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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Thursday, November 30, 1944

QUESTION BOX

ANSWERS from entomologists of the
U. S. Department of Agriculture

How control aphids?
How get rid of cockroaches?
How banish silverfish?

Homemaker's question box today. And from our mail bag, we've taken questions on household insects. The fight against these pests - the little things that crawl and sometimes fly - goes on 12 months of the year. And plant insects can be a nuisance in the winter as well as in the summer as the first inquiry in today's mailbag shows.

A homemaker writes: "Please tell me how I can get rid of the clusters of tiny insects on the leaves and growing points of my house plants. The leaves had already begun to shrivel and curl up when I found the little pests. They are pink. Some have wings. Others appear to be wingless. I've tried spraying them with paris green but that didn't seem to have any effect. How can I get rid of them?"

Entomologists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say the insects on your plants are aphids or plant lice. Now you may think of aphids as being green. Sometimes they appear in other colors - pink, black, brown, and red. Some have wings. Others are wingless. They live in clusters or colonies on the tender part of the plant and they suck the plant juices.

An effective control is a spray made of nicotine sulfate. You may buy the 40-percent solution and dilute it for use as a spray.

Before you spray the plant, pick off the shriveled leaves, as they probably will not recover, and there is no use wasting spray on them.

Now for your nicotine sulfate spray. A 1/4 teaspoonful of the 40 percent nicotine sulfate will make a quart of the spray. The other ingredients are mild soap flakes or chips and water. Use one level tablespoon of the soapflakes. Dissolve the soap in a pint of warm water. Then add the nicotine sulfate. Stir the mixture and add enough water to make a quart of the solution.

I'll repeat those proportions: 1/4 teaspoon of nicotine sulfate; one level tablespoon of mild soap flakes or chips; to one quart of water.

Spray the plants thoroughly. It's necessary to kill the aphids by actual contact with the poison. And by the way, use care when spraying with nicotine sulfate solution. Don't get it on your skin or about your eyes or mouth.

If the infestation of aphids is bad, you'll need to spray the plants at regular intervals - at least, once a week - to get the aphids under control. Be sure to inspect any new plants you buy. See that there are no clusters of aphids on the leaves. Often insects are brought into the house on house plants or in bouquets.

Our next question is about cockroaches. A homemaker wants to know whether sodium fluoride powder is just as effective as a liquid sprayed on the cockroaches. She says, "We've recently moved to a house that swarms with cockroaches. It seems to me that the powders I've used have been very slow in taking effect."

Slow, but sure. That's the verdict of scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture on sodium fluoride powder. Of course, you can get effective sprays. But unless you're mighty quick on the trigger, you're not going to catch Mr. Cockroach in time to spray him with the poison liquid. He has a talent for making a quick get-away when the light's turned on.

Sprinkle sodium flouride around his nightly loafing places and the cockroach will take his own poison. As you say...the powder doesn't get rid of the roaches immediately. May take several days. And you'll have to continue sprinkling the sodium flouride powder in the cracks and crevices...in the corners of the cupboard... under the sink...back of the stove. Sprinkle it in all places where the cockroach

hides. Don't give up. The sodium flouride will get the cockroaches.

A word of warning. Sodium flouride is poisonous when taken internally. So take care in storing it and handling it. Be sure there's no possibility of contaminating food with it. Keep the bait out of reach of children and pets.

And now for the final question in today's question box. This from a homemaker who wants to know what is the slender little gray insect that eats holes in rayon. She says, "It's causing damage to our ~~hose~~ as well as to our rayon dresses and blouses. How can we get rid of it?"

The guilty insect in this case is the silverfish. It likes warm damp places. The basements of heated houses are favorite haunts of the silverfish. It's food is starch. The silverfish also likes sugar. It eats the sizing in paper and the starch in clothes and curtains.

Best way to get rid of silverfish is to use a poison bait. The U. S. Department of Agriculture has a leaflet on silverfish. It tell the habits and methods of controlling the insect. And there's a formula for poison bait. You may have a copy free. Just send your name and address to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. Ask for the leaflet on silverfish.

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