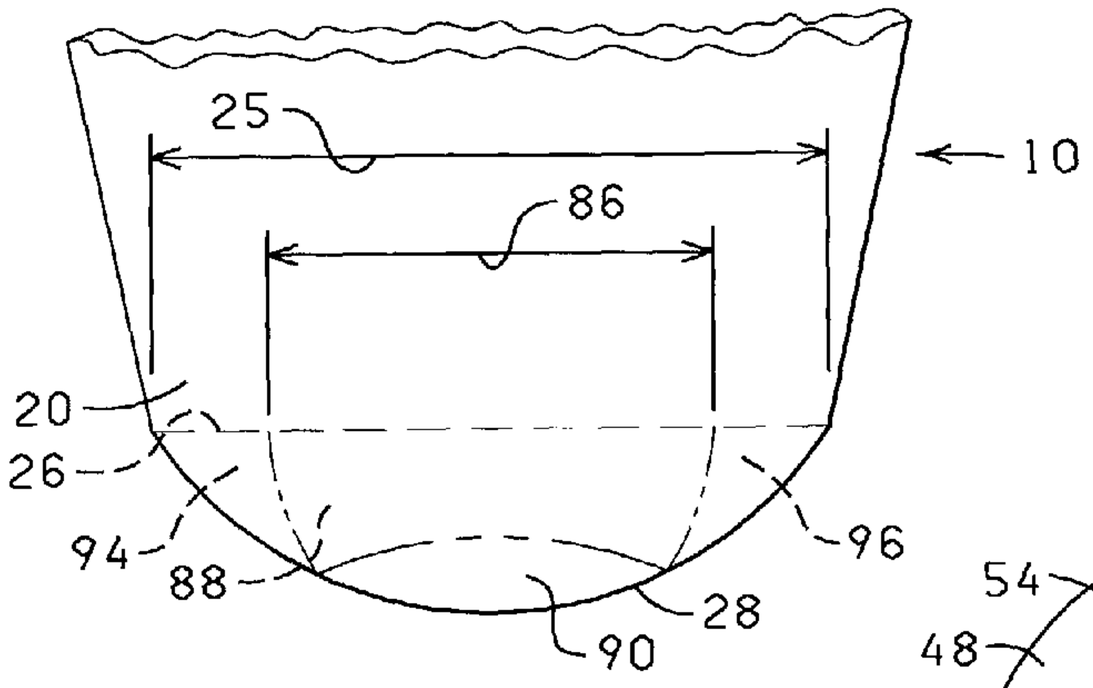


FIG. 5A

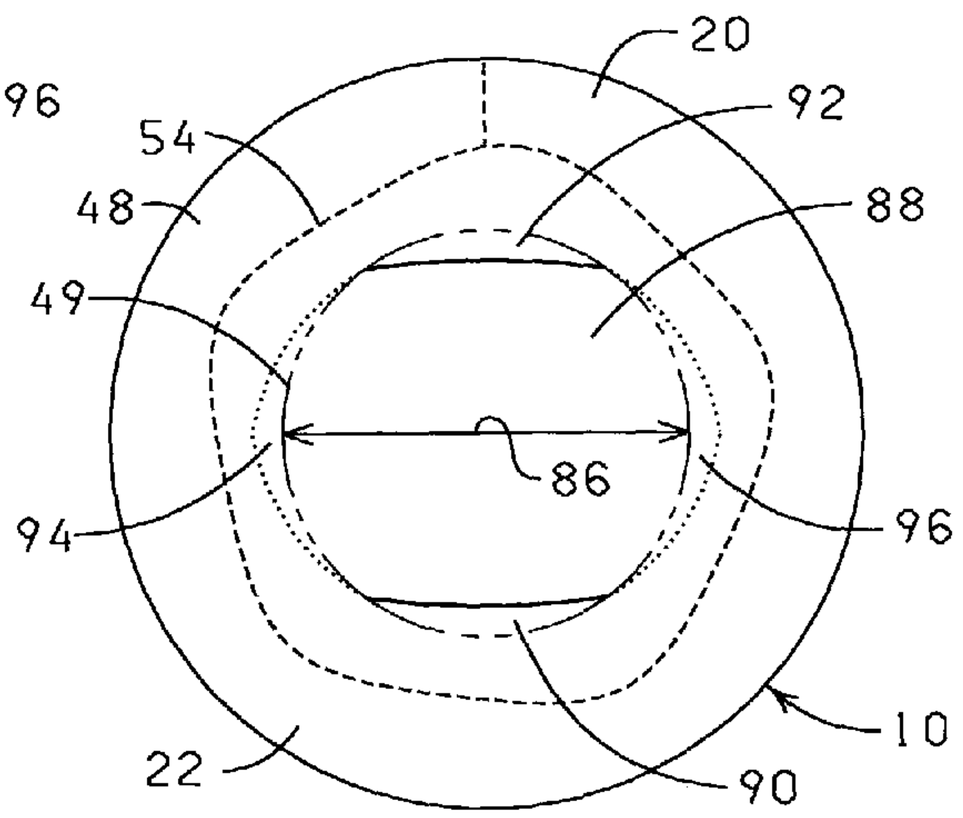


FIG. 5B

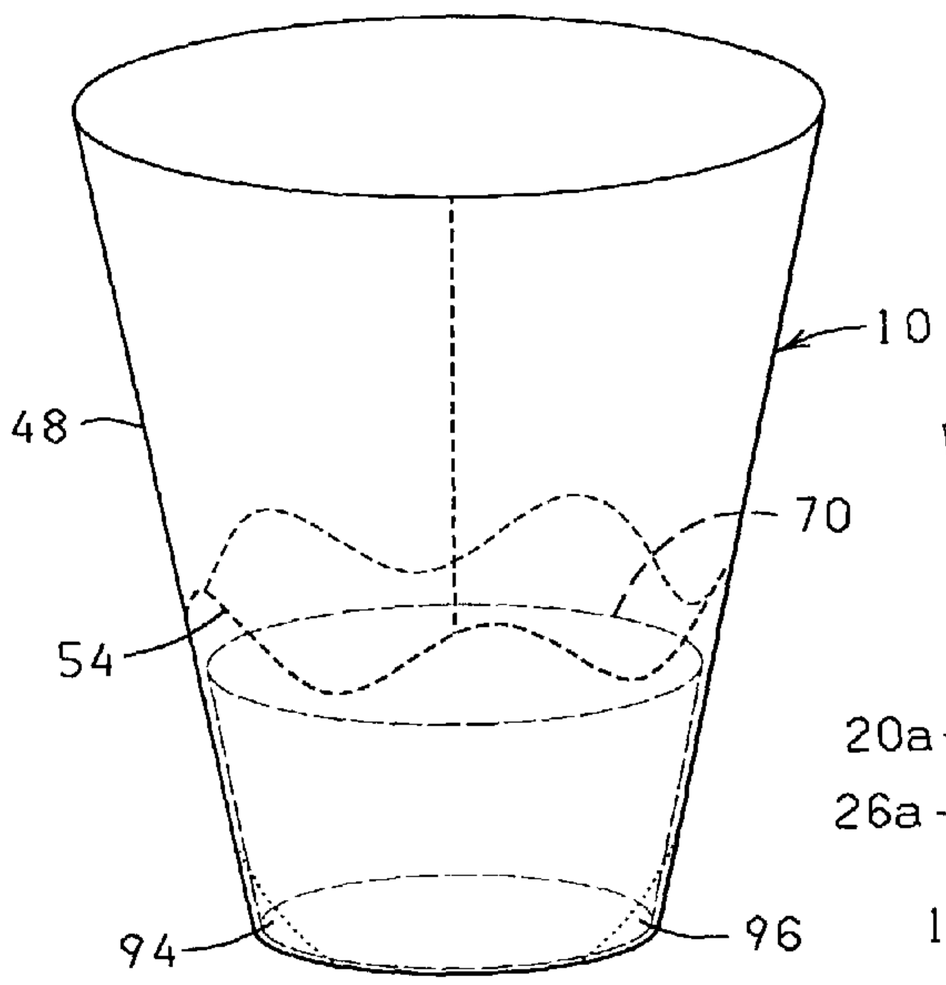


FIG. 5C

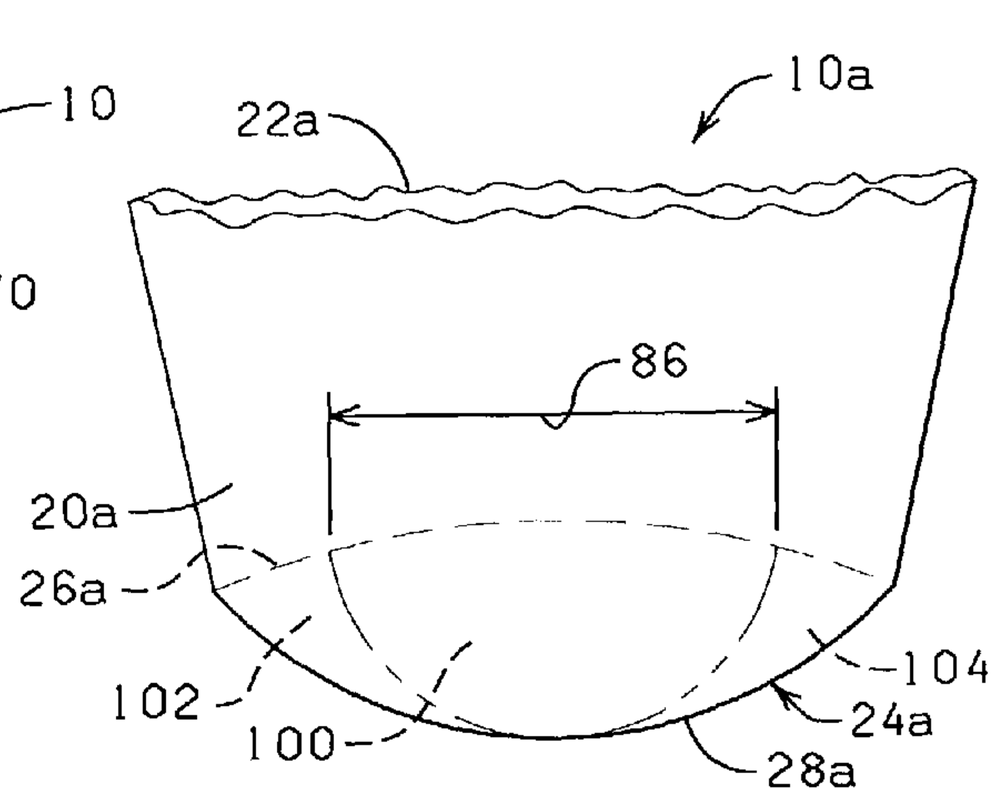


FIG. 6A

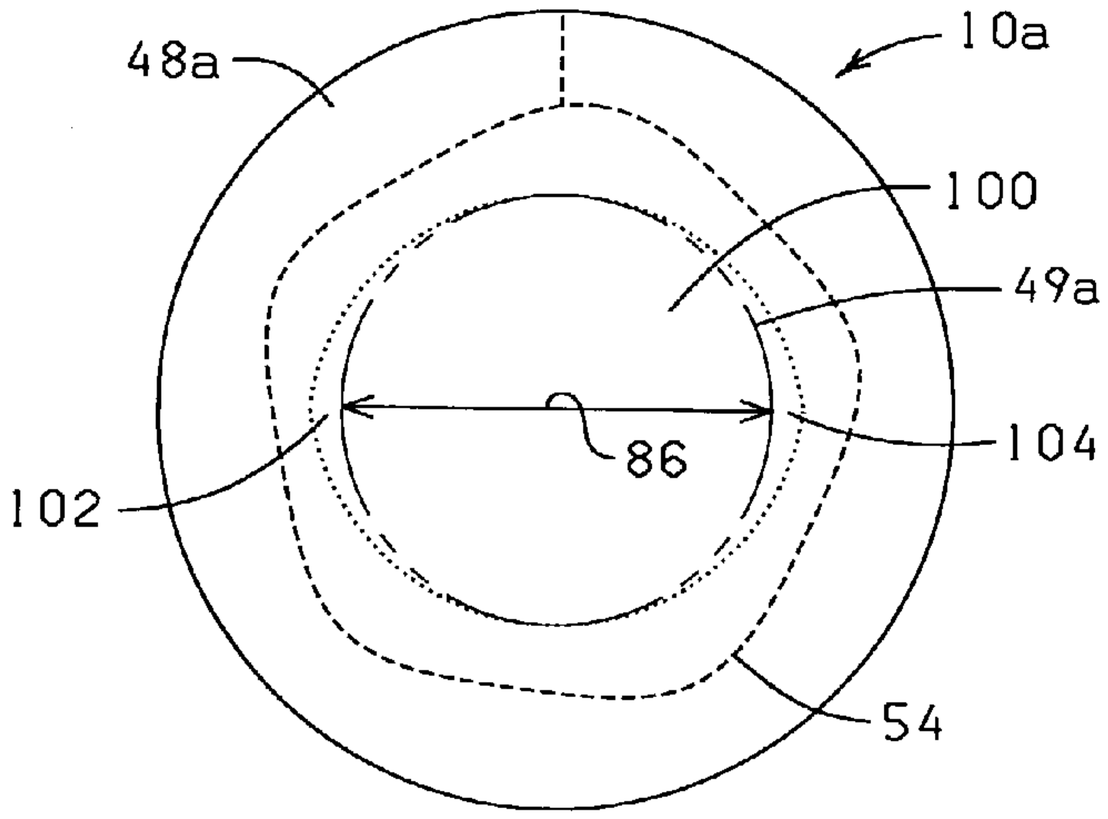


FIG. 6B

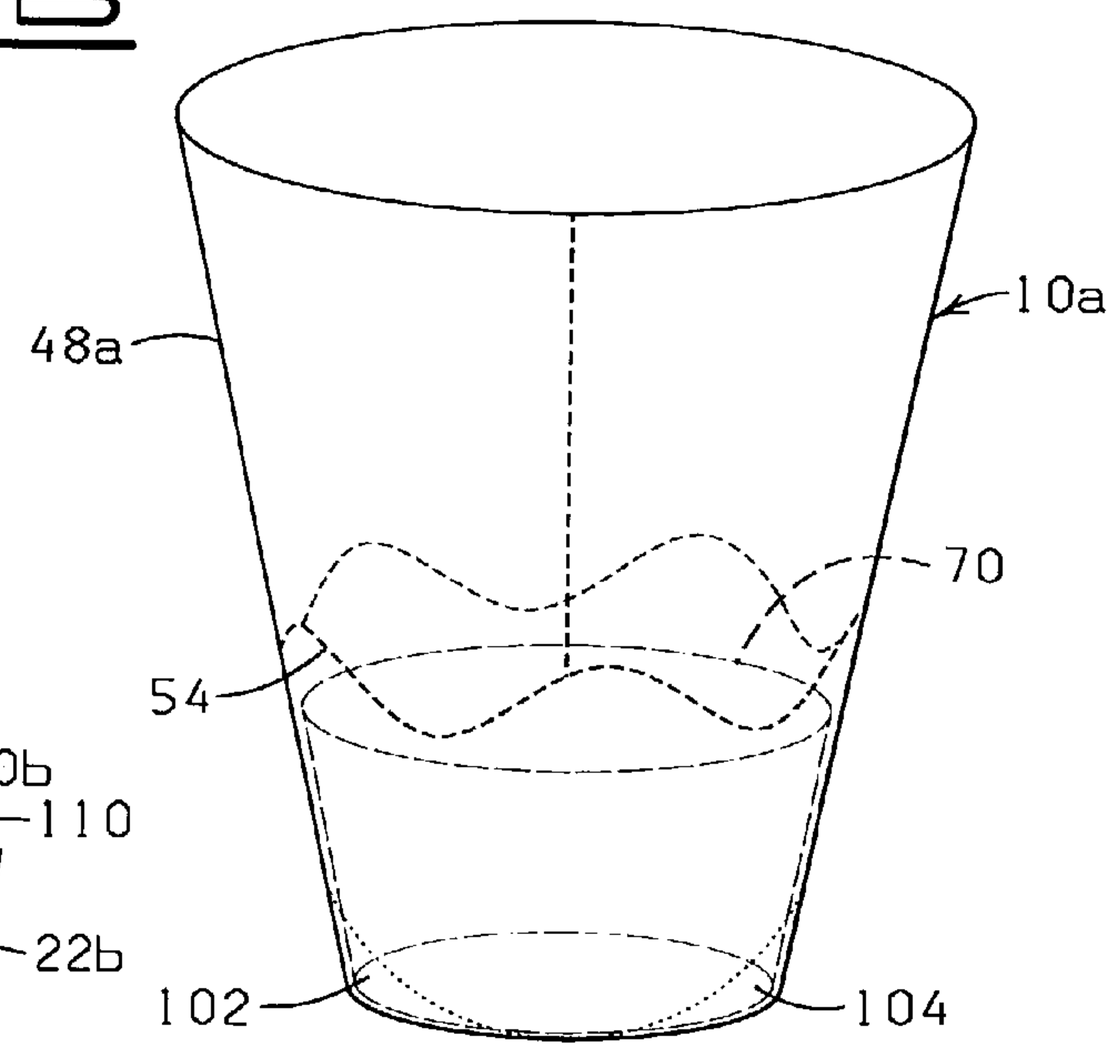


FIG. 6C

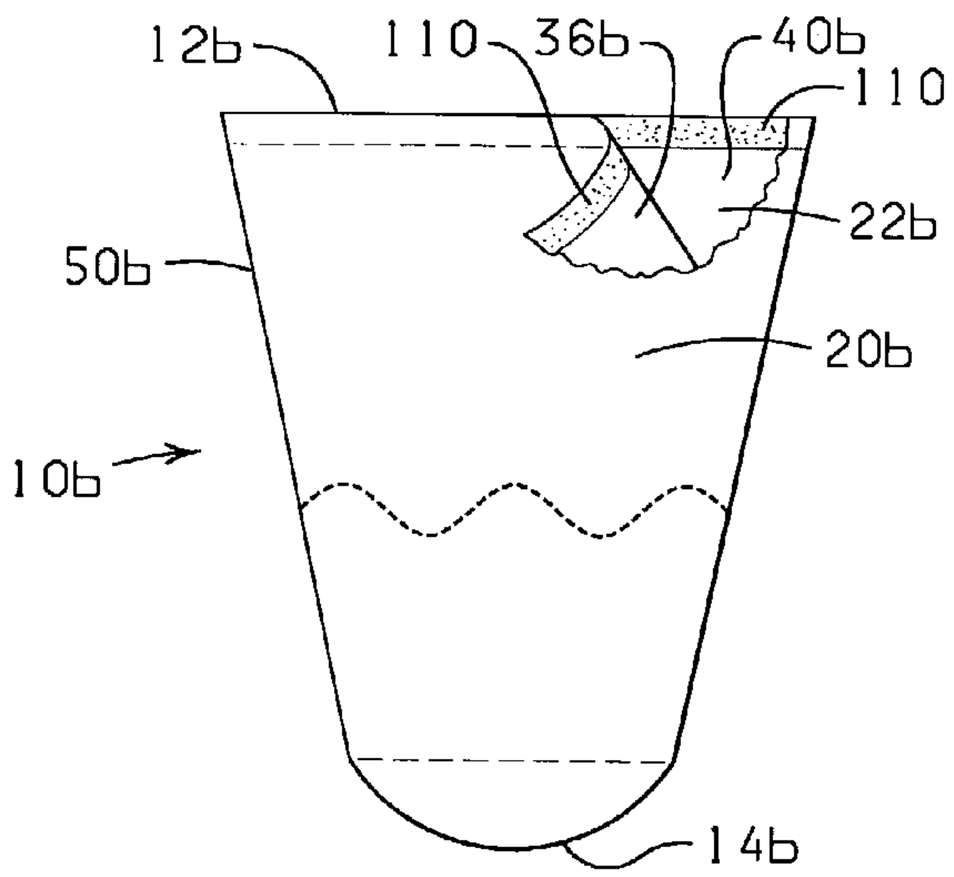


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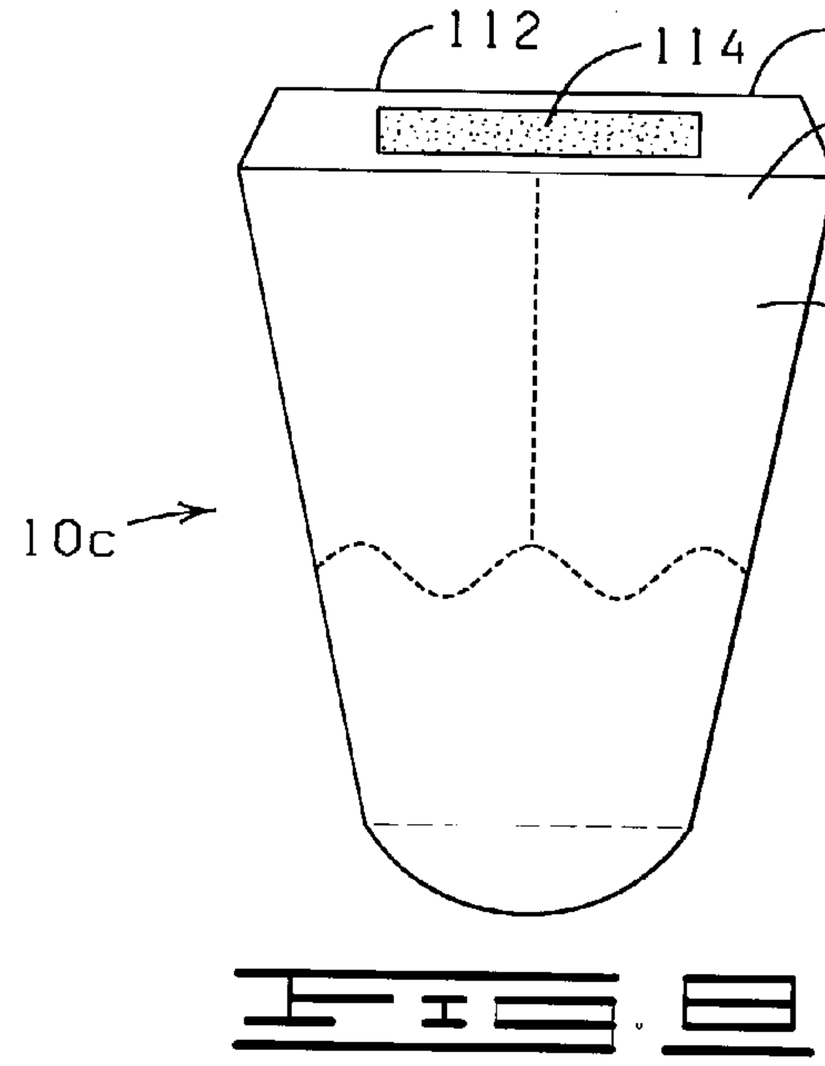


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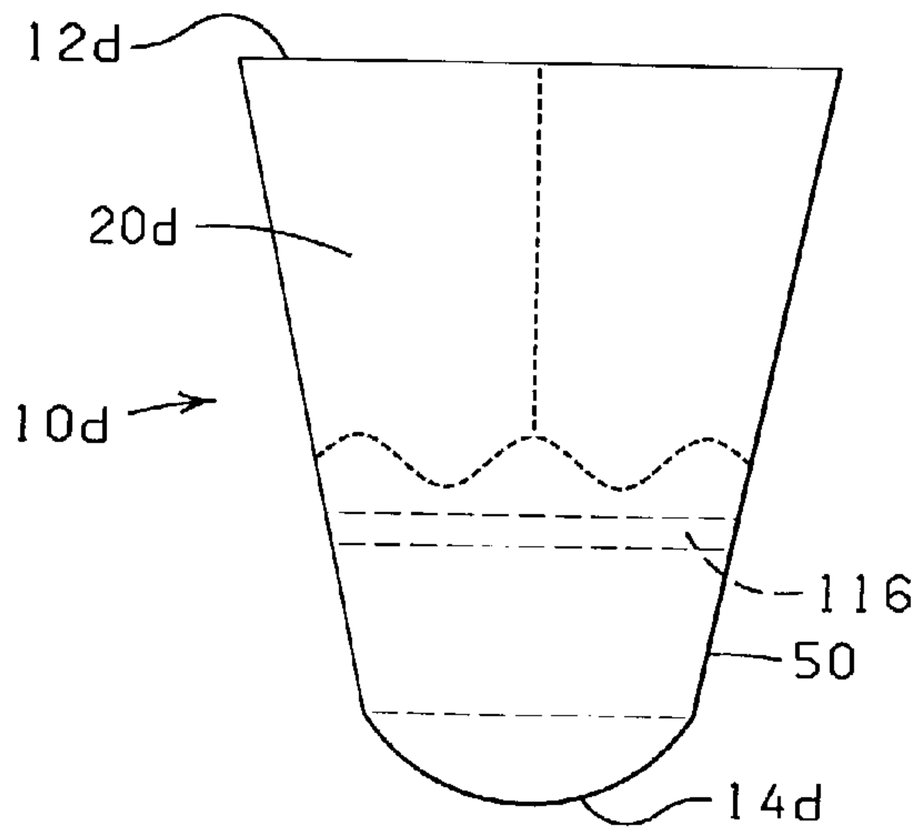


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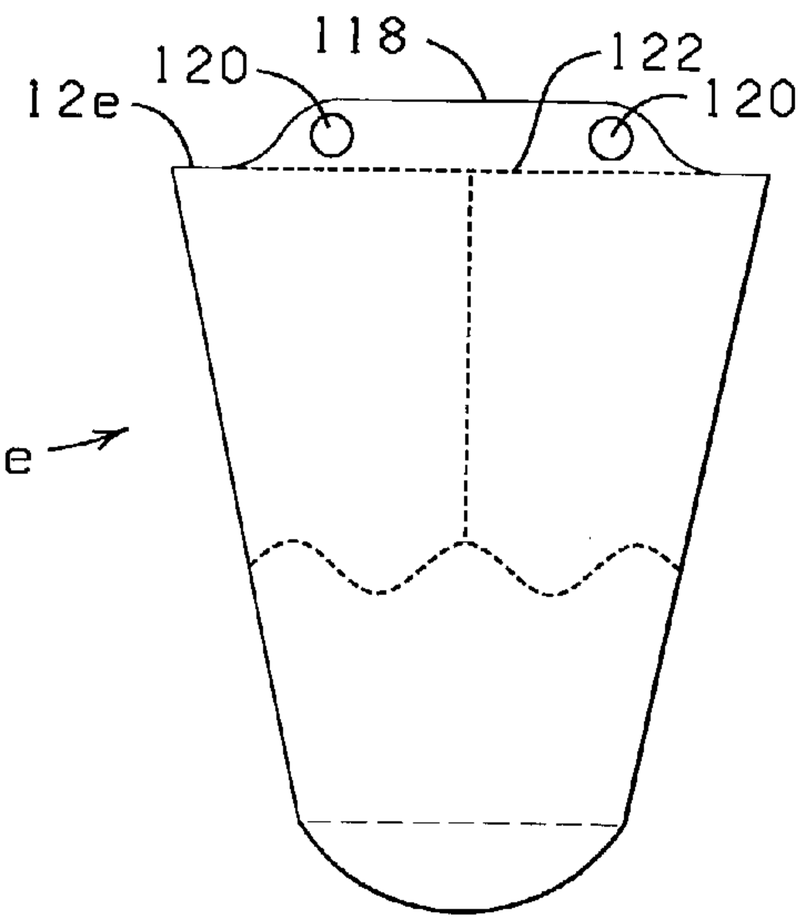
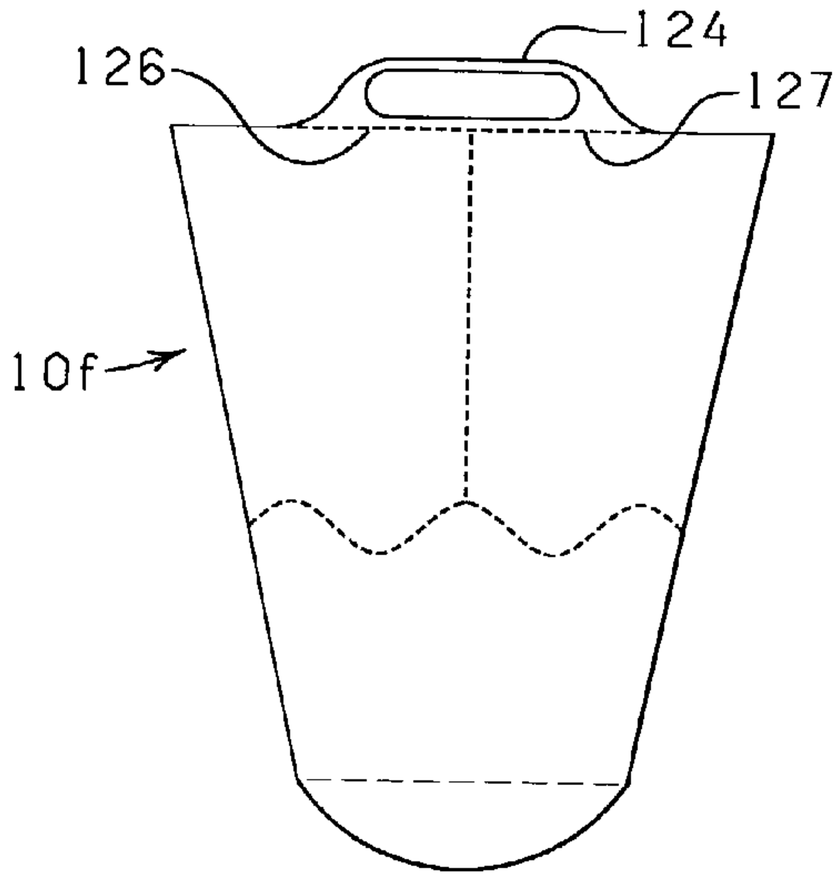


FIG. 10



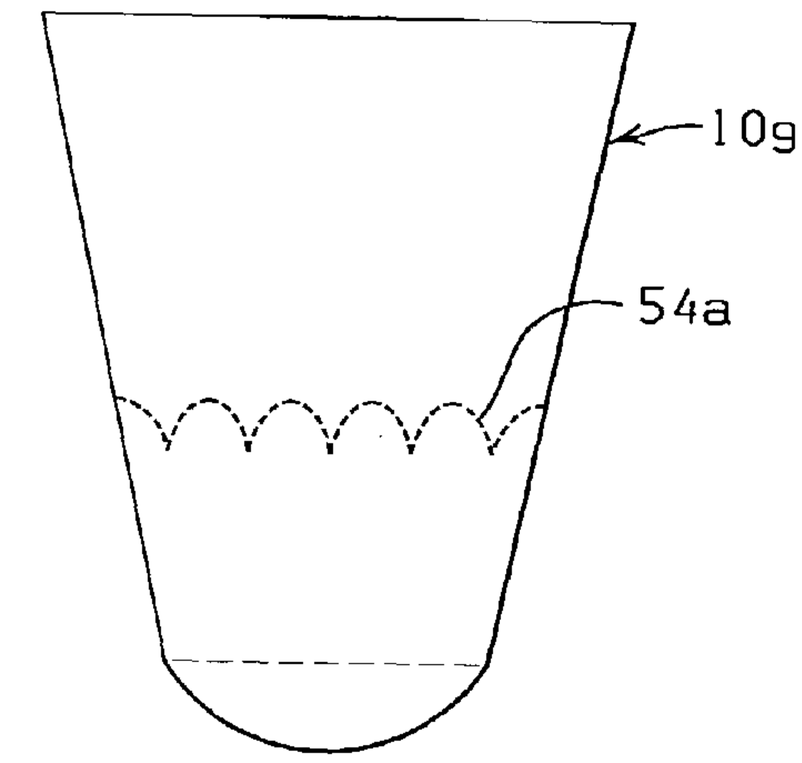


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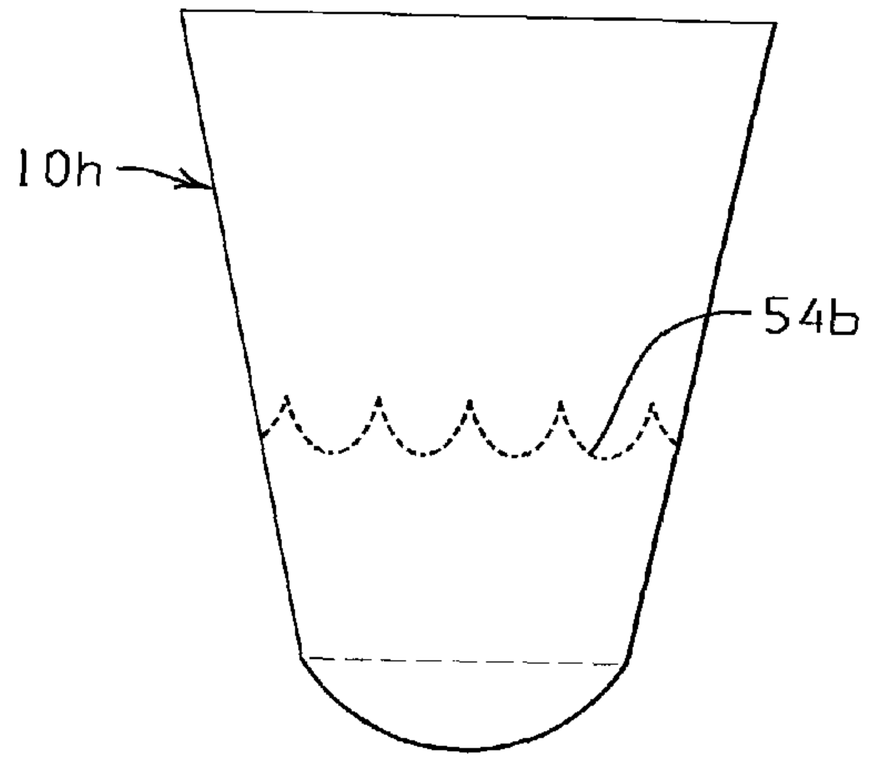


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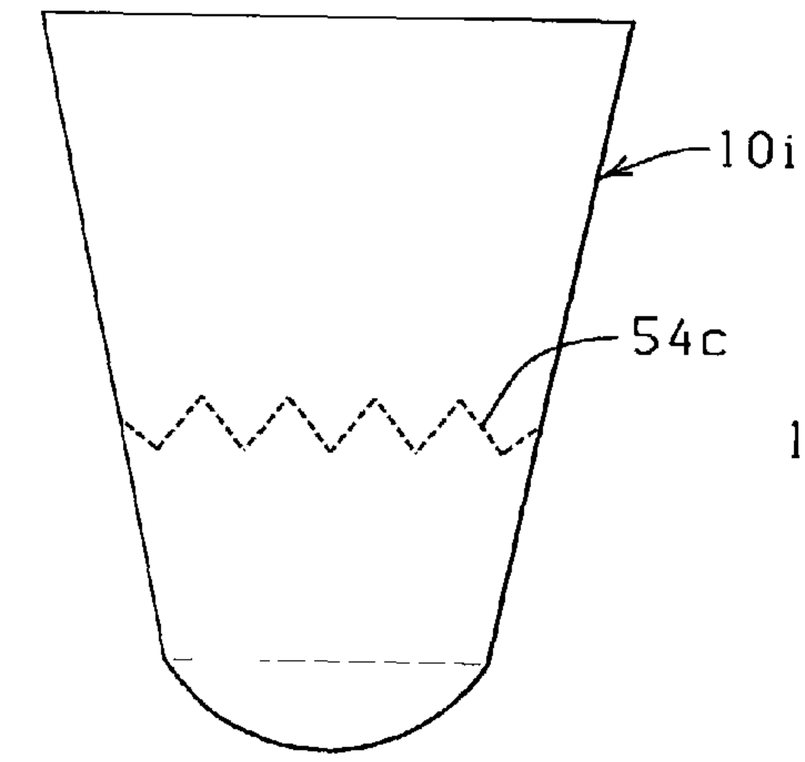


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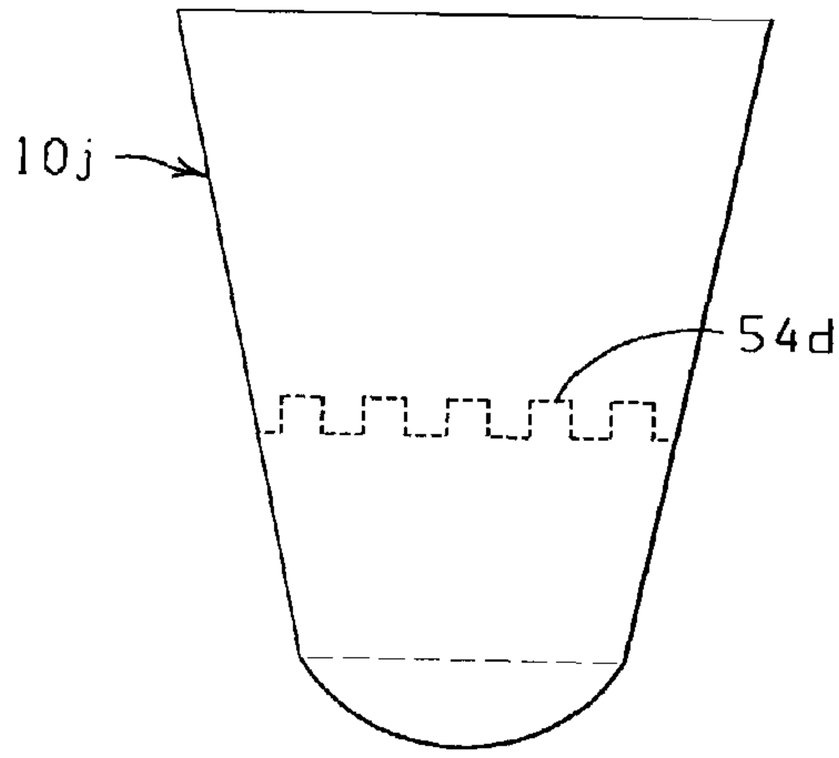


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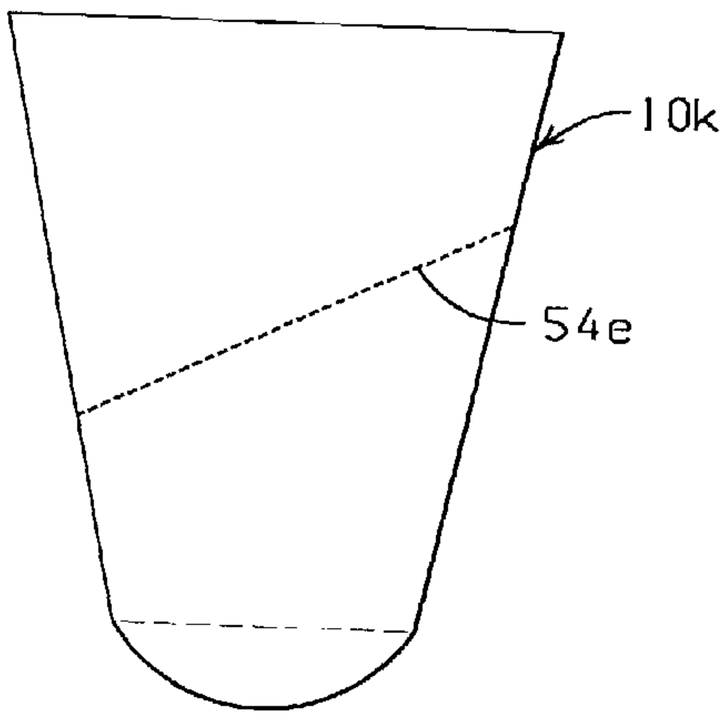


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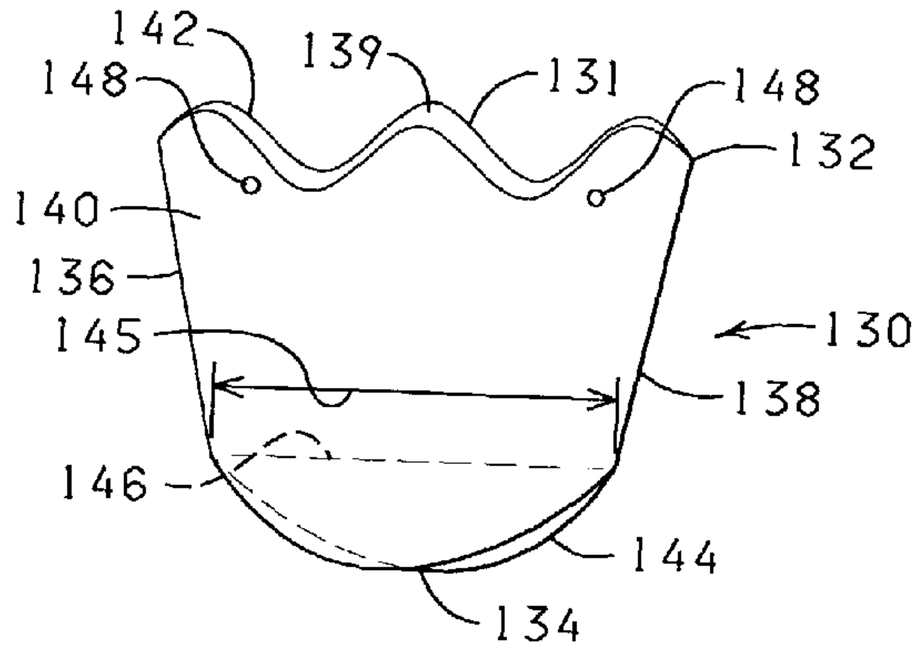


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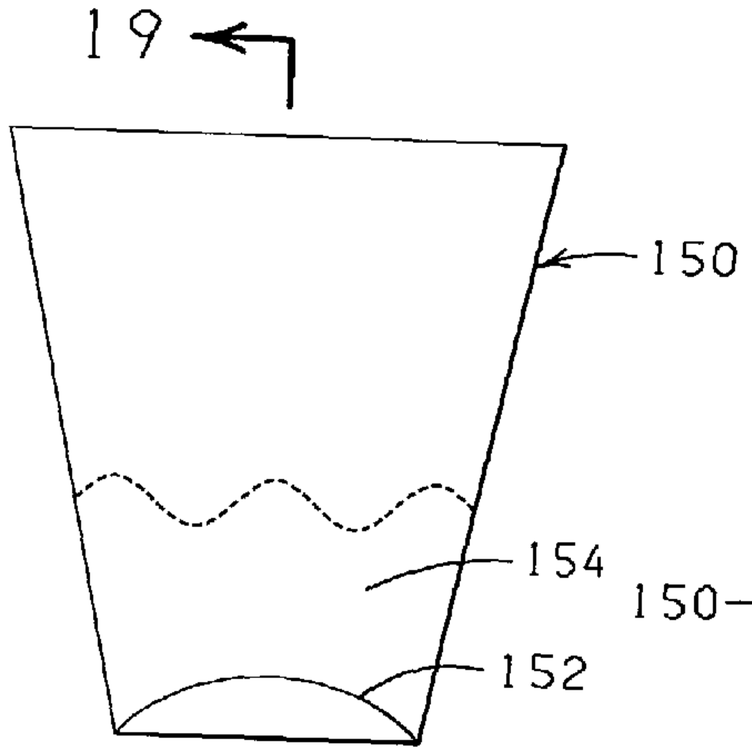


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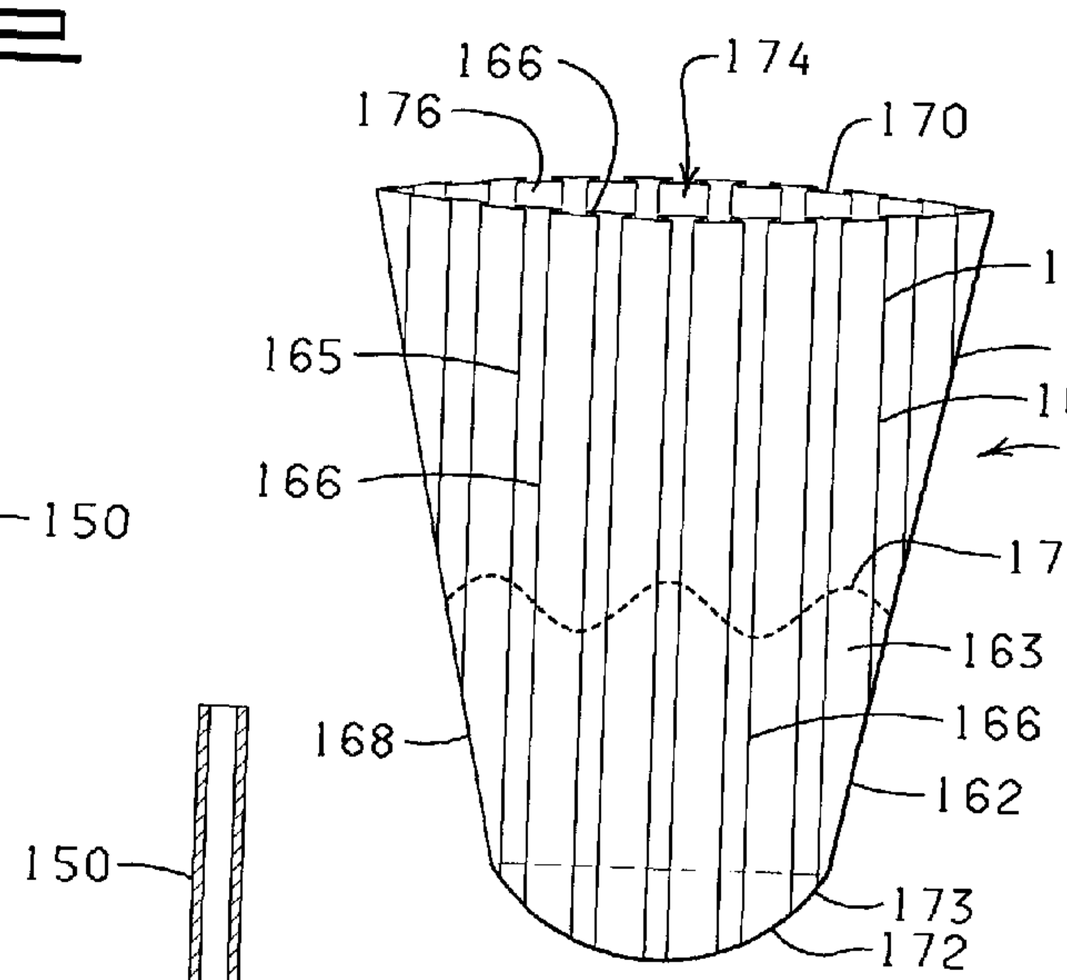


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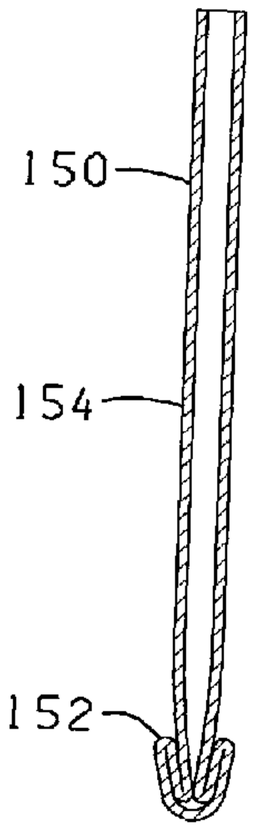


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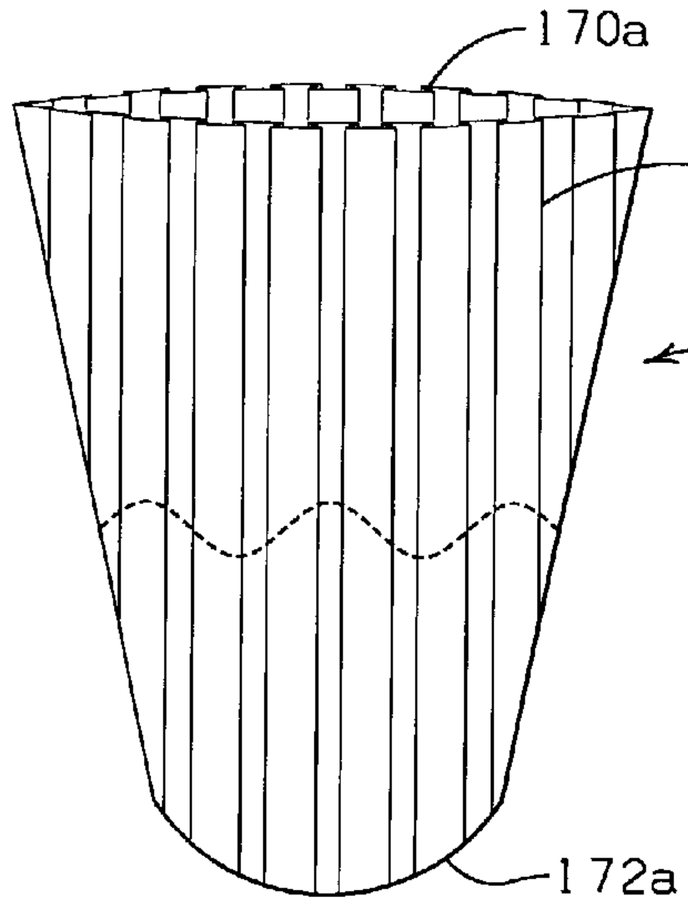


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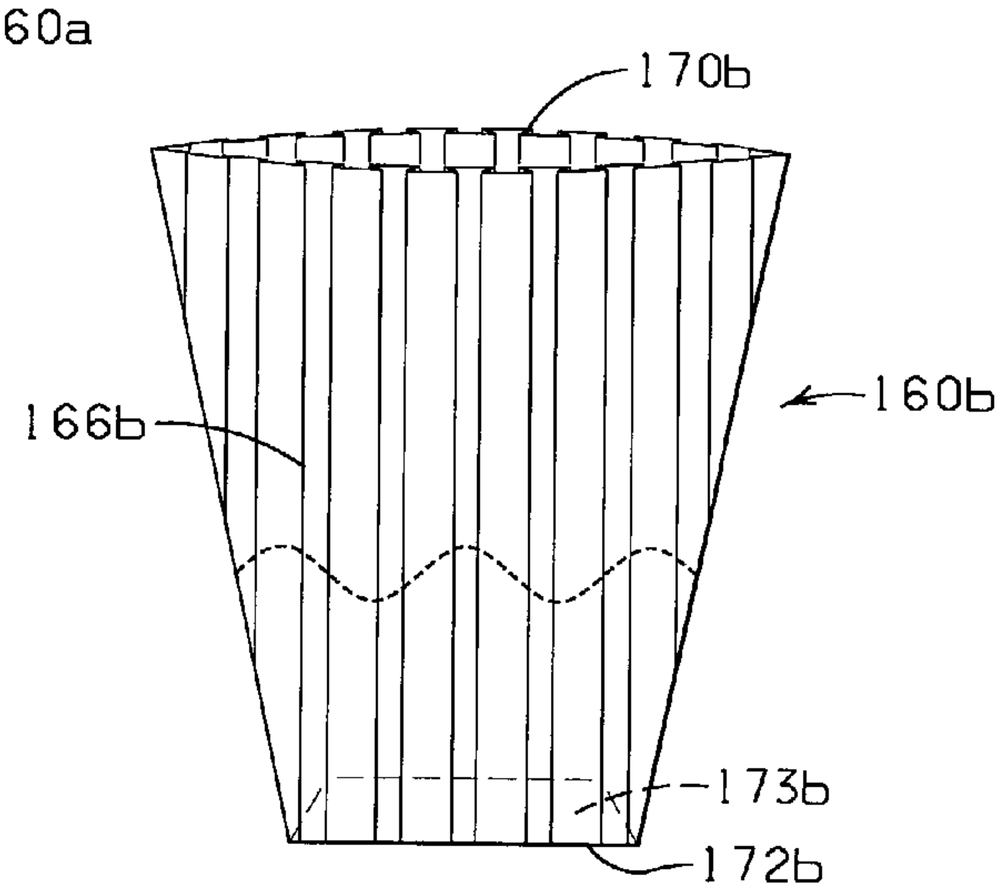


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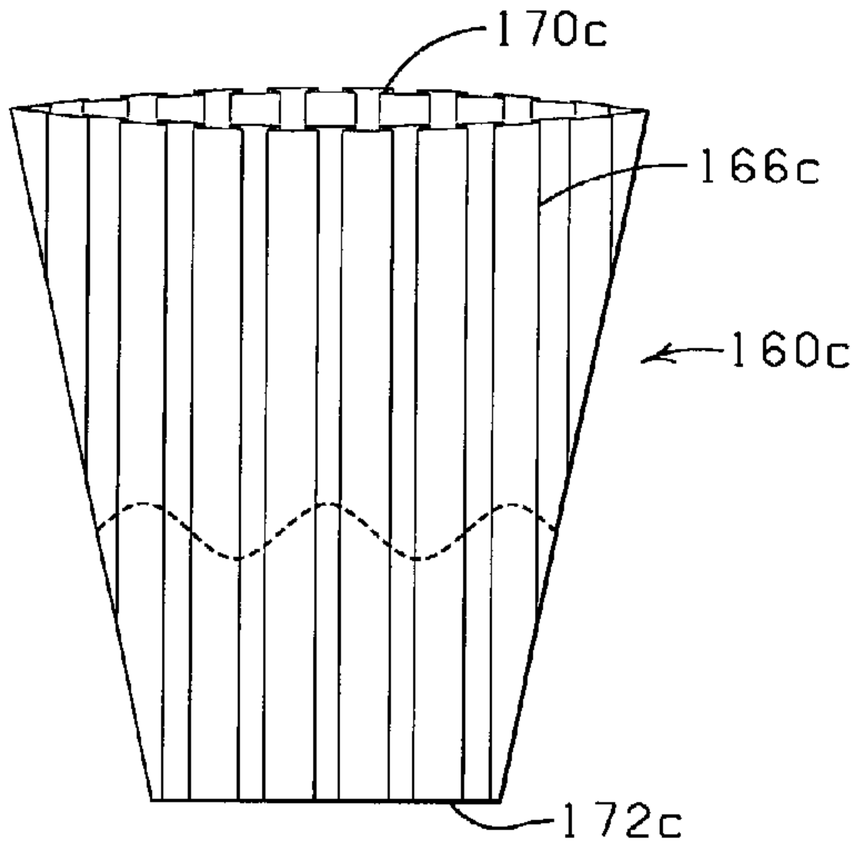


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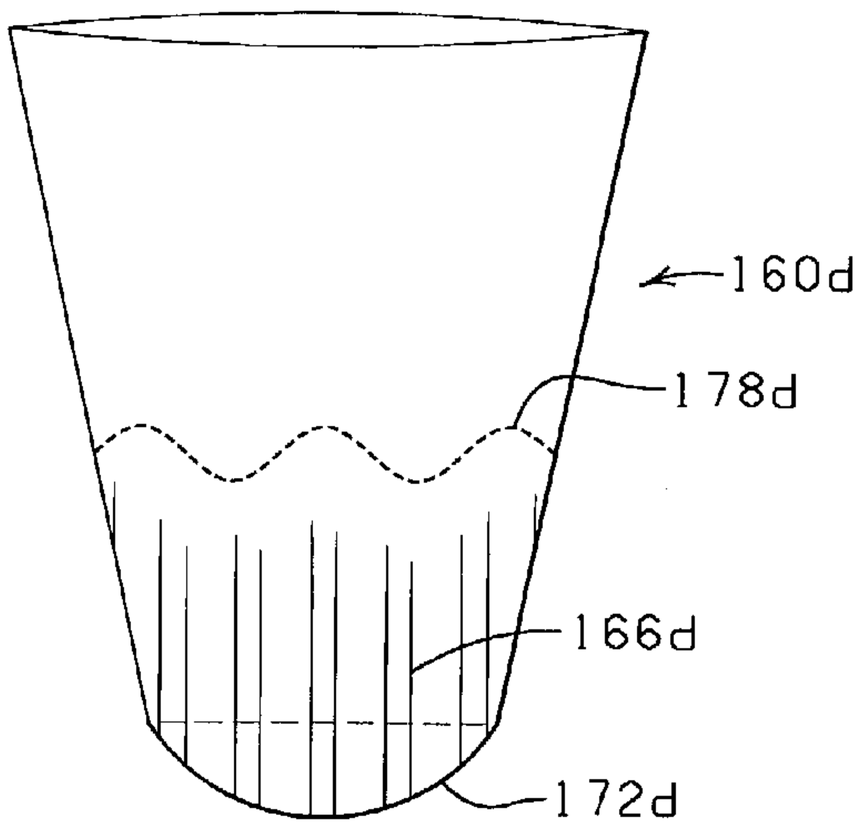


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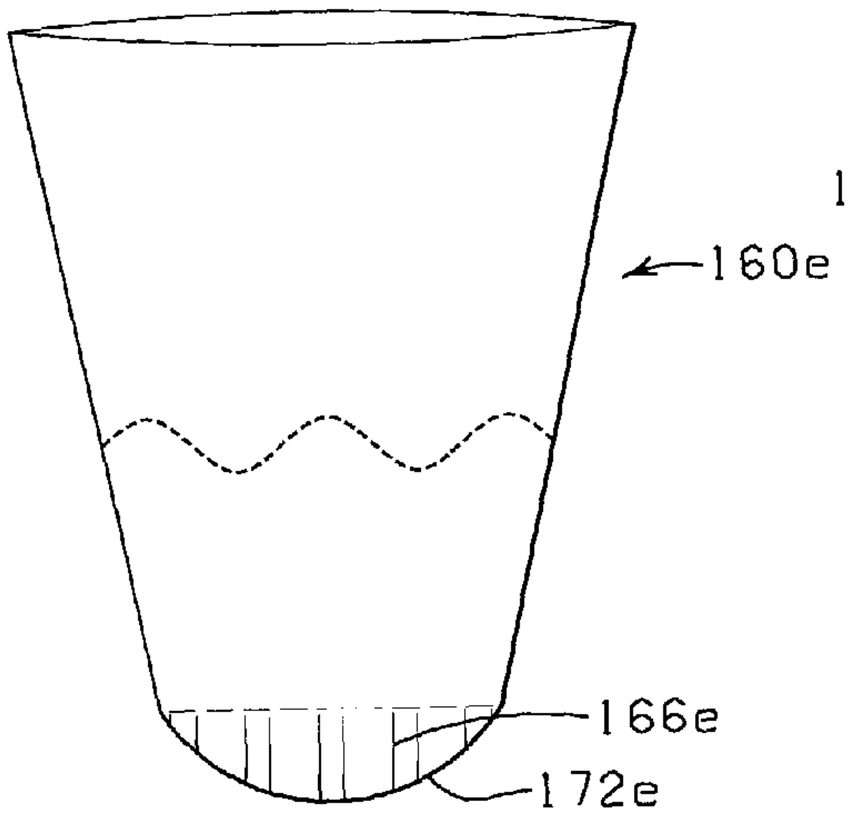


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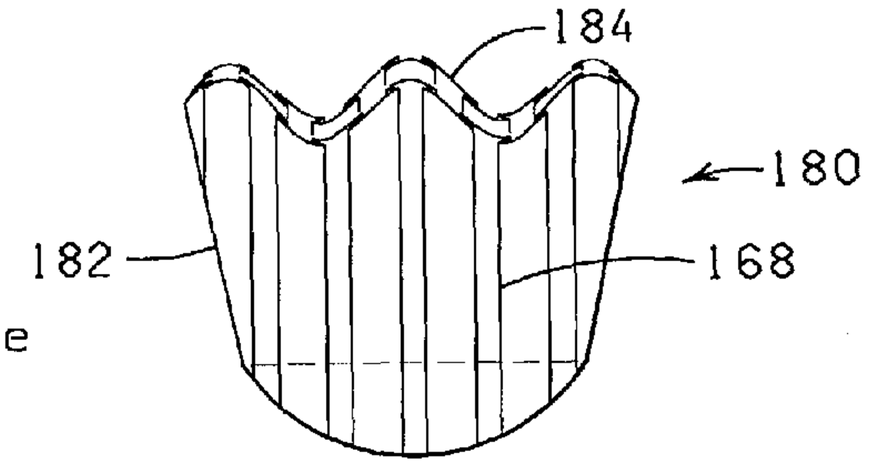


FIG. 26

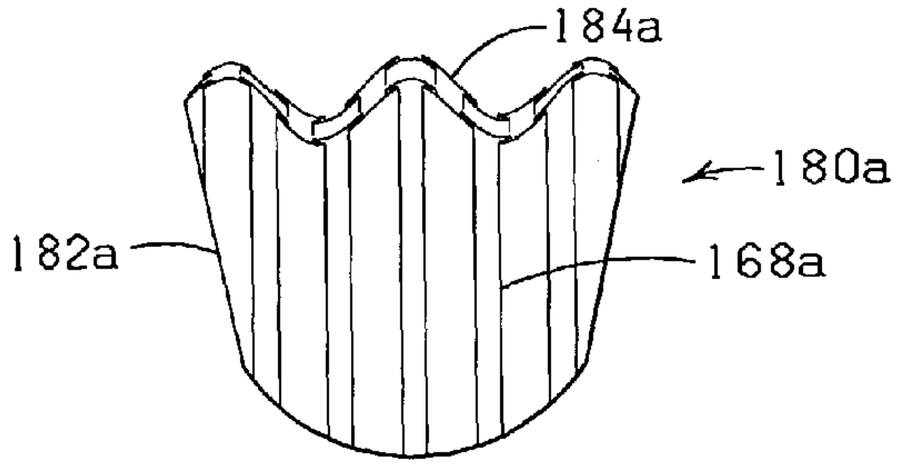


FIG. 27

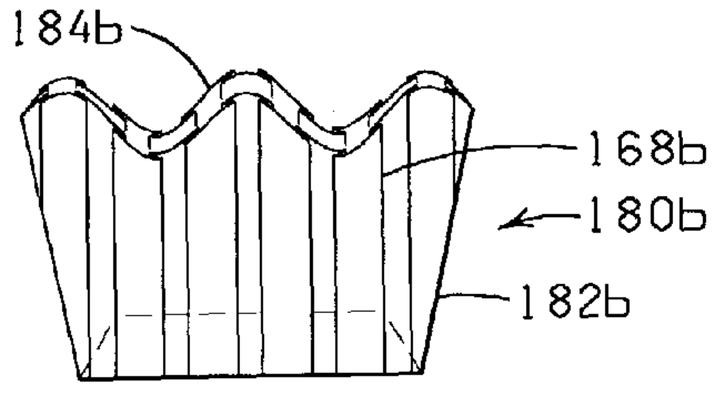
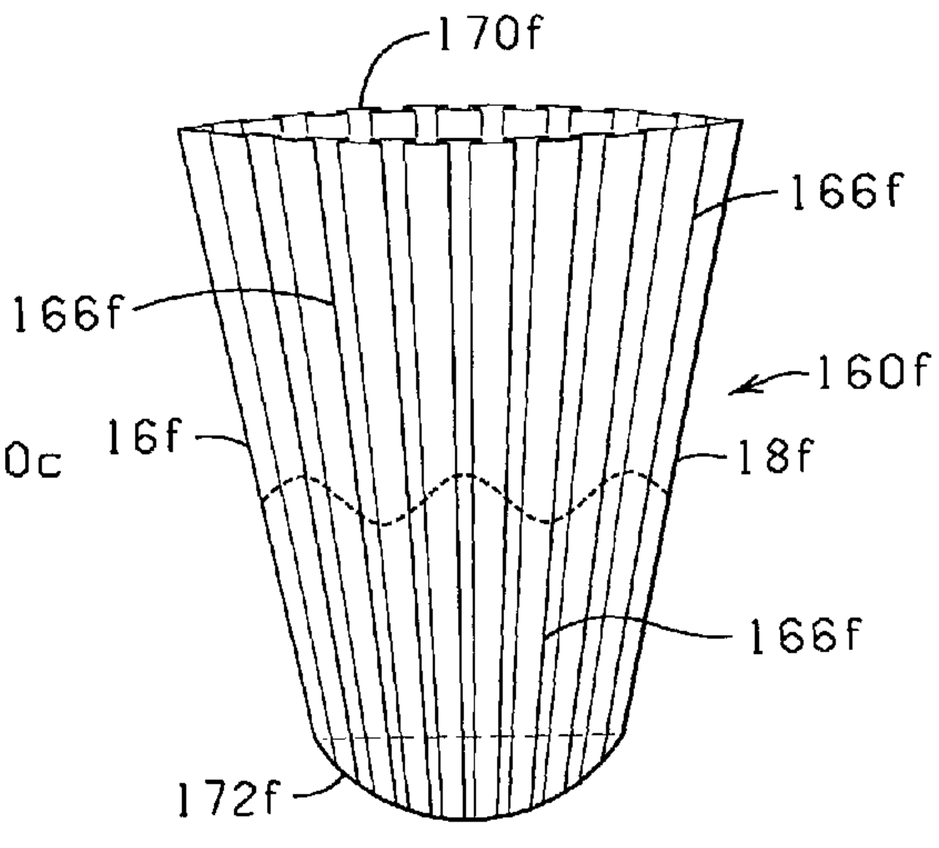


FIG. 28



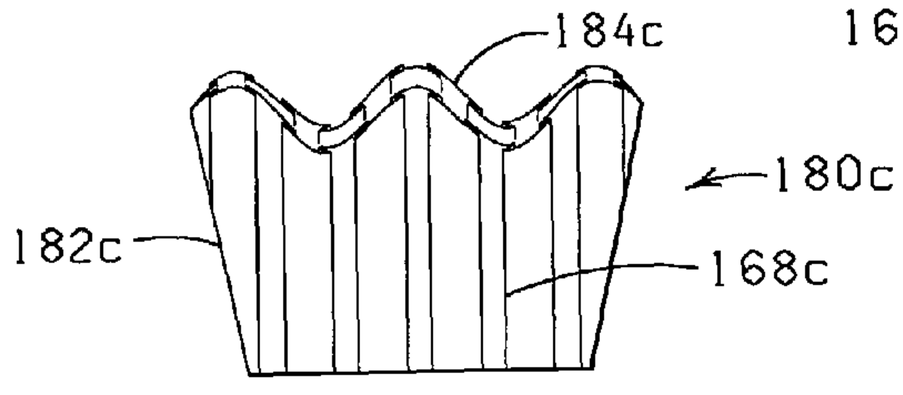


FIG. 29

FIG. 30

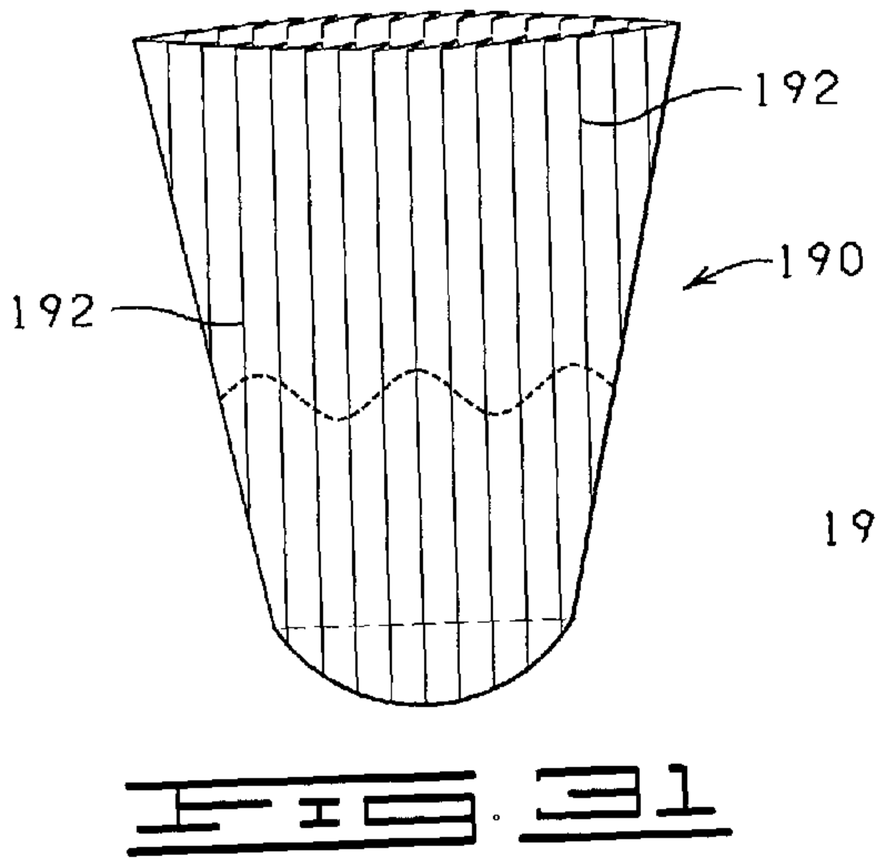


FIG. 31

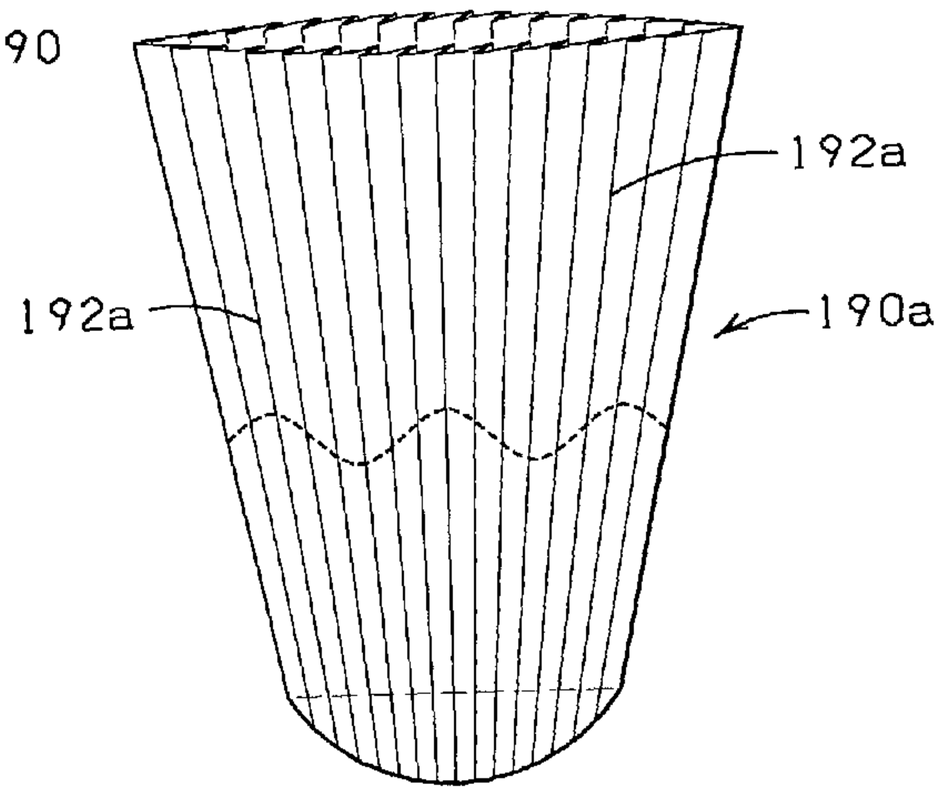


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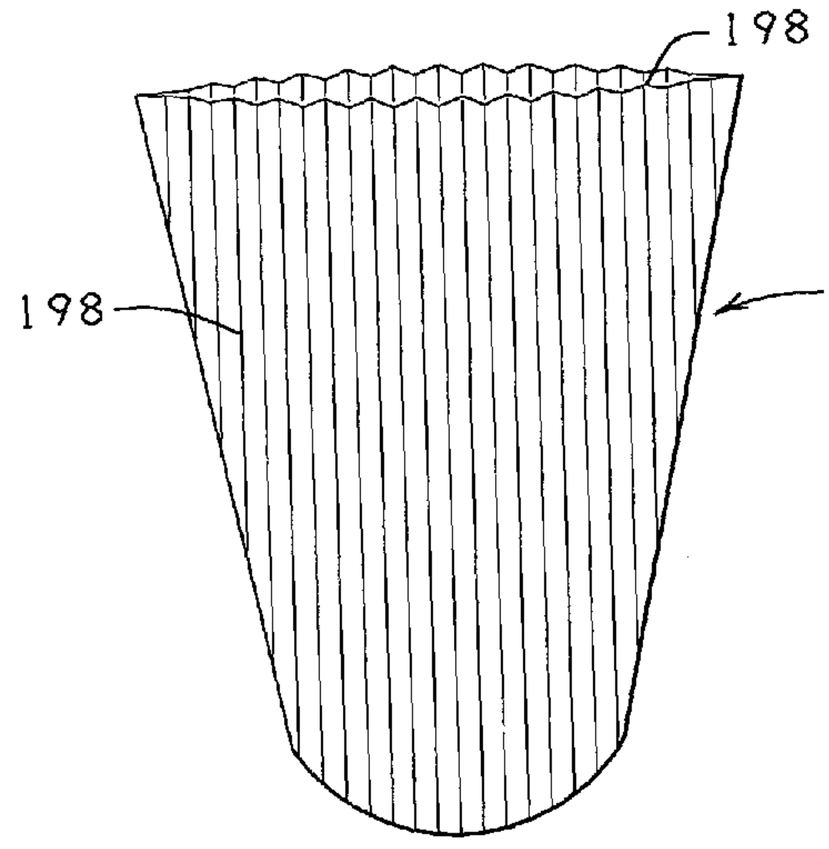


FIG. 33

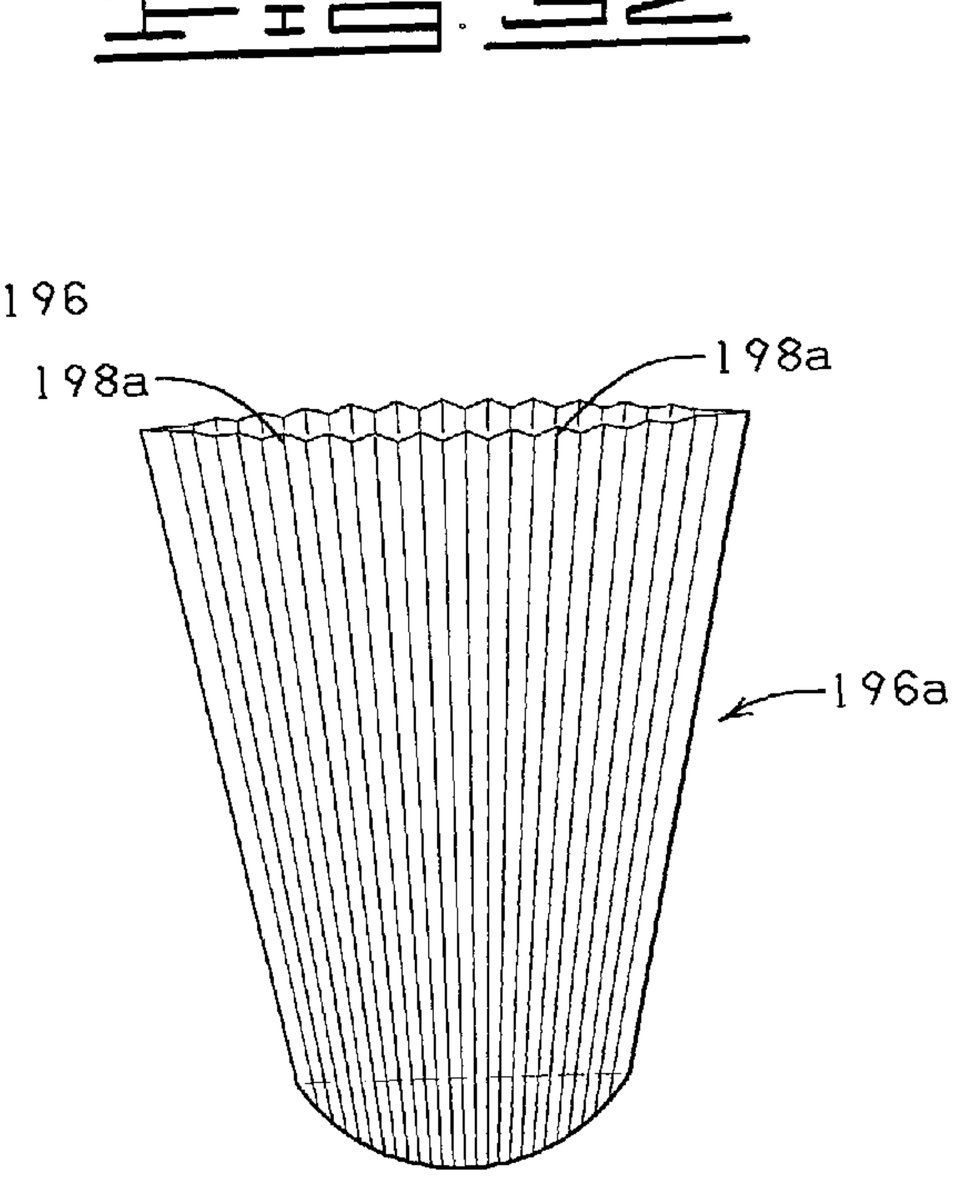


FIG. 34

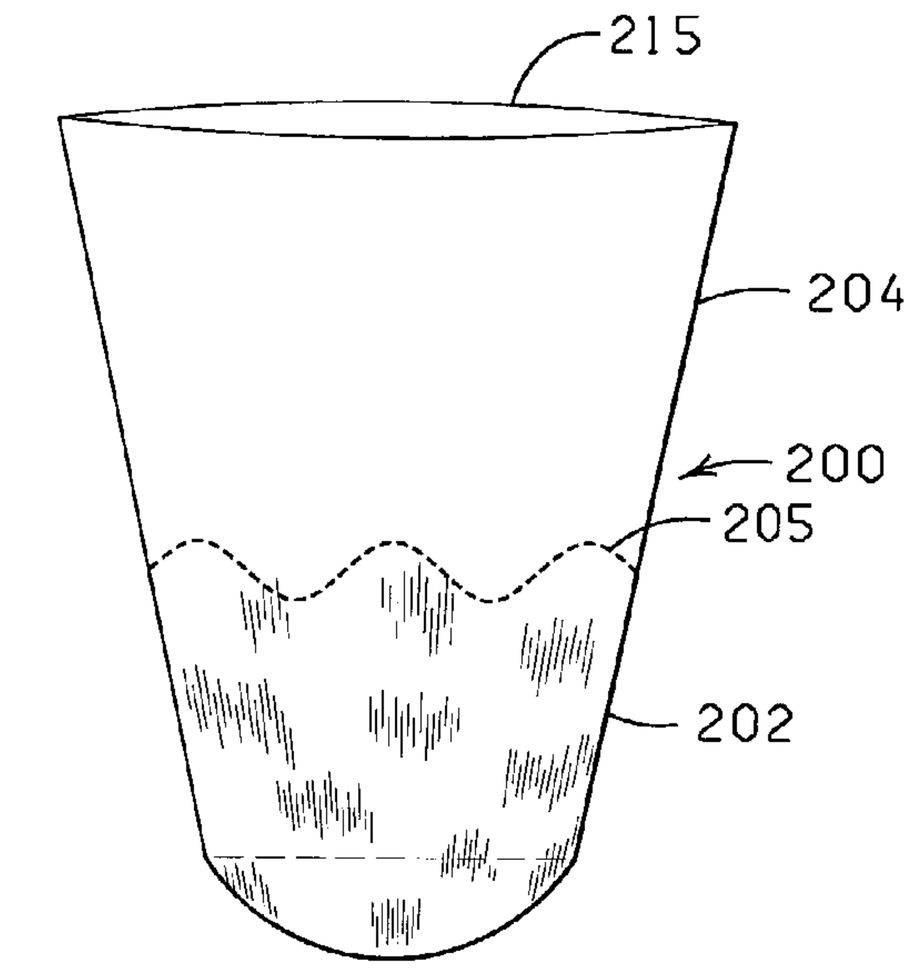


FIG. 3E

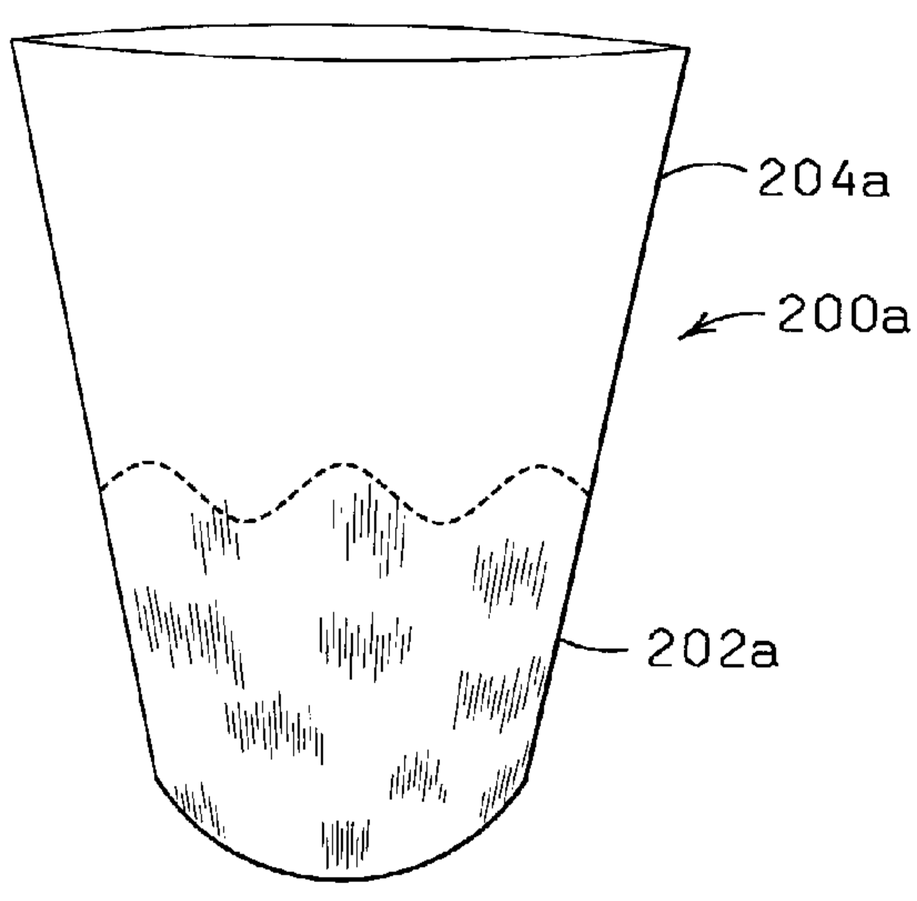


FIG. 3F

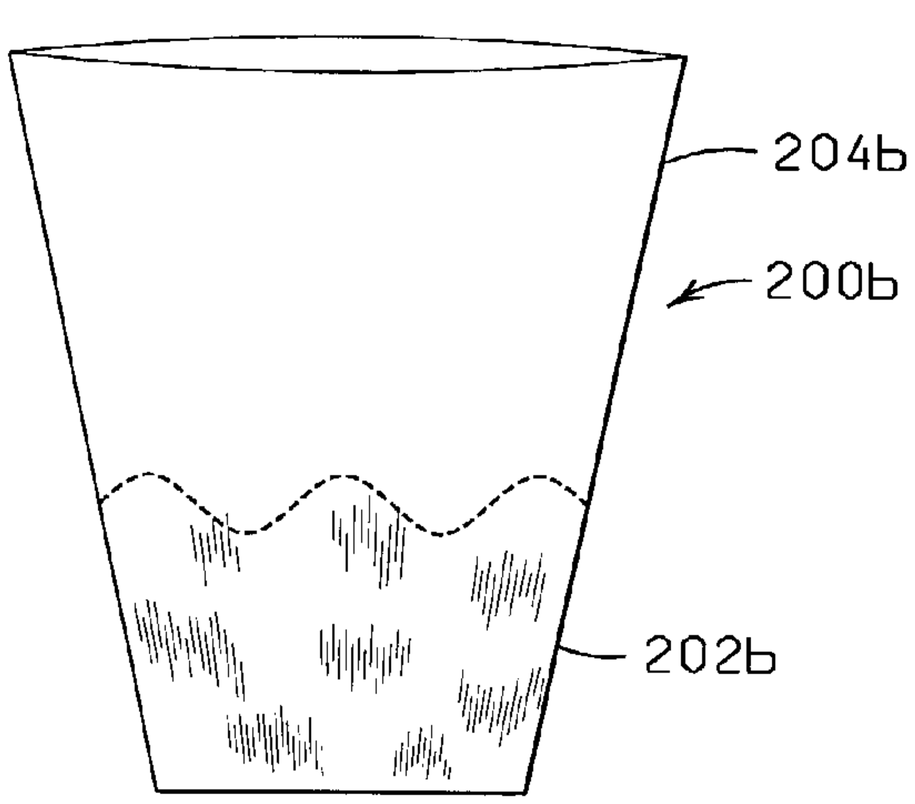


FIG. 3G

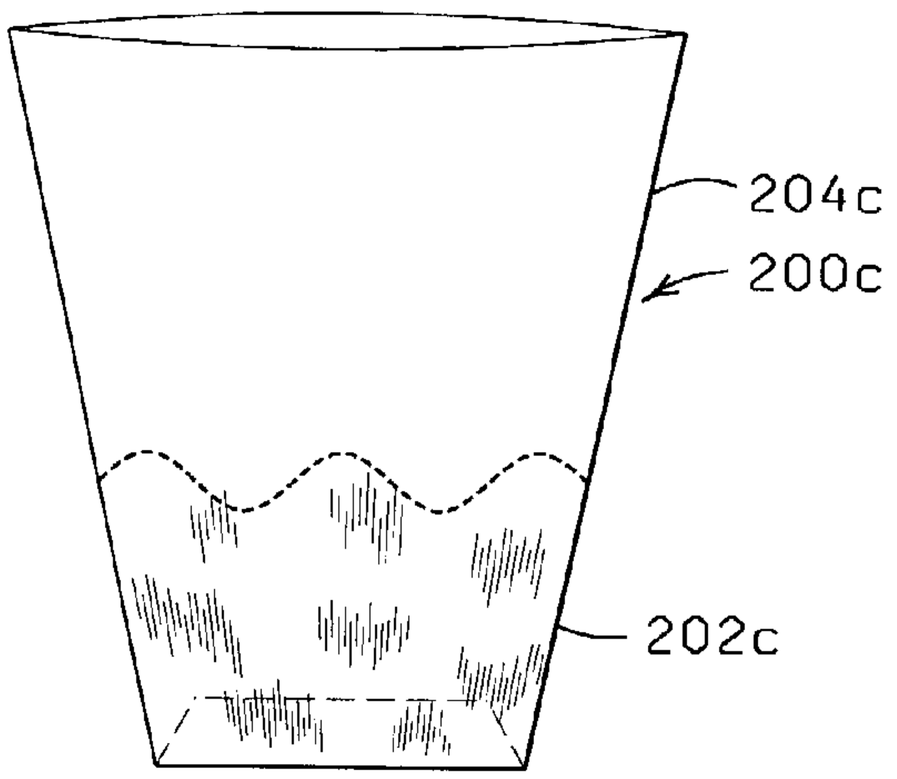


FIG. 3H

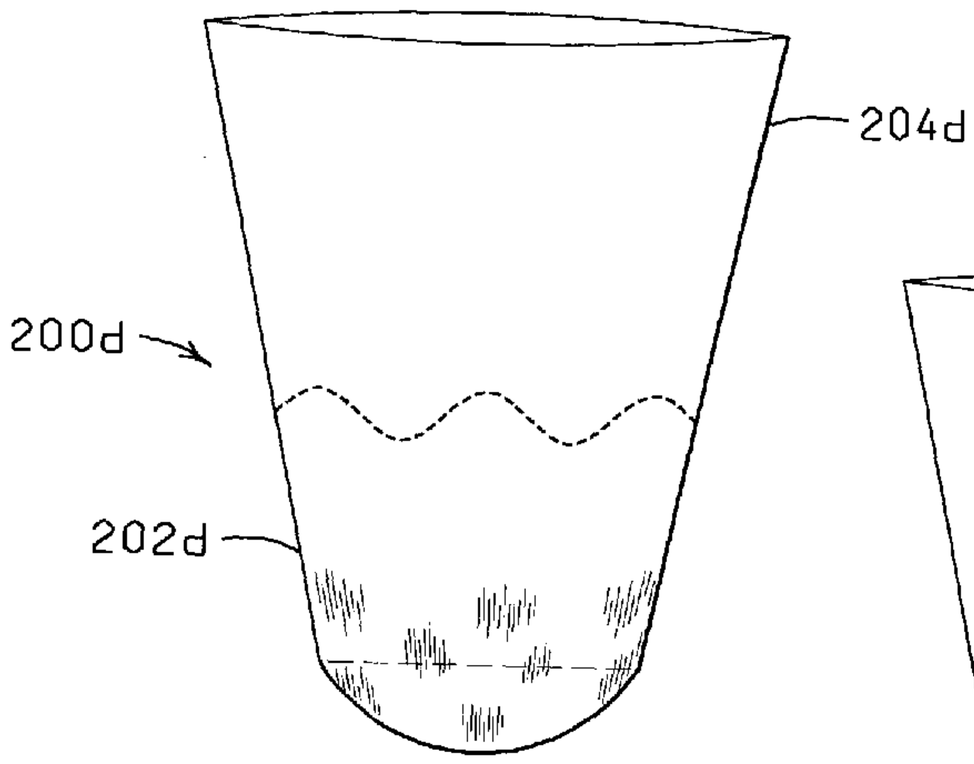


FIG. 39

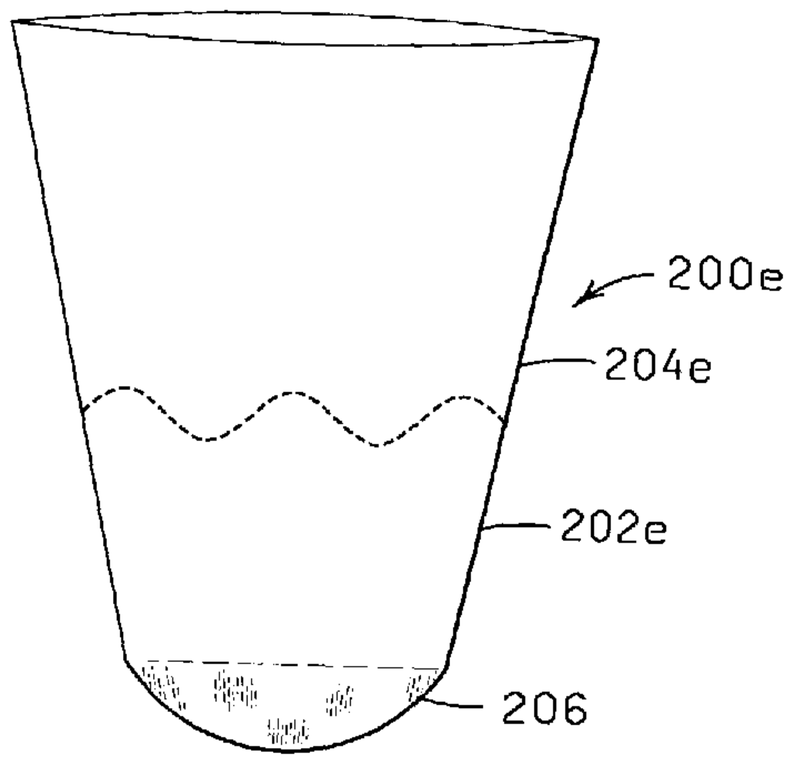


FIG. 40

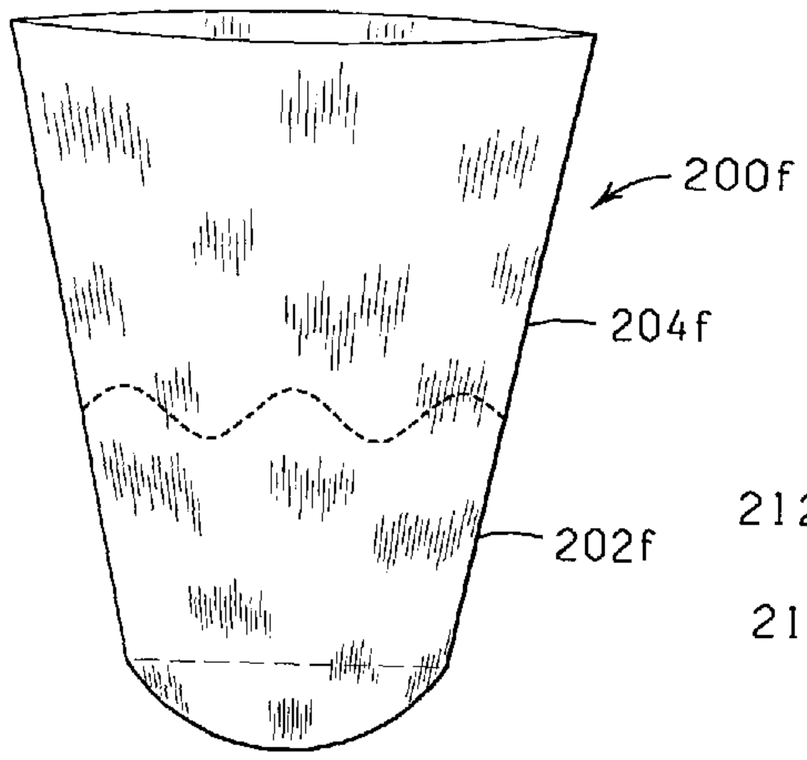


FIG. 41

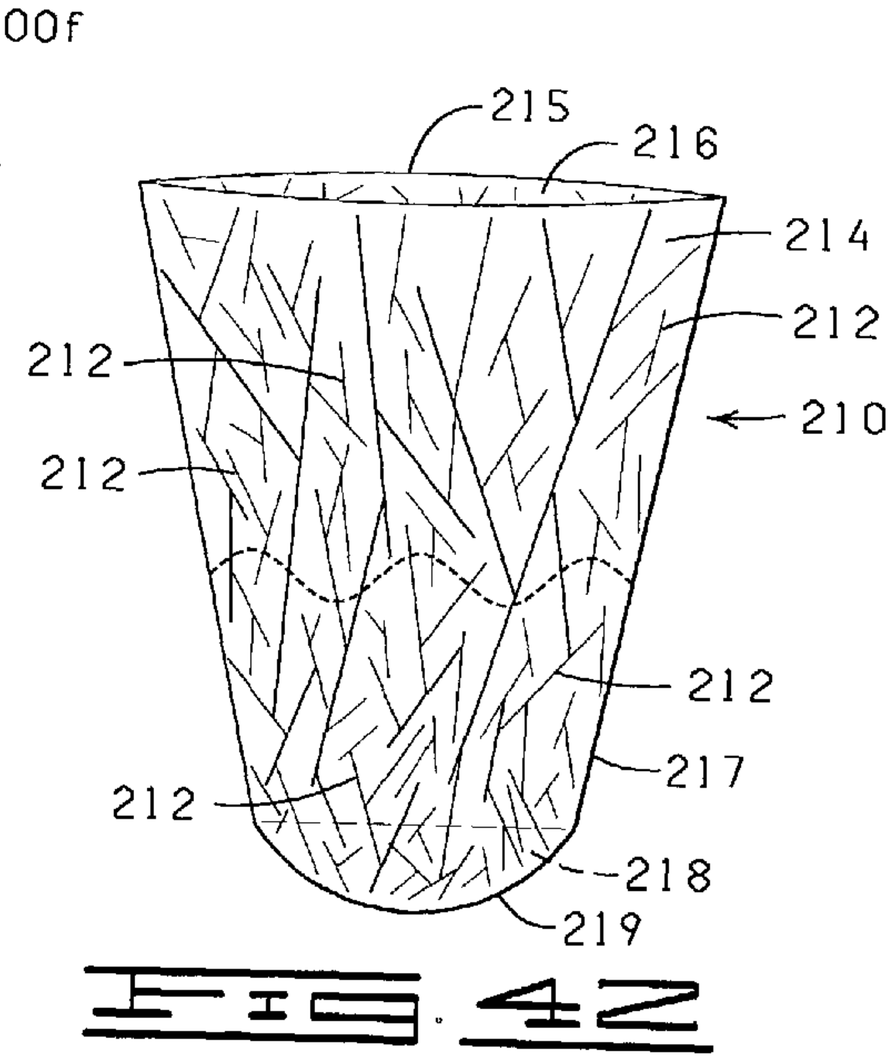


FIG. 42

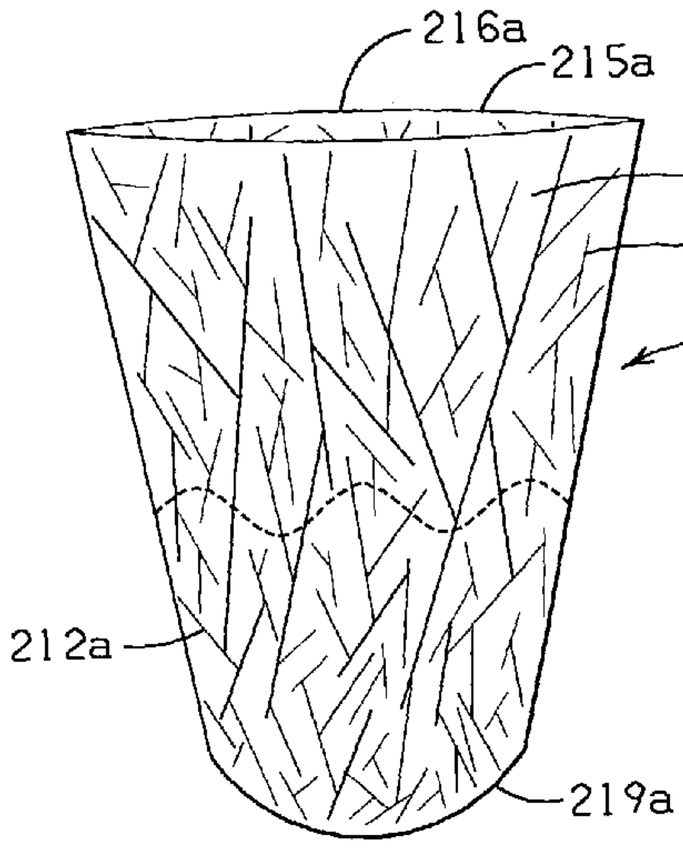


FIG. 43

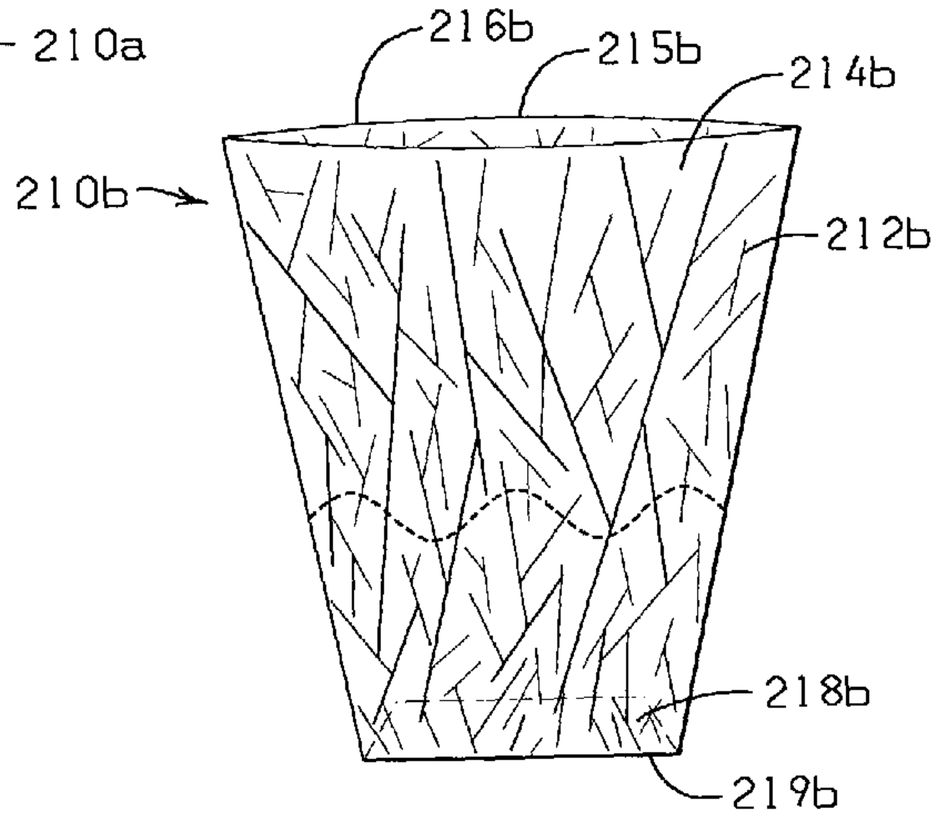


FIG. 44

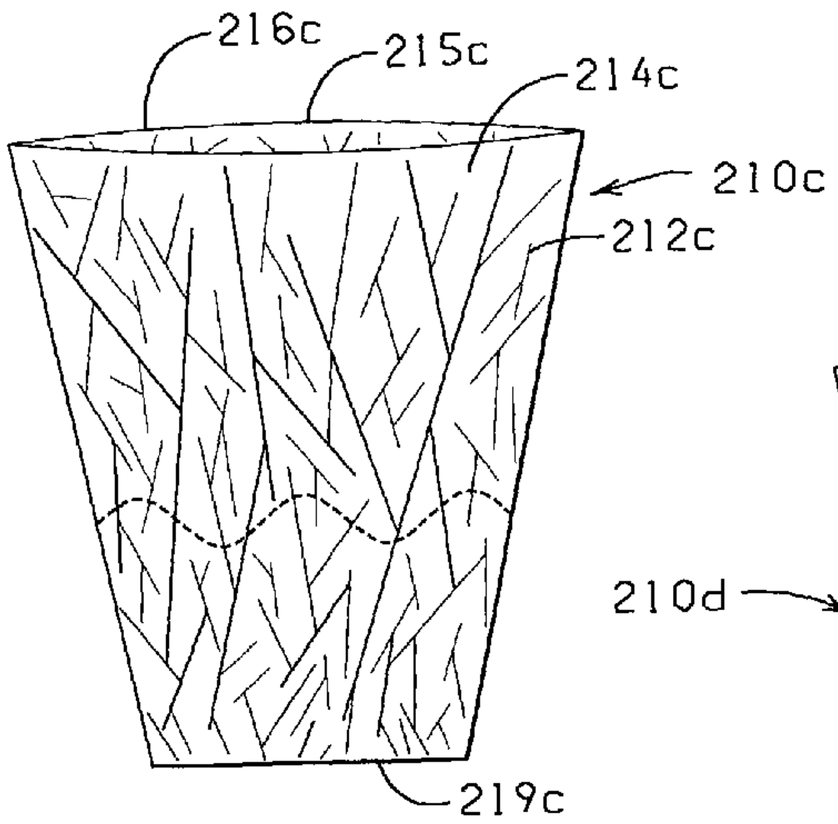


FIG. 45

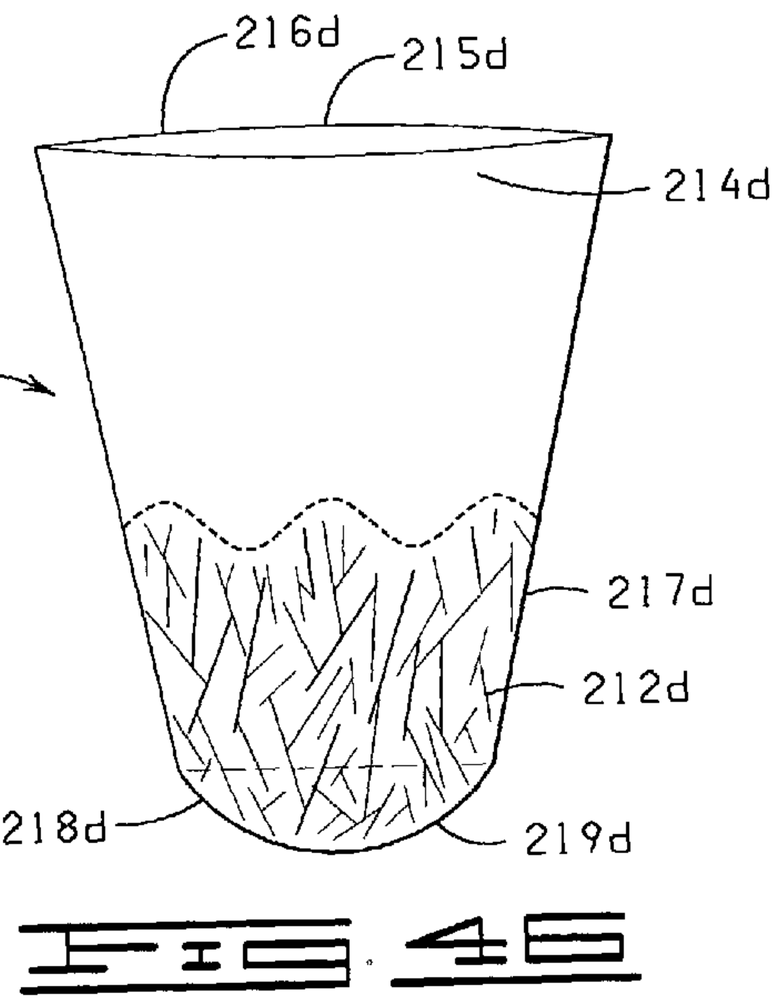


FIG. 45

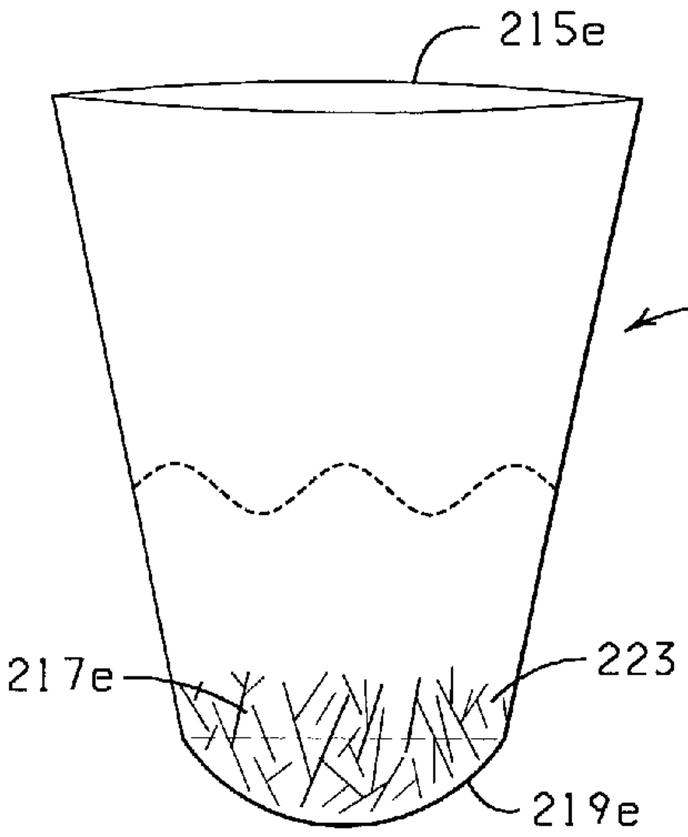


FIG. 47

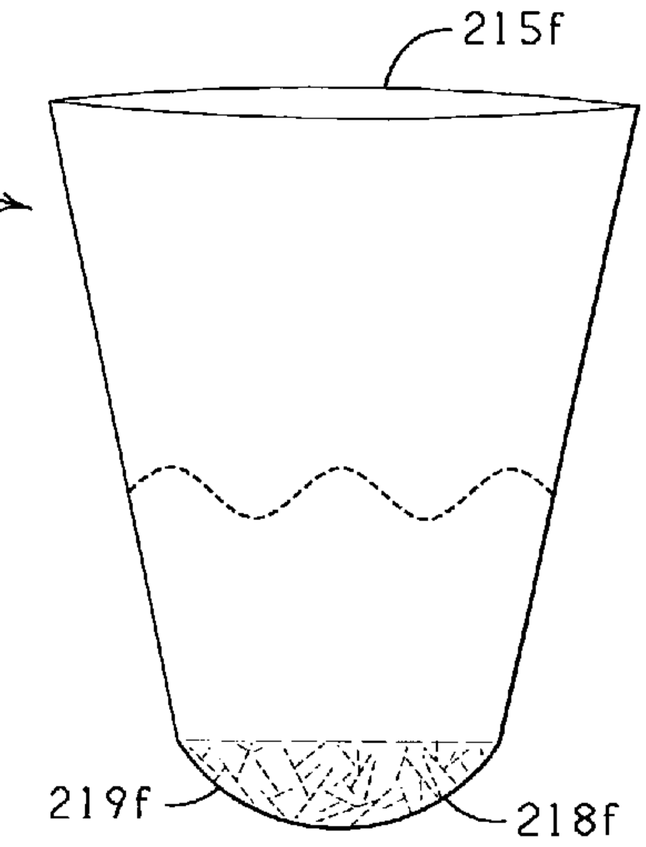


FIG. 48

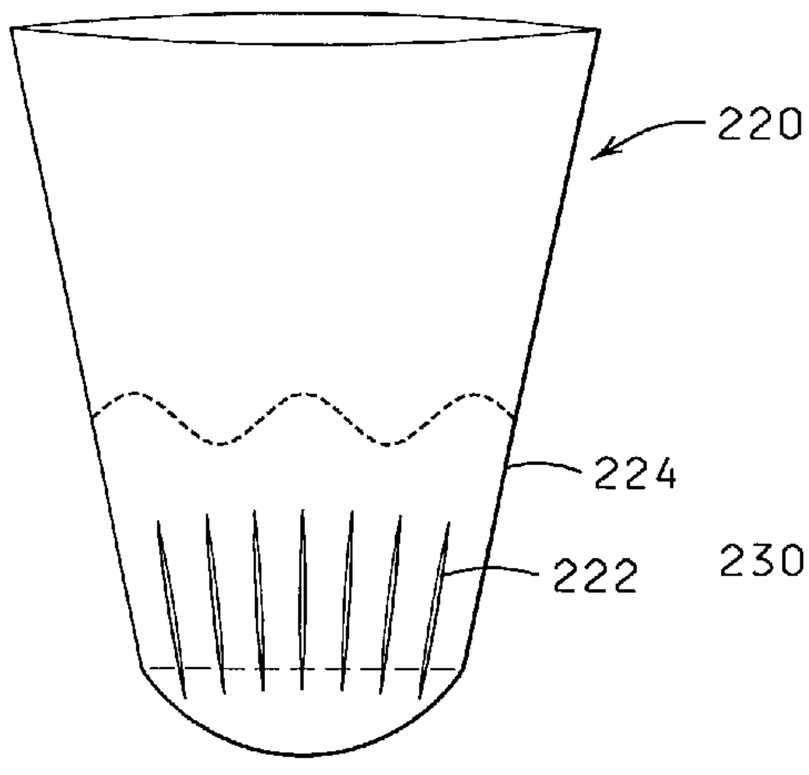


FIG. 49

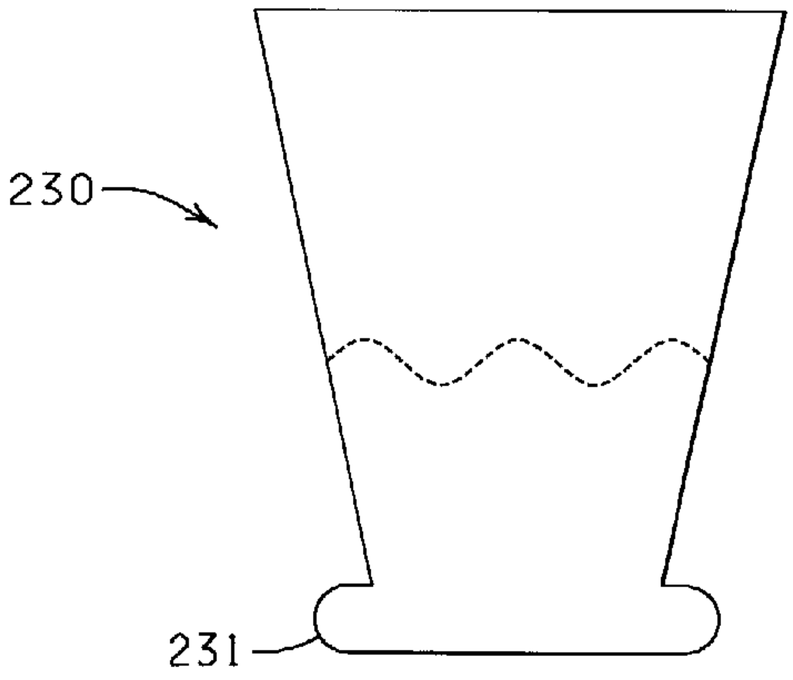


FIG. 50

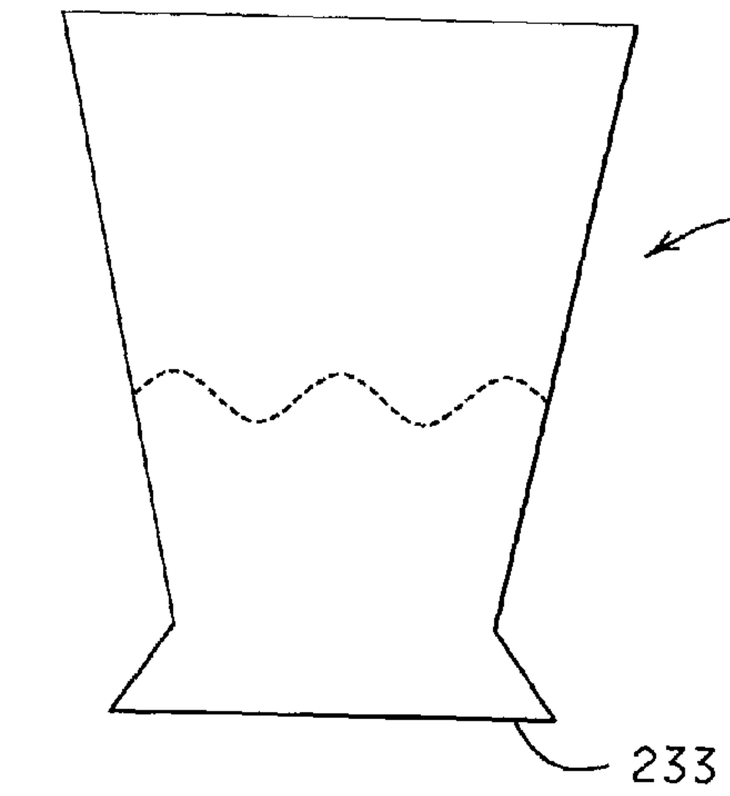


FIG. 51

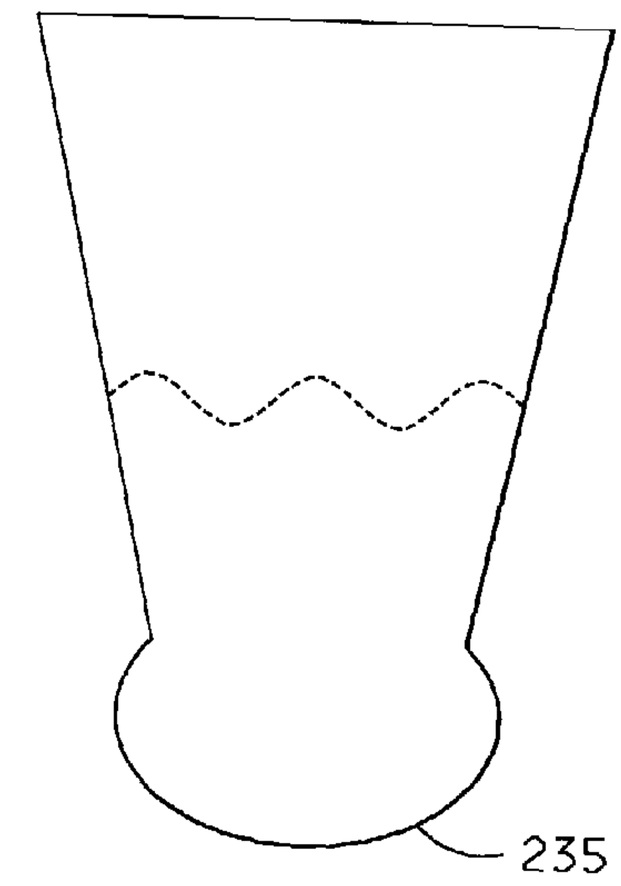


FIG. 52

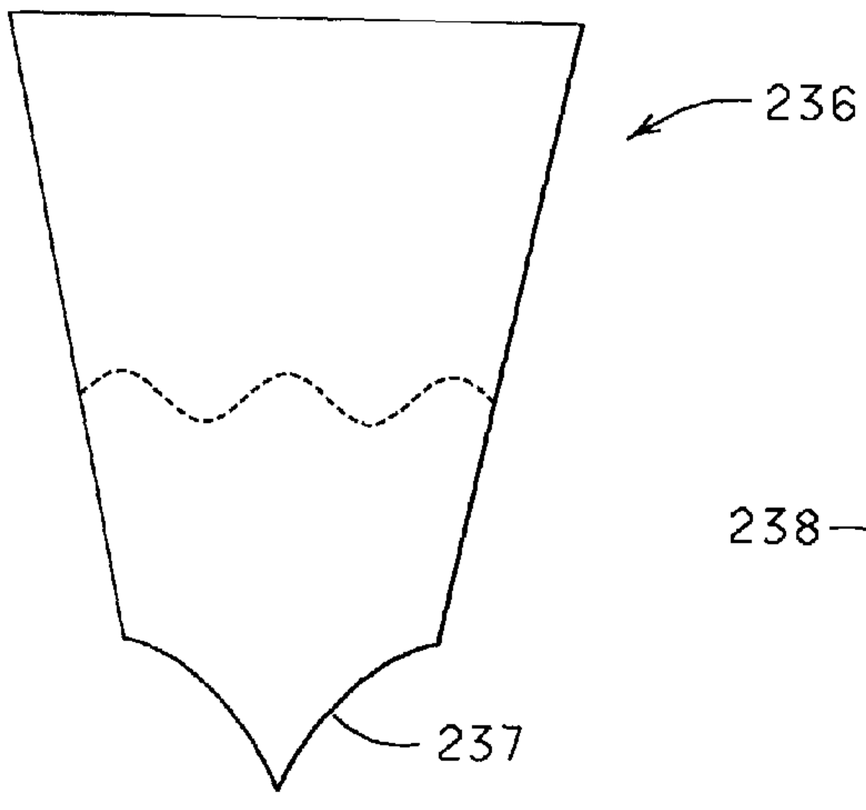


FIG. 53

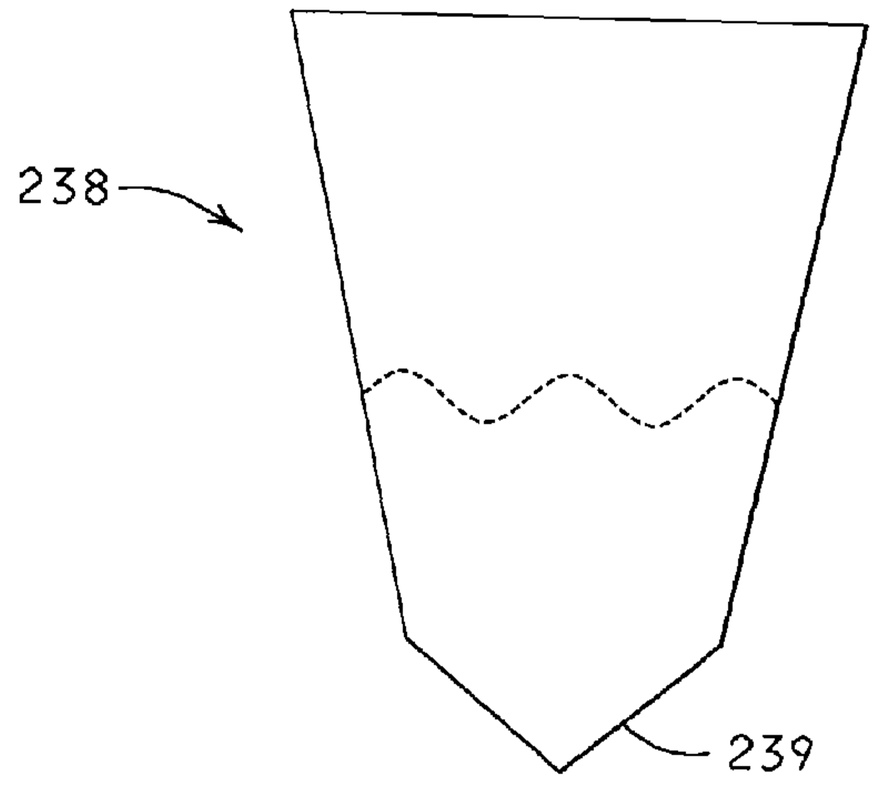


FIG. 54

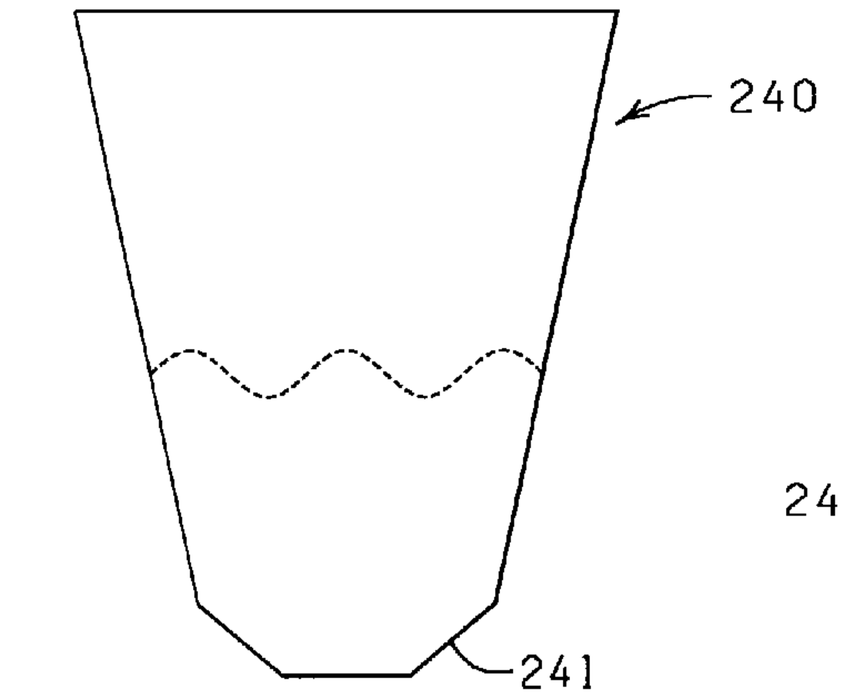


Fig. 55

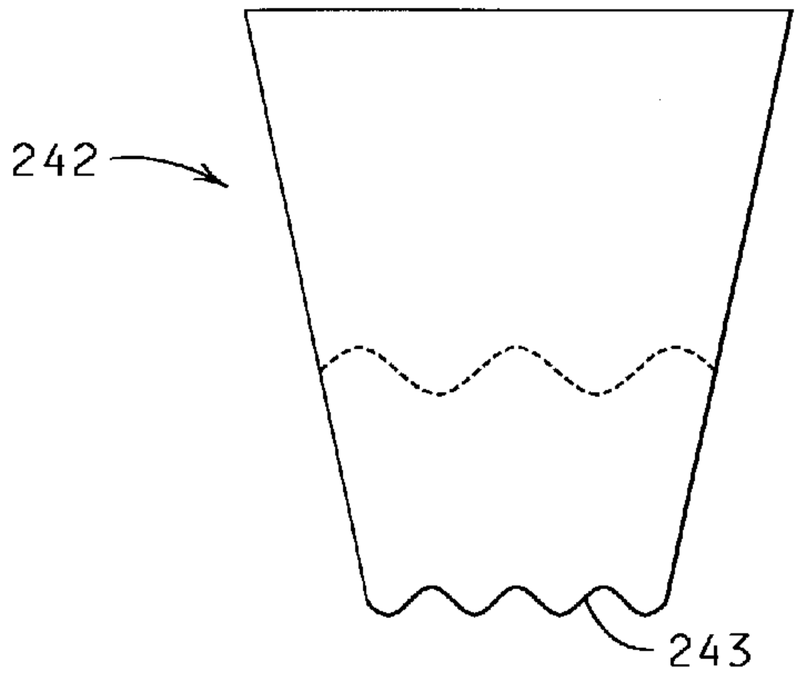


Fig. 56

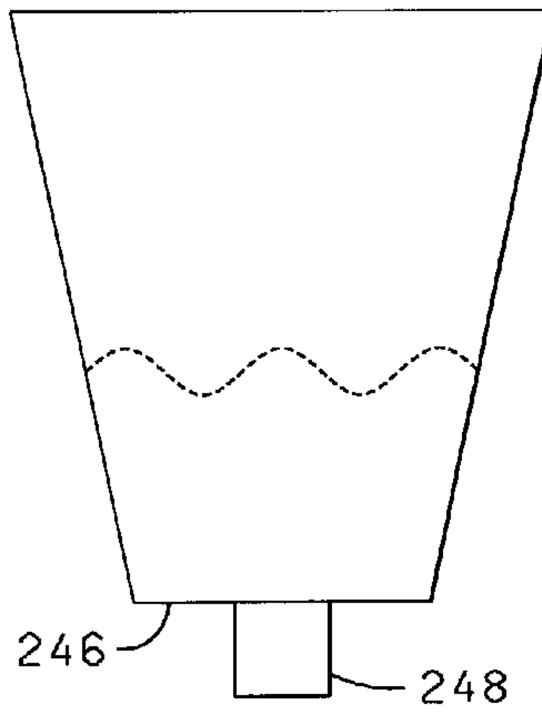


Fig. 57

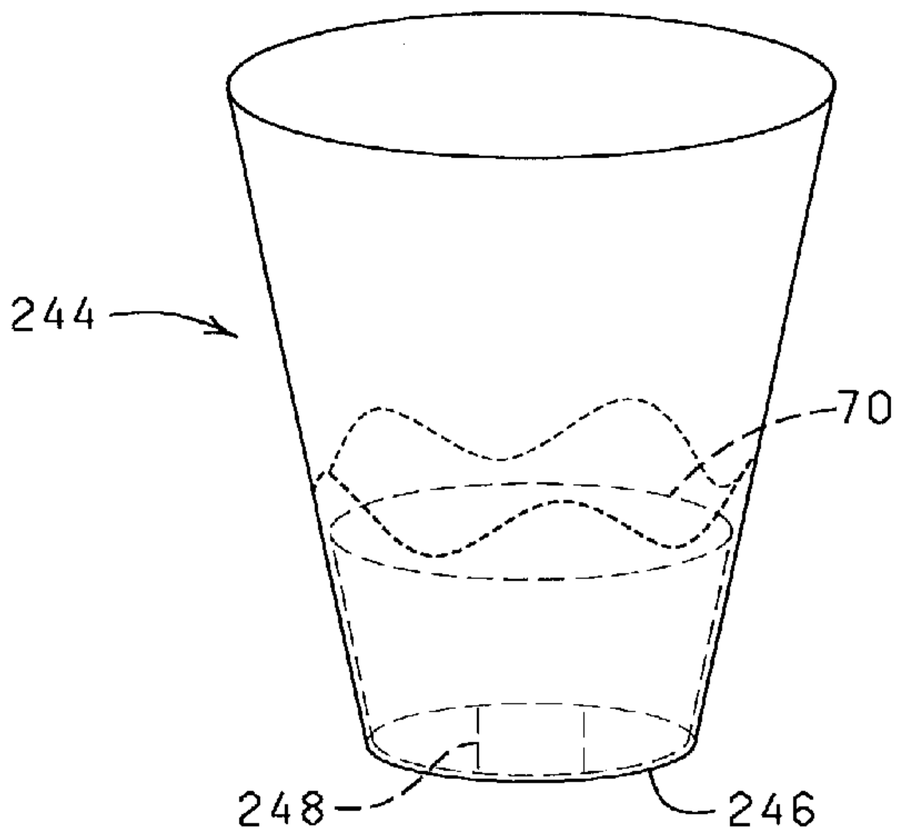


Fig. 58

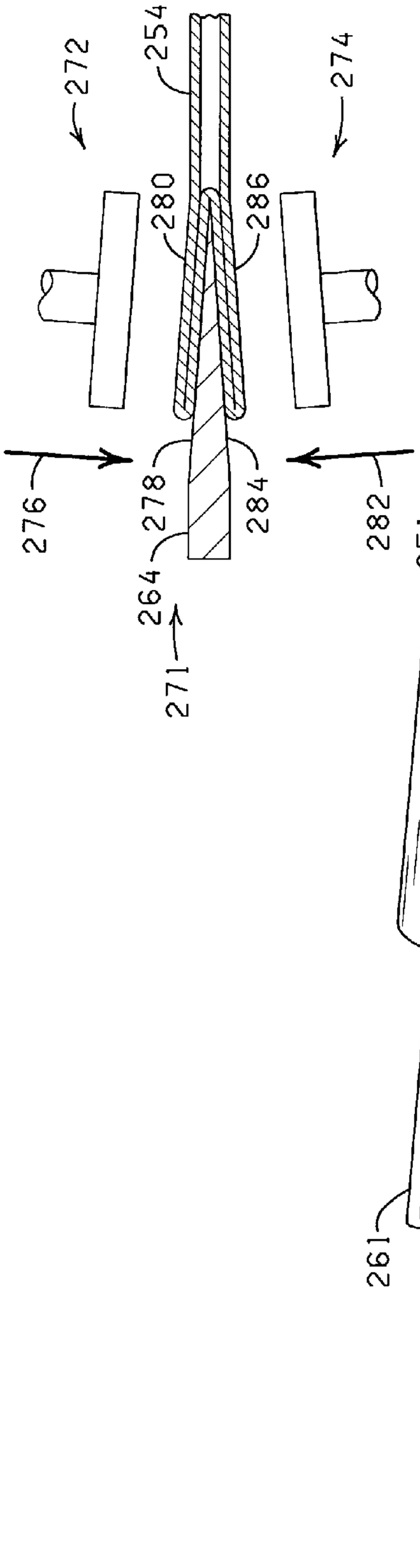

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FIG. 59

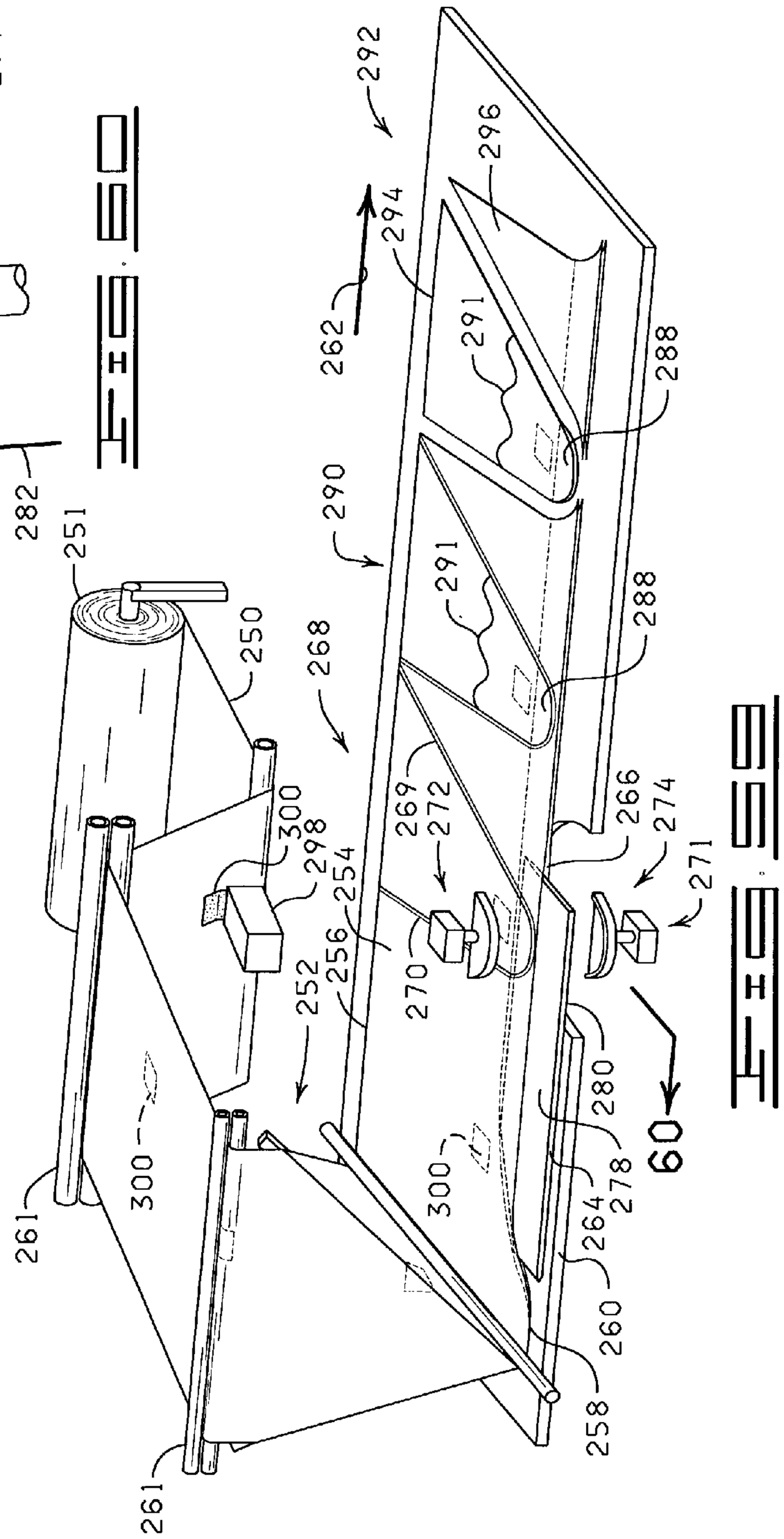

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FIG. 60

METHOD OF WRAPPING A POT WITH A CONFORMABLE SLEEVE

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. Ser. No. 10/165,971, filed Jun. 7, 2002, which is a continuation of U.S. Ser. No. 09/746,383, filed Dec. 21, 2000, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,418,698, which is a continuation of U.S. Ser. No. 09/189,033, filed Nov. 10, 1998, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,815,904, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Ser. No. 09/080,771, filed May 18, 1998, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,182,395, which is a continuation of U.S. Ser. No. 08/606,957, filed Feb. 26, 1996, now abandoned. Each of the applications listed above is hereby expressly incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not Applicable

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0003] This invention generally relates to sleeves to be used as containers and, more particularly, sleeves used to wrap flower pots containing floral groupings and/or media containing floral groupings, and methods of using same.

BACKGROUND

[0004] It is well known in the floral packaging industry to apply floral sleeves about potted plants for the purpose of erecting a protective sheath about the blooms and foliage of the potted plant for preventing damage to them and entanglement with adjacent plants. Such sleeves generally have an open bottom through which the inserted pot is exposed. U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,333,267 issued to Witte and 4,413,725 issued to Bruno, and Australian Patent 42319/78 show examples of such open-bottom sleeves.

[0005] Other sleeves have closed bottoms upon which the bottom of the pot can rest. However, in such closed sleeves, the lower portion does not have a shape which conforms to the shape of the bottom and outer sides of the pot. For example, in U.S. Pat. No. 5,235,782 issued to Landau, an unattractive void space is formed about the pot when the pot is inserted into the sleeve. In U.S. Pat. No. 5,388,695, issued to Gilbert, when a pot is inserted into the sleeve, the outer sides of the pot fit within the taper of the sleeve but an empty void space is left underneath the pot which must then be tucked below the bottom of the pot to conceal it. The basic problem in applying a closed-bottom flat sleeve to a pot is that in going from a two-dimensional flat sleeve to a three-dimensional open sleeve, the shape of the opened sleeve does not conform to the shape of the pot.

[0006] There are no sleeves currently available which can be erected so that the sleeve closely conforms to the curvature of both the outer sidewall of the pot and to the bottom surface of the pot, whereby the lower portion of the sleeve forms an attractive decorative cover about the pot reminiscent of a preformed pot cover when the upper portion of the sleeve is detached. The object of the present invention is, therefore, to provide a flat, two dimensional sleeve which is erectable into a three-dimensional sleeve wherein the erected sleeve has a shape which conforms to the shape of the pot without revealing unsightly extra material.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] **FIG. 1** is a perspective view of a flattened gusseted sleeve constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0008] **FIG. 2** is a cross-sectional view of the sleeve of **FIG. 1** taken along line **2-2**.

[0009] **FIG. 3** is a perspective view of the sleeve of **FIG. 1** in an open state with a pot disposed therein.

[0010] **FIG. 4** is a perspective view of the sleeve of **FIG. 3** after a flower pot has been disposed therein and an upper portion of the sleeve has been removed.

[0011] **FIG. 5A** is a fragmented perspective view of the sleeve of **FIG. 1** with particular reference to a straight fold in the gusset.

[0012] **FIG. 5B** is a bottom view of the sleeve of **FIG. 5A** when opened.

[0013] **FIG. 5C** is a perspective view of the sleeve of **FIG. 5A** when opened.

[0014] **FIG. 6A** is a fragmented perspective view of a sleeve like the sleeve of **FIG. 5A** but with a curved fold in the gusset.

[0015] **FIG. 6B** is a bottom view of the sleeve of **FIG. 6A** when opened.

[0016] **FIG. 6C** is a perspective view of the sleeve of **FIG. 6A** when opened.

[0017] **FIG. 7** is a partially cutaway, elevational view of a sleeve wherein a bonding material is disposed upon a portion of an upper end of the sleeve for sealing the sleeve.

[0018] **FIG. 8** is an elevational view of a sleeve having a folding flap for sealing the sleeve.

[0019] **FIG. 9** is an elevational view of a sleeve having a bonding material disposed on an inner portion of the sleeve for bonding the sleeve to a pot.

[0020] **FIG. 10** is an elevational view of a sleeve having an extended portion serving as a support extension.

[0021] **FIG. 11** is an elevational view of a sleeve having an extended portion serving as a handle.

[0022] **FIG. 12** is an elevational view of a sleeve showing an alternate pattern of perforations.

[0023] **FIG. 13** is an elevational view of a sleeve showing another perforation pattern.

[0024] **FIG. 14** is an elevational view of a sleeve showing another perforation pattern.

[0025] **FIG. 15** is an elevational view of a sleeve showing another perforation pattern.

[0026] **FIG. 16** is an elevational view of a sleeve showing another perforation pattern.

[0027] **FIG. 17** is a perspective view of a sleeve without an upper sleeve portion.

[0028] **FIG. 18** is an elevational view of a sleeve with the gusset folded outwardly.

[0029] **FIG. 19** is a cross-sectional view of the sleeve of **FIG. 18**, taken along line **19-19**.

[0030] **FIG. 20** is a perspective view of a sleeve having pleats.

[0031] **FIG. 21** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 20** but having a rounded bottom with no gusset.

[0032] **FIG. 22** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 20** but having a straight bottom.

[0033] **FIG. 23** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 20** but having a straight bottom and no gusset.

[0034] **FIG. 24** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 20** but having pleats extending only to near the perforations.

[0035] **FIG. 25** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 20**, but having pleats extending just a short distance above a lower end thereof.

[0036] **FIG. 26** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 20**, but without an upper sleeve portion.

[0037] **FIG. 27** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 21**, but without an upper sleeve portion.

[0038] **FIG. 28** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 22**, but without an upper sleeve portion.

[0039] **FIG. 29** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 23**. but without an upper sleeve portion.

[0040] **FIG. 30** is a perspective view of a sleeve wherein the pleats do not intersect the sides.

[0041] **FIG. 31** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 20**, but having z-shaped pleats.

[0042] **FIG. 32** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 30**, but having z-shaped pleats.

[0043] **FIG. 33** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 20**, but having fluted folds.

[0044] **FIG. 34** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 30**, but having fluted folds.

[0045] **FIG. 35** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 1**, but having an elastomeric lower portion.

[0046] **FIG. 36** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 35**, but without a gusset.

[0047] **FIG. 37** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 36**, but with a straight lower end.

[0048] **FIG. 38** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 37**, but with a gusset.

[0049] **FIG. 39** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 35**, but wherein the elastomeric portion extends only partially up from a lower end on a lower portion.

[0050] **FIG. 40** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve of **FIG. 35**, but wherein the elastomeric portion is only on a gusset thereof.

[0051] **FIG. 41** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 35**, but wherein an elastomeric portion extends over most of the surface of the sleeve.

[0052] **FIG. 42** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 20**, but rather than having pleats, has randomly positioned overlapping folds.

[0053] **FIG. 43** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 21**, but rather than having pleats, has randomly positioned overlapping folds.

[0054] **FIG. 44** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 22**, but rather than having pleats, has randomly positioned overlapping folds.

[0055] **FIG. 45** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 23**, but rather than having pleats, has randomly positioned overlapping folds.

[0056] **FIG. 46** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 24**. but rather than having pleats, has randomly positioned overlapping folds.

[0057] **FIG. 47** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 25**, but rather than having pleats, has randomly positioned overlapping folds.

[0058] **FIG. 48** is a perspective view of a sleeve similar to the sleeve in **FIG. 40**, but rather than having an elastomeric portion, has randomly positioned overlapping folds.

[0059] **FIG. 49** is a perspective view of a sleeve having slits in a lower portion thereof.

[0060] **FIG. 50** is an elevational view of a sleeve having a lower end without a gusset and having an alternate shape.

[0061] **FIG. 51** is an elevational view of a sleeve having a lower end without a gusset and having yet another alternate shape.

[0062] **FIG. 52** is an elevational view of a sleeve having a lower end without a gusset and having yet another alternate shape.

[0063] **FIG. 53** is an elevational view of a sleeve having a lower end without a gusset and having yet another alternate shape.

[0064] **FIG. 54** is an elevational view of a sleeve having a lower end without a gusset and having yet another alternate shape.

[0065] **FIG. 55** is an elevational view of a sleeve having a lower end without a gusset and having yet another alternate shape.

[0066] **FIG. 56** is an elevational view of a sleeve having a lower end without a gusset and having yet another alternate shape.

[0067] **FIG. 57** is an elevational view of a sleeve having an open lower end with a band.

[0068] **FIG. 58** is a perspective view of the sleeve of **FIG. 57** in an open state with a pot disposed therein.

[0069] **FIG. 59** is a perspective view of an apparatus and process for making a sleeve in accordance with the present invention.

[0070] **FIG. 60** is a partial cross-sectional view of a gusset sealing mechanism of the apparatus of **FIG. 59**, taken along line **60-60** thereof.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0071] The present invention contemplates in a preferred embodiment a plant packaging system comprising a floral sleeve (also referred to herein as a "sleeve") further comprising a combination of a protective upper sleeve portion (also referred to herein as an "upper portion") and a decorative lower cover portion (also referred to herein as a "lower portion") for packaging a potted plant. The protective upper sleeve portion can be detached from the decorative lower cover portion of the floral sleeve once the protective function of the sleeve has been completed, thereby leaving the decorative lower cover portion in a position covering the pot. The protective upper sleeve portion and decorative lower cover portion may be of unitary construction or may be separate components which are attached together by various bonding materials or other sealing or attaching methods.

[0072] More specifically, in a preferred embodiment, the present invention contemplates a sleeve-type plant cover for covering a pot having a bottom surface and an outer peripheral surface. The plant cover comprises (1) a lower portion having a lower end, an upper end, an outer peripheral surface, and an expansion element for allowing expansion of a portion of the lower portion and (2) an upper portion extending from the upper end of the lower portion and detachable therefrom. As used herein, the term "expansion element" means an amount of material or alternately, a type of material which can be expanded or unfolded to cover a greater area than in the unexpanded state. The expansion element may be an infolded or outfolded gusset, a pleated or folded area, overlapping folds, or elastic material. When the pot is inserted into the lower portion, the expansion element expands to allow the pot to fit into the lower portion of the sleeve. The lower portion is sized to substantially cover and conform to the outer peripheral and bottom surfaces of the pot once the lower portion has been expanded about the pot.

[0073] In a preferred embodiment, the sleeve is constructed so that when the pot is disposed within the sleeve, the sleeve conforms to the shape of the pot so that the bottom of the pot is coplanar with the inner bottom surface of the sleeve, wherein there are substantially no overlapping folded portions in that portion of the sleeve which is underneath the pot. Further, it is also preferred that the sidewall of the sleeve in the erected position extends angularly from the bottom of the sleeve upwardly from the bottom. Preferably the sidewall of the expanded sleeve extends upwardly from the bottom of the sleeve at a substantially uniform angle so that there are no outwardly extending "ears" such as those seen in U.S. Pat. No. 5,235,782, described above. More preferably, the sidewall of the sleeve in the expanded condition extends upwardly from the bottom at substantially the same angle at which the sidewall of the pot extends from the bottom of the pot. Preferably, the bottom of the sleeve in the expanded condition conforms to the curvature of the circumference of the bottom of the pot disposed therein. Also, preferably, the sidewall of the sleeve in the expanded condition conforms to the curvature of the circumference of the outer peripheral surface of the pot or to the circumference taken through a plane thereof.

[0074] In a preferred embodiment, the sleeve is constructed such that when the sleeve is converted to the expanded position and a pot is disposed therein, both the bottom and the side walls of the sleeve fit closely against the bottom and sidewalls of the pot leaving substantially no void space or gaps there between. In an alternative preferred embodiment, if a gap does exist between the walls of the sleeve and the walls of the pot, the gap is substantially uniform for the entire length of the side wall of the sleeve from the bottom of the sleeve to the upper end of the pot in any given plane.

[0075] In a particularly preferred embodiment, the present invention comprises a flattened sleeve for containing a pot having an outer peripheral surface and a bottom surface. The sleeve comprises a first panel having an upper end, a lower end, a first side and a second side; a second panel having an upper end, a lower end, a first side and a second side; and a gusset portion. In this embodiment of the flattened sleeve, the first panel is disposed flatwise upon the second panel with the first side of the first panel joined with the first side of the second panel, and with the second side of the first panel joined with the second side of the second panel, and with the gusset portion extending from the lower end of the first panel and from the lower end of the second panel. The gusset is inwardly folded to extend a distance between the first panel and the second panel.

[0076] In this embodiment, the flattened sleeve has a convexly curved lower end, and when the sleeve is expanded to an open state and disposed about the pot, the sleeve has a sidewall which substantially surrounds the outer peripheral surface of the pot and a bottom substantially without an overlapped portion therein when the pot rests upon the bottom of the sleeve. Preferably, the bottom of the sleeve in the open state substantially conforms to the circumferential curvature of the bottom surface of the pot. Also preferably, the sidewall of the sleeve in the open state substantially conforms to the curvature of the outer peripheral surface of the pot. The sidewall of the sleeve in the open state may extend upwardly from the bottom of the sleeve at an angle greater than 90 degrees when a pot is disposed within the sleeve. Also, the sidewall of the sleeve in the open state may extend upwardly at a substantially uniform angle from the bottom of the sleeve along the outer peripheral surface of the pot disposed therein.

[0077] Preferably, the sleeve comprises an upper sleeve portion extending from the upper end of the first panel and from the upper end of the second panel and which is detachable therefrom via a detaching element or assembly. Additionally, the sleeve forms a decorative cover when disposed about the pot. Further, the gusset, in a preferred embodiment, has a straight fold extending from the first sides of the first and second panels to the second sides of the first and second panels. Alternatively, the gusset has a curved fold extending from the first sides of the first and second panels to the second sides of the first and second panels. Moreover, a bonding material may be disposed upon a portion of the sleeve for connecting to the pot. The present invention may also comprise a package comprising a flower pot or other items described herein disposed within the sleeve described above, or any other sleeve described herein. The present invention may also comprise a method of assembling a package comprising a flower pot or other items

described elsewhere herein disposed within the sleeve described above, or any other sleeve described herein.

[0078] In another embodiment, the flattened sleeve is defined as above with a first panel, second panel and gusset and is for containing a pot having a bottom surface with a characteristic geometric shape. In this embodiment, the sleeve is not defined as having a convexly curved lower end but rather as having, in the open state, a bottom having a shape which conforms to the characteristic geometric shape of the bottom surface of the pot so that the bottom of the sleeve is left substantially without an overlapped portion therein when the pot rests upon the bottom of the sleeve. Where used herein, the term "substantially without an overlapped portion" in the bottom of the sleeve means that the bottom has no single fold the length of which exceeds one radius of the diameter of the bottom surface of the pot or plurality of folds, the total lengths of which exceed one diameter of the bottom surface of the pot.

[0079] The upper portion, when present, may be detachable via a detaching element such as perforations, tear strips and zippers. The sleeve may have an extended portion extending from the upper portion for serving as a handle or support device. Further, an expansion element is optionally constructed and positioned in the sleeve for allowing expansion of a portion of the lower portion into a decorative skirt extending angularly from the lower portion when the upper portion of the sleeve is detached from the upper end of the lower portion. The expansion element may be infolded or outfolded gussets, a plurality of vertical pleats, a plurality of vertical folds each having a z-shaped cross section, a plurality of vertical accordion-type folds, or other similar types of expandable forms. The expansion element may comprise a plurality of randomly positioned overlapping folds. Any of the folds described herein may be connected or unconnected. The expansion element may be an elastic material which expands to fit the outer surface and the bottom surface of the pot when the pot is inserted into the lower portion of the sleeve. These embodiments are all described in further detail below.

[0080] The lower portion of the sleeve may be constructed from a first material and the upper portion of the sleeve may be constructed from a second material different from the first material; or, a portion of the lower portion may be constructed from the same material as the upper sleeve portion; or, the expansion element may be constructed of one material and the remainder of the lower portion and/or upper portion of the sleeve constructed of another material.

[0081] The sleeve may form part of a plant package when used in conjunction with a pot disposed within the retaining space of the lower portion of the sleeve, the pot having a floral grouping disposed therein, and wherein the pot is substantially surrounded and encompassed by the lower portion of the sleeve and the floral grouping is substantially surrounded and encompassed by the upper portion of the sleeve.

[0082] Further, the lower portion may include a bonding material for bondingly connecting to the upper portion. Also, the lower portion may include a bonding material for bondingly connecting to a pot disposed therein. Further, the upper portion may include a bonding material for bondingly connecting to the lower portion. The sleeve may further comprise part of a plant package which includes a pot disposed within the inner retaining space of the lower portion, the pot having a floral grouping disposed therein, and wherein the pot is substantially surrounded and encompassed by the lower portion and the floral grouping is substantially surrounded and encompassed by the upper portion.

[0083] The lower portion of the sleeve may be constructed from a first material and from a second material different from the first material.

[0084] While the various sleeve embodiments disclosed herein are primarily directed for use with flower pots having a circular-shaped bottom, it will also be clear to one of ordinary skill in the art that one may construct sleeves using the technology described herein which are adapted to fit about and enclose pots having configurations other than round, such as square, rectangular, triangular, trapezoidal, cylindrical, ovoid and other well-known geometric shapes, and which function in accordance with the present invention to substantially conform to the shape of the pot. An example of such a sleeve is shown in FIGS. 20-23 in U.S. Pat. No. 5,493,809, the specification and drawings of which are hereby specifically incorporated herein by reference in their entirety. Where a pot has a shape other than a curved shape, i.e., such as a square, the sleeve conforms to the outer peripheral surface of the pot, or to the perimeter of a plane therethrough.

[0085] The sleeve described herein can also be used in various embodiments as a growing container or flower pot for growing and cultivating various botanical items. The sleeve described herein may also be used as a combination growing pot and decorative cover for a botanical item, wherein the botanical item is first cultivated in the sleeve, then displayed in the lower portion of the sleeve. The sleeve in its various embodiments described herein may also be used to contain various comestible items such as candy, treats, popcorn, french fries, chicken nuggets, and other fried items, and frozen confections. The sleeve may further be used to contain liquids for drinking or storage; the sleeve may be a collapsible cup, for example.

The Embodiments and Methods of Use of FIGS. 1-6C

[0086] preferred embodiment of the present invention as shown in **FIGS. 1 and 2** and designated therein by the general reference numeral **10**, is a flexible tubular bag or sleeve. The sleeve **10** initially comprises a flexible, flat, collapsed piece of material which is openable in the form of a tube or sleeve. The sleeve **10** preferably is tapered outwardly from its lower end toward a larger diameter at its upper end. In its flattened state the sleeve **10** generally has an overall trapezoidal or modified trapezoidal shape, and when opened is substantially frusto-conical to coniform. It will be appreciated, however, that the sleeve **10** may comprise variations on the aforementioned shapes or may comprise significantly altered shapes such as square or rectangular, wherein the sleeve **10** when opened has a cylindrical or columnar form, as long as the sleeve **10** functions in accordance with the present invention in the manner described herein.

[0087] The flattened sleeve **10** has an upper end **12**, a lower end **14**, a first side **16** and a second side **18**. The sleeve

10 has an opening **19** at the upper end **12** and in a preferred embodiment is closed at the lower end **14**.

[**0088**] The sleeve **10** comprises a first panel **20** and a second panel **22** which lie flatwise upon each other and are longitudinally sealed, connected, or otherwise continuous along first side **16** and second side **18**. The sleeve **10** in its flattened, folded state further comprises a gusset **24** having a length **25** and which has a fold **26** extending between first side **16** and second side **18** whereby the gusset **24** is inwardly folded between first panel **20** and second patent **22**. The gusset **24** comprises the expansion element in this embodiment. The fold **26** may be straight (i.e., FIGS. **1** or **5**A) or curved (**FIG. 6A**). An outer edge **27** of the gusset **24** is continuous with a lower edge **28** of first panel **20** and with a lower edge **30** of second panel **22** thereby forming the lower end **14** of the sleeve **10** in a closed and flattened condition. The lower edge **28** and lower edge **30** are convexly curved and therefore cause the lower end **14** to be convexly curved. The first panel **20** has an outer surface **34** and an inner surface **36** and the second panel **22** has an outer surface **38** and an inner surface **40**. The gusset **24** has an outer surface **44**, and an inner surface **45**. The inner surfaces **36**, **40** and **45** of the first and second panels **20** and **22** and the gusset **24**, respectively, together define the boundaries of an interior space **46** of the sleeve **10**. In another embodiment, the sleeve has a sealed rounded lower end with no gusset, such as that shown in FIGS. 43 and 44 in U.S. Pat. No. 5,493,809, the specification and drawings of which are hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

[**0089**] The construction of the lower end **14** of the sleeve **10**, comprising the gusset **24** with the fold **26**, permits the circular bottom of an object such as a potted plant to be disposed within the interior space **46** and therein causes a lower portion of the sleeve **10** to conform closely to the frusto-conical shape of the pot **70** as shown in **FIG. 3** and described in detail below. Briefly, the bottom of the pot **70** rests upon at least a portion of the inner surface **45** of the gusset **24**, and the outer sidewall of the pot **70** rests closely against at least a portion of each of the inner surface **36** and the inner surface **40** of the first and second panels **20** and **22**, respectively. Once expanded, the sleeve **10** has a sidewall **48** and a bottom **49** for supporting the pot **70**. The gusset **24** may be constructed from a separate material from the first and second panels **20** and **22** or, as will be clear to one of ordinary skill in the art, the gusset **24** may be constructed from the same web used to form the first and second panels **20** and **22** by sealing, then folding portions thereof. An example of how the gusset **24** may be formed from a separate sheet of material different from the web used to form the first and second panels **20** and **22** is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 3,380,646, issued to Doyen in FIGS. 9 and 10 and discussion thereof, which is incorporated herein by reference.

[**0090**] The sleeve **10** is demarcated into an upper portion **50** which is protective and a lower portion **52** which is decorative. The lower portion **52** of the sleeve **10** is sized to contain the pot **70** (**FIG. 3**) which is of a size standard in the floral industry and well known to persons of ordinary skill in the art. The upper portion **50** of the sleeve **10** is sized to substantially surround and encompass a floral grouping disposed in the pot **70**. The sleeve **10** is demarcated into the upper portion **50** and the lower portion **52** by a detaching element **54** for enabling the detachment of the upper portion **50** of the sleeve **10** from the lower portion **52** of the sleeve **10**. In the preferred version, the detaching element **54** is a plurality of perforations **61** in a crenulated or wavy pattern which extends circumferentially across the first panel **20** and second panel **22** of the sleeve **10** from the first side **16** to the second side **18**. The term "detaching element", as used generally herein, means any element, or combination of elements or features, such as, but not by way of limitation, perforations, tear strips, zippers, and any other devices or elements of this nature known in the art, or any combination thereof, which enable the tearing away or detachment of one object from another. Therefore, while perforations are shown and described in detail herein, it will be understood that tear strips, zippers, or any other "detaching elements" known in the art, or any combination thereof, could be substituted therefore and/or used therewith.

[**0091**] In a preferred embodiment, as shown in **FIGS. 1 and 3**, the lower portion **52** of the sleeve **10** further comprises a base portion **56**, and a skirt portion **58**. The base portion **56** comprises that part of the lower portion **52** which, when the pot **70** is placed into the lower portion **52**, has an inner peripheral surface which is substantially adjacent to and surrounds an outer peripheral surface of the pot **70**. The skirt portion **58** comprises that part of the lower portion **52** which extends beyond an upper rim of the pot **70** and adjacent at least a portion of a floral grouping contained within the pot **70** and which is left to freely extend at an angle, inwardly or outwardly or upwardly, from the base portion **56** when the upper portion **50** of the sleeve **10** is detached from the lower portion **52** of the sleeve **10** by actuation of the detaching element **54**. In the intact sleeve **10**, the skirt portion **58** comprises an upper peripheral edge **59** congruent with the detaching element **54** which is connected to a lower peripheral edge **60**, also congruent with the detaching element **54**, of the upper portion **50** of the sleeve **10**. In **FIGS. 1 and 3**, the upper peripheral edge **59** of the skirt portion **58** is congruent with a series of curved lines of the plurality of perforations **61** which together form an undulating line and comprise the detaching element **54**.

[**0092**] The upper portion **50** of the sleeve **10** may optionally have a vertical detaching element **62** indicated as a plurality of vertical perforations **63** for facilitating removal of the upper portion **50** and which are disposed more or less vertically therein extending between the detaching element **54** of the sleeve **10** and the upper end **12** thereof. The upper portion **50** of the sleeve **10** is separable from the lower portion **52** of the sleeve **10** by tearing the upper portion **50** along both the vertical detaching element **62** and the detaching element **54**, thereby separating the upper portion **50** from the lower portion **52** of the sleeve **10**. The lower portion **52** of the sleeve **10** remains disposed as the base portion **56** about the pot **70** and as the skirt portion **58** about a floral grouping **84** forming a decorative cover **64** as shown in **FIG. 4**, which substantially surrounds and encompasses the pot **70** and a portion of the floral grouping **84** therein. The upper portion **50** may have apertures **65** near the upper end **12** thereof so the sleeve **10** may be supported on a wicket (not shown).

[**0093**] As noted above, it will generally be desired to use the sleeve **10** as a covering for the plant or the floral grouping **84** contained within the pot **70**, as shown in **FIG. 4**. The pot **70** has an upper end **72**, a lower end **74**, an outer

peripheral surface **76**, a round bottom **78** and an inner peripheral surface **80** which encompasses an inner space **82** for retaining the floral grouping or plant **84**. The lower end **74** of the pot **70** is generally closed but may have holes for permitting water drainage (not shown). The term "pot" as used herein refers to any type of container used for holding the floral grouping **84** or plant. Examples of pots used in accordance with the present invention include, but not by way of limitation, clay pots, wooden pots, plastic pots, pots made from natural and/or synthetic fibers, or any combination thereof. The pot **70** is adapted to receive the floral grouping **84** in the inner space **82**. The floral grouping **84** may be disposed within the pot **70** along with a suitable growing medium described in further detail below, or other retaining medium, such as a floral foam. It will also be understood that the floral grouping **84**, and any appropriate growing medium or other retaining medium, may be disposed in the sleeve **10** without the pot **70**.

[**0094**] The sleeve **10** is generally frusto-conically shaped, but the sleeve **10** may be, by way of example but not by way of limitation, cylindrical, frusto-conical, a combination of both frusto-conical and cylindrical, or square or rectangular in cross-section, or any other shape, including geometric, non-geometric, asymmetrical and/or fanciful as long as it functions in accordance with the present invention described herein. The sleeve **10** may also be equipped with drains or ventilation holes (not shown), or can be made from permeable or impermeable materials.

[**0095**] The material from which the sleeve **10** is constructed has a thickness in a range from about 0.1 mil to about 30 mils. Often, the thickness of the sleeve **10** is in a range from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mils. Preferably, the sleeve **10** has a thickness in a range from about 1.0 mil to about 5 mils. More preferably, the sleeve **10** is constructed from a material which is flexible, semi-rigid, rigid, or any combination thereof. The sleeve **10** may be constructed of a single layer of material or a plurality of layers of the same or different types of materials. Any thickness of the material may be utilized as long as the material functions in accordance with the present invention as described herein. The layers of material comprising the sleeve **10** may be connected together or laminated or may be separate layers. Such materials used to construct the sleeve **10** are described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,111,637 entitled "Method For Wrapping A Floral Grouping" issued to Weder et al., on May 12, 1992, the specification of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. Any thickness of material may be utilized in accordance with the present invention as long as the sleeve **10** may be formed as described herein, and as long as the formed sleeve **10** may contain at least a portion of the pot **70** or the floral grouping **84**, as described herein. Additionally, an insulating material (not shown) such as bubble film, preferably one of two or more layers, can be utilized in order to provide additional protection for the item, such as the floral grouping **84**, contained therein.

[**0096**] In one embodiment, the sleeve **10** may be constructed from two polypropylene films. The material comprising the sleeve **10** may be connected together or laminated or may be separate layers. In an alternative embodiment, the sleeve **10** may be constructed from only one of the polypropylene films.

[**0097**] The sleeve **10** may also be constructed, in whole or in part, from a cling material. "Cling Wrap or Material" when used herein means any material which is capable of connecting to the sleeve **10** upon contacting engagement during the wrapping process and is wrappable about an item whereby portions of the cling material contactingly engage and connect to other portions of another material, or, alternatively, itself, for generally securing the sleeve **10** wrapped about at least a portion of the pot **70**. This connecting engagement is preferably temporary in that the material may be easily removed, i.e., the cling material "clings" to the pot **70**.

[**0098**] The cling material is constructed and treated if necessary, from polyethylene such as Cling Wrap made by Glad®, First Brands Corporation, Danbury, Conn. The thickness of the cling material will, in part, depend upon the size of the sleeve **10** and the size of the pot **70** in the sleeve **10**, i.e., generally, a larger pot **70** may require a thicker and therefore stronger cling material. The cling material will range in thickness from less than about 0.1 mil to about 10 mils, and preferably less than about 0.5 mil to about 2.5 mils and most preferably from less than about 0.6 mil to about 2 mils. However, any thickness of cling material may be utilized in accordance with the present invention which permits the cling material to function as described herein.

[**0099**] The sleeve **10** is constructed from any suitable material that is capable of being formed into a sleeve and wrapped about the pot **70** and the floral grouping **84** disposed therein. Preferably, the material comprises untreated or treated paper, metal foil, polymer film, non-polymer film, woven or nonwoven or synthetic or natural fabric, cardboard, fiber, cloth, burlap, or laminations or combinations thereof.

[**0100**] The term "polymer film" means a synthetic polymer such as a polypropylene or a naturally occurring polymer such as cellophane. A polymer film is relatively strong and not as subject to tearing (substantially non-tearable), as might be the case with paper or foil.

[**0101**] The material comprising the sleeve **10** may vary in color and may consist of designs or decorative patterns which are printed, etched, and/or embossed thereon using inks or other printing materials. An example of an ink which may be applied to the surface of the material is described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,147,706 entitled "Water Based Ink On Foil And/Or Synthetic Organic Polymer" issued to Kingman on Sep. 15, 1992 and which is hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference.

[**0102**] In addition, the material may have various colorings, coatings, flocking and/or metallic finishes, or other decorative surface ornamentation applied separately or simultaneously or may be characterized totally or partially by pearlescent, translucent, transparent, iridescent, neon, or the like, qualities. Each of the above-named characteristics may occur alone or in combination and may be applied to the upper and/or lower surface of the material comprising the sleeve **10**. Moreover, portions of the material used in constructing the sleeve **10** may vary in the combination of such characteristics. The material utilized for the sleeve **10** itself may be opaque, translucent, transparent, or partially clear or tinted transparent.

[**0103**] The term "floral grouping" as used herein means cut fresh flowers, artificial flowers, a single flower or other fresh and/or artificial plants or other floral materials and may

include other secondary plants and/or ornamentation or artificial or natural materials which add to the aesthetics of the overall floral grouping **84**. The floral grouping **84** generally comprises a bloom or foliage portion and a stem portion. Preferably, the floral grouping **84** comprises a growing potted plant having a root portion (not shown) as well. However, it will be appreciated that the floral grouping **84** may consist of only a single bloom or only foliage, or a botanical item (not shown), or a propagule (not shown). The term "floral grouping" may be used interchangeably herein with any of the terms "floral arrangement", "potted plant", or "plant". The term "floral grouping" may also be used interchangeably herein with the terms "botanical item" and/or "propagule."

[**0104**] The term "growing medium" when used herein means any liquid, solid or gaseous material used for plant growth or for the cultivation of propagules, including organic and inorganic materials such as soil, humus, perlite, vermiculite, sand, water, and including the nutrients, fertilizers or hormones or combinations thereof required by the plants or propagules for growth.

[**0105**] The term "botanical item" when used herein means a natural or artificial herbaceous or woody plant, taken singly or in combination. The term "botanical item" also means any portion or portions of natural or artificial herbaceous or woody plants including stems, leaves, flowers, blossoms, buds, blooms, cones, or roots, taken singly or in combination, or in groupings of such portions such as bouquet or floral grouping.

[**0106**] The term "propagule" when used herein means any structure capable of being propagated or acting as an agent of reproduction including seeds, shoots, stems, runners, tubers, plants, leaves, roots or spores.

[**0107**] Further, in accordance with the present invention, a bonding material (described in more detail below) may be disposed on a portion of the sleeve **10** to assist in holding the sleeve **10** to the pot **70** having the floral grouping **84** therein when the pot **70** is disposed within the sleeve **10** or to assist in closing the upper end **12** of the sleeve **10** or adhering the sleeve **10** to the pot **70** after the pot **70** has been disposed therein, as will be discussed in further detail below.

[**0108**] Preferably the bonding material, when present, is disposed as a strip or block on the inner surface **36** or **40** of the first and second panels **20** and **22** of the sleeve **10**. The bonding material may also be disposed upon either outer surface **34** or **38** of the first and second panels **20** and **22** of the sleeve **10**, as well as upon the pot **70**. Further, the bonding material may be disposed as spots of bonding material, or in any other geometric, non-geometric, asymmetric, or fanciful form, and in any pattern including covering either the entire inner surfaces **36** and **40** and/or outer surfaces **34** and **38** of the first and second panels **20** and **22** of the sleeve **10** and/or the pot **70** or the decorative cover **64**. The bonding material may be covered by a cover or release strip which can be removed prior to the use of the sleeve **10** or the decorative cover **64**. The bonding material can be applied by means known to those of ordinary skill in the art. One method for disposing a bonding material, in this case an adhesive, is described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,111,637 entitled "Method For Wrapping A Floral Grouping" issued to Weder et al., on May 12, 1992, which has been expressly incorporated herein by reference above.

[**0109**] The term "bonding material when used herein means an adhesive, frequently a pressure sensitive adhesive, or a cohesive. When the bonding material is a cohesive, a similar cohesive material must be placed on the adjacent surface for bondingly contacting and bondingly engaging with the cohesive material. The term "bonding material" also includes materials which are heat sealable and, in this instance, the adjacent portions of the material must be brought into contact and then heat must be applied to effect the seal. The term "bonding material" also includes materials which are sonic sealable and vibratory sealable. The term "bonding material" when used herein also means a heat sealing lacquer or hot melt material which may be applied to the material and, in this instance, heat, sound waves, or vibrations, also must be applied to effect the sealing. Alternatively, the bonding material may be an adhesive activated by ultraviolet light.

[**0110**] Alternatively, a cold seal adhesive may be utilized as the bonding material. The cold seal adhesive adheres only to a similar substrate, acting similarly as a cohesive, and binds only to itself. The cold seal adhesive, since it bonds only to a similar substrate, does not cause a residue to build up on equipment, thereby both permitting much more rapid disposition and use of such equipment to form articles and reducing labor costs. Further, since no heat is required to effect the seal, the dwell time, that is, the time for the sheet of material to form and retain the shape of an article, such as a flower pot cover or flower pot, is reduced. A cold seal adhesive binds quickly and easily with minimal pressure, and such a seal is not readily releasable. This characteristic is different from, for example, a pressure sensitive adhesive.

[**0111**] The fold in the gusset **24** may be a straight fold **26** extending from the first side **16** to the second side **18**, as shown in **FIG. 5A**, or the fold may be curved upwardly to form a fold **26***a* as explained below for **FIG. 6A**. When the fold is the straight fold **26**, and when the pot **70** is inserted into the sleeve **10**, the pot **70** which is sized to optimally fit therein has a bottom diameter **86 (FIGS. 5A and 5B)**. The bottom diameter **86** preferably is in a range of from about 0.5x to about 0.75x where "x" is the length **25 (FIG. 5A)**.

[**0112**] When the pot **70** is deposited into the sleeve **10** having the straight fold **26**, a portion **88** of the gusset **24** is positioned against the round bottom (not shown) of the pot **70** to form part of the bottom **49** of the sleeve **10**. Additionally, a portion **90** of the first panel **20** forms another portion of the bottom **49** of the sleeve **10**. Also, a portion **92** of the second panel **22** which is a mirror image of the portion **90** of the first panel **20** forms another portion of the bottom **49**. Together, the portions **88**, **90** and **92** form the bottom **49** of the sleeve **10** in the expanded state as shown in **FIG. 5B**. Preferably, the bottom **49** of the open sleeve **10** conforms to the curvature of the circumference of the round bottom **78** of the pot **70 (FIG. 5C)**.

[**0113**] Further, when the pot **70** having the bottom diameter **86** is inserted into the sleeve **10**, two mirror image side portions **94** and **96** of the gusset **24** (see **FIG. 5A**) become part of the side wall **48** of the expanded sleeve **10**, as shown in **FIGS. 5B and 5C**. Thus, it can be seen then that in a preferred embodiment, the gusset **24** of the sleeve **10** in the flattened state surprisingly does not solely comprise the bottom **49** of the sleeve **10** in its expanded state. Rather, the bottom **49** is comprised of the portions **90** and **92** of both the

first panel **20** and the second panel **22**, and of the portion **88** of the gusset **24**. Additionally, the side wall **48** of the expanded sleeve **10** is comprised of the side portions **94** and **96** of the gusset **24** as well as of the portions **90** and **92** of the first panel **20** and the second panel **22**. The side wall **48** conforms to the curvature and shape of the pot **70** disposed within the sleeve **10**.

[0114] Alternatively, the fold in a gusset **24***a* may be curved, as represented by fold **26***a* in sleeve **10***a* in **FIG. 6A**. The fold **26***a* extends further inwardly between a first panel **20***a* and a second panel **22***a* toward an upper end **12***a* of the sleeve **10***a* than does the straight fold **26** in the sleeve **10** shown in **FIG. 5A**. When the pot **70** is deposited into the sleeve **10***a* having the curved fold **26***a*, a circular portion **100** of the gusset **24***a* is positioned against the round bottom **78** of the pot **70** to form a bottom **49***a* of the sleeve **10***a* and which also conforms to the curvature of the round bottom **78** of the pot **70**. Additionally, first and second mirror image side portions **102** and **104** of the gusset **24***a* become part of a sidewall **48***a* of the sleeve **10***a* when expanded, as shown in **FIGS. 6B and 6C**. It can be seen then that in a preferred version of the invention having the fold **26***a* in the gusset **24***a* in the flattened state, the portion **100** of the gusset **24***a* comprises substantially the entire bottom **49***a* of the sleeve **10***a* when expanded and that the sidewall **48***a* of the sleeve **10***a* is formed both from the first and second panels **20***a* and **22***a*, and from the portions **102** and **104** of the gusset **24***a*. It will also be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that the fold **26***a* in the gusset **24***a* may be intermediate in curvature between the straight fold **26** of **FIG. 5**A and the curved fold **26***a* of **FIG. 6A** (or even may be convex rather than concave) and therein may possess properties of the straight fold **26** but to a lesser degree. Any of the sleeves described anywhere herein which comprise a gusset may have a gusset having a straight fold, or a fold which is curved.

Embodiments of FIGS. **7-19**

[0115] Another version of the present invention is shown as sleeve **10***b* in **FIG. 7** and is exactly the same as the various embodiments of sleeves shown above or elsewhere herein except a strip of bonding material **110** is disposed on an inner surface **36***b* and/or **40***b* of a first and a second panel **20***b* and **22***b* such that an upper portion **50***b* of the sleeve **10***b* generally in the vicinity of an upper end **12***b* of the sleeve **10***b* can be sealed for enclosing the upper portion **50***b* of the sleeve **10***b* about the pot **70** and the floral grouping **84** disposed therein (not shown).

[0116] Another version of the present invention is shown in **FIG. 8** and is exactly the same as the various embodiments of sleeves shown above or elsewhere herein except the sleeve, designated as sleeve **10***c*, including a flap **112** positioned at an upper end **12***c* which can be folded over and sealed with a flap bonding strip **114** to an adjacent portion of an outer surface **34***c* of a first panel **20***c* of the sleeve **10***c* near the upper end **12***c* thereof. Other versions of the sleeve (not shown) may comprise ventilation holes or drainage holes for allowing movement of gases or moisture to and away from the inner space of the sleeve.

[0117] Another version of the present invention is shown in **FIG. 9** and is exactly the same as the various embodiments of sleeves shown above or elsewhere herein except the sleeve, designated as sleeve **10***d*, further includes an inner strip of bonding material **116** disposed upon a portion of either of inner surfaces **36***d* or **40***d* (not shown) of a first panel **20***d* or a second panel **22***d* (not shown) of the sleeve **10***d*. The strip of bonding material **116** functions to enable portions of either the inner surface **36***d* or the inner surface **40***d* to be bondingly connected to the outer peripheral surface **76** of a pot disposed therein causing the sleeve **10***d* to be bondingly connected to the pot (not shown).

[0118] In another version of the present invention, after the pot has been disposed within the sleeve, the bonding material on the pot may be used to crimp a portion of the sleeve to secure the sleeve in a position about the pot. A description of a preferred crimping method is shown in FIGS. **10-13**, and described on pages 30-31, lines 10 through 2, in U.S. Pat. No. 5,625,979, which is hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference. A description of other methods which may be used in a crimping process in accordance with the present invention are shown in FIGS. **5-7**, and **15-20**, and the corresponding description in U.S. Pat. No. 5,526,932, which is hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

[0119] Another embodiment is shown in **FIG. 10** and is exactly the same as the various embodiments of sleeves shown above or elsewhere herein except the sleeve, designated as **10***e*, may further include an extended portion comprising a support extension **118** which extends away from a portion of an upper end **12***e* of the sleeve **10***e*. The support extension **118** has one or more apertures **120** disposed therein for allowing the sleeve **10***e* to be supported on a support assembly (not shown) which is commercially available and known by one of ordinary skill in the art, such as a pair of wickets for shipment, storage, assembly of the sleeve **10***e*, placement of a pot within the sleeve **10***e*, or other functions known in the art. The support extension **118** may have a plurality of perforations **122** or other detaching element for allowing the support extension **118** to be removed from the upper end **12***e* of sleeve **10***e* after the sleeve **10***e* has been provided for use as described elsewhere herein.

[0120] Another version of the invention is shown in **FIG. 11** and is exactly the same as the various embodiments of sleeves shown above and elsewhere herein except the sleeve, designated as sleeve **10***f*, has an extended portion comprising a handle **124** for carrying a potted plant package (not shown) by the sleeve **10***f*. The sleeve **10***f* may further include a detaching element **126** comprising a plurality of perforations **127** for removing the handle **124** at a later time.

[0121] The sleeves described herein may be formed by intermittently advancing two separate webs, one or two webs preformed in the form of a tube, or a single web folded double and sealing the longitudinal sides and bottom of the two facing panels then cutting the sleeve thus formed from the webs or web. Machines which can form sleeves from such single webs or pairs of webs are well within the knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art.

[0122] As shown in **FIG. 1**, the detaching element **54** is preferably the line of perforations **61** having a regular or irregular curved or wavy pattern on both the first panel **20** and the second panel **22**, which extend from the first side **16** to the second side **18**. It will be understood that the line of perforations **61** in any of the sleeves described herein may

be constructed in any number of other decorative patterns, several being shown in FIGS. **12-16**. For example, **FIG. 12** shows a detaching element **54***a* having a crenate or scalloped pattern in a sleeve **10***g*. **FIG. 13** shows a detaching element **54***b* having a crenate or scalloped pattern in a sleeve **10***h* which is inverted. **FIG. 14** shows a detaching element **54***c* having a crenulate toothed or zig-zag pattern in a sleeve **10***i*. **FIG. 15** shows a detaching element **54***d* having a crenelated or rectangular-shaped pattern in a sleeve **10***j*. **FIG. 16** shows a detaching element **54***e* having a diagonal pattern slanted upwardly from one side of a sleeve **10***k* to the other side of the sleeve **10***k*. One of ordinary skill in the art will understand these are but a few of the patterns that the perforations may form and one of ordinary skill could contemplate many other suitable patterns.

[**0123**] In another embodiment, the sleeve designated in **FIG. 17** as sleeve **130** is formed exactly as any of the versions of the sleeves described herein except that it is formed without an upper protective portion. In this version, the sleeve **130** serves as a decorative cover and may be formed with or without a decorative skirt portion or decorative border which extends from or comprises an upper edge **131** of the sleeve **130**.

[**0124**] The sleeve **130** has an upper end **132**, a lower end **134**, a first side **136**, and a second side **138**. The sleeve **130** has an opening **139** at the upper end **132** and is closed at the lower end **134**. The sleeve **130** comprises a first panel **140** and a second panel **142** which lie flatwise upon each other and are longitudinally sealed, connected or otherwise continuous along the first side **136** and the second side **138** of the sleeve **130**. The sleeve **130** further comprises a gusset **144** having a length **145** and which has a fold **146** extending between the first and second sides **136** and **138** whereby the gusset **144** is inwardly folded between the first and second panels **140** and **142**. The inwardly folded gusset **144** comprises the expansion element in this embodiment. The fold **146** may be straight or curved as described above for sleeves **10** and **10***a* in **FIGS. 5A and 6A**, respectively and functions in a similar manner. As shown here, the sleeve **130** has essentially the same construction as sleeve **10**, or any other sleeves shown elsewhere herein, except it is not formed with a detachable upper portion. As for the sleeve **10**, the construction of the lower end **134** of the sleeve **130** comprising the rounded gusset **144** with the fold **146**, permits the circular bottom of an object such as a pot or potted plant to be disposed therein causing the lower portion of the sleeve **130** to conform closely to the frusto-conical shape of the pot **70** as shown in **FIG. 4** and described in detail elsewhere herein.

[**0125**] The sleeve **130**, thus formed, may be equipped with or absent apertures **148** near the upper end **132** for enabling the sleeve **130** to be placed on a wicket (not shown) for transport and ease of handling. The sleeve **130** may further be constructed with the upper end **132** having a border having a shape like any of the perforation patterns of the detaching elements described elsewhere herein, for example, in the sleeves **10***g*-**10***k* of FIGS. **12-16**.

[**0126**] Another embodiment of the present invention is shown in FIGS. **18-19** and is designated by the reference numeral **150**. The sleeve **150** is exactly the same as sleeve **10** or any of the other gusseted sleeves described herein except that sleeve **150** includes a gusset **152** which is outwardly folded back upon an outer surface **154** of the sleeve **150** rather than inwardly folded as in sleeve **10**.

Embodiments and Methods of Use of FIGS. **20-34**

[**0127**] Attention is now drawn to the versions of the present invention which are shown in FIGS. **20-34** and more specifically to the sleeve in **FIG. 20** which is designated therein by the reference numeral **160**, and which is the same as the sleeves described elsewhere herein except for the differences described below. The sleeve **160**, comprises a unitary construction and has a lower portion **162**, an optional skirt portion **163** (not shown herein but which is described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,625,979, the specification of which is hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference in its entirety), an upper portion **164** and a plurality of pleats **165** comprising expansion elements **166** (only a few of which are specifically designated as such in **FIG. 20**) and further has an outer peripheral surface, an open upper end **170** and a closed lower end **172**, which in **FIG. 20** is rounded. The sleeve **160**, like the sleeves discussed elsewhere herein, has an inner retaining space **174** which extends from the open upper end **170** to the closed lower end **172** and which is bounded by an inner peripheral surface **176** of the sleeve **160**. The lower portion **162** is sized to substantially cover the outer peripheral surface **76** of the pot **70** as described elsewhere herein and the upper portion **164** is sized to substantially surround the floral grouping **84** within the pot **70** which is disposed within the inner retaining space **174** of the sleeve **160**, as also described elsewhere herein.

[**0128**] The upper portion **164** is detachable from the lower portion **162** via a detaching element **178** such as is described in detail with regard to sleeve **10** above. The expansion elements **166** are integral to at least a portion of the lower portion **162** and upper portion **164**, as shown in **FIG. 20**. The expansion elements **166** function to allow expansion of a portion of the lower portion **162** about the round bottom **78** and/or outer peripheral surface **76** of the pot **70** disposed therein so that the lower portion **162** fits closely thereto, as described in more detail above for sleeve **10** and for other sleeves described herein.

[**0129**] As shown in **FIG. 20**, each expansion element **166** of the sleeve **160** comprises one or more areas of excess material shaped in the form of the pleats **165**. The expansion element **166** may also be positioned so that portions of the skirt portion **163**, when present, can be extended angularly from the lower portion **162** forming the skirt portion **163** about a portion of the floral grouping **84** disposed in the pot **70** as shown in U.S. Pat. No. 5,625,979 referred to above.

[**0130**] The closed lower end **172** of the lower portion **162** may be constructed in a variety of configurations. For example, the closed lower end **172** may have a rounded bottom with a gusseted inverted portion **173** (**FIG. 20**). **FIG. 21** shows an alternative embodiment of a sleeve **160***a* having expansion elements **166***a* and having a closed lower end **172***a* which is rounded without a gusset. **FIG. 22** shows an alternative embodiment of a sleeve **160***b* having expansion elements **166***b* and having a straight closed lower end **172***b* with a gusseted inverted portion **173***b* to allow further expansion of the closed lower end **172***b*. **FIG. 23** shows a sleeve **160***c* having expansion elements **166***c* and having a closed lower end **172***c* which is straight across without a gusset.

[0131] As noted above, the expansion elements **166-166***c* may extend the entire distance between the closed lower ends **172-172***c* and the open upper ends **170-170***c* as shown in FIGS. **20-23**, respectively. Alternatively, the expansion elements **166-166***c* may extend from any position intermediate between the closed lower ends **172-172***c* and the open upper ends **170-170***c*, respectively. For example, expansion elements **166***d* of the sleeve **160***d* are shown to extend from a closed lower end **172***d* of the sleeve **160***d* to near or just below a detaching element **178***d*, as shown in **FIG. 24**. Alternatively, **166***e* may extend from a closed lower end **172***e* of a sleeve **160***e* to a distance just above the closed lower end **172***e*, as shown in **FIG. 25**.

[0132] In another set of embodiments shown in FIGS. **26-29**, sleeves **180-180***c* having expansion elements **168-168***c*, respectively are formed exactly as described above for sleeves **160-160***c*, respectively, and function in the same way, but are formed without upper portions. In these versions, lower portions **182-182***c* serve as decorative covers and may be formed with decorative skirt portions **184-184***c*, respectively, which extend from the sleeves **180-180***c* or may have a decorative border as described elsewhere herein.

[0133] The present invention also contemplates sleeves (not shown) which are similar to sleeves **180-180***c* but have expansion elements positioned in the manner shown for sleeves **160***d* and **160***e*. Further, the present invention contemplates sleeves, with or without upper portions, wherein the expansion elements are not in the side panels but are found only in the gusseted portions. It is further contemplated that in those sleeves with gusseted portions, the expansion elements may be positioned in both the gusseted portion and first and second panel portions, or only in the first and second panel portions, or in only one of the first or second panel portions.

[0134] It is also noted that in the embodiments of the sleeves shown in FIGS. **20-29**, the expansion elements **166-166***e* and **168-168***c* are substantially parallel. However, it is further contemplated that any of the pleated sleeves specifically described or otherwise contemplated herein may comprise a plurality of expansion elements **166***f* each of which extends from an open upper end **170***f* to a closed lower end **172***f* of the sleeve as shown in sleeve **160***f* in **FIG. 30**. That is, the expansion elements **166***f* do not intersect with the first and second sides **16***f* and **18***f* of the sleeve **160***f* but rather tend to converge from the open upper end **170***f* to the closed lower end **172***f*.

[0135] Attention is now drawn to **FIG. 31** and to the sleeve shown therein which is designated by the general reference numeral **190**. The sleeve **190** is exactly the same as sleeve **160** in **FIG. 20** except that the sleeve **190** has a plurality of z-shaped pleated expansion elements **192**. The expansion elements **192** of sleeve **190** serve the same purpose as the pleated expansion elements **166** of sleeve **160**. **FIG. 32** shows a sleeve **190***a* which is similar to sleeve **90** but has a plurality of expansion elements **192***a* which are positioned in the same manner as the expansion elements **166***f* of sleeve **160***f* in **FIG. 30**.

[0136] Attention is now drawn to **FIG. 33** and to a sleeve shown therein which is designated by the general reference numeral **196**. The sleeve **196** is exactly the same as sleeve **160** in **FIG. 20** or the sleeve **190** in **FIG. 31** except that the sleeve **196** has a plurality of fluted or groove-shaped expansion elements **198** which serve the same purpose as the pleated expansion elements **166** of sleeve **160** and can expand to cause the sleeve **196** to fit closely to the round bottom **76** and outer peripheral surface **78** of the pot **70** to form a decorative cover about a portion of the pot **70**. It will be understood that the sleeve **196** comprising the plurality of fluted or groove-shaped expansion elements **198** may be constructed in the same embodiments as described above, for example in FIGS. **21-30** and as described and contemplated elsewhere herein. **FIG. 34**, for example, shows a sleeve **196***a* having a plurality of expansion elements **198***a* positioned in the same converging way as the expansion elements **166***f* of the sleeve **160***f* in **FIG. 30** or as the expansion elements **192***a* in the sleeve **190***a*.

[0137] It will be appreciated by one of ordinary skill in the art that the shapes of the expansion elements described above are but several of the shapes which can be contemplated for the present invention. Other shapes which may be contemplated are gussets, fans, and "accordion-folds" to name but a few.

Embodiments and Methods of Use of FIGS. **35-41**

[0138] Shown in **FIG. 35** and referred to therein by reference numeral **200** is another version of a sleeve constructed in accordance with the present invention. The sleeve **200** and versions thereof are the same in all respects to the various embodiments of the sleeves described elsewhere herein except the expansion element is constructed from an elastomeric material. The sleeve **200** has an elastomeric lower portion **202** constructed of material having elastomeric properties which allows the elastomeric lower portion **202** to expand when the pot **70** is disposed within the sleeve **200** when the elastomeric lower portion **202** of the sleeve **200** is stretched about the lower end **74** of the pot **70**. The elastomeric lower portion **202** may be comprised of lycra, rubber, elasticized fabrics, or any other sheet materials which have elastic properties. The elastomeric lower portion **202** of the sleeve **200** will grip the adjacent portion of the pot **70** and will cause the elastomeric lower portion **202** of the sleeve **200** to closely conform to the shape of the pot **70** and will secure the sleeve **200** to the pot **70** leaving substantially no void space as explained above. The sleeve **200** preferably has an upper portion **204** constructed from the same material as non-elastomeric sleeves described herein above.

[0139] The elastomeric lower portion **202** may be a separate component connected to a lower end **205** of the upper portion **204** of the sleeve **200**. Alternatively, the lower elastomeric portion **202** may be of unitary construction with the upper portion **204** of the sleeve **200** which is non-elastomeric. The elastomeric lower portion **202** may be an elasticized or rubberized extension of the upper portion **204**. For example, the sleeve **200** may be constructed from a fabric which is impregnated with an elastic material in one portion to form the elastomeric lower portion **202**.

[0140] Shown in **FIGS. 36, 37** and **38** are sleeves **200***a*, **200***b*, and **200***c*, having lower portions **202***a*, **202***b*, and **202***c*, respectively, and having upper portions **204***a*, **204***b*, and **204***c*, respectively, which represent alternative versions of the invention which are similar to the sleeves **160***a*-**160***c*, respectively, in FIGS. **21-23**. The sleeves **200***a*-**200***c* comprising lower portions **202***a*-**202***c* with elastomeric properties may further be constructed like sleeves **180-180***c* in

FIGS. **26-29**, respectively, that is, without upper portions **204***a*-**204***c*. In another series of versions, the present invention contemplates sleeves having expansion elements similar to those of FIGS. **20-34** and which also have elastomeric properties.

[**0141**] The elastomeric material of the sleeves **200-200***c* may comprise most or all of the elastomeric lower portions **202-202***c* of the sleeves **200-200***c* as shown in FIGS. **35-38**. Alternatively, the elastomeric material may comprise only a portion of the lower portion of the sleeve as shown in a lower portion **202***d* of a sleeve **200***d* (**FIG. 39**), also having upper portion **204***d*. Or, the elastomeric material may comprise only a gusset portion **206** as shown in a sleeve **200***e* in **FIG. 40**, also having upper portion **204***e* and lower portion **202***e*.

[**0142**] It will be understood that the elastomeric lower portion, when expanded about the pot **70** may cover only the round bottom **78** of the pot **70**, or may cover the round bottom **78** of the pot **70** and a portion of the outer peripheral surface **76** of the pot **70** above the round bottom **78** of the pot **70**. In yet another version, (not shown), of the elastomeric sleeve, the elastomeric portion of the sleeve may be constructed in such a way that the round bottom **78** of the pot **70** disposed within the sleeve may be covered by a non-elastomeric portion of the sleeve, while a portion of the outer peripheral surface **76** of the pot **70** is the portion surrounded by the elastomeric portion of the sleeve. The elastomeric portion of the sleeve functions to eliminate or minimize the void space between the inner surface of the sleeve and the outer peripheral surface **76** or round bottom **78** of the pot **70**. Finally, the elastomeric portion may comprise an entire sleeve, as shown in sleeve **200***f* in **FIG. 41**, which has lower portion **202***f* and upper portion **204***f*.

Embodiments and Methods of Use of FIGS. **42-58**

[**0143**] Attention is now drawn to another set of embodiments of the present invention, the first of which is designated by the general reference numeral **210** shown in **FIG. 42**. In this version of the invention, the expansion elements comprise a plurality of overlapping folds **212** which are, randomly positioned on a first panel **214** and a second panel **216** and on a gusset **218** in a lower portion **217** of the sleeve **210**. The overlapping portions of the overlapping folds **212** may be connected via a bonding material or they may be unconnected or some may be connected and some unconnected. The overlapping folds **212** may be distributed over the entire surface of the first and second panels **214** and **216** of the sleeve **210** from an upper end **215** to a lower end **219** as shown in the sleeve **210** in **FIG. 42** or the overlapping folds **212***d* may be disposed over only a lower portion **217***d* of a sleeve **210***d* with an upper end **215***d* (**FIG. 46**), for example, or over only an area **223** adjacent a lower end **219***e* of a sleeve **210***e* with an upper end **215***e* and lower portion **217***e* (**FIG. 47**). **FIG. 43** shows a sleeve **210***a* having overlapping folds **212***a*, a first panel **214***a*, a second panel **216***a*, an upper end **215***a* and a lower end **219***a*, and which is similar to sleeve **210**, but does not have a gusset portion. The overlapping folds may be positioned only along the first and second panels **214***c* and **216***c*, respectively, of the sleeve, such as sleeve **210***c* (**FIG. 45**), only upon a gusset portion **218***f* of a sleeve **210***f* (**FIG. 48**); or upon both the first and second panels **214**, **214***b*, and **216**, **216***b*, respectively and the gusset portion **218**, **218***b*, as in sleeves **210** and **210***b*, respectively (**FIGS. 42 and 44**).

[**0144**] The sleeves **210-210***c* are shown as having the same lower end configuration as sleeves described above herein, for example, the sleeves **160-160***c* of FIGS. **20-23**, respectively.

[**0145**] The sleeves having overlapping folds may be constructed in any of the manners and configurations shown elsewhere herein.

[**0146**] For example, each of the sleeves **210-210***f* may further comprise a support extension as mentioned previously which extends away from a portion of the upper end of the sleeve such as for the sleeve **10***e* as shown in **FIG. 10**. As described earlier the support extension has one or more apertures disposed therein for allowing the sleeve to be supported on a support assembly which may comprise, for example, a pair of wickets for shipment, storage, assembly of the sleeve, placement of a pot within the sleeve, or other functions known in the art. As noted above, the support extension may have a plurality of perforations or other detaching element for allowing the support extension to be removed from the sleeve after the sleeve has been provided for use as described elsewhere herein. In another version of the invention, and applicable to any of the sleeves described above, or elsewhere herein, a sleeve has a handle for carrying the potted plant package by the sleeve. The sleeve further comprises a detaching element comprising perforations for removing the handle at a later time.

[**0147**] As noted above, the upper portions and lower portions of the sleeves of the present invention may comprise a unitary construction; or, the sleeves may comprise separately formed components which are attached or sealed together by various bonding materials, as shown and described elsewhere herein.

[**0148**] In yet another version of the invention, a sleeve designated by the general reference numeral **220** is shown in **FIG. 49**. The sleeve **220** is exactly the same as the sleeve **10** or any of the various versions and embodiments described or shown in figures elsewhere herein except the sleeve **220** further comprises a plurality of slits **222** disposed in a lower portion **224** thereof for enabling the lower portion **224** to be more easily expanded to fit snugly about the outer peripheral surface **76** of a pot **70** disposed therein.

[**0149**] Referring now to the embodiments of FIGS. **50-56**, shown therein are several alternative shapes of the lower ends of sleeves which may be constructed in accordance with the present invention. Shown in FIGS. **50-56** are sleeves designated with the general reference numerals **230**, **232**, **234**, **236**, **238**, **240** and **242**, respectively. Each of sleeves **230-242** has a non-gusseted lower end **231**, **0233**, **235**, **237**, **239**, **241** and **243**, respectively, which is sealed closed in a manner similar to either of the sleeves **160***a* or **160***c* shown in **FIGS. 21 and 23**, respectively, and are ideally suited to any of the sleeves described herein having expansion elements, for example, such as pleats, overlapping folds, slits, and elastomeric portions. The lower ends **231-243** may have a partially rounded shape (lower end **231**, **FIG. 50**), an outwardly-directed partially trapezoidal shape (lower end **233**, **FIG. 51**), an expanded rounded or bulbous shape (lower end **235**, **FIG. 52**), a curved pointed shape (lower end **237**, **FIG. 53**), a triangular shape (lower end **239**, **FIG. 54**), an inwardly-directed trapezoidal shape (lower end **241**, **FIG. 55**), or a curved or wavy shape (lower end **243**, **FIG. 56**).

[0150] In another version of the invention, shown in **FIGS. 57 and 58**, is a sleeve designated by the general reference numeral **244**, and constructed exactly the same as the sleeves discussed elsewhere herein except that the sleeve **244** has an open lower end **246** and a band **248** which extends across the open lower end **246**. The band **248** functions to prevent the sleeve **244** from "riding up" on the pot **70** disposed within the sleeve **244**, or to prevent the pot **70** from dropping through the open lower end **246** of the sleeve **244** (**FIG. 58**).

Construction of the Sleeves—FIGS. **59-60**

[0151] It will be readily appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that processes for making standard floral sleeves which have open upper and lower ends are well known. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the sleeve is constructed with a closed bottom which may simply comprise a seal along the lower end of the sleeve or more preferably the closed bottom comprises an infolded portion such as a gusset which when opened enables expansion of the bottom of the sleeve for allowing insertion of a pot therein and a close, conforming fit thereto.

[0152] One version of an apparatus and process used to construct a sleeve such as sleeve **10** described herein is shown in **FIG. 59**. A single web of material **250** from a roll **251** is fed by a drive mechanism such as an electric motor (not shown) to a folding assembly **252** which causes the single web of material **250** to fold and double up on itself to form a folded web **254** having an open side **256** and a folded side **258**. The folded web **254** is supported upon a conveyor or other support surface **260**. As the folded web **254** is advanced by drive rollers **261** or other advancing mechanism in a direction **262**, the folded side **258** is caused in a continuous process to be infolded or pouched by an infolding device **264** forming a pouch **266** which extends the length of the folded web **254** therefrom. The folded web **254** with the pouch **266** therein continues to be advanced in the direction **262** to a sealing position **268**. A sealing bar (not shown), such as is common and well known in the art, is then activated forming a pair of longitudinally sealed edges **269** and **270**. The sealed edges **269** and **270** extend from near the pouch **266** to the open side **256** and may extend completely about the lower end of the incipient sleeve if a gusset is not formed therein.

[0153] In the embodiment of the sleeve formed using the apparatus of **FIG. 59**, not only is the lower end formed with a rounded bottom, but a gusset is also formed. The gusset is formed when portions of the infolded pouch **266** of the folded web **254** are sealed by a sealing device such as the double sealing mechanism **271** shown in **FIGS. 59 and 60**. The sealing mechanism **271** is comprised of an upper sealing portion **272** and a lower sealing portion **274**. The upper sealing portion **272** moves in a direction **276** and presses an infolded portion of the folded web **254** against an upper side **278** of the infolding device **264** and seals a portion **280** of the folded web **254** by heating, pressure or other sealing mechanism well known to those of ordinary skill in the art. Similarly the lower sealing portion **274** moves in a direction **282** and presses an infolded portion of the folded web **254** against a lower side **284** of the infolding device **264** and seals a portion **286** of t he folded web **254** as above. In this manner a rounded gusset **288** is formed.

[0154] The folded web **254**, now having a sleeve outlined by the sealed edges **269** and **270** and with a gusset **288**, is further advanced to a perforating position **290** where perforations **291** are punched into the sleeve and optionally support apertures are also punched into the sleeve for enabling a collection of sleeves to be collected in a stack and held on a support mechanism such as a wicket. Ventilation holes may also be punched into the sleeve at this point. In the next step the sleeve, now with sealed edges **269** and **270**, gusset **288**, and perforations **291**, is advanced to a cutting position **292** where the sleeve is cut by a cutting die or blade (not shown), such as is well known in the art, from the web **254** to form a complete sleeve **294**. Excess material **296** may be removed to facilitate removal and storage of the sleeve **294**. It will be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that the steps of sealing, perforating and cutting the sleeves may be performed together in a single step, or two steps at one or two positions.

[0155] The process outlined above describes the construction of the sleeve **294** similar to a sleeve **10** without a bonding material disposed upon any portion thereof. However, as explained above, in an alternative version of the invention, a bonding material for bonding a portion of the sleeve to a pot is located on a portion of the inner surface of the sleeve. Shown in **FIG. 59** is a bonding material applicator **298** such as a sprayer or pad applicator which can be used to apply an area of bonding material **300** to a portion of the inner surface of a sleeve. The bonding material applicator **298** may be reciprocatingly activated by a reciprocating assembly (not shown) which is preferably automatically controlled and construction of which is well within the level of ordinary skill in the art. The bonding material **300** is preferably applied to the single web of material **250** prior to the doubling over of the single web of material **250** so that when the single web of material **250** is doubled over to form the folded web **254**, the bonding material **300** is oriented on a portion of the inner surface of the sleeve **294** preferably in the lower portion of the sleeve **294**. The result is the production of a sleeve such as one of those shown in FIGS. **7-9**.

[0156] The process described herein can be modified to produce sleeves such as any of the other sleeves described elsewhere herein. For example, a sleeve can be produced by inserting a piece of release material (not shown) into the sleeve **294** at some point during the sleeve production process, either manually or automatically, for example, after the bonding material **300** has been applied but before the single web of material **250** has been folded over to form the folded web **254**. The piece of release material may be inserted manually by hand or automatically using a device which automatically shoots or blows or deposits such pieces of material and which is well within the skill of one of ordinary skill in the art. Alternatively, the release material may be applied directly upon the bonding material **300** when the bonding material **300** is applied to the single web of material **250**. An additional area of bonding material may be applied to another portion of the web with another adhesive applicator (not shown) thereby forming sleeves having the bonding material **300** distributed on different portions of the sleeve.

[0157] **FIG. 59** shows both edges of open side **256** of the folded web **254** as being an equal distance from the folded side **258**. It will be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that the two edges which comprise the open side **256** of the folded web **254** can be offset during the folding process

to form a sleeve such as a sleeve shown in **FIGS. 8, 10**, or **11** having an upper end flap which can be folded over to close the upper end or an upper portion used to form an extension of the sleeve.

[**0158**] **FIG. 59** shows a sleeve-forming process in which a single web is doubled over to form the double-layered web. The sleeve formed as described herein may also be formed during a process using two or more separate webs in a manner well-known in the art (not shown). A first roll of material and a second roll of material provide a first web of material and a second web of material, respectively. These webs are fed to a position where one side of the two webs are sealed by a sealing assembly. If a gusset in the finished sleeve is desired, the sealed side can be infolded to form a pouched side as described in the process of **FIG. 59**. The remainder of the operation can be formed as described above for the process of **FIG. 59**.

[**0159**] Sleeves formed in accordance with the present invention can also be formed from tubular materials (not shown) such as are commercially available. For example, a sleeve can be formed by cutting a portion of a tube, forming a gusset in the lower end of the tube, or sealing the lower end of the tube to form a closed bottom, then sealing and cutting off portions of the lower end of the tube forming a sleeve having a tapered lower end. Adhesive may be applied to an interior portion of the sleeve by opening the tube and spraying a bonding material onto a portion of the inner surface of the sleeve, for example. In another version of the invention, the process of forming the tubular material from one or more flat webs of material may comprise a step in the process of forming a sleeve.

[**0160**] changes may be made in the construction and the operation of the various components, elements and assemblies described herein or in the steps or the sequence of steps of the methods described herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of wrapping a potted plant comprising a pot having an outer peripheral surface and a bottom, and having a floral grouping, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a sleeve having a flattened state and comprising:

a convexly curved lower end, a tapered side wall, and a gusset portion in the convexly curved lower end; and

providing the potted plant and opening the sleeve and disposing the sleeve about the potted plant.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the sleeve further comprises an upper portion which is sized and dimensioned to substantially enclose the floral grouping disposed within the pot.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the upper portion of the sleeve is detachable from the sleeve via a detaching element in the sleeve.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the gusset portion of the sleeve has a straight inner fold.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the gusset portion of the sleeve has a curved inner fold.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the sleeve is further defined as constructed from a material selected from the group consisting of treated or untreated paper, metal foil, polymeric film, non-polymeric film, cardboard, fiber, cloth, burlap, and laminations or combinations thereof.

7. A method of wrapping a potted plant comprising a pot having an outer peripheral surface and a bottom, and a floral grouping, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a sleeve having a flattened state and comprising a side wall, a convexly curved lower end, a gusset portion in the lower end, and an upper portion detachable via a detaching element in the sleeve; and

opening the sleeve and disposing the sleeve about the potted plant.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the upper portion of the sleeve is sized and dimensioned to substantially enclose the floral grouping disposed within the pot.

9. The method of claim 7 wherein the gusset portion of the sleeve has a straight inner fold.

10. The method of claim 7 wherein the gusset portion of the sleeve has a curved inner fold.

11. The method of claim 7 wherein the sleeve is further defined as constructed from a material selected from the group consisting of treated or untreated paper, metal foil, polymeric film, non-polymeric film, cardboard, fiber, cloth, burlap, and laminations or combinations thereof.

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