ALFALFA AND ALL THAT

LEROY F. MEYERS
Columbus, Ohio

It all began with a party -- one that I did not attend. The next day, someone mentioned to me that word games had been played at the party, and that a word with the pattern 1231231 (where different letters are represented by different digits) had been sought. I replied (immediately, so I like to think) with alfalfa and entente, and later with the German words Kuckuck ('cuckoo') and endende ('ending', as a weak adjective).

Some time later, I came across the name of the Dutch mathematician LekKERKERKER (for emphasis, I capitalize the internal repetitions in this article). But I started making a list of words with consecutive repeated sequences of letters only after I saw M. C. Escher’s lithograph title Printententoonstelling ('Print gallery').

In order to make the list of reasonable size, I exclude words in which the sequence to be repeated consists of only one or two letters, such as needed or neEDED, as well as words in which the repetitions are not consecutive, such as pressures. Most of the words come from reading, although some are obtained by browsing through dictionaries. In general, I am interested in ordinary words (no unusual words or archaic spellings), preferably words which contain non-obvious repetitions. Two fine examples, sent to me by Richard See, are nonsensical and contented. Common patterns of repetition, such as those found in Polynesian plurals, or words with common prefixes or endings (English -ing, French -ent or -ant, German -end or -ende or -enden, Polish -nie or -ente) are represented by only a few words. Few proper names or their derivatives are collected.

Here are definitions for ten English words which contain repeated sequences of three or more letters:

1. owns 6. at once
2. killer 7. addition of color
3. more ardent 8. fullness
4. get ready again 9. whizzes
5. abdominal pain 10. bearberry

Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions.

A sampling of names and words derived from them: BERBER, CORCORan, CINCINnati, mISSISSippl, AlbANIANism, lONDONDerry, MIAMIan, LouisIANIAN, IndIANIAN, KASKASKia.
English
TARTAR, TSETSE, TESTES, MUUMUU, MURMUR, CANCAN, CHA-CHA, UNSUNS (thanks to E. R. Wolpow)
asSESSES, spONSONS, brINGING (also clinging, cringing, flinging, hinging, impinging, ping- ing, ringing, sing- ing, slinging, spring- ing, string- ing, swinging, ting- ing, wring- ing, and zing- ing), BARBAric, sENTENTious, KINKINess, PREPRESSurized, in- grATIAtion, morPHOPHOnemics, palEOGEOGraphy, hyPERPER- ceptive, IOPHOPHore, paralLELLEd (British spelling), suPER- PERfect, suPERPERSON, UNNUNned (last two from E. R. Wolpow), vERSERS, revERSERS, FURFURol, FURFURaceous, meTASTASIs

German
ZURÜCKZURÜCKen ('to shove back'), mENSCHENSchlag ('race of men'), zuRÜCKRÜCKen ('shove back'), mEIREEIERezeugnisse ('dairy-farm products'), LämmerGEEEIEIER ('lammergeyer eggs'), HauptTAUSTAUSSchritte ('principal exchange steps'), Hauptaustaus- SCHSCHritte, FURFUR, NENNEN ('call, name'), KERKER, END- END, ANGANG ('approach'), SENSEN ('scythes'), SENSENbrener (former Columbus mayor), EINGING ('entered'), KuGELGELenk, Vakuumpumppe, näCHACHten, blENDEND (also sendend, wendend), mUNDENDE (also bindende, findende, gründende, rundende, ver- schwindende), reDENDEnd (also werdenden, bildenden, ledenden, schuldenden, meldenden, scheiden- den, schaden- den, vermeiden- den, Dividenden), RepeTENTEN (also Assistenten, Emittenten), oBER- BERgamt (also Oberbergisch, Oberbergmeister, Oberbergrat), erweiTERTER (also erschütterter, gemalterter, gefütterter, ge- mustertter, gescheiterter), staTISTIsch, AbfrAGENERierung ('inquiry generation'), mississIT, festest, FURFURschwörung ('Gunpowder Plot'), maUSAUSSortung ('mouse extermination'), FalsCHschwörer ('perjurer', from D. Borgmann's Language on Vaci- nation, p. 178), mETETET ('(ye) rented'), tapfEREnder (as in ein tapfererer Soldat, 'a braver soldier') (also schwererer, heiser- erer, heltereperer, lockererer, muntererer, magererer, hagererer), FISCHSWarm

Dutch
GENEGENE (plural form of 'favorably disposed'), klaarbLIJKELIJE (plural form of 'obvious'), VERVER ('house-painter'), zENDEND, vrINDEND, vrINGING, komkommert ('cucumber'), vOOROORdeel, vOOROORlogs ('pre-war'), onbevOOROORdeeld ('unprejudiced'), VERVERsen ('refresh'), DERDErangs ('third-rate'), klooster- KERK, antiquITEIT ('antiquities') (also universiteite, kwaliiteite), gevoRDERDE (plural form of 'advanced'), mENSENSchuw (''shy'), zEEREERward ('reverend'), kettERVERVolging ('persecution of heretics') Is there oVERVERVERVER ('overpainter')?

French
CHERCHER ('seek'), RENTRENT ('(they) reenter'), COUCHOUtter
Does your spouse make snide remarks about word play being child's play? Do you hide your copy of Word Ways from your boss, lest he think you've finally gone off your rocker? John McClellan recently sent in the perfect answer to these doubting Thomases, in James Fixx's Games for the Super-intelligent (Doubleday, 1972). On page 28, he says:

For many of the superintelligent, word games are to be preferred above all other types of puzzles. One reason is that extremely bright people are, by definition, verbally adept people. Typically they have a way of noticing, delighting in, and remembering words that other people are likely to ignore or forget, and they are ordinarily very good at any challenge involving words ... Beyond all that, he has a general verbal facility that makes playing word games and solving word puzzles as natural for him and as much fun as it is for Vida Blue to throw a baseball.

Enough said!