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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE



Thursday, December 10, 1942.

QUESTION BOX:

Is it too late to cut wood for fuel?
Burn green wood?
Stain on white wool?
How wash feather pillows?

ANSWERS FROM:

Forestry experts and home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

—ooOoo—

Fuel, feathers, and stained white wool are the problems coming up in the mail today. Scientists in the U.S. Department of Agriculture supply the answers.

As the fuel situation grows more acute, people are trying every possible means of saving fuel in keeping houses warm the next few months. Here is one question in the week's mail: "Is it too late in the season to cut fuel wood so we can stretch our furnace fuel? We have two fireplaces, and a wood-burning stove for one room, and we could also burn wood for quick fires in the range."

Of course, you can bring in wood any time all winter that weather permits. In fact, it often happens that no one in a farm family has much time until late fall and winter to fell trees and cut up wood. There are many small wooded areas near towns and villages, as well as near country homes, where owners are willing to have scattered pieces of dead timber removed from the ground. They will even give permission at times for neighbors to cut down unwanted trees provided they are taken away. Or you may find persons owning such trees who are willing to cut them for others at the regular local price.

Winter-cut hardwood needs from 6 months to a year to season, so some of the green wood you get now could not be used until next fall. But some kinds of wood can be burned while green, and some after a short seasoning period,—about 3 months. This brings us to our next question:

"I have always heard that you can't burn green wood, but one of my neighbors

says she burns it frequently. What do the experts say?"

It makes a difference what wood you burn green, the forest specialists say. The way wood burns depends on the amount of moisture it contains, and there are a number of species that burn well with comparatively little seasoning. Green Douglas-fir heartwood is so dry that it has very little more fuel value after you season it than it has green. Many people prefer green ash for baking because it gives a steadier fire.

Here's a list of woods that you can burn with very little drying: Ash.... biltmore ash, blue, white or Oregon ash; American beech; Douglas-fir.... also Alpine and noble fir; pignut and shagbark hickory; black locust; csageorange; red and lodgepole pine; red and white spruce; tamarack (Eastern larch).

Of course, dry wood kindles more quickly than wet wood, so it's a little harder to start a fire with green wood. One way to get around this difficulty in starting fires is to mix the green wood with some sticks of seasoned wood, if you can get any. Put the green wood in the range after you have a hot fire started. Then, if you must count on green woods for future supplies, keep each kind in a pile by itself, protected from the weather, and season as long as possible. Give the woods just named 3 months, with good air circulation, and they'll compare well in fuel value with any seasoned wood.

Next we have a stain removal question. "What can I use to bleach a stubborn beverage stain on a white wool sweater? Most of the bleaches I knew about are only safe to use on white cotton and linen."

Textile specialists of the Department say you can safely use sodium perborate and hydrogen together on white woolens. Sodium perborate sells at drug stores. It's often used in mouth washes. This is one of the safest bleaches for all types of materials, and leaves woolens soft and fluffy. But you must use this bleach rapidly and be sure to rinse it all out after removing the stain.

Make a mixture of sodium perborate and hydrogen peroxide..... 1 level teaspoonful of the perborate to 1 pint of the peroxide. Always use this mixture immediately as it soon loses its strength. Simply sponge the spot on your white woolen sweater with the solution, and then rinse it well in lukewarm water. This combination of sodium perborate and hydrogen peroxide is also good to take out grass, mud, scorch, and some perfume stains.

From washing out stains, let's turn to a question about washing feather pillows. Here's a letter that says: "I have some soiled pillows that I would like to wash. Will you tell me whether you take the feathers out of the ticking cover and wash cover and feathers separately, or can you wash the pillow as is?"

You can do it either way, the home economists say. It's less trouble to wash pillows just as they are. But if the ticking covers are old and the feathers have begun to work through, you may need to wash the feathers in a large muslin bag. You'll find complete directions for this rather long job in the free bulletin on home laundering. You can get a copy by writing to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Ask for Farmers' Bulletin 1497-F.

Here's how to wash feather pillows without removing the feathers: Make a weak solution of washing soda in lukewarm water, and add enough mild soap to make a good suds. Scrub the pillow, lifting it up and down in the suds. If the pillow is very soiled, wash again in clean suds. Now rinse 2 or 3 times in lukewarm water. Press out as much moisture as you can. Lay the wet pillow on a sheet or bath towel in a warm place. Sunny breezy warm weather is ideal for drying pillows, but in winter you will probably have to dry the pillows indoors in a warm place. Beat the pillows and turn from time to time as they dry.

You can wash pillows in a washing machine of the cylinder type. Other kinds of machines won't do for pillows. You can also use a spinner-dryer or extractor to get much of the moisture out.

Poultry experts of the Department of Agriculture say that feathers don't need washing very often. To keep them fresh and fluffy, sun and air them often, and beat them with the hand every day to fluff them up. It's usually the ticking cover of the pillow that becomes soiled rather than the feathers inside. If you have a muslin cover inside the ticking, you can take off the outside ticking when it becomes soiled and wash that without washing the feathers.

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