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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Thursday, June 12, 1941.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Question Box

How get rid of ants?
How treat berry stains?

Answers from entomologists and
home economists of the U. S.
Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Today's mailbag brings the usual requests for information, and sends us to the scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture for the answers. House ants and berry stains seem to bother our correspondents. Well, here goes,-- we'll take the ants first. I'll read this woman's letter:

"We have been very much annoyed this spring by black ants- both big ones and little ones. The large ones seem to come from the porch and the wood pile, and the very small ones appear along the outside walks. Both get into foods indoors, especially cake or anything sweet. What can we do to get rid of them?"

That's a question, of course, for the entomologists of the Department to answer. They say that although there are several different kinds of ants, some in one region and some in others, the methods of control of any of them are about the same, and are based on the way ants live.

All ants form colonies or nests. The queen ants remain in the nests, lay eggs, and take care of the newly hatched young. The queen and her young have to be fed by the worker ants. Those are the ones you see running about the house in search of food. They carry the food back to the nest and feed it to the queen and the newly hatched ants. It weakens the colony to some extent to kill the workers but the secret of success in fighting ants is to locate the nests and destroy the queen and young. When that is done the few workers that escape do not survive very long.

Follow the trail of the workers back to where they disappear, and try to inject a little carbon disulphide, kerosene, or gasoline into the opening. Use an oil can or a small syringe. Remember these are all inflammable materials, so don't have any fire or smoking around while using them.

If you can't find the ant colony you can get some relief by using poisoned sirup as bait. Or sodium fluoride powder, or chemical barriers of one sort or another. No one remedy will work in all cases. The poisoned sirup is usually carried back to the nest by the workers and they feed it to the queen and young ants. Some ants do not eat sweets, but prefer grease and meat, so other poisoned baits must be prepared for them.

There's a free government leaflet which gives half a dozen different formulas for poisoned ant baits. Why not send for a copy, since you need to know the exact proportions for the baits you mix, and the method of mixing them? Write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and ask for Leaflet 147 on House Ants.

Of course you sweep up all crumbs promptly and keep your food supplies in tight containers. But perhaps you've had trouble with ants getting on cakes and cookies even while they were cooling before you put them away. There's an old-fashioned way you could protect the kitchen table so that when you must put cooked foods down they will be safe from ants. Stand the table legs in small saucers or jars containing a little kerosene. Be sure to keep the kerosene surface free of dead ants, or live ones will use them for a bridge to crawl over to the table legs. Or you could fasten "ant tapes" on the table legs. You make them by boiling strips of bias cloth in a saturated solution of bichloride of mercury. That's a deadly poison, so be careful to keep it away from pets and children. After you boil the strips hang them up to dry and then wrap them around the legs of the table and tie firmly. Ants will not cross there for months.

Next comes a question on stains. "What is the easiest way to take out blackberry and blueberry stains from table linen and cotton dresses?"

If the stained article is white or fast-colored, the textile chemists say you can use the boiling water method. But act promptly, or the stain will be much harder to get out.

Stretch the stained part over a bowl and hold it in place with a rubber band or a string. Then pour boiling water on the stain from a tea-kettle held 3 or 4 feet above the bowl so the water strikes the stain with some force. This usually works at once, but if there is fruit pulp in the stain, you may need to rub the spot between your hands after you use the tea-kettle, then try the boiling water again. Hanging the wet material in the sun will help bleach it. For a very persistent stain try rubbing lemon on the spot and then put the piece in bright sunlight.

Avoid using soap on fresh fruit and berry stains. The alkali in the soap may set the stain. Do you know the "Stain Removal" bulletin of the U. S. Department of Agriculture? It tells how to deal with more than 100 different common stains. If you want a copy, write to the Department and ask for Farmers' Bulletin 1474.

(STAINS--18 lines. o.k. to mention 1474.)

