Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection

# FACT SHEET

## Safe substitutes for hazardous household products

**Air freshener:** Put vinegar out in an open dish. Simmer a pot of spices on the stove. Leave an open box of baking soda in the room.
**All-purpose cleaner**: In one quart warm or hot water, mix one teaspoon liquid soap, boric acid (borax), lemon juice and/or vinegar. Make stronger according to the job to be done.
**Ant control:** Pour a line of cream of tartar, red chili pepper, paprika, and/or dried peppermint where ants enter the home.
**Bleach:** Instead use a ½ cup of borax per load to whiten laundry and remove stains.
**Detergents**: Use soap flakes with ½ cup added borax as a water softener. Or use a synthetic detergent that doesn't contain added fabric softeners or bleach.
**Drain cleaner:** Pour boiling water down the drain once a week. Use a plunger or mechanical snake.
**Flea and tick powder**: Put brewer's yeast or garlic in your pet's food; sprinkle fennel, rue, rosemary or eucalyptus seeds or leaves around animal sleeping areas.
**Fly paper:** Boil together sugar, corn syrup and water. Spread on brown paper bag and hang.
**Furniture polish:** Wipe a mixture of one teaspoon lemon oil in one pint mineral or vegetable oil.
**Glass cleaner:** Mix one tablespoon vinegar or lemon juice in one quart water. Spray on and use newspapers to wipe dry.
**Laundry detergent:** Use natural soap flakes. If the water is hard, add 1/4 cup vinegar during the first rinse to prevent the soap from leaving a film.
**Mildew Cleaner:** Scrub with baking soda or borax for extended mold inhibition. Do not rinse.
**Mothballs:** Use cedar chips, lavender flowers, rosemary, mint or white peppercorns.
**Oil-based paints:** Instead use latex or water-based paints.
**Oven cleaner:** Clean spills as soon as the oven cools using steel wool and baking soda; for tough stains, add salt (do not use this method in self-cleaning or continuous-clean ovens).
**Plant sprays:** Wipe leaves with mild soap and water; rinse.
**Roach and ant repellent:** Sprinkle powdered boric acid in cabinet edges, around baseboards and in cracks.
**Rug deodorizer and shampoo:** Deodorize dry carpets by sprinkling liberally with baking soda. Wait at least 15 minutes and vacuum. Repeat if necessary. To clean rugs, vacuum first to remove dirt. Mix one quart white vinegar and three quarts boiling water. Apply to nap of rug with wet rag being careful not to saturate rug backing. Dry thoroughly then vacuum.
**Silver polish:** Boil two to three inches of water in a shallow pan with one teaspoon of salt, one teaspoon baking soda and a sheet of aluminum foil. Totally submerge silver and boil for two to three more minutes. Wipe away tarnish. Repeat if necessary. Another alternative is to use nonabrasive toothpaste.
**Toilet bowl cleaner:** Use a toilet brush and baking soda or vinegar.

**NEVER mix bleach and ammonia. That combo creates a deadly gas.**

## Environmentally Safe Stain Removal

**Bathtub/sink stains**: Scrub with a paste made of cream of tartar and hydrogen peroxide.
**Beer spills:** Apply hydrogen peroxide to dried stains on white cotton. Sponge stains on colored fabrics with white vinegar.
**Blood stains:** Douse spots with hydrogen peroxide (if fabric is bleachable) or diluted ammonia before rinsing in cool water. Avoid hot water; heat will set the bloodstain.
**Brass & copper tarnish:** Mix together equal parts salt and flour, then add enough white vinegar to make a paste. Rub into stain. This may require more than one application.
**Chewing gum:** In hair, work in vegetable oil or an oil-based cream (such as peanut butter) until gum is loosened. On fabric, rub area with ice until gum hardens and most can be removed. Place waxed paper over excess gum and iron lightly over paper.
**Coffee & tea stains:** Wipe clean with a paste made of baking soda and water, or salt and white vinegar.
**Fresh fruit & vegetable stains:** Stretch fabric tight and pour hot or boiling water slowly over the stain so that water runs through the fabric.
**Grass stains:** Apply rubbing alcohol liberally to stained areas before laundering.
**Grease/oil marks:** Gently rub in talcum powder, cornmeal or cornstarch; let set, then brush or sponge powder away.
**Mildew:** Scrub walls and floors with a brush dipped in borax and water. For books or papers, dust with talcum powder, cornmeal or cornstarch, let set for two days; then brush off.
**Mustard stains:** Soak stained area with diluted ammonia before laundering.
**Perspiration stains:** Rub stained areas with white vinegar before laundering. (Keep vinegar handy in a squirt bottle to saturate such stains before laundering.)
**Pet urine:** Dampen area with equal parts of white vinegar and water and blot dry.
**Price stickers:** Saturate with vegetable or baby oil before removing.
**Rust stains**: Rub with lemon juice and salt, then rinse thoroughly with water.
**Scorch marks:** Soak fabric in hydrogen peroxide, then rinse. Or alternate rubbing the area with a lemon slice, then wiping with a dampened sponge until stain disappears.
**Tarnish from eggs:** Rub off with table salt.
**Vinyl that's dry**: Sponge down with equal parts rubbing alcohol and water.
**Water spots on stainless steel:** Rub area with a clean, soft cloth dampened with white vinegar.
**Wine spills:** Pour club soda on the spill, then sponge up the soda and wine.

A few cautionary notes: DO NOT mix anything with a commercial cleaning agent. When preparing alternatives, mix only what is needed for the job at hand and mix them in clean, reusable containers. This avoids waste and the need to store any cleaning mixture. If you store a homemade mixture, make sure it is properly labeled and do not store it in a container that could be mistaken for food or beverage.

Artwork courtesy of California Integrated Waste Management Board.

---


## Division of Waste Management

200 Fair Oaks, Frankfort KY 40601 Phone: 502-564-6716 Fax: 502-564-4049
E-mail: waste@ky.gov Web site: http://www.waste.ky.gov/



The Division of Waste Management does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, ancestry, age, disability or veteran status. The division provides, on request, reasonable accommodations necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in all services, programs and activities. To request materials in an alternate format, contact the division.


Kentucky UNBRIDLED SPIRIT


November 2008