



Less-Toxic Housecleaning

Avoid Using Harsh Chemicals in Your Home

People often think that because home cleaning and maintenance products are sold in grocery and drug stores, they are all safe to use. But reading the labels on these products may change your mind when you see WARNING, CAUTION, DANGER, FLAMMABLE, POISONOUS, etc. Not only can they be hazardous to you and your family, especially if used incorrectly, they can also harm sensitive aquatic plants and animals in our watershed that make their homes in creeks and the Bay. Why? Your local wastewater treatment plant was designed to treat organic wastes using biological processes and cannot entirely remove toxic substances before discharging effluent into local waters.



How You Can Help Reduce Chemical Use

You can avoid buying and using toxic household hazardous products by switching to safer less-toxic alternatives like those listed below:

For General Cleaning - Dissolve 4 tablespoons baking soda in 1 quart warm water. Or, use a mixture of 1/2 cup or 1 cup vinegar to 1 quart of warm water.

Drain Cleaner - Pour 1/2 cup baking soda down the drain; follow with 1/2 cup vinegar. After 15 minutes, pour 2 quarts boiling water down the drain.

Windows and Mirrors - A great recipe is to combine 2 cups of water, 1/4 cup of white distilled vinegar, with 1/2 teaspoon (or less) of liquid soap in a spray bottle.

Polish for Furniture or Floors - Use a commercial polish made with mineral oil and citrus oil, rather than one containing toxic petroleum naphtha. Mineral oil polishes do not have "danger" warnings on the label. For scratches, mix equal parts lemon juice and salad oil. Rub into scratches with soft cloth until they disappear. To remove water marks, rub toothpaste on wood furniture and polish with soft cloth.

Bathroom Cleaner - Make a creamy soft scrubber by pouring about 1/2 cup of baking soda into a bowl, and add just enough liquid detergent to make a texture like frosting.

Scoop the mixture onto a sponge, and wash the surface. This is the perfect recipe for cleaning the bathtub because it rinses easily and doesn't leave grit. For stains - use borax. (Borax should not be taken internally and should not come in contact with the eyes).

For a complete guide to less toxic housecleaning products, call Environmental Outreach at (408) 730-7717 and ask for a copy of "Clean It! Safer Housecleaning Methods That Really Work!"

Never dispose of household hazardous waste in the trash, storm drain, or sink. For Sunnyvale residents and businesses, contact the City's recycling program at (408) 730-7262 for information and details on drop-off locations. For anyone living or working outside of Sunnyvale, contact the County Household Hazardous Waste program at (408) 299-7300 or at www.hhw.org.

By protecting the watershed, creeks and the Bay, you are protecting the environment for yourself, your children, and future generations. For more information about other ways you can help protect your watershed, call 1(866) WATERSHED or visit www.MyWatershedWatch.org.