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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, June 11, 1942.

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Answers from: RECEIVED
Scientists of the U.S. De-
partment of Agriculture

U. S. Department of Agriculture

119
In 344

Question Box:

How identify poison ivy?
How care for electric ironer?
Stocking situation this summer?

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The questions today are on such different subjects as poison ivy, electric ironers, and stockings. Scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture answer these questions for us.

Our first letter-writer wants to know how to recognize poison ivy. The plant scientists answer with the old rhyme: "Leaflets three, Let it be". Of course, some harmless plants have three leaflets, but if you avoid all such plants, you'll be on the safe side. Poison ivy has three rather shiny dark green leaflets in each cluster. These leaflets turn a lovely red in the fall, and people have been known to gather them for autumn leaves, with sad results. Another way to tell poison ivy is by the whitish or cream colored berries resembling mistletoe that appear later in the season on the older plants. The berries stay on the plant far into the winter, and help you identify it. It may be more convenient to get rid of plants near your home in cold weather.

There are also some other poisonous plants which have the same effect on the skin as poison ivy. Poison sumac grows in swampy places. Poison oak is a very common shrub in California. Poison oak has three leaflets like poison ivy, but poison sumac looks like other sumac. You can get further facts on these poison plants from a government bulletin. Write to U. S. Department of Agriculture Washington, D.C., for a copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1166 called "Poison Ivy and Poison Sumac." It describes all of these plants, with pictures to help you identify them. Meanwhile, if you happen to touch any ivy or go where it is growing, wash exposed



skin immediately and thoroughly with a strong kitchen soap, lathering it on freely and rinsing several times in running water.

Next we have a question about electric ironers. This homemaker writes: "I am fortunate enough to have a fine electric ironer which I bought last year. Naturally I want to make it last as long as possible. Are there any special precautions I should take to keep it in condition?"

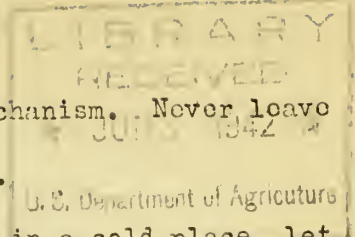
The home economists of the Department say that except that it is bigger, and different in shape, you care for an electric ironer much as you would an electric hand iron. The metal ironer shoe corresponds to the soleplate and body of the iron. The heating element is inside of it. You don't want to damage the surface of the shoe in any way, nor jar the delicate wires of the heating element. And of course you want to keep it clean.

Turn metal objects or anything that would scratch the shoe toward the padding when ironing. You can do most cleaning of the shoe with a damp cloth. Remove stubborn spots with a scratchless powder such as whiting. Dry and polish with a soft cloth. Occasionally rub beeswax on the warm shoe to help keep it smooth.

Before you close the ironer after working with it on dampened clothes, always dry the roll well by running the hot shoe over it a few times.

The padded roll with its muslin cover corresponds to your ironing board. That muslin cover, by the way, needs frequent washing, just as the cover on the ironing board does. Traces of scorch or soil on it may get on clean clothes. By the way, if you haven't already made yourself an extra cover, it might be well to do so now. Follow the pattern of the cover that came with the ironer.

If your roller padding has grown hard, you may be able to freshen it. Take off the muslin cover, and then the padding. But be sure to check the way it was put on the roller so you can get it back right. Fluff it up or reverse it, and air it. Then put it back, using the machine to help rewind it. If it is very matted so that it doesn't fluff up, it needs new padding.



Follow the manufacturer's directions for oiling the mechanism. Never leave any oil where it will get on clothes or on the roller padding.

Next winter, if you store the ironer from week to week in a cold place, let it stand several hours in a warm room before you start the motor. This helps to soften the grease and oil that make the machine operate easily.

Most ironers have a dust-proof top, but if yours is open, make a cover for it to keep the roller and other parts clean.

From electric ironers let's turn to a question on stockings. "What is the stocking situation this summer? Shall we women have to wear ankle socks, or rayon or cotton hose, or just paint our legs to look like stockings?"

Home economists say you probably won't have to camouflage your legs unless you want to. As stocks of silk hose are used up, they will be replaced by other kinds. Cotton stockings are increasing in popularity, especially mesh weaves. However, only a limited amount of sheer cotton hose will be available, because the Army and the Navy requirements for high count cotton yarns are very high and spindles for making them in this country are limited. Sturdy cotton hose of coarser yarns for work, socks for wear with slacks, and knee-lengths for sports are gaining in favor.

Nylon yarn is needed for military uses and nylon hose are becoming scarce. The principal substitute for silk which is at the disposal of hosiery manufacturers is rayon and much experimentation is under way in an effort to improve this fiber for hosiery purposes. Many manufacturers are packing washing directions with each pair because rayon is fragile when wet. They also warn wearers not to put rayon stockings on until they are perfectly dry.

All in all, the stocking situation is not too bad, the home economists think. And with that encouraging note, we'll sign off for today. (Written by Elna H. Wharton)

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