

## **A Clean Alternative**

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As a hunter and a fisherman, I have always been extremely upset when I notice things such as cigarette butts and food wrappers on and along the trail. Excess fishing line and spent casings can be added to this list. All of us have seen such things along the road like disposable diapers, tires, and other various types of garbage. This is considered by law to be "Offensive Littering" and is punishable by fines. To me, this shows not only a lack of respect for the environment but a huge lack of self respect as well. With this understanding, it is just as important to acknowledge there are more subtle polluters often not considered in and around our homes and businesses (and yes, I am guilty too!).

Pollutants that come from homes often originate in the kitchen, bathroom, or garage. Some chemicals such as oil, paint thinner, and pesticides often find their way down the drain and into the environment where water supplies can become contaminated. Household cleansers, such as drain cleaner, oven cleaner, and tarnish remover have caustic chemicals that lower water quality. These products have chemical ingredients that may cause increased difficulty when treating wastewater. A partial solution would be to avoid putting these chemicals directly into the environment and the wastewater in the first place. Hazardous household wastes can be taken to approved disposal sites. Fortunately, there are non-toxic alternatives that can be used instead of some household cleansers. Items such as baking soda and vinegar can be used in different combinations to clean different areas of the home. Baking soda can be used in place of a room deodorizer. Boiling water, vinegar, and baking soda can be used with a plunger to take the place of a toxic drain cleaner. Vinegar wiped with newspaper can be used as a window cleaner. Scouring powder can be replaced by baking soda and vinegar. Salt, baking soda, and a piece of aluminum foil in warm water can take the place of a tarnish remover.

The average home in America today has between 10-15 gallons of toxic products. The following is a list of safe alternatives to some of these toxic chemicals used in the home. Please be aware that, although these "home brews" may be friendlier for

the environment, this does not mean they are safe for human consumption (even common materials such as vinegar can be harmful if consumed in large quantities). So treat these mixtures with care and keep them out of children's reach. Here are some safe alternatives to otherwise toxic home cleaning products:

### **DRAIN CLEANER:**

Dissolve 1 lb. washing soda in 3 gallons of water and pour down the drain. Grind lemon rinds and 1/4 cup borax in garbage disposal and rinse with hot water. Pour 1/2 cup baking soda into drain and follow with 1/2 cup vinegar or lemon juice (beware of a strong reaction from these two chemicals). Let the mixture sit for 15 minutes before rinsing with hot water.

**BEST BET:** avoid dumping grease down the drain; instead, pour into soup can, freeze it, and throw it out on garbage day.

### **APPLIANCE CLEANER:**

Combine 1 tsp borax, 2 tbsp vinegar, 1/4 tsp liquid soap and 2 cups of very hot water in a spray bottle. Shake gently until everything dissolves; spray the mixture onto appliances and wipe with a rag.

### **OVEN CLEANER:**

Sprinkle oven generously with water, sprinkle with baking soda, and sprinkle again with water. Let sit overnight and wipe up. If desired, wipe entire oven with liquid soap and rinse thoroughly. Mix 2 tbsp liquid soap, 2 tsp borax and warm water.

### **CREAMY SOFT SCRUBBER:**

Combine 1/2 cup baking soda in a bowl with vegetable oil-based liquid soap, stirring into a creamy paste. Scoop onto a sponge and wash desired surface. Rinse thoroughly. If a disinfectant is desired, add borax; for heavy washing jobs, add washing soda.

### **WINDOW CLEANER:**

Shake up 1 tsp liquid soap, 3 tbsp vinegar and 2 cups water in a spray bottle. Use as you normally would.

### **LINOLEUM FLOOR CLEANER:**

Blend 1/2 cup liquid soap, 1/2 cup lemon juice, and 2 gallons warm water. Wash floors as usual.

#### STAIN REMOVERS:

COFFEE STAINS – rub moist salt on the item

RUST STAINS on clothes – lemon juice, salt, and sunlight

SCORCH MARKS on clothes – use grated onions

INK SPOTS on clothes – cold water, 1 tbsp cream of tartar and 1 tbsp lemon juice

OIL STAINS on clothes – rub white chalk on stain before laundering

PERSPIRATION STAINS on clothes – white vinegar and water

GENERAL SPOTS on clothes – club soda or lemon juice or salt

#### BATHROOM CLEANERS:

MILDEW REMOVER – use equal parts vinegar and salt

TOILET BOWL CLEANER – paste of borax and lemon juice, or just borax, left in toilet overnight and wiped out in the morning

TUB AND TILE CLEANER – combine 1/2 cup baking soda, 1 cup white vinegar, and warm water

#### POLISHES FOR AROUND THE HOUSE:

For CHROME – apple cider vinegar. For SILVER – mix 1 qt. warm water, 1 tbsp baking soda, 1 tbsp salt, and a piece of aluminum foil. For COPPER – lemon juice and salt. For STAINLESS STEEL – mineral oil. For BRASS – Worcestershire sauce or vinegar and water

#### SHOE POLISH:

Banana peel

#### INSECT PROBLEMS AT HOME:

Flies – well-watered pot of basil

Roaches – chopped bay leaves and cucumber skins

Insects on outdoor plants – soapy water on leaves, then rinse; or boil elderberry leaves in water and add a touch of liquid soap to make a spray

Ants – red chili powder at point of entry into house

Moths – cedar chips

Fleas on pets – gradually add brewers yeast to pet's diet

Nematodes in garden – plant marigolds

#### LIQUID FABRIC SOFTENER:

Baking soda or borax in the rinse water

#### RUG & UPHOLSTRY CLEANER:

Club soda

#### DECAL REMOVER (ON GLASS):

Soak with white vinegar

#### RUSTY BOLT / NUT REMOVER:

Carbonated beverage / vinegar

#### CAUTION:

Be judicious using any of these mixtures. Test on a small, hidden area when cleaning clothes, carpets, etc. As indicated earlier, these mixtures can be harmful if ingested or used carelessly. The easiest and safest way to manage household hazardous waste is not to make it in the first place. Choose less toxic products and products whose processing results in less toxic waste. OAWU accepts no responsibility for the results or lack of results when using these alternative cleaners. The reference material for this information came from the USEPA.

I found that in many cases we didn't have the "store bought" cleaning item, but did however, have the less toxic alternatives readily available. That made it easier and less expensive given our distance from local shopping centers. As with leak detection in our distribution systems – drips and drops really add up. Every little bit of effort to protect our environment helps. For us hunters, fishermen, and hikers – I think you know what I mean! My son recently landed a large Bass out of Lake Elsinore in Southern California. When he went to clean it, he noticed a horrible odor. What he found inside of the fish, I cannot even begin to describe because it's just too gross. No, he did not keep the fish.