

**HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT.**

All communications or inquiry for this department should be addressed to

FLORIDA AGRICULTURIST,

The editor of this department will gladly welcome any hints or articles pertinent to the household. If an reader has any helpful suggestions, please send them along.

**December.**

Holly at the window pane,  
Fields snowy white,  
Merry bells a-tinkling,  
Stars shining bright.

All the world a-smiling,  
Goodwill to spare,  
Gracious thoughts and generous thoughts,  
Christmas in the air!  
—Judith Giddings.

**The House Restful.**

Our houses, like our lives, are overcrowded; it is the tendency of the times; and, although many a voice is raised in praise of the simple Japanese interiors, where one vase decorates a room, there are few who follow this excellent example. It is depressing to think of the money spent on unnecessary furniture and bric-a-brac, and of the many hours spent cleaning and caring for them. Perhaps it might be worth while if the result were beautiful, which it certainly is not. There is nothing artistic in a crowded room. As a rule, there is no discretion in the massing, and the most incongruous articles are placed side by side. A really exquisite vase, picture or carving, loses its value when it is surrounded too closely by other ornaments, and the whole effect is blurred and confused. The ideal room has spaces to rest the eye, everything is beautiful in itself, and each article is chosen with due regard to the room as a whole. An ornament that is handsome in the store may prove to be a jarring note in your house. And, when I say "beautiful," I do not mean expensive. Indeed, some of the most hideous things I have ever seen have been costly, and some of the prettiest have been bought for a few cents.

Aside from these considerations, a crowded room is not wholesome. Dust collects in all the cracks and corners, and even the tidiest housekeeper cannot dislodge every particle every day. This ought to be especially taken to heart in our bedrooms. Whatever obtains downstairs, our sleeping-rooms should be as free of dust-catchers as possible.

At this point I hear someone exclaim. "That's all very well if one is just beginning and can arrange things according to an ideal plan, but how about me? I have kept house for twenty years and naturally every room is full to overflowing." Under these circumstances the change is difficult, but not impossible. Of course, many of one's household goods are endeared to one by associations; but I should weed out such as are neither beautiful nor beloved, and give them to someone who really needs them. It will be a pleasure to think they are helping someone else instead of hindering you. After this there would still be an over-abundance, so I should put in the storeroom all that was not necessary, and then at the end of a few months I should shift things and have my house refurnished, so to speak. This is not impossible, for I know two people who do it regularly. Until one tries she cannot realize how much more she appreciates a favorite picture or a cherished bit of pottery after it has been in seclusion for a time. It is like having a lovely new present, to set it again.

Our eyes need breathing spaces as well as our lungs and a very good rule to follow is this: If you suspect that your room is over-full, try removing a lamp, a cushion or a photograph. If, at the end of a week, you no longer notice its absence, you are safe in not replacing it.—Boston Cooking School.

**Exit the Washboard.**

It has of late been asserted that the old familiar instrument of torture, the washboard, has been banished; that the cleansing of the family clothes is now an easy process, literally speaking, and this without extravagance of any sort—either in machinery, washing materials or wear and tear on the clothes.

Just an instance or two that comes to mind. A newcomer in an apartment house, where the laundry was used in common and clothes line space was at a premium, went to arrange with her neighbor so that their washing should not conflict. Judge of her surprise to find that the other housekeeper, a frail little woman with a baby at the creeping age, invariably had her washing on the line by 8 o'clock, and on a pleasant day had it ready to iron at an hour when the other housekeepers were just beginning to hang out their clothes. The secret of this was a washing machine, and a husband who on Monday mornings got up a half-hour or so earlier than usual to operate it. The baby's dainty lace-trimmed clothes, though often grimy from frequent expeditions across floor and piazza, came out without the slightest tear, yet white as snow. Tablecloths, sheets and even blankets were done as successfully, and even the young housewife's old-fashioned neighbors, who sniffed at the idea of a machine for washing clothes, were not at all above making use of that machine to clean their quilts and blankets.

How about the large family where the head of the house isn't available for running the machine? asks the reader. In a family of six, including a hired man, off on a farm, the two youngest children, a boy thirteen and a girl fourteen, take great pride and pleasure in doing the family washing all by themselves before they go to school. The washing is always far from small, yet they consider it fun.

It would seem from this that no mousekeeper need longer be under the thrall of "blue Monday," and despite the notorious reluctance of woman to adopt new appliances and methods for housework the washing machine is here to stay and is constantly gaining a larger clientele. The first cost is not large, and any housewife who employs a laundress must admit that the machine pays for itself in money in a comparatively short time, to say nothing of the saving of wear and tear on clothes. The woman who has been accustomed to doing her own washing, finds a machine saves her no end of time, not to mention the lessened wear and tear on herself. The work of operating a good washer furnishes a moderate amount of the most healthful sort of exercise, taken in a correct posture, expanding the lungs and developing arms and shoulders. It may often be accomplished sitting permitting the housekeeper to read the paper or hold the baby in addition. There is no inhaling of dirt-laden steam, no cramped chest, no danger of chill or chapped hands.

Best of all the washing does not call for fibre-eating and clothes-destroying chemicals. The motions involved force the water through the clothes, carrying away the dirt, and turn the garments so that each part is subjected to this cleansing operation. The garments are not rubbed to pieces as with a washboard. As the hands need not be considered, very hot water is used, being more effective than warm. The soap is dissolved in the water before the clothes are added, though sometimes extra boiled portions are well soaped. It is hard to conceive of less wear on the clothes.

There is uniform enthusiasm among machine users as to results, from lace curtains to pieces of carpet, where machines are correctly used. Apparently the washboard will soon be, like the spinning wheel, a thing of the past.—Good Housekeeping.

**Treatment of Constipation.**

It is a curious fact, and a most unfortunate one, that the mind exerts a powerful influence on the bowels. There are many sensitive souls who can never have an operation unless all the conditions and surroundings are absolutely favorable. The fear of interruption, the necessity of withdrawing oneself from the company without being able to conceal the reason for such withdrawal, or the feeling that some business engagement presses may suffice effectually to repress desire.

The sole remedy for this is mental discipline. One should endeavor to overcome false modesty and cultivate the habit of mind of those who recognize instinctively that this is as natural a function as breathing or eating, and that, while the act requires privacy, the act of retiring for such act is most becoming and not at all to be ashamed of.

One who is of a constipated habit should take thought of his diet. The muscles of the bowels, in order to contract, must have something to contract upon; therefore one should eat fruit, vegetables, whole-wheat bread and such things as will leave a fibrous or woody residue to give bulk to the intestinal contents.

Regular exercise is necessary, as is likewise the breathing of plenty of fresh air. Water-drinking—six or eight glasses or more a day, and especially a glass of cold water before breakfast—should, in one with sound heart and kidneys, be a regular habit.

Laxative medicines are perhaps the most vicious of all the causes of constipation. Every one suffers occasionally from an attack of constipation. This may be due to any one of various causes, but will usually pass away of itself in a few days unless one tries to cure it, by a cathartic, which will give only momentary relief, and will leave the self-drugger in a worse state than before. Sometimes, of course, the regular use of a laxative for a few days or weeks may be necessary to get one back into a normal condition, but this should be done only under the advice of a physician. Regulation of the food and drink, sufficient (but not too much), sleep in a well-ventilated room, a regular habit of going to the closet at the same time each day, mental calm, the repression of worry over one's condition and strict avoidance of laxative medicines will cure most cases of constipation. If they do not, and the condition threatens to become chronic, then medical advice should be sought.—Youth's Companion.

**How to Cook the Very Simple Things.**

It is, as a general rule, the simplest things that are least commonly done well. From the very fact that things are easily done we frequently neglect the details to make them perfect.

To cook a steak one must have a general knowledge of the condition of the meat, and must know exactly the time at which it is to be served. If it is to be done under a gas stove the broiler must be thoroughly heated; if over a coal fire the gas must be thoroughly burned from the coals; charcoal is, perhaps, the best of all. When the coals are red and free from smoke they are in good condition to produce a perfectly cooked steak, but not otherwise.

**How to Boil a Potato.**

It requires more knowledge to serve a vegetable in good condition than it does to broil a steak. In fact, the boiling and baking of potatoes seem to be lost arts. First of all, select potatoes of an equal size, scrub them thoroughly, and if they are to be boiled in their jackets throw them in to cold water for ten minutes, then put them into a kettle of actually boiling water, and boil them, not rapidly until you can easily pierce them to the center with a fork. Medium-sized potatoes should not be tested before twenty minutes; it usually requires about half an hour to cook them, and constant trying spoils them. As soon

## Make Your Grocer Give You Guaranteed Cream of Tartar Baking Powder

Alum Baking Powders interfere with digestion and are unhealthy.

Avoid the alum.

as they are done drain every particle of water from the saucepan; dust the potatoes with salt and shake them over the fire in an uncovered vessel, until they are perfectly dry. Turn them into a vegetable dish and serve at once; do not cover the dish.

To boil pared potatoes take off the very thinnest skin; put the potatoes at once into very cold water; throw them into a kettle of boiling water and boil until they can be pierced to the center with a fork; drain perfectly dry, salt; shake over the fire until the potatoes are glossy and as white as snowballs, turn into a heated dish and serve at once.

All starchy foods should be allowed to dry in uncovered vessels and be served in hot uncovered dishes.

It may not be amiss to say a word about the mashing of boiled potatoes. As soon as the potatoes are dry, they should be put through an ordinary vegetable press, and sufficiently hot milk added to make them moist but not pasty; stand the pot or bowl over the fire and beat the potatoes until they are white and light; heap them at once in an uncovered heated dish and send to the table; do not pat them down and do not add butter to them either before or after the beating.

**To Make a Cake.**

If the cake is to be a butter cake arrange the oven so that it will be in good condition but rather moderate. Cakes without butter require quick ovens with the exception of angel's food and sunshine cake. First read the recipe and collect all the ingredients; measure the sugar; measure and sift the flour; add baking powder and sift it again; separate the eggs; get pans; grease them or line them with paper. Beat the butter to a cream; add the sugar gradually and beat until light; add the yolks of the eggs and beat again, and if the recipe calls for water or milk add it slowly and alternately with the flour. When you have used the last of both beat the cake for three minutes; then beat the whites of the eggs; fold them into the batter carefully, and turn the cake into the pan or pans and put at once into the oven. Make sure that you understand the oven; do not open the door nor move the cakes for at least ten minutes; peep into the oven to make sure that they are baking nicely, and close the door quietly. If the oven is too hot the cakes brown before they are light, and the result is that when you cool the oven down they crack in the center. Butter cakes must be baked slowly, while sponge cakes, lady-fingers and such cakes should always be baked quickly.