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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Thursday, December 21, 1944

QUESTION BOX

ANSWERS from foresters and home
management specialists of the
U. S. Department of Agriculture

- How season cord wood?
- How shine copper and brass?
- How remove candle stains?

Once again it's time for the homemaker's question box.

And first, we'll take up a letter from a soldier's wife. She writes, "We cook and heat with wood at our house. My husband used to buy the wood. He built the fires too, of course. Since he went into the army, I've taken over both jobs - buying the wood and building the fires. I guess I'm not much good at either one. At first, when I fussed with the fires and shivered while they refused to burn, I thought it was because I didn't know how to build a fire. But now I've decided it's the wood. It's just too green to make a fire. Is there anyway I can dry it out so that it will be usable? And will you please tell me how I'll know the next time that I'm getting good dry wood?"

We've turned to forest experts of the U. S. Department of Agriculture to answer these questions.

About drying out the wood, they say it usually takes from six months to a year to season cord wood. And if the wood you have is too green to burn well, you might plan to stack it up and let it dry out for next year. Buy some dry wood for use this winter. There's no comparison in the amount of heat that dry wood and green wood give off.

The rate your green wood will dry out will depend on the temperature and how much moisture is in the air. It'll depend also on the movement of the air around the individual pieces of wood. And the wood will of course dry faster if it is not exposed to rain and snow.

Some kinds of wood will dry out much more quickly than others. Splitting the wood will help some. Another way you can hurry up the drying is to pile the sticks crosswise. This makes it easier for the air to circulate around them. Stack your wood in a dry place in the basement. Or put it in the woodshed or on the back porch.

And here are some tips to make sure you get good dry wood the next time you buy. Dry wood, or seasoned wood as the forest experts call it, looks dry. It has a greyish weathered color. Now green wood is bright white or yellowish in color. In dry wood, you'll see little cracks or checks at the cut ends. And the bark on dry wood is loose. It breaks off easily. If the bark on wood is tight, you may be fairly certain that the wood is green.

However, don't think that just because wood is wet it's also green. If the dry wood has been standing out in the rain before it's delivered, it will be wet, of course. And it'll burn slowly. But it'll dry out in no time at all if you put it in a dry basement or wood shed for a few days. And it will burn well when it's dry.

Next we have a letter from a soldier's mother. She says, "My son has sent us several souvenirs from overseas. They're little trinkets made of copper and brass. I'd like to keep them pretty and shining. Can you give me a recipe for taking off tarnish?"

You may get commercial polishes for copper and brass. Some of these have wax in them that seem to keep the copper and brass from tarnishing again quite so soon.

Household management specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say that a piece of lemon with salt on it is very good for shining copper and brass.

One thing to keep in mind when you use this lemon-salt treatment is careful rinsing. Be sure you rinse the lemon juice and salt off completely.

The third letter in our question box today goes back to Thanksgiving but I'm answering the question on the air at this time because you may run into the same thing this weekend in your Christmas celebrations.

In this letter, the homemaker says, I'm afraid I've ruined by best tablecloth. We used candles on our Thanksgiving dinner table. The wax ran over and stained the tablecloth in several places. Is there any way to get this stain out?"

Textile scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture suggest this treatment. First, take a dull knife and scrape off as much of the wax as you possibly can. Then blot the remaining wax off the table cloth. Yes, I said "blot". Here's how you do it. You may use clean white blotters or cleaning tissues or paper towels. Place the stained spot between the blotters and press with a warm iron. The wax will melt and the blotters will absorb the melted wax. Use fresh blotters when the blotting paper has become soiled. You may not be able to get all of the wax out this way but you can get most of it. Then sponge what's left with carbon tetrachloride or some other grease solvent.

If you have a color stain on your table cloth after you've blotted the wax out, sponge the cloth with a mixture of rubbing alcohol and water. Use two cups of water to one cup of rubbing alcohol. These treatments should take out any stains of candle wax that may get on your table cloth during the holidays.

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