

Household Hazards

I remember when life was much simpler and mom had maybe 2 or 3 cleaners under the sink that worked as a degreaser for cars to crystal. NOW there are thousands of products, each with a separate purpose. Again I pose the same question: How harmful are these products to the environment?

Below is an article from Small Flows Quarterly, which addresses these concerns and lists less toxic alternative.

What's a safe alternative for household cleaning solutions?

Americans produce 1.6 million tons of household hazardous waste every year. What is household hazardous waste? The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines these household products as flammable, combustible, toxic, explosive/reactive or corrosive. Some of these products you are probably aware of. For example, it is well known that brake fluid, antifreeze, pool chemicals and varnishes can be very dangerous if not stored, used or dispose of properly. But did you know that nail polishes/removers, mothballs, charcoal light fluids and fluorescent lights can also cause significant damage to humans, vegetation, wildlife and other environmental resources? Problems usually arise when these chemicals leak and/or spill from their containers. If the spill interacts with other chemicals, toxic gases can form or even explode. Another significant problem can occur when these spills take place outside, in driveways or lawns. A simple rain can sweep these chemicals into larger water bodies or groundwater – polluting healthy areas and damaging the ecosystem that depends on them.

Take a look at the **table below** to see how many potentially dangerous products are stored in your home.

| <u>Automotive</u> | <u>Household Items</u> | <u>Lawn & Garden</u> | <u>Home</u> |
|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| auto batteries | aerosol products | bug spray | concrete cleaner |
| brake fluid | batteries | lighter fluid | driveway sealer |
| carburetor cleaner | drain cleaner's | fertilizer | glue |
| degreaser's | fluorescent lights | insect killer | latex paint |
| fuels | mothballs | pool chemicals | oil-based paint |
| oil filters | nail polish/remover | rodent bait | paint thinner |
| used antifreeze | oven cleaner | weed killer | roofing tar |
| used motor oil | polish | | stain/varnish |

It is estimated that the average American home stores up to 100 pounds of hazardous waste. A great way to prevent accidents and make your home is to limit the amount of household hazardous waste stored in and around your home. By limiting the storage of these products, you reduce the risk of accidents in your home and the environment around it. The Health Department of Tacoma-Pierce County, Washington has provided an extensive table (from their research) containing alternative cleaning solutions for everyday home maintenance. Some of the solution may surprise you, as the ingredients can be gathered around the home or for purchased for a low cost.

| <u>Purpose</u> | <u>Less Toxic Alternative</u> |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Aluminum spot remover | 2 Tbsp. Cream of tarter to 1qt hot water |
| Bleach | borax |
| Car battery corrosion | baking soda & water |
| General household cleaners | baking soda |
| Coffee cup stain remover | moist salt |
| Copper cleaner | lemon juice & salt |
| Dish detergent: grease cutter | ½ c. baking soda + usual amount of liquid detergent |
| Drain cleaner | plunger followed by ½ c. baking soda + ½ cup vinegar + 2 qts. Boiling water |
| Fertilizer | compost and vermicompost |
| Furniture polish | 1 Tbsp. lemon oil in 1 pt mineral oil |
| Garbage disposal deodorizers | used lemons |
| Grease removal | borax on damp cloth |
| Hand cleaner: paint/grease | baby oil |
| Ink spot remover | cold water + 1Tbsp. Cream of tartar + 1 tbs. lemon juice |
| Laundry detergent | basic soap |
| Linoleum floor cleaner | 1 c. white vinegar +2 gal. Water |
| Mildew remover | equal parts of vinegar and salt |
| Oil stain remover | white chalk rubbed into stain before laundering |
| Oven cleaner | 2 Tbsp. Liquid soap + 2 tsp. Borax + warm water |
| Paint; oil based/stain/spray | Water-based, non-aerosol paints |
| Paintbrush softener | hot vinegar |
| Perspiration spot remover | baking soda |
| Pet odor remover | cider vinegar |

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Rug/carpet cleaner | club soda |
| Rust removal (clothing) | lemon juice + salt + sunlight |
| Scorch mark removal | grated onion |
| Scouring powder | baking soda |
| Shaving cream | brush and shaving soap |
| Silver polish | 1 qt. Warm water + 1 Tbsp. Baking soda + piece of aluminum foil + 1Tbsp. Salt in glass |
| Spot remover | dish: soak silver, rinse and dry |
| Stainless steel polish | club soda, lemon juice or salt |
| Toilet bowl cleaner | mineral oil |
| Tub and tile cleaner | paste of borax + lemon juice |
| Water softener | ¼ c. baking soda + ½ c. vinegar + warm Water |
| Wine stain removal | ¼ c. vinegar |
| Window cleaner | salt |
| Wood polish | 2 Tbsp. Vinegar in 1 qt. Warm water |
| | 3 parts olive + 1 part white vinegar: almond or olive oil (interior unvarnished wood Only) |

Cleaning Hints

- Wear gloves to protect your hands.
- Use the simplest, mildest cleaner that can do the job.
- Never mix bleach with an ammonia containing product. A poisonous gas will be produced.

Note: The writer does not guarantee the effectiveness of any and all alternative cleaning solutions. Use these and all other solutions with CAUTION. Keep these solutions and all other cleaning supplies out of the reach of children.

Look at how safe you can be by using a less toxic alternative cleaning solutions and I imagine it would help your wastewater treatment facility also.

If you have any question about this article; please give me a call at (402) 443-5216.

References:

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