

homemakers' chat

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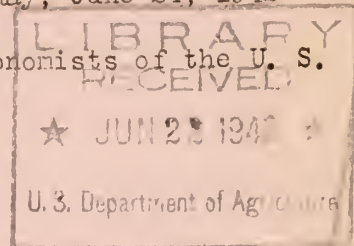
U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, June 24, 1942

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SUBJECT: "BRUSH AND BROOM CARE." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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A good job of cleaning always winds up with cleaning the cleaning tools. You know--every good housekeeper knows that the job isn't well done unless brooms, brushes, dust pans and cloths, mops and all the other cleaning equipment are clean and ready for the next job. Of course, it takes a few extra minutes to clean the cleaners, but every good housekeeper knows that those few minutes may save a lot of time later.

One reason for putting cleaning tools away clean is that you don't store dirt. Your brooms, brushes, mops and clothes don't develop sour or moldy odors, and don't attract insects. With clean equipment you're all ready to go when cleaning day comes around. You don't have to waste a moment getting started, and you can do an efficient job that gives you satisfaction. But when you open the closet and find the dustpan full of dust, the broom greasy or sticky, the mop dirty and mildewed--well, you know what kind of a start that gives you. It just spoils your enthusiasm for cleaning. You have to do a big job of cleaning up before you even start on the house.

Today in wartime there's another important reason for cleaning and caring for your cleaning tools. It's to make them last and keep in condition for best use. Many of these common everyday things, like brooms and dustpans that you've always taken for granted aren't going to be so common and everyday. Many of them are already becoming scarce. You can no longer be sure of getting new ones if those you have wear out.

You probably use your brooms and brushes more than any other small cleaning equipment, so here are some points about caring for them, suggested by home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cleaning most brooms and brushes is very simple. All you need is soap and warm water. If the water is hard, you may need a water softener, such as borax, washing soda, or trisodium phosphate. If any part of the brush or broom is made of wire or metal that will rust, you need to dry it promptly and thoroughly after you wash it.

New brooms sweep clean--and old ones, too--if their bristles are straight. So be sure to hang brooms up and hang them high enough so their bristles are off the floor. You probably know of those clasp holders of metal that fasten on the wall to hold brooms. If you don't have such holders in your broom closet, hang your brooms and mops from hooks. Bore holes in the handles for loops of wire or cord, or put a screw-eye in the end of the handle to hang it by.

Another way to keep your broom in condition to sweep clean is to turn it as you sweep so that it will wear evenly. And don't flip the broom up as you sweep. Keep it down close to the floor to avoid raising dust.

Your broom won't need washing every time you sweep, of course. In general, a broom just needs wiping with a dry cloth when you put it away. This is especially true of brooms made of broom corn. Water is not good for these brooms. But, sometimes the broom gets so dirty you have to wash it. Then do it this way: Dip the broom up and down in a pail of soapy water, rinse in clear water, and shake. Then hang it up by the handle to dry, so the weight doesn't rest on the wet straws and bend them. If the broom corn spreads in washing, bind it with a strip of paper or rag so it will dry straight.

Fiber brooms you can wash as often as you like. Water doesn't hurt them--in fact, it seems to be good for the fiber, provided you rinse off all the soap, and after washing, hang the broom up so the fibers will dry straight. Washing seems to

make palmetto, tampico and palmyra fiber brooms more durable. But once the fibers dry out of shape, it is hard to straighten them.

Now about brushes. The same simple rules of care apply to brushes. Keep them clean, and keep the bristles straight. You use brushes to gather dirt and hold it, or get dirt into a dustpan. Because brushes do hold dirt, they need frequent cleaning. A dirty brush will scatter dirt, or smear a surface. After washing a dust-brush in warm soapy water and rinsing it in clear water, shake it well until the bristles and fibers are straight. If brushes are very dirty, add a tablespoon of ammonia to each quart of soapy wash water.

If the bristles of the brush are twisted together with wire, hang the brush up to dry. If they are set in wood blocks, as in an ordinary scrub-brush, dry with the bristles down so the water will not run into the wood. But straighten the bristles before drying. A coarse comb helps get lint and thread out of brooms and brushes.

Here are some notes about special care for different kinds of brushes. Dry scrub brushes with wooden backs in the sun. Keep most other brushes out of hot sun. In winter don't let brushes freeze. After using a toilet brush, wash it in hot soapy water, shake well, and dry quickly. Scald occasionally and sun to keep it fresh. Wall brushes need to be especially clean or you'll smear walls when you use them. Clean wall brushes of goat or horse hair like other brushes. Wall brushes of wool pick up dirt readily only when they are clean and fluffy. So shake them frequently outdoors as you use them. Wool wall brushes clean best with a dry-cleaning fluid but this is rather expensive. Another way to clean them is to first soak the brush an hour in cold water to loosen the dirt; then wash thoroughly in lukewarm suds; and rinse in lukewarm water. Hang up to dry. When the wool is completely dry, beat the brush with a stick to fluff it up. Then comb with a coarse comb.

These little ways of cleaning and caring for your brooms and brushes make them last and help make your cleaning jobs easier and pleasanter.

