



# BUILDING A GREENER LIFESTYLE FOR FREDERICK COUNTY

## Natural Household Cleaners

### FOR MORE RECIPES

#### Internet:

- **Boulder County Recycling webpage**  
<http://www.ecocycle.org/hazwaste/recipes.cfm>
- **Children's Health Environmental Coalition**  
<http://www.checnet.org/healthhouse/education/>
- **Los Angeles County Department of Public Works**  
<http://ladpw.org/epd/hhw>

#### Books:

- **Clean House, Clean Planet**  
by Karen Logan
- **The Green Kitchen Handbook**  
by Annie Berthold-Bon
- **Home Safe Home**  
by Debra Dadd-Redalia

### SUPPLIES

- **Gaiam**  
[www.Gaiam.com](http://www.Gaiam.com)  
Carries 7th Generation products, available in bulk quantities, 877-989-6321
- **Green Home**  
[www.greenhome.com](http://www.greenhome.com)  
Has a wide selection of cleaning products, 877-282-6400

### REFERENCES

- **Household Products Database**  
<http://hpd.nlm.nih.gov/products.htm>  
National Institutes of Health, National Library of Medicine  
Search the database for household products to find out what is in them and their potential health effects.
- **The Consumer Union Guide to Environmental Labels**  
[www.eco-labels.org](http://www.eco-labels.org)  
This site is where to go if you are ever confused about terms used in advertising or on a label. What do "biodegradable" and "earth smart" mean? And who regulates these claims? This site can answer these questions.

### NATURAL HOUSEHOLD CLEANERS



*Common household products such as castille soap, baking soda, vinegar, and lemon can make powerful natural household cleaners.*

chemicals are not always listed on the labels. The Consumer Product Safety Commission regulates the labeling of products. Many cleaners contain known carcinogens (cancer-causing substances), endocrine disruptors (cause reproductive illnesses), and some emit large doses of VOCs (volatile organic compounds) that contribute to smog.

When possible, use non-toxic products to clean your home. Many of these products are just as effective as their chemical counterparts, are safer to use, and less expensive. One way to ensure you are using safe cleaners is to make your own using natural ingredients.

Basic ingredients include baking soda, castile soap, vinegar, and water. Essential oils provide pleasant smells and may make a dirty job more enjoyable.

- Baking Soda (sodium bicarbonate) works as a deodorizer and mild abrasive. It is non-toxic to humans, inexpensive, and versatile.
- Castile soap removes dirt by dissolving oils that bind dirt to surfaces. Soaps made from vegetable sources are better for the environment than those made from petroleum sources; they biodegrade more quickly and come from a renewable resource.
- White, distilled vinegar (acetic acid) is a powerful deodorizer that repels grease, can help prevent mold and mildew, and dissolves soap film and mineral deposits. Choose vinegar made from vegetable sources.
- Borax cleans and deodorizes. It is an excellent disinfectant, and softens water. Borax can usually be found with laundry products in grocery stores.

Cleaners can be classified as more or less environmentally preferable. At the high end (preferable) would be products that are almost entirely vegetable derived, perhaps with some mineral content. At the low end (not preferable) are products that are entirely petroleum derived, do not readily biodegrade, and contain highly toxic or carcinogenic components. In the middle are products that are petroleum based and are biodegradable and less toxic, as well as cleaners that contain both plant and petroleum components.

Conventional cleaners are among the most dangerous chemicals found in the home, but these

| TO CLEAN OR DEODORIZE...           | TRY...  |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Windows and windshields            | Club soda   |
| Tubs, sinks, and toilet            | Paste of baking soda, castille soap, and water  |
| Open and clean sink and tub drains | Mix 1/4 cup vinegar and baking soda. Let stand a few minutes and rinse with boiling water.      |
| Silverware, candlesticks, etc.     | Paste of baking soda and water, or toothpaste   |
| Mildew                             | Mix 1/2 cup vinegar with 1/2 cup borax in warm water. Apply with a sponge or spray bottle.      |
| Garbage disposal                   | Grind ice or citrus peels in disposal.  |
| Ceramic tiles                      | Mix 1/4 cup vinegar with 1/2 gallon hot water.  |
| Carpet Odor                        | Sprinkle carpet with baking soda, cornmeal, or cornstarch. Allow to sit 1/2 hour and vacuum up. |

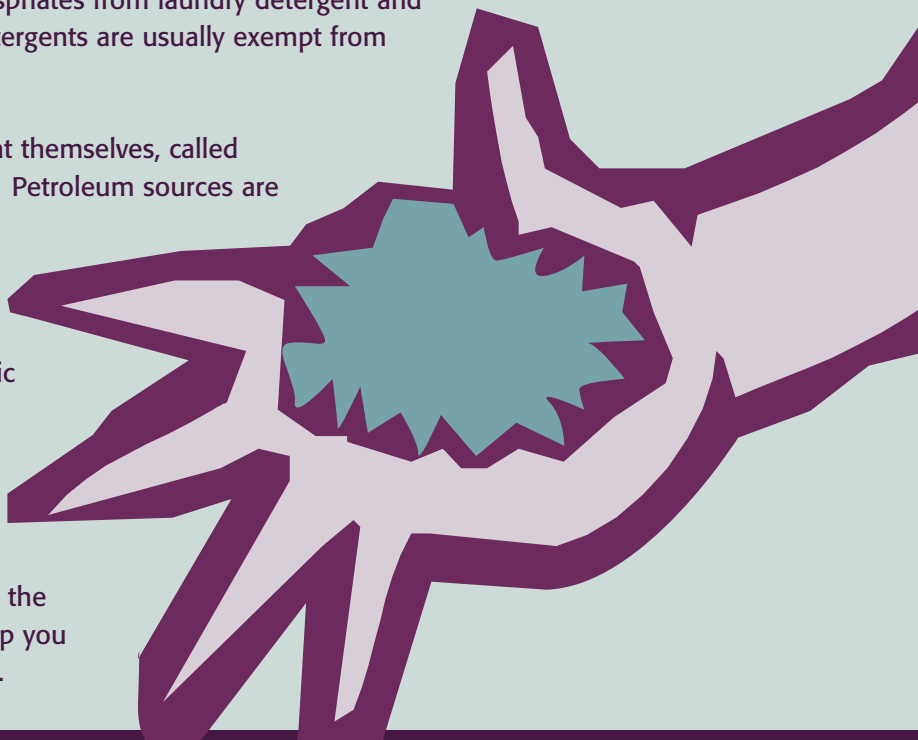
## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CONVENTIONAL CLEANERS

Phosphates are minerals that act as water softeners. They can be very effective cleaners, but also act as fertilizers. When cleaning products are washed down the drain, phosphates enter waterways and cause rapid growth of algae, polluting the water. Many states have banned phosphates from laundry detergent and other cleaning products. Automatic dishwasher detergents are usually exempt from these restrictions.

The key ingredient in many cleaners is the detergent themselves, called surfactants. Most surfactants are petroleum based. Petroleum sources are a limited resource and their extraction often causes pollution.

Responsible use of bleach means minimal use. If needed for disinfection, clean first with a non-toxic product and follow-up disinfection with bleach.

It is important to determine the life cycle of a product before purchase. Ask questions about the manufacturing process, packaging, shipping, performance, and resource recovery (can you reuse the package?). The answers to these questions will help you determine if the product is environmentally friendly.



The Building a Greener Lifestyle series is a public outreach component of the Frederick County WRAS (Watershed Restoration Action Strategy), an alliance of diverse stakeholders interested in improving water quality and wildlife habitat in the Monocacy and Catoctin Watersheds. Community Commons coordinated the series to empower citizens to take action in their own homes and yards towards improving water quality. More information about the WRAS can be found at [www.co.frederick.md.us/cleanstreams](http://www.co.frederick.md.us/cleanstreams) or by calling 301.694.1741. Community Commons can be reached at 301.662.3000 or at [www.communitycommons.org](http://www.communitycommons.org).