

Many everyday house and garden products contain toxic chemicals that can expose you and your family to harmful fumes, skin or eye irritants, cancer-causing chemicals, or chemicals that cause other medical problems. Pouring these chemicals down the drain, dumping them in the back yard, or tossing them in the trash means these toxics can enter septic systems, local rivers and streams, groundwater, landfills, or incinerators, putting your family further at risk.

Managing household toxics includes proper use and storage, using up products completely or recycling them, and using safer alternatives.



All you need to clean without harm are five basic, inexpensive ingredients:

- baking soda
- washing soda
- borax
- lemon juice
- white vinegar

Make the switch to safer housecleaning today!



Protecting the Nature of Maine

For 50 years, people who love Maine have trusted the Natural Resources Council of Maine, the state's most effective member-supported nonprofit working for Maine's environment. We harness the power of science, the law, and more than 12,000 supporters across Maine and beyond to protect our air, waters, and forests.

When you become a member, your support helps NRCM

- Stop corporate lobbyists from polluting and spoiling our state;
- Watchdog agencies to make sure existing laws protecting the health of our people and environment are followed; and
- Fight for new laws to safeguard Maine's land, water, and air, now and for generations to come.

For more information about the Natural Resources Council of Maine or to become a member, contact us at

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Visit us online at www.nrcm.org

Clean and Healthy Housekeeping



Toxics-free solutions for your home, yard, and garden.



Artwork by Toki Oshima

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Kitchen and Bathroom

Copper Cleaner

- Rub with a cut lemon dipped in salt.
- Rub with vinegar and salt.

Drain Opener

- Prevent clogs by flushing drain weekly with boiling water.
- Pour 1/2 cup of baking soda into drain, then add a cup of vinegar. (It will fizz.) Rinse with mixture of boiling water and salt.

Oven Cleaner

- Sprinkle salt on still warm spills, scrub.
- Scour with baking soda and water.



Kitchen Cleanser

- Wash surfaces with a paste of baking soda and water. Rinse with water.
- Mix equal parts vinegar and water in a pump-spray bottle. Rinse with water.

Silver Polish

- Soak silver in solution of 1 qt. warm water, 1 tsp. baking soda, 1 tsp. salt, and a piece of aluminum foil.

Stainless steel cleaner

- Wash item in solution of 1 qt. warm water and 3 tbs. baking soda. Rinse with hot water.

Disinfectant and Mold Inhibitor

- Mix 1 tsp. borax and 3 tbs. white vinegar with 2 cups hot water in a pump-spray bottle. Spray onto mold-growing areas. Do not rinse—vinegar will evaporate.

Floor Cleaner

- Mop with a solution of 1 cup vinegar in 2 gallons of water.

Porcelain Cleaner

- Make paste from baking soda and water, apply. Let set, rub clean. Rinse with water.

Toilet Cleaner

- Sprinkle with baking soda or borax, pour a little vinegar on toilet brush, scrub.

Tub and Tile Cleaner

- Mix 1 2/3 cup baking soda, 1/2 cup liquid soap, 1/2 cup water, and 2 tbs. vinegar (don't add vinegar too early, it will react with baking soda), scrub. Rinse with water.

Yard and Garden

Ant Control

- Pour a line of cream of tartar or sprinkle red chili, paprika, or dried peppermint where the ants enter the house.
- Soak paper towels in solution of 2 tbs. boric acid, 2 tbs. sugar, and 1 cup water. Place on dishes, set out for ants. Keep away from children and pets.

Flea and Tick Repellent

- Scatter pine needles, fennel, rue, or rosemary on pet's bed.
- Feed pet brewer's yeast, vitamin B, or garlic tablets.

Insect Spray for Plants

- Blend 6 cloves crushed garlic, 1 minced onion, 1 tbs. dried hot pepper, and 1 tbs. pure soap in 1 gal. hot water. Let sit 1-2 days. Strain, put in a pump-spray bottle.

Moth Control

- Sew dried lavender or cedar chips into small cloth bags. Place in closets and drawers.

Roach Killer

- Set out dish of equal parts baking soda and powdered sugar, oatmeal flour and Plaster of Paris, or borax and brown sugar. Keep away from children and pets.
- To repel roaches, place bay leaves around cracks in room.

Snail and Slug Killer

- Fill shallow pan with stale beer, place in infested area.
- Lay boards or clay flower pots between rows of vegetables; snails will often attach themselves and can be collected.
- Add lime or wood ashes to soil to raise pH level.



More Healthy Housecleaning Tips

If you have to buy commercial products:

Shop Wisely

- Read the label, buy only what you need, and buy child-proof products.
- Buy nonaerosols. Aerosols produce a fine mist that can settle deep in the lungs, where chemicals can be quickly absorbed in the bloodstream.



Use Wisely

- Use products in a well-ventilated room. Avoid breathing fumes.
- Take breaks and work outside if possible. Wear protective clothing.
- Never mix products, which can produce deadly fumes and can even cause explosions.
- Try using half the recommended amount of commercial cleansers.
- If pregnant, avoid exposure to toxics.
- In case of poisoning, call Poison Control (800) 222-1222. Labels may be incorrect.



Store Securely

- Store in a safe place, keeping all toxics away from children. Close containers securely.
- Some products, such as gasoline, paint, and paint thinner, can evaporate over a long period of time and pollute the air in your home. Store these products safely in a shed or garage.
- Keep products in their original containers.

Dispose of properly

- Use up products completely. Donate leftover paint and other products to a local service organization. Take used motor oil to a recycling center. Call (800) 452-1942 to find a participating service station near your home.
- Never pour harmful chemicals down the drain or on the ground. Find out how and where your town collects household hazardous waste.

