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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, March 30, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry and the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Listeners, letters come blowing this way with almost every March wind. Between the listeners whose problems are lawns and gardens and those whose questions concern such indoor affairs as curtains, slip covers, and cleaning, your Aunt Sammy is having to hop, skip, and jump to keep up on answers.

First, let me reply to those listeners who have been asking for flower-garden information -- about annuals, and perennials, and so on. Two Department-of-Agriculture bulletins are the best answers I know to these questions. And this is none too early to send a post-card for them. If you are putting your garden library in shape for ready reference, you will find that either or both these bulletins have a place there. Is your pencil handy? You may want it to jot down the names and numbers of these bulletins. The first is called "Growing Annual Flowering Plants." It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1171. Once more: "Growing Annual Flowering Plants," No. 1171. The second is called "Herbaceous Perennials," Farmers' Bulletin No. 1381. "Herbaceous Perennials", No. 1381. You can order a copy of these bulletins by dropping a card or a note to the U. S. Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C. As long as the free supply lasts, you are welcome to a copy.

Next week I'll take up further garden questions, but right now I want to answer those listeners who are working on new spring slip covers and curtains.

Here's a letter from a lady who wants to know how to make slip covers that won't become wrinkled and creased in a short time, as some of her neighbors' covers have done. As she says, it is too bad to spend so much time, effort, and money on covers only to have them look worn and unattractive after a little use. After all, aren't these covers meant to make the room look trim, fresh, and springy at this time of year?

I'll quote Miss Bess Viemont on preventing wrinkles. Miss Viemont, you know, is one of the textile people at the Bureau of Home Economics. And slip covers have been one of her special interests. She has looked into the slip-cover matter very thoroughly. And here's what she says:

"Slip covers often wrinkle badly because they cannot be as tightly stretched and securely fastened to the furniture frame as upholstery can be. The heavier and more firmly woven materials such as denim, galatea, rep, and upholsterer's sateen, will wrinkle less than thinner fabrics. Cretonne, crash, hand-blocked linen, and cotton damask will retain their newness longer than gingham, percale, or chintz. The wrinkling of any material is influenced by the amount of sizing. Those that are filled with starch muss easily, but those with very little dressing look well for a long time. If the slip-cover material is washable, much of the original freshness can be restored."

So if you would prevent wrinkles in the covers you are going to make this spring, choose heavy, firmly woven materials that contain as little starch or dressing as possible. And if you can, choose materials that will wash. Which reminds me, if you plan to wash your slip covers, be sure to shrink the fabric in advance or buy material that is guaranteed completely pre-shrunk.

One more point about wrinkles. Miss Viemont says that figured materials show wrinkles less than plain ones, just as figured materials show soil less. But of course, you can't always use figured fabric in slip covers anymore than you can in curtains. When the walls are figured, the furniture coverings must be plain or so finely patterned that the design gives the impression of texture. A very fine, inconspicuous stripe or check is often all right in a room where a definite design would make you dizzy, so to speak. In rooms with plain walls and floor coverings, figured materials are the proper choice and offer unlimited possibilities for individuality. Plain fabrics would be monotonous, but patterned ones will give character.

Second slip-cover question: "I am trying to fix my house up inexpensively this spring and I want to make a slip cover for an old but comfortable ^{davenport} /-- a cover that will conceal a few worn spots on the davenport and tide us over until we can afford a new lounge. In this case, don't you advise making the cover of rather cheap material instead of investing much in the fabric?"

Again I think you will be interested in what Miss Viemont has to say on this subject. She says: "Unless the slip cover is to be used for only one season, it is usually more economical to buy the best material that can be afforded. The very inexpensive ones fade quickly both in the light and in laundering. As a rule, they are filled with dressing or other finishing substances that wash out and leave a coarse, flimsy, loosely woven cloth. Better colors and designs are found in higher quality fabrics, and although the initial cost may be somewhat greater, they are attractive as long as they last. Even though slip covers may be used only during certain seasons, it is advisable to buy cretonne, semiglazed or unglazed chintz, gingham, percale, or poplin for them. These materials are easy to work with, moderate in price, suitable in color and design for any room in the house, and they will always look well. If the cover is to be used all year and a material that closely resembles upholstery is desired, rep, crash, cotton damask, galatea, drapery sateen, hand-blocked denim, or tapestry offer a wide range of colors and patterns."

One last question -- this one about curtains. "Please suggest some inexpensive fabrics suitable for glass curtains." Answer: A great variety of familiar fabrics make up into glass curtains. You have your choice of fabric as low in cost as cheesecloth, as well as theatrical gauze, voile, batiste, dimity, lawn, madras, marquisette, mull, nets, and laces of all kinds, organdie, pineapple cloth, scrim, swiss, and even pongee.
