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(54) **FRUIT HANGER**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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**Related U.S. Application Data**

(60) Provisional application No. 62/719,890, filed on Aug. 20, 2018.

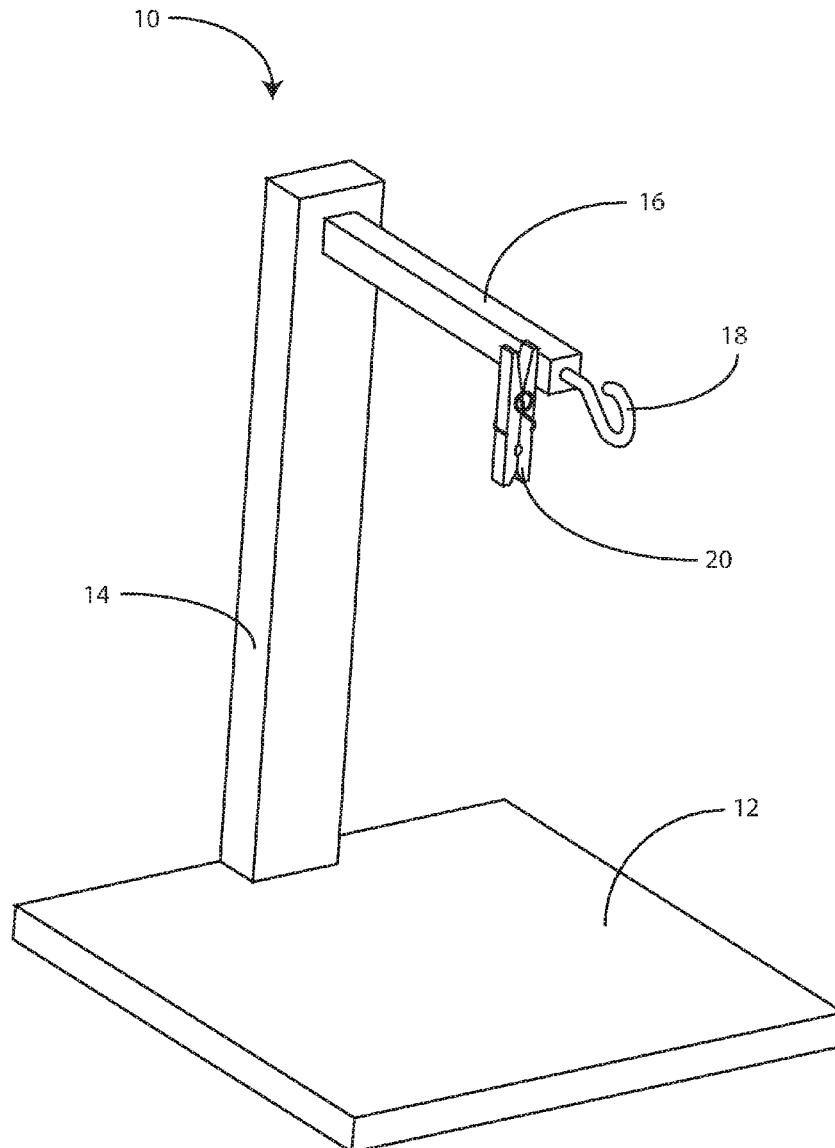
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Described is a fruit hanger with a hook for suspending a bunch of fruit or vegetables, such as bananas, above a surface to protect the produce from bruising and premature over-ripening. Versions of the fruit hanger also include a clip, for attaching to the stem of a single banana, or other piece of fruit or vegetable, after the remainder of the bunch has been consumed. Some versions of the fruit hanger may rest on a kitchen countertop, and other versions of the fruit hanger may be suspended beneath a kitchen cabinet or pantry shelf.



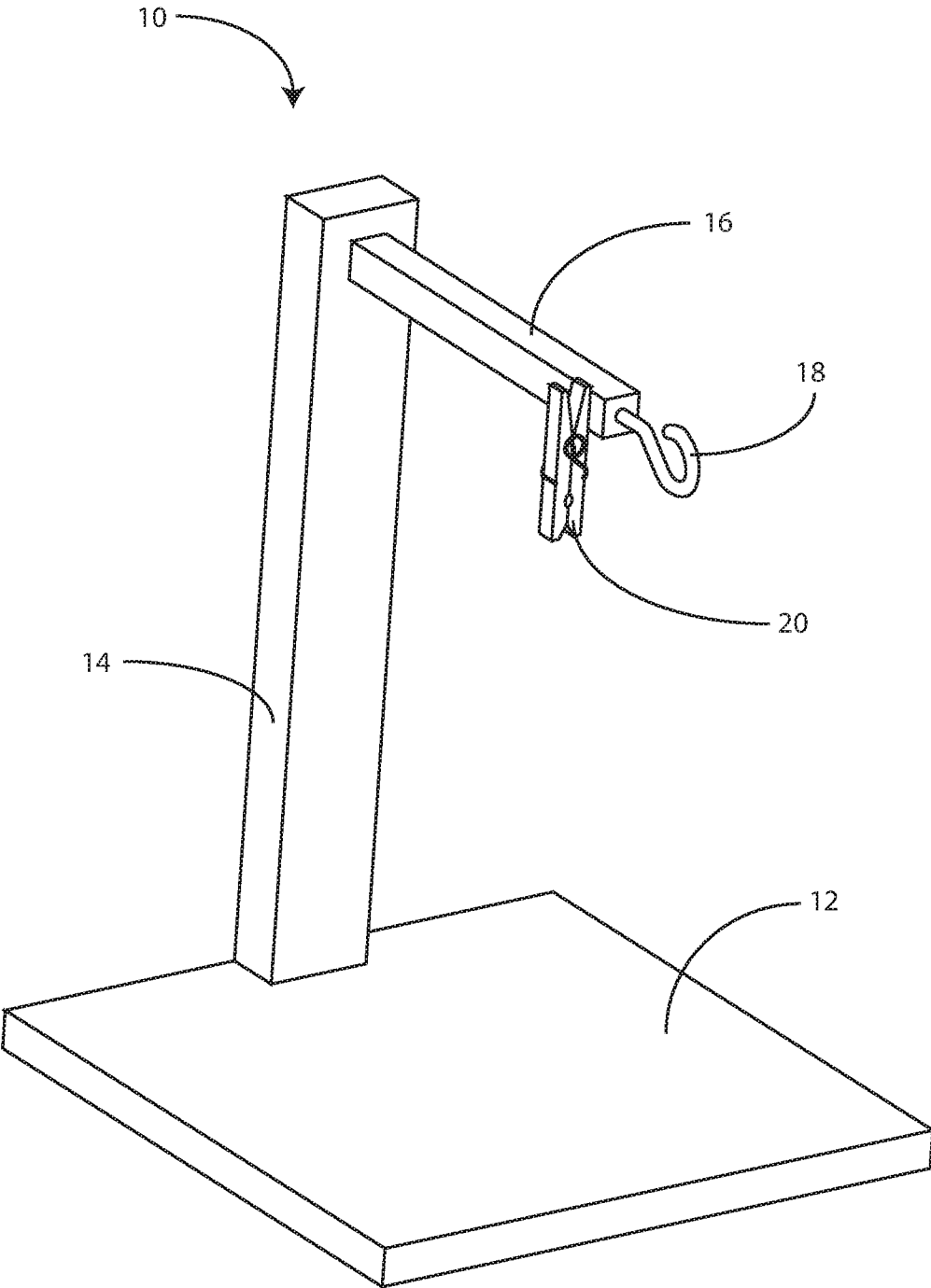


FIG. 1

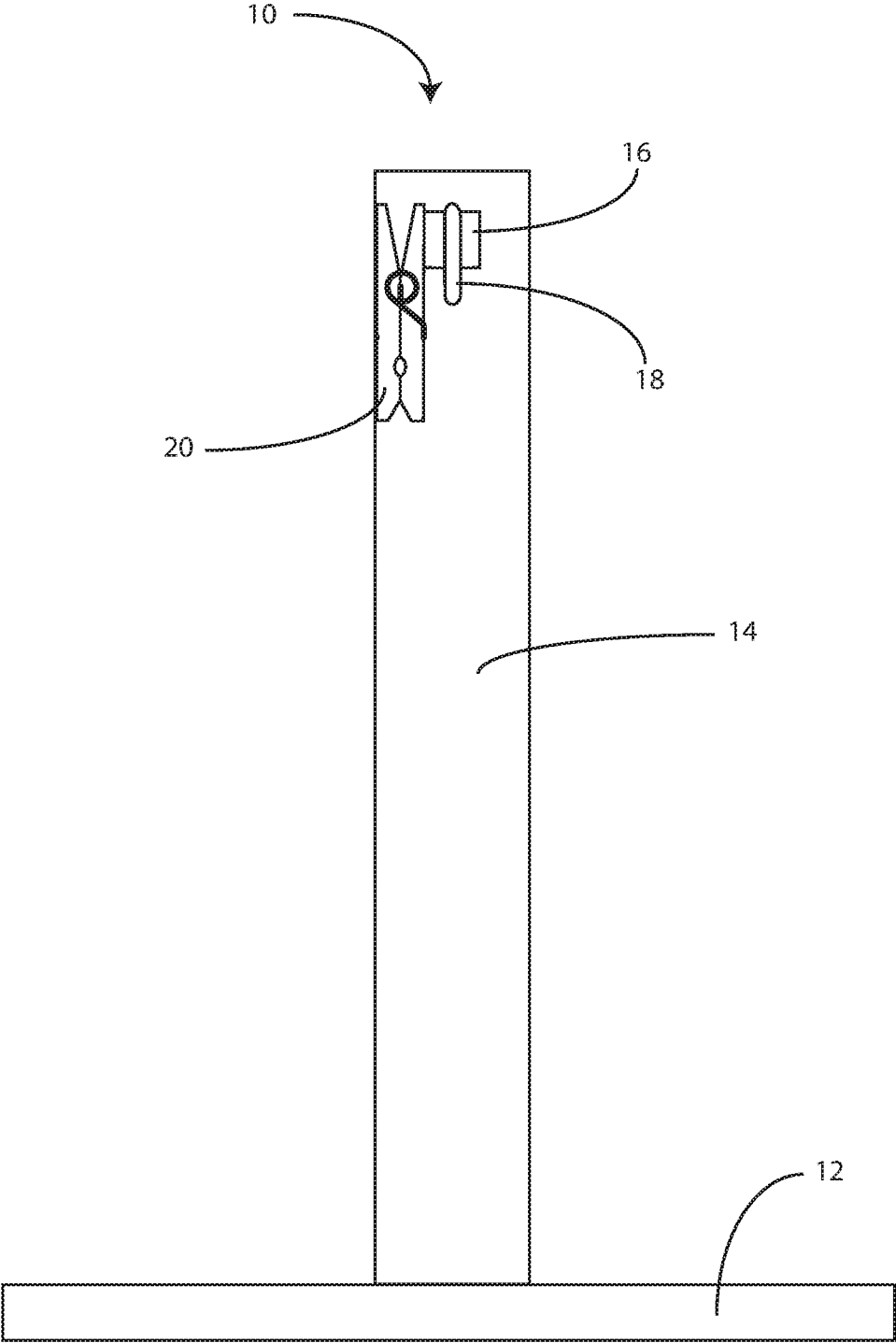


FIG. 2

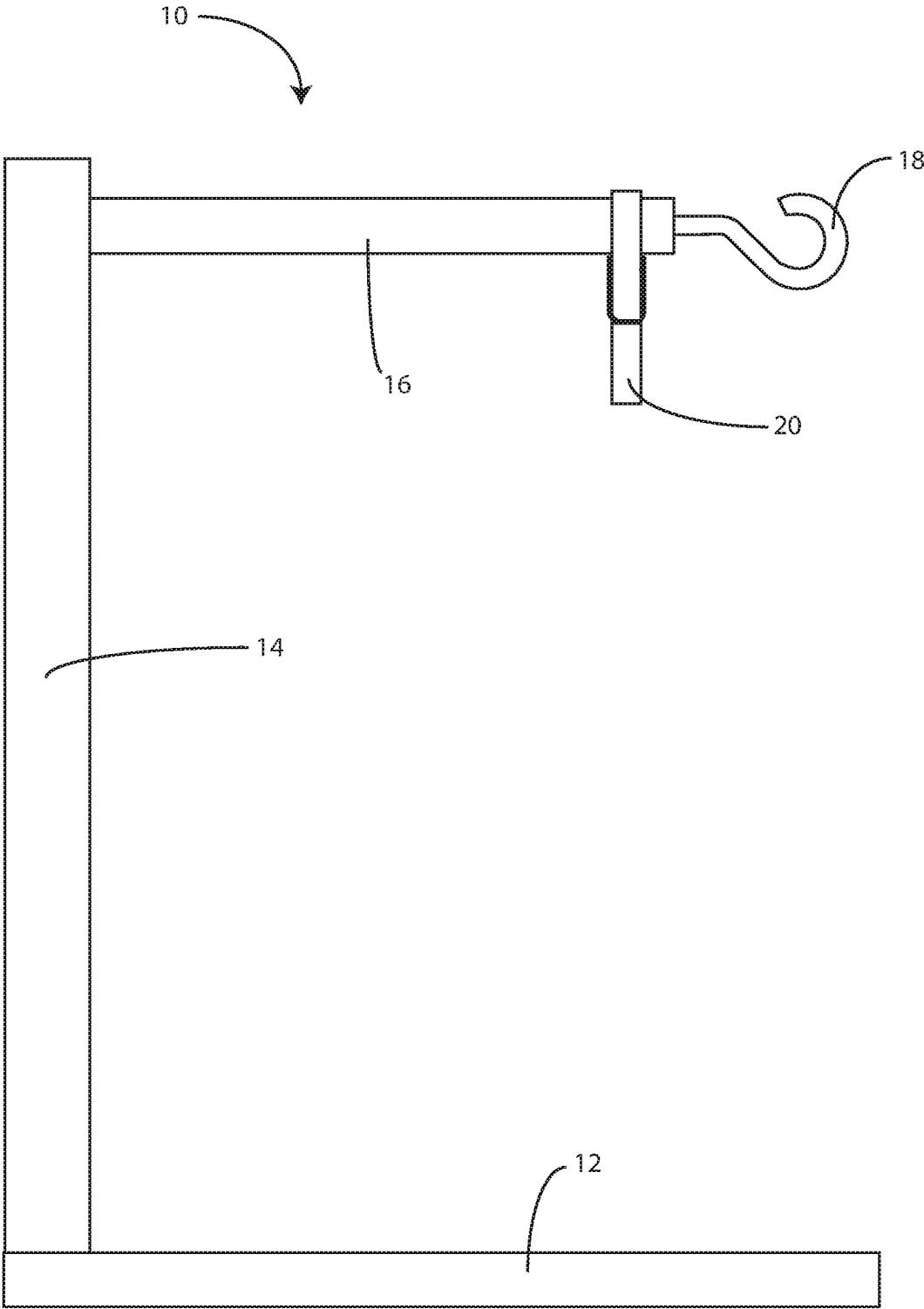


FIG. 3

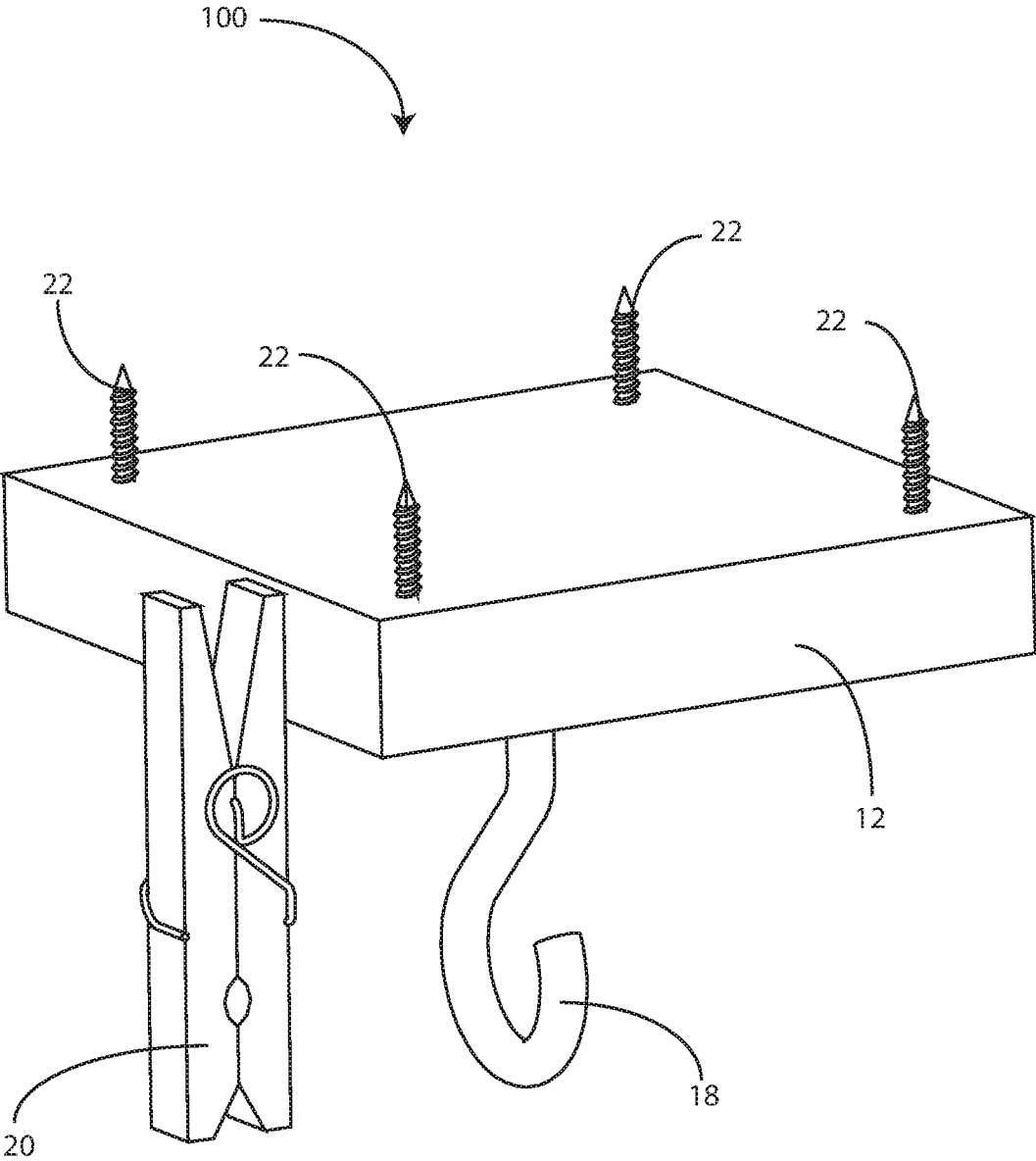


FIG. 4

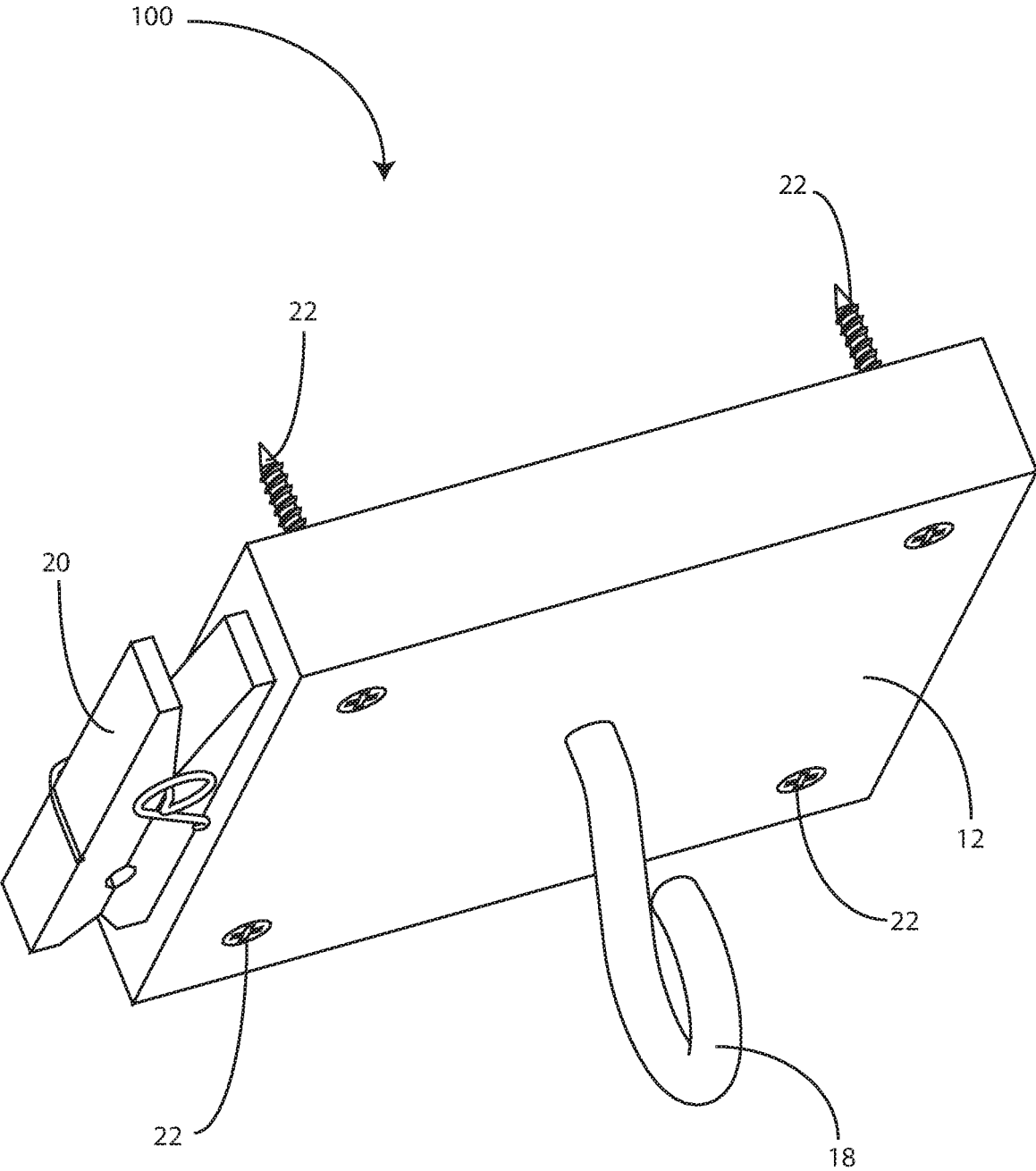


FIG. 5

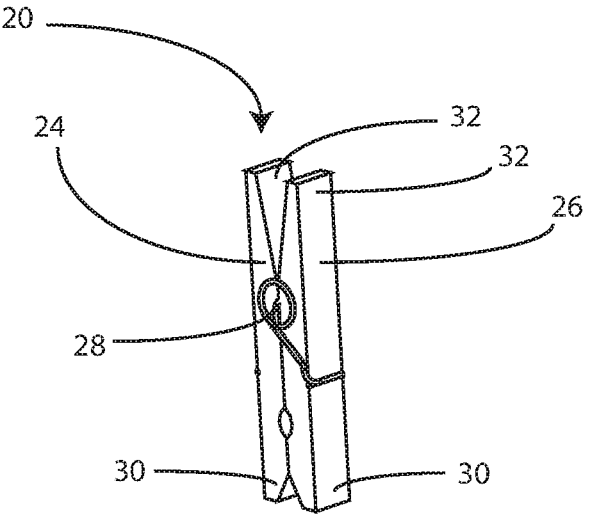


FIG. 6A

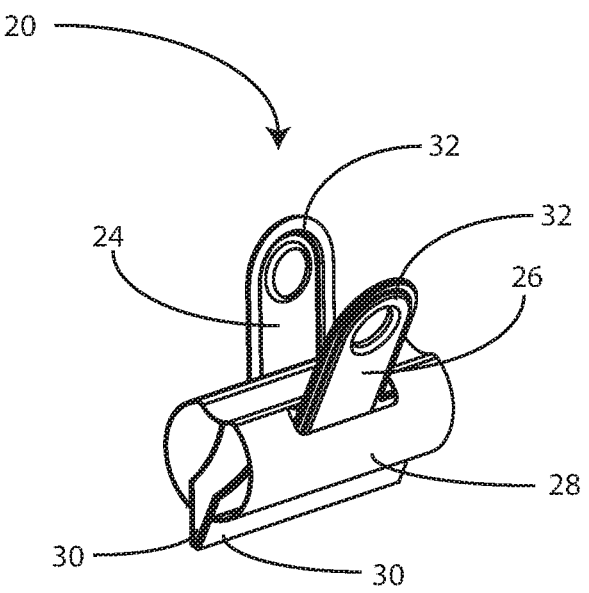


FIG. 6B

## FRUIT HANGER

### CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application to Lisa Battin, entitled "Fruit Hanger," Ser. No. 62/719,890, filed Aug. 20, 2018, the disclosures of which are hereby incorporated entirely herein by reference.

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

#### Technical Field

[0002] This invention relates to devices for suspending fruits and vegetables, and specifically to a device for suspending bananas using a hook and a clip.

#### State of the Art

[0003] It is widely appreciated that fruits and vegetables left on a shelf or countertop ripen more quickly at localized points-of-contact with the supporting surface. Consequently, devices have been developed to suspend a bunch of fruit, such as bananas, for example, by hanging the common stem of the bunch of bananas from a hook, eliminating any pressure point between the fruit's skin and the surface. These devices work well for a bunch of fruit connected to a common branching stem, but are ineffective for a single piece of fruit, such as the last banana in the bunch. Consequently, the last banana left resting on the shelf or countertop rapidly develops an over-ripe black spot at the contact point, compelling disposal of the whole banana.

[0004] Accordingly, what is needed is a fruit-suspending device that includes a means for holding a single piece of fruit above the kitchen counter or other supporting surface.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a fruit hanger, according to an embodiment;

[0006] FIG. 2 is a front view of a fruit hanger, according to an embodiment;

[0007] FIG. 3 is a side view of a fruit hanger, according to an embodiment;

[0008] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a fruit hanger with a clip in a deployed configuration;

[0009] FIG. 5 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a fruit hanger with a clip in a stored configuration;

[0010] FIG. 6A is a perspective view of a clip of a fruit hanger, according to an embodiment; and

[0011] FIG. 6B is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a clip of a fruit hanger, according to an embodiment.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0012] As discussed above, embodiments of the present invention relate to devices for suspending fruits and vegetables, and specifically to a device for suspending bananas using a hook and a clip.

[0013] Conventional devices for hanging bananas or other fruit utilize branch points of the stems wherein individual pieces of fruit are joined together to suspend the entire bunch from a hanging means, such as a hook. This works well until

a single piece of fruit remains. The single piece, usually lacking a forked stem, cannot hang from a hook and, consequently, is left on the counter or shelf. The fruit's flesh beneath the skin contacting the counter or similar resting surface ripens more quickly, leaving a darkened spot of flesh which looks unappetizing and may hasten spoilage, which rapidly spreads and ruins the entire piece, which must then be discarded.

[0014] Disclosed is a fruit hanger with a hook for hanging bananas, fruits, vegetables, or other food items. The fruit hanger includes a base coupled to a hook and a clip. The base may be designed to rest on a kitchen countertop or, in some alternative embodiments, to be mounted underneath a shelf or cabinet. The countertop version may include a framework comprising a support and a cross member.

[0015] Throughout the disclosures herein, reference is made to bananas, whether individual bananas or bananas held in a bunch. This is because existing fruit hangers are most commonly used for bunches of bananas. This is in no way, however, meant to be limiting. Embodiments of the disclosed invention may be used with other fruits or vegetables commonly sold or harvested in bunches, such as vine tomatoes, for example. Bananas, tomatoes, and many other fruits and vegetables have flesh that is soft, delicate, and prone to bruising. Suspending such fruits and vegetables above a countertop protects this delicate flesh from bruising and localized over-ripening. Embodiments of the disclosed invention include devices which can suspend both a bunch of produce coupled together by a branching stem, as well as a single piece of produce lacking a branching stem.

[0016] As shown in FIGS. 1-3, in some embodiments, a fruit hanger 10 comprises a support 14 coupled to a base 12. Support 14 is additionally coupled, in some embodiments, to a cross member 16. A hook 18 may be coupled to cross member 16. Fruit hanger 10 also comprises a clip 20 which may be coupled to cross member 16, in some embodiments. In some embodiments, hook 18 and/or clip 20 may be coupled to support 14.

[0017] Base 12 is a member with a bottom surface configured for resting on a countertop, shelf, or the like. In some embodiments, the base 12 may comprise decorative elements, such as textures, contours, three-dimensional shapes or figures, and the like. In some embodiments, base 12 is formed from a denser material relative to other elements of fruit hanger 10, or base 12 may be otherwise heavily weighted relative to other elements of fruit hanger 10, such that base 12 lowers the center of gravity of fruit hanger 10. A lower center of gravity stabilizes hanger 10 under a condition wherein hanger is loaded with a bunch of bananas or other produce, making the loaded fruit hanger 10 less likely to tip over.

[0018] Support 14 may be coupled to, and extend upward from, the top surface of base 12. In some embodiments, including the embodiment shown in FIGS. 1-3, a fruit hanger 10 comprises cross member 16 coupled to support 14. Cross member 16 extends a point of attachment for hook 18 and clip 20 away from support 14, such that a bunch of bananas or other fruit is suspended more-or-less centrally over base 12 away from support 14, which is more peripherally coupled to base 12, in some embodiments.

[0019] A fruit hanger 10 may be configured such that a bunch of bananas or other fruit does not contact support 14, or any other element or surface, when suspended from its stem by fruit hanger 10. This decreases the risk of bruising

of the fruit caused by its contact with support 14. In some embodiments, base 12 and support 14 form a unitary body. In some embodiments, support 14 and cross member 16 form a unitary body. In some embodiments, base 12, support 14, and cross member 16 form a unitary body.

[0020] The Figures are not meant to be limiting, with regard to the precise shape of base 12, support 14, or cross member 16. For example, support 14 and/or cross member 16 may arc in a curvilinear fashion. In some other embodiments (not shown in the Figures), a fruit hanger 10 does not comprise a distinct cross member 16. Support 14 in these, and some other embodiments, is formed in a shape to curve, arc, angle, or otherwise extend substantially both vertically and horizontally away from its attachment point to base 12. Some examples include support 14 in a regular, arcing shape. In some other embodiments, support 14 is formed in an irregular shape, with linear and curvilinear surfaces. In some embodiments, for example, support 14 may be formed in the shape of an animal, cartoon character, or other whimsical figure which "holds" the bunch of bananas or other produce suspended over base 12.

[0021] Hook 18 is coupled to cross member 16 or to support 14. In some embodiments, hook 18 is generally hook-shaped. Hook 18, however, may be formed as a generally straight peg, an angled or arcing member, or other suitable shape which protrudes from cross member 16 or support 14 to provide a protuberance upon which to hang a branching stem attached to a bunch of bananas or other produce, suspending the produce bunch above the counter-top or other surface whereupon a user positions base 12. In some embodiments, hook 18 is formed in the shape of a hand of a figurine depicting a person, animal, or other entity holding the bunch of produce. In the non-limiting example embodiment shown by FIGS. 1-3, hook 18 is a metal hook screwed into an end of cross member 16 opposite a coupling point of cross member 16 to support 14.

[0022] Clip 20 is configured to hold a single stem attached to a piece of fruit or produce, such as a banana. For example, when all but one of the individual bananas of a bunch of bananas have been consumed, the single remaining banana is typically attached to a single, non-branching stem which cannot hang from hook 18. Clip 20, therefore, is a releasable holding means for a stem attached to a single banana, fruit, or other article of produce.

[0023] Clip 20 is a spring-loaded releasable clip of suitable size and spring tension to support the weight of a banana or other fruit. As shown in FIGS. 6A and 6B, a spring-loaded releasable clip 20 comprises a first member 24 hingedly coupled to a second member 26, and a spring 28 operationally coupled between the first and second members 24 and 26. Each of the first and second members 24 and 26 has a grasping end 30 and a handle end 32. The force of the spring 28 biases the grasping end 30 of the first member 24 against the grasping end 30 of the second member 26. The spring force may be overcome by a user squeezing the handle ends 32 of the first and second members 24 and 26 together to rotate the first member 24 with respect to the second member 26 to separate the grasping ends 30 thereof. In operation, a user may thereby open the clip 20 by squeezing the handle ends 32 of the first and second members 24 and 26 together, insert the stem of a piece of fruit between the grasping ends 30, and release the handle ends 32, causing the grasping ends 30 to squeeze together upon the piece of fruit to hold the piece of fruit in place within the

grasp of the clip 20. The fruit may be removed again by a user squeezing the handle ends 32 again to release the fruit from the clip 20.

[0024] For example, clip 20 may be rotatably coupled to cross member 16 by a fastener (not shown) which allows clip 20 to rotate around the fastener at the coupling point. An attachment means that allows a user of fruit hanger 10 to rotate clip 20 around the attachment point to cross member 16 or support 14 provides the user with a means to rotate clip 20 into a position substantially alongside cross member 16 or support 14 when clip 20 is not being used. At which time clip 20 is needed to suspend a single piece of fruit, the user simply rotates clip 20 approximately ninety degrees (90°) from the position substantially alongside cross member 16 or support 14 to a second position substantially perpendicular to cross member 16 or support 14. The second position of clip 20 with respect to cross member 16 is shown in FIGS. 1-3.

[0025] FIGS. 4 and 5 show a fruit hanger 100, which is an alternative embodiment of a fruit hanger designed to be mounted on an undersurface of a cabinet or shelf, wherein the fruit or produce is suspended beneath the shelf or cabinet. In some embodiments, hanger 100 is used inside a cupboard, pantry, or cabinet by mounting hanger 100 to the underside of a shelf of the cupboard, pantry, or cabinet.

[0026] Fruit hanger 100 comprises a base 12 coupled to or fitted with a mounting means 22. Mounting means 22 is a means for attaching base 12 to a mounting surface, such as the underside of a kitchen cabinet, for example. Mounting means 22 is capable of securely coupling and supporting the full weight of hanger 100 loaded with a bunch of bananas or other produce beneath a cabinet, a shelf, or the like. Some non-limiting examples of mounting means 22 include one or more screws, nails, magnets, suction/vacuum members, adhesive coatings, suspension t-clips, hangers, or the like. In the embodiment shown in FIGS. 4-5, and in some other embodiments, mounting means 22 is at least one wood screw coupled to base 12.

[0027] As shown by FIG. 4 and FIG. 5, hanger 100 comprises a hook 18 coupled to base 12. Fruit hanger 100 additionally comprises a clip 20 coupled to base 12. In the embodiments shown by FIG. 4 and FIG. 5, clip 20 is coupled to a side surface of base 12, however, this is not intended to be limiting. In some embodiments, clip 20 may be rotatably coupled to base 12, such that clip 20 may be rotated between a deployed orientation, as shown in FIG. 4, and a stowed orientation, as shown in FIG. 5.

[0028] The components defining any fruit hanger may be formed of any of many different types of materials or combinations thereof that can readily be formed into shaped objects provided that the components selected are consistent with the intended operation of a fruit hanger. For example, the components may be formed of: rubbers (synthetic and/or natural) and/or other like materials; glasses (such as fiber-glass) carbon-fiber, aramid-fiber, any combination thereof, and/or other like materials; polymers such as thermoplastics (such as ABS, Fluoropolymers, Polyacetal, Polyamide; Polycarbonate, Polyethylene, Polysulfone, and/or the like), thermosets (such as Epoxy, Phenolic Resin, Polyimide, Polyurethane, Silicone, and/or the like), any combination thereof, and/or other like materials; composites and/or other like materials; metals, such as zinc, magnesium, titanium, copper, iron, steel, carbon steel, alloy steel, tool steel, stainless steel, aluminum, any combination thereof, and/or

other like materials; alloys, such as aluminum alloy, titanium alloy, magnesium alloy, copper alloy, any combination thereof, and/or other like materials; any other suitable material; and/or any combination thereof.

**[0029]** Furthermore, the components defining any fruit hanger may be purchased pre-manufactured or manufactured separately and then assembled together. However, any or all the components may be manufactured simultaneously and integrally joined with one another. Manufacture of these components separately or simultaneously may involve extrusion, pultrusion, vacuum forming, injection molding, blow molding, resin transfer molding, casting, forging, cold rolling, milling, drilling, reaming, turning, grinding, stamping, cutting, bending, welding, soldering, hardening, riveting, punching, plating, and/or the like. If any of the components are manufactured separately, they may then be coupled with one another in any manner, such as with adhesive, a weld, a fastener (e.g. a bolt, a nut, a screw, a nail, a rivet, a pin, and/or the like), wiring, any combination thereof, and/or the like for example, depending on, among other considerations, the particular material forming the components. Other possible steps might include sand blasting, polishing, powder coating, zinc plating, anodizing, hard anodizing, and/or painting the components for example.

**[0030]** The embodiments and examples set forth herein were presented to best explain the present invention and its practical application and to thereby enable those of ordinary skill in the art to make and use the invention. However, those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the foregoing description and examples have been presented for the purposes of illustration and example only. The description as set forth is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise form disclosed. Many modifications and variations are possible in light of the teachings above.

What is claimed is:

1. A fruit hanger, comprising:
  - a base configured for resting on a surface;
  - a support coupled to the base and extending upward therefrom;
  - a hook coupled to the support; and
  - a clip coupled to the support.
2. The fruit hanger of claim 1, further comprising a cross member coupled between the support and the clip and the hook.
3. The fruit hanger of claim 2, wherein the cross member and the support are of unitary construction.
4. The fruit hanger of claim 1, wherein the clip comprises:
  - a first member having a first grasping end and an opposed first handle end;
  - a second member having a second grasping end and an opposed second handle end; and
  - a spring operationally coupled between the first member and the second member.
5. The fruit hanger of claim 4, wherein the first member is hingedly coupled to the second member.
6. The fruit hanger of claim 4, wherein the clip is rotatably coupled to the support and rotatable between a stowed orientation and a deployed orientation.
7. The fruit hanger of claim 2, wherein the clip comprises:
  - a first member having a first grasping end and an opposed first handle end;
  - a second member having a second grasping end and an opposed second handle end; and

a spring operationally coupled between the first member and the second member.

8. The fruit hanger of claim 7, wherein the first member is hingedly coupled to the second member.

9. The fruit hanger of claim 7, wherein the clip is rotatably coupled to the cross member and rotatable between a stowed orientation and a deployed orientation.

10. A fruit hanger, comprising:

- a base configured to be suspended below a surface;
- a hook coupled to the base; and
- a clip coupled to the base.

11. The fruit hanger of claim 10, further comprising:

- at least one fastener operationally coupled to the base and configured for fastening the base to the surface.

12. The fruit hanger of claim 11, wherein the clip comprises:

- a first member having a first grasping end and an opposed first handle end;

- a second member having a second grasping end and an opposed second handle end; and

- a spring operationally coupled between the first member and the second member.

13. The fruit hanger of claim 12, wherein the first member is hingedly coupled to the second member.

14. The fruit hanger of claim 12, wherein the clip is rotatably coupled to the base and rotatable between a stowed orientation and a deployed orientation.

15. A fruit hanger, comprising:

- a rectangular base plate, further comprising:

- opposed upper and lower surfaces, wherein the lower surface is configured for resting on a support surface;

- opposed forward and rearward edges; and

- opposed left and right edges;

- an elongate support of rectangular cross section, further comprising:

- opposed top and bottom ends; and

- opposed front and rear surfaces, wherein the bottom end thereof is coupled to the rectangular base plate at a location proximate the rearward edge thereof midway between the left and right edges thereof such that the elongate support is disposed perpendicular to the upper surface of the rectangular base plate;

- an elongate cross member of rectangular cross section, further comprising:

- opposed first and second ends;

- opposed left and right sides;

- opposed top and bottom sides, wherein the cross sectional area of the elongate cross member is smaller than the cross sectional area of the elongate support, wherein the second end of the elongate cross member is coupled to the front surface of the elongate support at a location proximate the top end thereof, such that the bottom side is perpendicular to the elongate support and parallel to the rectangular base plate, wherein when the rectangular base plate is disposed horizontally, the first end is disposed above the rectangular base plate; and

- a threaded recess in the first end thereof;

- a hook, further comprising:

- a hooked end; and

- an opposed threaded end, wherein the threaded end is threaded into the threaded recess of the elongate cross member, wherein when the rectangular base

plate is disposed horizontally, the hooked end is disposed above the rectangular base plate; and  
a clip rotatably coupled to one of the left side or the right side of the elongate cross member at a location proximate the first end of the elongate cross member, the clip further comprising:  
a first member having a first grasping end and an opposed first handle end;  
a second member having a second grasping end and an opposed second handle end; and  
a spring operationally coupled between the first member and the second member, wherein the force of the spring between the first and second members biases the first grasping end against the second grasping end, wherein the spring force may be overcome by a user pushing the first handle end toward the second handle end to separate the first and second grasping ends, wherein the clip is rotatable between a deployed configuration in which the clip is disposed perpendicular to the elongate cross member and a stowed configuration in which the clip is disposed parallel to the elongate cross member.

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