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## Keeping Up Household Appearances

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# Keeping Up Household Appearances



*Dollar Savers and Stretchers*

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE  
EXTENSION SERVICE

C. Larsen, Director  
Brookings, S. D.

# ***Keeping Up Household Appearances***

By Mary A. Covert

Extension Specialist in Home Management

Feeding and clothing the family, and saving for necessary replacements and the proverbial "rainy day," often leave little to be expended in the general upkeep of the home. There are many ways by which dollars can be saved and stretched. Saving through home production of household supplies, and preservation and care of home furnishings is discussed here.

## **Supplies Which Can be Made at Home**

It is cheaper and much more convenient to make up supplies for general use in large quantities.

### **Furniture Polish**

Put 1 cup of turpentine into a quart jar or bottle. Add to it 1 cup of strong vinegar and shake. Then add 1 cup of denatured alcohol and shake. Lastly add 1 cup of raw linseed oil and shake. The ingredients must be added in this order. It is very important that the contents be thoroughly shaken each time before using. The polish should be evenly distributed over the cloth and sparingly applied.

### **Furniture Cream**

Mix together 1 pint of crude oil, and rotten stone sufficient to make a thin cream. Apply liberally to cracked or marred varnished surface and rub briskly with soft cloth. Wipe off, clean the surface with oil. Wipe off thoroughly and apply polish.

### **Floor Wax (1 pint)**

Mix thoroughly 1 ounce raw linseed oil and 6 ounces of turpentine and set aside. Melt 1 ounce of beeswax and 4 ounces of paraffin over hot water. Salt may be added to the water bath to raise the temperature. Remove from the water bath and add the linseed oil and turpentine mixture. Beat vigorously until the mass becomes creamy and thick. Turpentine is highly inflammable. Care must be taken to have no flame in the room while making the wax and to heat the ingredients over hot water away from the stove.

### **Floor or Woodwork Oil (1 pint)**

One-half cup boiled linseed oil thinned with 1½ cups of turpentine makes an excellent floor or woodwork oil. It should be very sparingly applied and all excess oil removed. Special attention should be given to the corners. Excess oil collects dust forming a film which is difficult to remove.

### **Laundry Bleach**

An economical laundry bleach is made by mixing together in the following order ¾ pound of washing soda, 1 quart of boiling water, 1 pound of fresh "chloride of lime" and 2 quarts of cold water. Stir the mixture well. Let it settle and clear. Pour the clear liquid into bottles and store. The sediment is an excellent disinfectant for toilets and drain pipes.

### Soaps and Water Softener

Money may be saved by making both toilet and laundry soap, by softening hard water or sweetening and clearing rain water. See Extension economy circulars entitled "Home Made Soap," "Economical Purchase and Use of Soap," "Adequate Water Softening—Storage and Care of Rain Water."

### Pumice Paste

Dissolve  $\frac{1}{4}$  cake of alkali free soap in 1 pint of soft water. Cool and add 1 cup of powdered pumice. Mix well. Beat with egg beater until it becomes a light creamy paste. Add warm water if too thick. Pumice paste is excellent for both toilet and household purposes.

### Silver Polish

Dissolve  $\frac{1}{4}$  cake of alkali free soap in 1 pint of soft water. When cool add  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups of whiting which has been finely powdered by rolling and sifting and mixed to a paste with a little water. Stir well and add 4 teaspoonfuls of glycerine. Beat thoroughly into a creamy paste. Add warm water if too thick. This polish may be used on any metal where whiting is recommended, also for cleaning very soiled light colored painted woodwork.

## Saving Through Household Care

### Walls

Responses to the question "What concerns you most about the appearance of your house," show that the majority of homemakers are concerned about the appearance of their walls. Redecoration of walls is expensive if professional labor is used. The cost of labor often exceeds the cost of materials. Wall finishes can be successfully applied by home labor at a decided saving. Extension Circular 231 "New Wall Finishes" explains how plaster walls are repaired and how various wall finishes are applied.

Walls should be dusted regularly, weekly or twice a month depending upon the amount of dirt in the air. If the dust is not removed the vapors in the air will unite with it forming a dirt film which is difficult to remove. Good ventilation, especially while cooking or washing will help to prevent vapors from condensing. An efficient homemade wall brush is illustrated in Extension Circular No. 318. Chairs and other pieces of furniture should be protected if the wall does not have a washable finish. Oil cloth preferably in matching color may be applied to the area. If held tightly in place by a narrow metal or wooden molding it will last a long time, look well, and be easily cleaned.

### Care of Papered Walls

Papered walls should be brushed regularly to remove the dust. The brush should be shaken frequently and washed when needed. There are numerous wall cleaning preparations. Most of them are difficult to use and the results are often unsatisfactory.

The best way to repair a large grease spot on a papered wall is to remove the spot of soiled paper and put on a carefully matched new piece. The patch will show less if it is irregular in shape and if the edges are sand papered thin before applying. Fuller's earth mixed to a paste with ammonia will usually remove small grease spots. Apply it to the spot,

let dry and brush off the dried paste with a clean stiff brush. For grease spots on very delicate paper apply a very hot iron over a flat pad made of powdered chalk between folds of cheese cloth. Clean white blotting blotting paper may be used instead of the pad.

#### **Care of Painted Walls**

Painted walls should be brushed regularly with a dry wall brush and occasionally gone over with a damp flannel cloth. As a rule any attempt to clean spots leaves a ring so the entire surface has to be cleaned.

To wash flat painted walls use a good suds made with warm water and soap. Do not rub hard. If the walls are greasy add a small quantity of kerosene to the suds—1 ounce to a gallon of water. Sponge about a square yard of the surface at one time and rinse immediately with clear warm water and a large sponge. Commence at baseboard and work upward taking care that soiled water does not run down on clean surface. Should it run down, clean it at once. Watch that the edge of the cleaned spot does not get dry.

Gloss painted walls and enameled walls are easier to clean than flat painted walls. They will stand stronger washing solutions. For ordinary cleaning, the procedure recommended above for flat painted walls will give good results. Badly soiled gloss painted walls may be washed with a very weak solution of sal soda and warm water. They should be gently rubbed with a soft cloth or sponge. If too much sal soda is used it will take off the gloss.

#### **Calcimine Walls**

(Kalsomine more familiar spelling)

Calcimine walls cannot be washed satisfactorily. They should be dusted regularly as recommended for papered walls. Grease spots are treated as directed for the removal of spots on wall paper.

### **Rugs, Cause of Color Shading, Dyeing**

Home makers are also concerned about the appearance of their floors. For general care and repair of rugs and floors see Farmers Bulletin No. 1219.

#### **Color Shading**

Color shading in pile rugs is usually due to insufficient moisture in the air. When the air is too dry the short fibers, left in the rug to help keep the pile upright, fuzz out. The fibers of the pile lose their elasticity and fall over exposing the side of the pile to the surface of the rug. The rug appears spotted because part of the pile is upright and part is reclining. The cut ends of the upright pile give the rug a dull finish, and the sides of the reclining pile reflect light giving a shiny or lighter appearance. Shading may be corrected if done in time by restoring moisture to the air, rubbing the reclining pile lightly with a dampened cloth and brushing it to an upright position.

#### **Rug Dyeing**

Dyeing is an inexpensive solution for inharmonious rugs which must be used together or rugs which have become faded and shabby. Prepare a pail of hot dye in the color desired—brown, green or blue are the colors most often used over other colors. Go over the surface of the clean rug

with a brush dipped into the hot dye. Use only enough dye to color the fibers—do not saturate the rug. Rub the color well into the fibers. Apply the dye evenly, working over a small area, keep the edge of the dyed area irregular and wet. Take up the excess dye on the area with newspapers or rags—clean burlap sacks may be used. When beginning a new area be careful to blend the dye at the edge so that the rug will not be streaked. If the color should become too deep at any place it may be lightened by successive spongings with clear hot water. When the entire rug has been dyed it should be dried as quickly as possible. When almost dry the pile should be brushed up.

### **Cleaning and Preservation of Woodwork**

Warm water and neutral soap in a light suds makes the best and most economical cleaner for most woodwork. After washing, the woodwork should be rinsed with clear warm water, and then rubbed dry with a soft cloth. Light colored painted woodwork which is very soiled may be rubbed with a mixture of soap lather and whiting. Oil in varnished or painted surfaces evaporates causing the finish to check and powder. Oil should be applied sparingly twice a year to replace the oil which has evaporated. All excess oil should be wiped off with a clean dry cloth. If left on surface a dirt film forms which is difficult to remove. For general care and repair of wood finishes see Extension Circular 301, "Furniture, its Care and Repair."

### **Care of Upholstery**

The cleaning and repair of upholstery is discussed in Extension Circular 301. Pile rugs and tapestries are cleaned as directed for upholstery.

### **Care of Leather**

Great harm is often done to leather upholstery by the use of furniture polishes which soften the surface to stickiness with their turpentine, alcohol or alkalis. Soiled leather surfaces should be rubbed briskly, a small area at a time, with a warm neutral soap lather. Every trace of the soap is then removed with a clean moist cloth. The gloss is restored by rubbing with a soft, dry cloth. Leather requires a dressing of oil about every six months. This "feeding" of the leather replaces oil which has evaporated. It softens the pores, helps to close up cracks, prevents untimely wear and retains the polish. The leather should be cleaned as directed above and allowed to dry thoroughly before the oil is applied. Olive oil, raw linseed oil or vaseline may be used. Apply the oil or vaseline sparingly taking care not to saturate the grain. Rub in well and polish with a soft woolen or silk cloth. This treatment also applies to leather book bindings, suit cases and other leather articles about the home.

### **Care and Cleaning of Metals**

#### **Aluminum**

Aluminum is not discolored by air even in the presence of moisture but contact with anything alkaline will produce a dark tarnish. The tarnish may be removed by boiling a strong solution of vinegar and water in the vessel and allowing it to stand for several hours. The tarnish may also be

removed with fine steel wool. Soaps and scouring powders of alkaline nature should not be used in cleaning aluminum.

#### **Tin**

Tin is not affected by air but both alkalis and acids discolor it. The so-called tin utensils are really made of a very thin sheet of iron covered with tin. Tin is a soft metal. The use of hard abrasives wears through the outer coating of tin, exposing the iron which readily rusts. A paste made of whiting and water or kerosene makes a satisfactory polishing agent for tin.

#### **Zinc and Galvanized Iron**

Galvanized iron is made by dipping an iron vessel in a vat of molten zinc. Galvanized vessels are superior to iron for many purposes because zinc is but slightly affected by air. It is acted upon by both acid and alkalis. Galvanized iron is not a suitable material for culinary vessels because many of the zinc compounds are poisonous if taken into the body in large quantities. Zinc surfaces should be polished with paste made of whiting and kerosene. The harder abrasives are not suitable because of the softness of the metal.

#### **Iron**

Iron is acted upon by air especially in the presence of moisture. It forms scales which peel off exposing a new surface to be rusted. The rusting of iron is more serious than the tarnishing of metals which forms a firm film of metallic compound protecting the remainder of the metal from further tarnish. Unpainted iron or steel equipment when not in use should be protected against the action of air by a thin coating of kerosene or vaseline. Iron and steel kitchen utensils are not affected by scouring agents containing alkalis. They are not scratched by the hardest household abrasives. The cooking surface of a stove in regular use can be kept from rusting by rubbing the slightly warm surface with waxed or oil paper (bread wrappers, etc.) or with a cloth moistened with a few drops of kerosene or light lubricating oil.

#### **Copper, Brass, Bronze**

Copper, brass and bronze are acted upon by moist air. The tarnish is a greenish compound which is poisonous. Rotten stone mixed with oil to a creamy consistency is commonly used to remove the tarnish. Warm buttermilk or vinegar also dissolves the tarnish on these metals. When buttermilk or vinegar has been used the article must be thoroughly washed, rinsed, dried and rubbed with oil to stop the action of the acid on the metal. After copper, brass, or bronze has been cleaned a final rubbing with dry rotten stone or whiting produces brighter luster.

#### **Silver**

Tarnish on silver is caused by contact with sulphur in the air, in food, in wool, rubber, and some bleached and dyed materials. A satisfactory and inexpensive silver polish can be made by using whiting and household ammonia mixed to a cream. It should be kept in a tightly stoppered bottle. The silver should be rubbed well with the paste and allowed to dry. It is then washed in warm neutral suds, rinsed in hot water, dried and polished with a soft cloth.

Solid pieces of silver with bright finish may be cleaned quickly by submerging in an aluminum kettle of hot water containing 1 teaspoon of salt and one of baking powder to each quart of water. The tarnish is removed from the silver and deposited on the sides of the kettle. The tarnish must be removed before the kettle is used again for cleaning. A strip

or aluminum cut from an old kettle or a small aluminum pie pan placed in the bottom of an enamel kettle containing the salt and soda solution works just as well as the aluminum kettle and is easier to clean. In either case the silver must touch the aluminum or another piece of silver which touches it in order to be cleaned. This method cleans but does not polish. If a polish is desired a quick rubbing of each piece with a little dry whiting will be necessary after removing from the pan. This method is advised for old silver only. It should not be used on hollow handled silver or silver which has an oxidized French gray finish.

#### **Nickel**

Nickel and nickel plated articles if kept dry seldom need more than frequent washing with hot soapy water, careful drying and polishing with a soft cloth. Nickel which has grown dull from neglect may be brightened by a rubbing with whiting or rotten stone and olive oil.

#### **Other Metals**

Pewter, Britannia ware and German silver should be cleansed by rubbing with whiting or rotten stone and olive oil. Tarnish may be removed from gold by rubbing with dry or moistened baking soda.

#### **Enameled Ware**

Enamelware should be protected from strong acid, sudden changes of temperature and unnecessary knocks. Discolored enamelware may be scoured with whiting or rotten stone mixed to a paste with water or oil.

#### **Care of Porcelain and Marble**

Porcelain should be wiped dry after being used. Water drying in spots dulls the finish. Porcelain tubs, bowls, sinks, should be washed regularly with hot water containing a little kerosene. An occasional rubbing with whiting and kerosene will help to keep them in good condition. Stains made by water containing an excess of iron may be removed from porcelain by scrubbing the spot with a mixture of whiting and oxalic acid in creamy consistency. The porcelain must be washed free of the acid.

Marble is affected by acids. Even the mildest acid will remove the polish. If anything containing acid has touched the marble it should be neutralized at once with an alkali—ammonia, soda or borax. If the acid has roughened the finish it may be restored in a measure by rubbing the rough spot with pumice stone and water and then polishing with a chamois covered flat weight. If grease is spilled on marble make a thin paste of a strong hot solution of sal soda and fuller's earth. Spread this on the spot and let it remain for twenty-four hours. Repeat the treatment if needed. For general care marble should be washed with a soft cloth, neutral soap, and water. If very soiled pumice stone should also be used. Tiles are cleaned and polished in the same manner.

#### **Cleaning China, Casts and Papier Mache Articles**

Discoloration on glass, china and glazed pottery can often be removed by rubbing with whiting and vinegar.

If Japanese or Papier-Mache articles are spotted or greasy, sponge them with warm neutral soap suds. Wipe off with clean cloth moistened with clear warm water. Dry thoroughly. Polish with a soft cloth and sprinkling of whiting. Dust free of whiting and give final polish with chamois.

Cover soiled plaster casts well with a mixture of dry whiting and fuller's earth. Wrap in a cloth dusted heavily with the mixture. Let them stand a few days then brush off the cleaning material. This does not always remove all the soil but it is the safest method of cleaning.



### **Cleaning Oil Paintings, Picture and Mirror Frames**

Expensive oil paintings should be cleaned by an expert. Others may be cleaned by applying a stiff lather made of luke warm water and neutral soap jelly liberally to the surface with a shaving brush. Remove lather immediately with a damp cloth, patting rather than rubbing the surface. Repeat until the surface is clean.

Picture and mirror frames are also cleaned with a stiff lather made of mild white soap and soft water. Apply with a soft brush, holding a blotter tight against the frame to protect the glass and prevent moisture from working inside. Rinse off with a soft cloth or brush dipped in clear water, being careful not to use more water than necessary. Dry thoroughly and polish with a soft cloth.

### **Cleaning Isinglass and Ivory**

Isinglass is very fragile. Carefully remove soot with a soft cloth and wash the surface with hot vinegar. Rinse with clear vinegar and dry with a soft cloth.

Wash ivory well in lukewarm soap lather, using an old toothbrush for any carved parts. Place in bright sunshine for several hours, keeping the ivory wet all the time with soapy water to prevent warping. Wash, rinse, and dry. If still stained, clean with a little whiting moistened with lemon juice or vinegar. Wood alcohol should be used to clean piano keys. Water tends to loosen the ivory from the wood beneath.

### **Washing Chamois Skin**

Rub the chamois thoroughly with soap, then allow it to remain for 2 hours in a weak, warm solution of sal soda, and rinse until clean. Instead of rinsing in clean water and removing all traces of soap, rinse in a weak, soapy solution of soda, such as was used for washing in the first place. It is the soap left in the leather by the rinsing solution that keeps it soft and smooth. After rinsing, wring out the leather in a coarse towel and dry quickly; then brush well, and pull and rub it thoroughly in the hands.

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