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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Thursday, May 9, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from Farm Security Administration and Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry and Engineering.

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Out-of-doors and indoors questions have turned up in today's mail. How to fireproof curtains, how to make a stepping-stone walk, and co-ops are on the minds of these correspondents. So we'll take them in that general order.

Summer breezes may create certain hazards in the home, especially if a window curtain can blow dangerously near a stove or other flame. Here's a question from a woman who has had a little experience of this kind.

"We had a near-tragedy in our home the other day," she writes. "A breeze blew the kitchen window curtain over toward the lighted oil stove and the curtain caught fire. Fortunately we were able to put out the blaze promptly. But now I wish I could make those curtains fireproof by dipping them in some solution. Can you tell me what it is, and whether the curtains will still be fireproof after they are washed?"

The Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry and Engineering studied ways to fireproof fabric, and reports several methods. A good one for home use is to dip the cloth in a solution of boric acid and borax -- products you can get at any drug store. Use 3 ounces of boric acid and 7 ounces of borax in 2 quarts of hot water. If you use powdered boric acid, first make a paste with a little water, then add more water.

The easiest way to fireproof thin curtains is dip them right into this solution, squeeze them, then hang them up until nearly dry and iron. The curtains must be clean and dry before dipping. If they are wet, the solution may be too much diluted to be effective. Another way is to sprinkle the curtains with the fire-

proofing solution just before you iron them, instead of dampening them with water. Sprinkle rather liberally, use a moderately hot iron and do not attempt to iron them until they are almost dry. (You will need to dip the curtains in the fireproofing solution each time after they are washed and dried.)

The fireproofing solution will also protect the curtain fabric for some time against the effects of coal or illuminating gas in the air. Gases like this gradually destroy household fabrics.

Farmers' Bulletin 1786 tells about fireproofing fabrics. This is a free bulletin. If you want a copy, write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

Those of you who are thinking a good deal about the garden may be interested in a question in the next letter. "I have always wanted a flagstone walk across our lawn at the back of the house," this woman writes, "but we do not seem to have any suitable, big flat stones in this part of the state. Would it be possible to make stepping-stones out of cement or concrete, and would they last well?"

Yes, indeed, say the agricultural engineers. You can make stepping stones of concrete slabs about 4 inches thick and they may be precast or cast in place. They will look more irregular, like natural stones, and be less trouble to make if cast in place. All that is necessary is to remove the sod -- which means getting husband and brother to do this, of course, -- and excavate the soil 2 to 4 inches deeper than the desired thickness of the slab. Have the sides of the cut vertical. The extra depth is filled with sand rammed in place. This provides drainage and a smooth base for the concrete, which is then mixed as usual and poured into the space cut out to receive it.

It is possible to cast irregular shaped stepping stones elsewhere and then set them in place, but concrete is very heavy to move. A block 12 by 18 inches 4 inches thick weighs 75 pounds. So casting in place is easier. Sometimes pieces of concrete can be salvaged when nearby roads or pavements are torn up for repair work.

(5/9/40)

Many questions come in from time to time about "co-ops."

A farmer with only 40 or 50 acres of land cannot usually afford to own a tractor by himself, and a woman who is managing her household budget on a minimum amount can seldom spare enough to buy a pressure canner although its use would help in keeping food bills down. But if 8 or 10 small farmers get together they can buy one tractor for them all to use, and take turns using it. Then all of them will have the advantage of this modern equipment at very small cost each. In the same way, a co-operatively owned pressure canner helps to spread the cost of the largest equipment so that all can afford to share the use of it.

I suggest that all who are interested in the subject or who want help in organizing a small co-op in their neighborhood ask the county agricultural agent about it, or the county Farm Security Administration supervisor. Sometimes groups of farmers,- or farm women,- can get FSA loans to buy equipment and services they need.

More than 10,000 small co-operatives are already doing business. They have bought tractors, harvesters, cotton gins, fertilizer and lime spreaders, and many other kinds of equipment; pure-bred sires to give them better livestock; seed corn; veterinary services; family health services; gasoline and oil and many other commodities needed on the farm or in the farm home. Co-operatives have been growing rapidly and soundly, but there is room for many more of them. In many cases the Farm Security Administration can lend enough to help get one of these enterprises started.

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