

## Less-Toxic Alternatives

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**It's Murphy's Law:** If you're wearing a brand-new shirt, you spill something on it. Or, you've just cleaned the house and your puppy decides to track mud across the carpet. What are some non-toxic quick fixes for life's large and small stains? Here are some effective methods that use what you may already have around the house.

### **Why bother with alternatives.**

Many commercial cleaners contain substances that are toxic and can burn skin or eyes on contact. Without proper ventilation, their use can also cause injury from harmful fumes. According to the Poison Control Center, in 1997 there were approximately 230,000 over exposures nationwide to household cleaners of which seven were fatal.

Thoughtless disposal of hazardous products can have harmful impacts on people and the environment. Disposal in trash, or pouring them down the drain, can disrupt wastewater systems, seriously injure waste handlers, and contaminate drinking water.

### **What we mean by non-toxic .**

This page offers non-toxic cleaning recipes for a **safer home** and cleaner **environment** . Non-toxic cleaners are cleaners that you can use relatively safely, as compared to other commercial cleaning products (which range from fairly safe to extremely dangerous). This does not mean that you can safely eat non-toxic cleaners or spray them in your eyes. Always label your home-made cleaners and keep them out of the reach of children.

These recipes generally work just as well as commercial cleaners and are less expensive. With the use of essential oils, non-toxic cleaners can smell more pleasant than commercial cleaners.

Many of the recipes on this page are from [Clean House, Clean Planet](#) by Karen Logan. For more recipes and information on household cleaners, this is an excellent resources well worth reading. Other books:

[Clean and Green](#) , Annie Berthold-Bond. New York: Ceres Press, 1990.

[Nontoxic and Natural: A Guide for Consumers](#); How to Avoid Dangerous Everyday Products and Buy or Make Safe Ones, Debra Lynn Dadd. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1984



The Dirty Doze  
 It is easy to overlook cleaning products as the culprit for the cleanliness of our home.



KITCHEN	
<b>All Purpose Cleaner</b>	2 tablespoons vinegar 1 teaspoon borax or washing soda 2 cups hot water 1/4 cup liquid soap <i>Mix everything but soap in a spray bottle and shake. Add 1/4 cup liquid soap last. Mix gently. Apply and wipe clean. Good for counters, wood work, appliances, etc.</i>
<b>Dish Soap</b>	Use non-phosphate detergent <b>TIP:</b> use half the recommended amount of detergent in your Automatic dishwasher.
<b>Scouring Powder</b>	Baking soda <i>Pour in shaker and sprinkle in sink or on pans. Scrub with a rough pad and rinse.</i>
<b>Scouring Paste</b>	2/3 cup baking soda 1/2 cup liquid soap or detergent Water 2 tablespoons vinegar <i>Mix everything except vinegar to form a paste. Add vinegar and stir. Keep paste in a tub at the kitchen sink for scouring pots and pans or the sink itself.</i>
<b>Stain Remover</b>	Salt Juice of lemon or lime <i>Sprinkle surface with salt and squeeze lemon or lime juice over the area. Let sit and rub out. This can even remove rust if allowed to sit a few hours.</i> <b>TIP:</b> A wet pumice stone can remove tough stains from porcelain or enamel without scratching.
<b>Drain Cleaner</b>	1/2 cup baking soda 1/2 cup vinegar <i>Pour baking soda down the drain followed by vinegar. Let it bubble for 15 minutes, then pour down a teakettle full of boiling water. For stubborn clogs, use a mechanical snake.</i>

<b>Oven Cleaner</b>	<p>1 tablespoon liquid soap  1/2 cup water  1/4 cup salt  3/4 cup baking soda</p> <p><i>Spray oven surfaces with soapy water. Mix salt and baking soda and sprinkle on wet surface. Spray again so that the mixture is damp and pasty. Let stand overnight. Scrape off with putty knife or wet pumice stone.</i></p> <p><b>TIP:</b> Prevention is the key to a clean oven. Line your oven with foil or aluminum oven liner found in the baking section of grocery stores.</p>
<b>Garbage Pail Deodorizer</b>	<p>1 teaspoon tea tree oil  1 cup baking soda</p> <p><i>Mix and work out all the lumps with a fork. Sprinkle in bottom of pail after liner is removed. Periodically rinse pail with vinegar and water and let dry in the sun.</i></p>
<b>LAUNDRY</b>	
<b>Laundry Soap</b>	<p>Use non-phosphate detergent.</p> <p><b>TIP:</b> Add 1/2 cup borax or washing soda to the wash cycle to boost cleaning for heavily soiled clothes.</p>
<b>Fabric Softener</b>	<p>Vinegar</p> <p><i>Add 1-2 cups of vinegar to rinse cycle to deodorize and soften fabrics.</i></p>
<b>Bleach</b>	<p>Hydrogen peroxide (3%)</p> <p><i>Spot clean. Let dry. Repeat if necessary.</i></p> <p>--or--</p> <p>1/2 cup borax</p> <p><i>Presoak in mixture of 1/2 cup borax in 2 gallons of hot water.</i></p>
<b>Diaper Pail Deodorizer</b>	<p>1 cup baking soda  1 teaspoon tea tree oil and/or  other essential oil</p> <p><i>Mix and work out all lumps with a fork. Sprinkle in bottom of pail after liner is removed. Periodically rinse pail with vinegar and water and dry in the sun.</i></p>
<b>Laundry Stain Removers</b>	<p>1/4 cup liquid detergent  1/4 cup glycerin  1 1/2 cups water</p> <p><i>Mix and pour into a squirt bottle. Use sparingly and run on stain.</i></p> <p><i>Wash. TIP: Do not use hot or warm water on sugary stains. Wash and rinse in cool water only.</i></p> <p>--or--</p> <p>Equal parts vinegar and water</p> <p><i>Mix and use to remove tough stains including grass, perspiration, rust, jam, coffee, orange juice, wine, beer, ketchup, barbeque sauce, chili, urine and pet stains.</i></p>

**FLOOR CLEANERS**

<b>All Purpose Floor Cleaner</b>	2 tablespoons liquid soap or detergent 1 gallon hot water <i>Mix, mop, and wipe clean.</i>
<b>No-Wax Floor Cleaner</b>	All Purpose Recipe (above) 1/4 cup vinegar <i>Mix, mop, and wipe clean.</i>
<b>Tile Floor Cleaner</b>	1 cup vinegar 1 gallon hot water <i>Mix, mop and wipe clean.</i> <b>TIP:</b> <i>To remove scuff marks, sprinkle with baking soda and spray with equal parts vinegar and water. Wipe clean.</i>
<b>Wood Floor Polish</b>	1/4 cup olive oil 1/4 cup vinegar 10 drops essential oil (optional) <i>Mix and apply. Wipe clean.</i>

### METAL CLEANERS

<b>Brass &amp; Copper Cleaner</b>	2/3 cup vinegar 2/3 cup flour 1/2 cup salt <i>In a glass bowl, mix vinegar and flour. Add salt and stir. Spread on tarnished metal. Wait 1-2 hours. Rinse, dry and polish with a soft cloth and a dab of olive oil.</i>
<b>Chrome Cleaner</b>	1/2 cup baking soda 1-2 tablespoons water <i>Mix to form a paste. Apply with sponge and rinse well.</i>
<b>Silver Cleaner</b>	3-inch square of aluminum foil 1 tablespoon salt 1 tablespoon baking soda 1 cup warm water <i>Dissolve salt and baking soda in warm water. Submerge the foil and silver in the solution. Wait one hour. Rinse silver and wipe dry with a soft cloth.</i> --or-- <i>Use a non-gel toothpaste and rub tarnished spots with soft cloth and rinse.</i>

### LIVING ROOM

<b>Glass Cleaner</b>	1/8 cup vinegar 1 cup water <i>Mix ingredients in a spray bottle. Shake and apply. Wipe clean.</i> --or-- 2 tablespoons borax or washing soda <i>Mix ingredients. Apply to surface. Wipe clean.</i>
<b>Leather Cleaner</b>	1/2 cup olive oil 1/4 cup vinegar <i>Mix in a squirt bottle and shake before each application.</i>

	<p><i>Rub with cloth into leather for cleaning and conditioning. <b>DO NOT USE ON SUEDE.</b></i></p>
<b>Wood Furniture Polish</b>	<p>3/4 cup olive or mineral oil  1/4 cup vinegar  1/2 teaspoon lemon oil (optional)  <i>Mix thoroughly in a squirt bottle. Shake well and squirt on furniture or rag and rub into wood.</i></p>
<b>Carpet Deodorizer</b>	<p>1 pound box baking soda  1 teaspoon essential oil  <i>Mix using a fork to work out lumps. Sprinkle on carpet. Vacuum after 1 hour.</i></p>
<b>Carpet &amp; Upholstery Stain Remover</b>	<p>1/4 cup liquid detergent  1/4 cup glycerin  1 1/2 cups water  <i>Mix and pour into a squirt bottle. Use sparingly and rub on stain.</i>  --or--  Club soda  Dish detergent  <i>Blot stain with club soda then scrub with a dab of dish detergent.</i>  --or--  Equal parts vinegar and water  <i>Mix and use to remove tough stains including grass, perspiration, rust, jam, coffee, orange juice, wine, beer, ketchup, barbeque sauce, chili, urine and pet stains.</i>  <b>TIP:</b> <i>Never use warm or hot water on stains containing sugar!</i></p>

## PESTICIDES

### PESTICIDES? Why Should We Care About Them?

**Because the toxic effects of pesticides and all chemicals can adversely affect human health, consumers should try to minimize their exposure. SAFE SOLUTIONS to common pest problems**

Ants	Vacuum up with some cornstarch to suffocate them. Mix equal amounts of white vinegar and water in a spray bottle. Spray into and around where ants get in. A line of cinnamon or cayenne pepper will also deter ants.
Fleas	Use cedar-filled pet beds. Try adding brewer's yeast or a little apple cider vinegar to our pet's food.
Mosquitoes	Eucalyptus, citronella, and essential oil of cedar wood all repel mosquitoes. Remove standing water around your house.
Moths	For pantry moths, use sticky traps. Store fabrics with cedar wood or cedar chips.
Wasps	Close dampers and seal vents that may be entry points. Food left outside, like pet food or bar-b-que scraps will attract them, so be sure to clean up well.

Mice and Spiders

Mice and spiders have an aversion to peppermint. Put some peppermint oil in a spray bottle with water, and spray your garage and all door frames.

Helpful links:



[How to Keep Ants Out of Your House Naturally](#) - How to keep ants out of your home without toxic chemicals. [read more](#)



[22 Surprising Uses for Lemons](#)

[The Many Uses of Baking Soda](#)

[Green Cleaning - Do It Yourself Green Cleaning Solutions](#)

[Ideas for Natural Homemade Cleaning Products](#)

[Make Your Own Cleaning Supplies](#)

## Biosolids

Biosolids are the nutrient-rich organic product of wastewater treatment. During the wastewater treatment process, the liquid portion of the wastewater is treated and returned to rivers or lakes, and the solids, or 'sludge', are further processed into stable organic material, called biosolids. Everyone contributes directly or indirectly to biosolids, whether connected to sewer systems or on septic tanks. It is therefore important for households and businesses to properly dispose of hazardous materials at waste collection facilities and not into a sewer or septic system. [Learn more here....](#)

## Where Does the Dirty Water Go?

When the wastewater flushed from your toilet, drained from your household sinks, washing machine, or dishwasher leaves your home, it flows into your septic system or your community's wastewater treatment facility.

When septic tanks are pumped out, the waste may be disposed of through land application (spreading any chemicals or heavy metals that are in the waste onto the fields as well), taken to the local wastewater treatment facility, or taken to a solid waste incinerator for disposal.

Your home may be connected to a wastewater treatment facility. The wastewater from homes, along with the wastewater from some septic haulers, businesses, industries and other facilities, is treated to reduce or remove pollutants.

### **Don't Pour it Out!**

#### **How is the wastewater at a wastewater treatment plant treated?**

Waste water treatment plants incorporate a series of processes to try to remove pollutants from water used in homes, small businesses, industries, and other facilities. All wastewater goes through a **primary treatment process**, which involves screening and settling out large particles. During treatment, solid, semi-solid, and liquid residues, or sludges/ biosolids, are removed from the wastewater. Sludges/ biosolids may be composted, land applied, incinerated, or landfilled.

The wastewater then moves on to the **secondary treatment process** where organic matter is removed by allowing bacteria to break down the pollutants.

The treated wastewater is then usually disinfected with chlorine to remove the remaining bacteria.

Some communities go one step further and put the wastewater through an **advanced treatment process** to reduce the level of pollutants of special concern to the local waterbody, such as nitrogen or phosphorus.

#### **What happens to the treated water when it leaves the wastewater treatment plant?**

The treated wastewater may be released into local waterways where it is used again for any number of purposes, such as supplying drinking water, irrigating crops, and sustaining aquatic life.

#### **What Can You Do to Protect Local Waterways and the Environment?**

**FLUSH RESPONSIBLY!** Don't pour household products such as cleansers, beauty products, medicine, auto fluids, paint, and lawn care products down the drain. Properly dispose of them at the HHW events.

Wastewater treatment facilities are designed to treat organic materials, **not hazardous chemicals**. If you pour chemicals down the drain, they might end up in your local rivers or lakes or spread on land.

Don't pour used motor oil down the drain.

Used motor oil can diminish the effectiveness of the treatment process, and might allow contaminants to be discharged. The contaminants could pollute local waterways or harm aquatic life.

**You Don't Have to Use Toxic Products! Make the Switch...and here's why:**

- The average American uses 40 lbs. of toxic cleaners every year.

#### **No Toxics**

- Toxics can harm your health now, or cause disease years from now.
- Children have the highest risk because their bodies' defenses are still developing. Childhood cancer and asthma have increased dramatically in the past 10 years. Every year, approximately 10 percent of child poisonings are caused by exposure to household cleaners.
- EPA says 80-90% of human cancer is caused by exposure to toxins in our environment.

Visit <http://rutlandcountyswac.org/green-living/less-toxic-alternatives/> for ideas for less toxic cleaning products for a safer home and cleaner environment.

**How to Choose Wisely:** Adopt a new way of thinking about hazardous household products. Try to buy less or use non-hazardous products as much as possible. The best way to tell if a product is hazardous is to read the label.

**DANGER** indicates the product is extremely hazardous: a taste could be fatal. **WARNING** and **CAUTION** signal a somewhat lesser hazard. Select products with a **CAUTION** label over those with **WARNING** or **DANGER**. The best selection is one with no hazards.

**Plan Ahead:** Now that you know the possible dangers of disposing of HHW improperly, try to identify any products you may have that need to be disposed of properly.

Read more about use of [biosolids](#) as well as an article on biosolids use in [crop production](#).

- [Video: PBS News Hour - Turning Poop Into Power](#) (March 2016)

Do not put food scraps down the

drain: [http://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wmp/SolidWaste/Documents/No food scraps down drain.pdf](http://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wmp/SolidWaste/Documents/No_food_scraps_down_drain.pdf)

### Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Refuse

The [Reuse Marketplace](#) is a website where businesses, government, institutions, and non-profits can post unwanted items for *free*. If you go to the site right now, you will see a variety of items posted, including: a check point security system, windows, a jet dust collector, stereo speakers, burlap bags, etc. The site includes more than 30 material categories, making it a great marketplace for exchanging items.

To become a member and start posting items, you must be located in one of the seven participant states (CT, DE, MA, NJ, NY, PA, RI, & VT) and create an account. Once the site administrator reviews and accepts your account (generally within 24 hours), you can begin posting your items. Anyone is welcome to browse and obtain the posted items by contacting the lister directly. For more information, contact the site administrator, Mary Ann Remolador of the [Northeast Recycling Council](#).

**Rocking video showing people how to single stream recycle** - <http://youtu.be/exhgrxpeQws>

[Electronics Environmental Producer Responsibility Legislation Takes Effect in Vermont](#) - Find a collection facility near you. Collection of televisions, computers, monitors, printers, peripherals, and are FREE to Vermont residents.

Living Green: A Guide to Recycling Electronics - (<http://sewelldirect.com/articles/Recycling-electronics.aspx>)

**VERMONT PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL** - The Vermont Product Stewardship Council (VTPSC) was formed to shift Vermont's product waste management system from one focused on government funded and ratepayer financed waste diversion to one that relies on producer responsibility in order to reduce public costs and drive improvements in product design that promote environmental sustainability.

[LORD OF THE RINGS PARODY OF EPIC JOURNEY](#) - A great parody on recycling and reuse.

**TAKE THE 10% CHALLENGE** - The 10% Challenge is a voluntary program to raise public awareness about global climate change and to encourage households and businesses to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by at least 10 percent. Visit [10percentchallenge.org](http://10percentchallenge.org) for details.

**CLOSE THE LOOP** - [Check out the Buy Recycled Paper Products](#) page. Making a few simple changes can make an *Incredible* difference to our World.

[The Growing Role of the Electric Car](#) - The automobile industry has experienced a revolution.

[OurEarth.org](http://www.ourearth.org) - Non-profit organization that promotes environmental education and awareness. This is an excellent site worth visiting. It has abundant amounts of information on recycling, energy, special collection events, conservation and reuse. <http://www.ourearth.org/>

Don't throw away your old clothing, textiles, shoes, and books. Give them a second chance at prolonging their lifespan.

## REDUCE and REUSE

**Recycling label seeks to clear consumer confusion** - Recycling — it can get a little confusing at times. Most people think that if a package has a little recycle symbol (the chasing arrows around a number) on it that means that item can be recycled. Many people choose packages with that recycling symbol on it thinking they're making a more sustainable choice. [READ MORE](#)

Check out the [Movoto](#) site for great tips for recycling and living a greener lifestyle.

**Ban the Burn Barrel: Trash has changed, and now we know that burning trash emits many nasty chemicals and particles into the air. Backyard burning hurts us, our children, and our natural surrounds. Go to [Don't Burn Vermont](#) for more information.**

**Buy Recycled:** Buying products made of high percentage of post-consumer recycled content keeps recycling working to help the environment.

**Compost At Home:** Begin composting your kitchen food scraps, or find ways to do more. Separating food and yard waste can reduce the amount of trash your household produces by 25% or more! Compost bins are available for sale through the Rutland County Solid Waste District ([RCSWD](#)) for a nominal fee and many home and garden stores carry composting systems. Can't or don't want to get involved with a composter? How about a [Green Cone](#) food digester. Check out our information page to see how you can lower your trash costs even if you are not able to compost.

**Don't Trash Mercury:** Mercury in our environment has created the need for fish consumption advisories in New England. mercury can be found in thermostats and fluorescent light bulbs. Please bring these items to the [Household Hazardous Waste Collection Events](#) for proper disposal.

**GET SOME LOCAL COLOR** - Local color paint is 100% premium, re-blended latex paint made by the Chittenden Solid Waste District. Leftover latex paint collected from residents and businesses is inspected for quality, sorted by color, then blended, double-filtered, and sold at an affordable price. All Local Color paint has a matte finish and is available in a wide variety of colors. Quality is guaranteed. One of the best things about Local Color is the price. A 2-gallon container of any color is sold for just \$16. A 2-gallon container of white is just \$18. Compare that cost per gallon to new paint. Local Color is now available at the Addison County Community Action Group (ACCAG) on 282 Boardman Street in Middlebury. The warehouse is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Call them at 388-3608 to check availability. Local Color is a great alternative to expensive paints, and yet another way we can reuse our waste! REMEMBER - buy only what you need. Estimate your project needs carefully. Latex paint is not a hazardous waste and may be discarded with the regular trash IF IT IS SOLIDIFIED FIRST. Solid or liquid oil-based (alkyd) paints should always be brought to the hazardous waste collection events. See our [hazardous waste](#) page for additional information.

**Make More Time for Your Real Priorities** : It turns out that most people's real priorities in life--family, relaxation, connecting with nature, for examples--don't rely on heavy use of "stuff." So making time for your real priorities just might reduce your waste. Remember, the landfill starts at the shopping plaza. Buy only what you need.

<http://oldjunkcar.com/art-junk-recycled-craft-ideas/> It has some fun and great ideas to help kids (and adults) reuse recycled materials for art

**Recycling for Kids** - ([http://greenliving.lovetoknow.com/Recycling\\_for\\_Kids](http://greenliving.lovetoknow.com/Recycling_for_Kids))

**Recycle More:** Recycling rates have been dropping lately as people have become more lax about separating their recyclables. Take a moment to pat yourself on the back for all you do to recycle and reduce your impact, then think again about renewing your efforts. Keep recyclables out of the trash.

Information on **Recycled Art Projects** : [Recycled Art Ideas for Kids](#).

**Recycle All The Paper You Can** : Chances are you are not recycling all the paper that can be recycled through your recycling program. Ask the attendant or town clerk about all the paper that can be taken through the program you use, and make sure to maximize what you recycle.

**Recycling Resources for Appliances and Other Kitchen Items** : Many of the products that are found in the kitchen, like food, everyday items, and appliances, can be recycled to promote a healthier environment. Check out this page for some great ideas from backyard composting to recycling household appliances and items.

Here is a great site for and **Reusing** - Real Estate Resources: A Guide to Recycling"  
- <http://sanibelrealestateguide.com/recycling/>

Information and additional links for **Recycling Toner**

**Cartridges**: [http://www.quikshiptoner.com/catalog/Recycle\\_Your\\_Toner\\_Printer\\_Cartridges](http://www.quikshiptoner.com/catalog/Recycle_Your_Toner_Printer_Cartridges)

**Reduce Junk Mail**: Another good way to reduce waste is to reduce the junk mail that comes to your home or business. Five to six million tons of junk mail is thrown away unopened every year in the United States.

Reducing the amount of junk mail that comes to your home or business is also a way to reduce waste. The best way to reduce junk mail is to have your name taken off mailing lists. The first step is to write to the Mail Preference Service of the Direct Marketing Association. Provide them with all possible variations of your name and address and request that your name be removed from their association's mailing lists. The address is:

Mail Preference Service Direct Marketing Association

P.O. Box 282

Carmel, NY 10512

Now you can clean out your mailbox and reduce the poundage you lug to the recycling center. Catalog Choice is a free service that lets you decline paper catalogs you no longer wish to receive. Reduce the amount of unsolicited mail...while helping to preserve the environment.

[www.catalogchoice.org](http://www.catalogchoice.org)

**Reduce the Use of Hazardous Substances:** Reducing waste means reducing the volume OR toxicity of waste. Using baking soda, vinegar, borax, and other low-impact cleaners reduces your waste impact, and can save you money. See [Non-Toxic Cleaners](#) for more information.

**Saving Money & the Environment:** A Kid's Guide to Recycling - (<http://www.upack.com/moving-services/articles/saving-money-the-environment-a-kids-guide-to-recycling/>).