

Green Cleaning

Healthy alternatives
for household
chemicals



Caring for Northland
and its environment

**NORTHLAND
REGIONAL
COUNCIL**



What's in your house?

Do you use chemicals in your home? Most people use hazardous chemicals every day without thinking about it.

Common chemicals include

- Paint, solvents and paint strippers
- Wood preservatives
- Glues
- Garden chemicals
- Pesticides
- Fertilisers
- Petrol, oil and other vehicle products
- Toilet and drain cleaners
- Kitchen and oven cleaners
- Pool chemicals
- Bleach and disinfectants
- Batteries
- Furniture and shoe polish
- Nail polish and nail polish remover.



Why are these products hazardous?

They can harm people and the environment because they are:

- Toxic (poisonous)
- Flammable
- Corrosive or caustic (cause burns)
- Chemically reactive.

If you have these chemicals in your home, they must be:

- Stored properly
- Labelled accurately
- Disposed of safely.

Acknowledgements

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Reduce, reuse, recycle

Do your bit for our environment

- Buy environmentally friendly products - look out for the New Zealand Environmental Choice logo.
- Only buy what you need and read the label first to avoid highly toxic products.
- Share left-overs with neighbours, friends or community groups to ensure products are being used efficiently.
- Find safe substitutes - this booklet will help you to do this and gives helpful hints on easy alternatives to using chemicals!



Safe storage

- Store in a dry place, away from heat or flames
- Keep product in original container
- Re-label if necessary
- Keep tightly closed
- Keep out of reach of children.

Safe use

- Always follow directions on the package
- Use all the product if possible but do not use more than recommended by the manufacturer
- Do not mix products.

Safe disposal

- Never pour chemicals down the sink, stormwater drain or onto the ground
- Do not put hazardous materials out with your household rubbish
- Reuse or recycle where possible
- Take unwanted hazardous chemicals to a household hazardous waste drop-off facility.

Safe alternatives for the entire household

Assemble a natural cleaning kit - most of these ingredients can be found in your local supermarket. You can follow the recipes at home safe in the knowledge they are environmentally friendly and won't harm you or your family.

Baking Soda (Bicarbonate of Soda)

Cleans, deodorises, softens water and a good scouring powder.

White Vinegar

Cuts grease, is a deodoriser and mild disinfectant.

Pure Soap

A general purpose cleaner that biodegrades completely.

Lemon Juice

Mild bleach, a deodorant and a cleaning agent.

Borax

A naturally occurring mineral salt. It cleans, deodorises, bleaches and disinfects, and is used to control pests such as ants and cockroaches.

Washing Soda

Cuts grease and removes stains.

In the bathroom

Toilet cleaner

Make a paste from borax and lemon juice for cleaning toilet bowls.

All-purpose cleaner

Clean tiles, sinks, toilets and baths with baking soda, using a damp cloth.

Grout & mildew cleaner

Dip an old toothbrush in vinegar and scrub the tile grout to remove mildew and mould and prevent new growth.

Mirror cleaner

Apply eucalyptus oil with a wad of newspaper to prevent mirrors fogging up.

In the kitchen

Surface cleaner

Use baking soda on a damp cloth to clean bench tops, sinks, windows and refrigerator or freezer surfaces.

Dishwashing detergent

Use pure soap to wash dishes and add white vinegar to the rinse water to give glasses extra shine.

Oven cleaner

Dissolve 3 tablespoons of washing soda in 1 litre of warm water. Spray on, wait 20 minutes and clean. For tough stains, scrub with steel wool and baking soda.

Pot cleaner

To remove burnt-on food, cover the burnt area with water, add two teaspoons of baking soda and bring to the boil. Leave to cool and scrape off.

Silver cleaner

Line a bowl with aluminium foil, fill with hot water and add a quarter of a cup of table salt. Put the silver in and leave until tarnish disappears.

Silver and metal polish

Make a paste with lemon juice and baking soda. Rub it on with a soft cloth, rinse with water, dry and polish.



In the living room

Window cleaner

Add 500 ml of white vinegar to 1 litre of warm water and wipe windows with a damp cloth. Use wads of newspaper to dry and polish.

Furniture polish

Use olive oil for unvarnished or unpainted furniture. Spread lightly and dry with clean cloth. For varnished or lacquered wood, mix 2 tablespoons of olive oil with 1 tablespoon of white vinegar and 1 litre of water in a spray bottle. Spray lightly and dry with a clean cloth.

Carpet cleaner

Sprinkle baking soda on carpet before vacuuming to deodorise. To remove stains, make a spray from 1/4 cup of borax and 2 cups of water. Spray on and wipe off with a damp sponge.

Alternatively, try lemon juice or undiluted white vinegar, or immediately rub with soda water, or sprinkle salt or cornflour on the stain and vacuum after 30 minutes.

Air freshener

Simmer vinegar or herb mixtures in water, or try cinnamon and cloves.



In the laundry

Bleach

Use 1 cup of lemon juice in half a bucket of water and soak overnight, or substitute half a cup of borax per wash load to whiten whites and brighten colours.

Stain remover

Use eucalyptus oil to remove stains before washing. Simply apply a few drops and let it evaporate.

Laundry detergent

Grate a third of a cake of pure soap (or buy soap flakes from the supermarket), and mix with 1/3 of a cup of washing soda. Dissolve in hot water, and top up with a little more water. The mixture will set to a soft gel. Use 2-3 cups per wash load.

In the garage

Battery cleaner

Dissolve 2 teaspoons of baking soda in 1 litre of water to clean battery terminals. Smear vaseline around the base of the terminals to prevent further build-up.

Chrome polish

Use flour or baking soda on a dry, clean cloth.

Car polish

Wash your car as usual on grass and allow it to dry - then sprinkle cornflour over the paint and polish to give that extra sheen.

Smell remover

Get rid of that new car smell by wiping vinyl surfaces with a strong solution of white vinegar, and air well. An open container of baking soda absorbs odours, especially doggy and stale cigarette smells.

Used oil

NEVER tip or spill oil (used or new) down drains, gutters or onto the ground. Take it to a household hazardous waste drop-off facility.

Rust remover

Mix lemon juice and salt, apply and expose to sunlight.

Fuel use

Keep your car well tuned as this will increase engine life, use less fuel and generate less pollution. Alternatively, why not ride a bicycle instead?

Tar remover

Moisten a clean cloth with eucalyptus oil and rub. Alternatively, rub butter onto the tar and wash off with a safe cleaner .

Paint

Choose water-based over oil-based paints. NEVER tip paint down drains, gutters or onto the ground. Take it to a household hazardous waste drop-off facility.



In the garden

Natural fertiliser

Turn garden and food scraps into natural fertiliser - compost! For further information pick up a copy of our Composting and Worm Farming brochure from your nearest Northland Regional Council office or download a copy from our website: www.nrc.govt.nz

Mulch helps to prevent weed growth, conserves water and soil temperature and improves your soil. Dried coffee grounds, blood & bone, ashes from untreated wood, seaweed, sheep pellets and other natural manure make great fertilisers.

Location

Pick the right spot - plant in sunny, dry spots with good drainage to keep plants healthy. Attract birds, ladybirds and worms to your garden - they will help to keep pests down.

Companion planting

Certain plants assist others in fending off attack by pests. For examples, chives help roses against aphids, thyme protects cabbages from white butterfly caterpillars and nasturtiums lure aphids away from a variety of plants. Marigolds deter a variety of insects, and horseradish deters the potato beetle.

Ask your garden centre for information on companion planting.

Rotation planting

Crop rotation reduces the build-up of pests and disease in the soil. Always pull or hoe weeds before they flower.

Pest control

Ants

Sprinkle chilli powder, pepper, mint or borax in their trail.

Fleas

Vacuum regularly and sprinkle lavender or pennyroyal around infested rooms. Empty vacuum cleaner after each use. Add brewer's yeast to your pet's diet, and flea comb them regularly.

Nits

Shampoo regularly with tea tree oil shampoo.

Moths

Clean all clothes, bedding and furnishing fabrics before storing because moths breed in dust and dirt. Store in plastic bags.

Insect repellent

Rub vinegar or tea tree oil on exposed areas of skin.

Flies

Keep all food and rubbish covered and clean the rubbish bin regularly. Simmer vinegar on the stove while leaving the windows open. Keep basil plants around the house.

Mosquitos

Use citronella oil or candles, plant basil or pennyroyal and eliminate all stagnant water around the house.



Recipes for natural pest control

Garlic spray

Blend 2 or 3 very hot chilli peppers, half an onion and one clove of garlic in 4 litres of water. Boil and leave to soak for 2 days. Strain and use. This spray can be frozen for future use and works on aphids, whitefly and caterpillars.

Soap spray

Dissolve 25 grams of pure soap in 1 litre of water.

For snails

Try setting up physical barriers such as broken eggshells, or remove snails by hand at night. Snails can be attracted by a shallow pan of beer.

Helpful hint

Some of the products mentioned in this brochure may need a bit more effort to find than popping into the supermarket. Borax for example is often available from your local pharmacy, but you may have to ask for it. Yeast can be bought from a home brewing shop or bulk food shop, and eucalyptus is usually available from a health food store.

Rethink, reduce, reuse, recycle

- Rethink – Do you really need to buy it, is there a better alternative?
- Reduce as much as possible – only buy what you need
- Reuse – share leftovers with friends and neighbours
- Recycle – what you can for another purpose.
- Dispose of your household hazardous waste safely by taking it to a household hazardous waste drop-off facility.

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