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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, June 23, 1942.

ANSWERS FROM

Scientists of the U. S.
Department of Agriculture

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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In 3 Hh
QUESTION BOX

How take paint from bristles?
Why flat places on rubber rolls?
Quick and often, or slow and seldom?

—ooOoo—

Letters and more letters in the mailbag lately asking how to look after household articles so they'll last. Women understand now that household goods are going to be scarce—that when this or that article wears out, there may not be another at the store to replace it. So everybody's getting interested in the secrets of saving. And a good thing, too—for the family and the country.

Several letters this week ask about saving paint brushes. The paint brush is a little article that used to go to waste right and left. Mother would get ambitious in the spring and paint the kitchen chairs or the porch furniture. And then she'd just forget about the brush. The brush would lie around until the paint dried on the bristles. Then Mother would throw the brush in the trash. Next time she had the urge to paint, she bought another brush.

Well, those were the days before the war when manufacturers of paint brushes were getting good bristles from China and Russia. But good brushes are getting scarce. Bristles aren't coming in from China and Russia as they did. And the pigs in this country have bristles that are too short and too soft for first-class brushes. Poor bristles make brushes drip and don't spread paint evenly.

So nowadays Mother doesn't forget the brush when the painting job is done. She cleans the paint off while the paint is still fresh, instead of letting it get dry and hard. Then she wraps the clean brush in paper, ties a cord around to hold the paper on, and hangs the brush up by its handle to keep the bristles straight and ready for the next time she paints.

Well, the letters here this week ask how to clean paint from brushes. Chemists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say: clean with a solvent that suits the kind of paint on the brush. Some paint dissolves in oil, some in turpentine, some in alcohol, and some in water. If you have been painting with oil paint, clean the bristles with raw linseed oil; if you've been using flat finish paint, clean with kerosene oil--or "coal oil" as some people call it. If you've been using varnish, clean your brush with turpentine. If you've been using shellac, the best cleaner is denatured alcohol. As for calcimine or whitewash, just plain water will take that off.

When you have finished painting, get as much paint off the brush as you can with a rag. Then dip the brush in the liquid solvent. Clean again with a clean cloth. Last of all, wash the brush in soap and water, rinse, and dry. Hang the brush up by the handle to keep the bristles straight. Cover with paper to keep out dust.

If your paint job is going to last over several days, of course, it's wasteful of paint to clean the brush every night. Painters often keep brushes soft this way, they make a hole through the wooden handle and then run a heavy wire through that hole. They lay the wire over the top of the paint-can with the brush hanging down. Then they put enough raw linseed oil in the can to keep the bristles completely covered. They make sure the ends of the bristles don't touch the bottom of the can and become bent or twisted.

So much for saving your good paint brush. Now a question about saving the rubber on the wringer of your washtub or washing machine. A letter here says: "The rubber rollers of my wringer have become flat in places so they don't wring clothes well any more. Here and there the rubber has come off the surface of the roller. Can you tell me what caused this?"

Flat spots on rollers of the wringer came from leaving the rolls pressed together, household equipment experts say. They advise releasing the pressure on the wringer the moment all clothes have gone through. Warm rubber left under pressure sticks and may tear when pulled apart. The experts also advise cleaning and drying the wringer after every wash and then covering the wringer to protect against dust, dirt, heat and sunshine. Rubber is too valuable to neglect. If you ruin your rubber rollers, you may not be able to buy more.

Here's how the experts say to clean the wringer. If the rollers come out easily, remove them; brush in warm soapy water; rinse in clear water; wipe dry and replace. If they do not come out easily, wash, rinse and dry them in place. Never use a greasy cleaner on the rolls because grease "rots" rubber. Stubborn spots that don't come off with soap and water you can rub off with fine scouring powder.

Remember never to leave the wringer rolls pressed together even a few minutes when you've finished washing. And remember to clean and then cover the wringer after every wash.

Last question: "In order to save my best rug, I have tried not to use my vacuum cleaner on it very often. My neighbor tells me that dirt that gets down into the rug wears out the rug faster than cleaning. She says it actually saves a rug to clean it often. Will you tell me if this is true?"

Equipment experts agree with your neighbor. They advise cleaning the rug before gritty dirt can work down into the pile and cut the fibres. So short cleaning two or three times a week is better for the rug than the usual once-a-week cleaning.

That's all for today. More questions on Thursday.

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