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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, July 10, 1941

QUESTION BOX

Why dressing-table drawers stick?
What makes ironing-board warp?
How to build a cool kitchen?

ANSWERS FROM

wood experts and agricultural engineers of the U. S. Department of Agriculture

--ooOoo--

In the question-box today are three familiar summer inquiries. One housewife wants to know what makes the drawers in her dressing-table stick in summer when they slide easily in winter. Another asks why her ironing boards all warp and what to do about it. Still another wants to know how her kitchen could be rebuilt so it would be cooler.

Let's start with the question about the bureau drawers.

Wood experts of the Forest Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say wooden drawers swell and stick when the wood absorbs moisture. In the winter when your house is kept dry by furnace heat, the wood in the dressing-table drawers does not absorb moisture and therefore the drawers don't stick. But in summer the wood absorbs the moisture from the warm moist air around it. To keep drawers from sticking, cover the wood with varnish or other finish that will protect it from moisture. Varnish the drawers in the winter before they swell. Wax along the runways helps them slide more easily.

The answer to the second question is about the same. The question is: "What makes my ironing board warp instead of remaining flat as it was when I bought it?"

The wood experts say wood warps when it absorbs moisture. The way to prevent warping is to keep the wood dry.

But with an ironing board that's not so easy. Every time you iron, the heat from the iron drives steam from the damp clothes down into the wood. And the

laundry or kitchen where the air is moist is the place most people keep their ironing boards.

But here are some tips to help you keep your board from warping. To begin with, when you buy a board, buy one that has stood for some time in the warm dry atmosphere of a store. To make doubly sure, ask the dealer to assure you that the board has been properly dried and seasoned.

Another point to remember is that a thick board is less likely to warp than a thin board. So if possible buy a board an inch and a half thick.

When you get the board home, give it a coating of varnish mixture to keep the wood from absorbing moisture. The best mixture to use is aluminum powder and phenolic resin varnish. You can buy these supplies at paint stores. Mix a fourth pound of the powder with 1 pint of phenolic resin varnish. Varnish top, bottom, and sides of the board. Brush only in one direction as you put the varnish on.

Still another way to keep an ironing board in shape is to fasten metal cleats--strips of metal, you know-- across the underside. These cleats will hold the board rigid and level. Buy one-fourth angle iron cleats 1 inch wide, and long enough to stretch across the whole width of the board. Fasten a cleat about 3 inches from each end of the board. Then fasten 2 more cleats toward the center of the board. You can also use wooden strips or cleats. If you use wooden cleats, have them one-inch thick and 2 inches wide.

And remember this: If you want to keep your board from warping, keep it in as dry a place as possible. The attic is usually a better place than the cellar.

The last letter today asks how a very hot kitchen might be rebuilt without much expense to make it cooler.

Engineers and architects of the Department of Agriculture say one of the best ways to keep a kitchen cool is to provide for cross-ventilation in the room. The

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ideal location for a kitchen is on the corner of a house because then you can have windows or doors on at least 2 sides of the room. It is important to have the stove in the part of the kitchen where cross-ventilation is strongest.

On one-story houses you can provide more comfort in summer by the simple device of having a ventilation opening cut in the ceiling directly above the stove. Have the opening at least 2 or 3 square feet. From this opening have a stack of wood or metal extending through the roof, and have a hood over the top to keep out rain. Such a ventilator ought to have a screen in it and a hinged lid in the ceiling which you can close in winter.

Of course, a fan in the kitchen over the stove or in place of a window pane helps keep the air moving in a kitchen. Another way to keep cool is to plan your cooking so that you use the stove mostly early in the morning or late in the day rather than in the heat of midday.

That's all the questions for this week.

