ENVIRONMENTAL
Fact Sheet

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Services

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Alternative Household Products

Part of pollution prevention is "product substitution," that is, using a less toxic or nontoxic product to create a less toxic or nontoxic waste. The following is a partial list of substitutions to consider as alternatives to the toxic products you may be presently using in your home.

AIR FRESHENER: Simmer cloves and cinnamon in boiling water and/or leave an opened box of baking soda in the room.

ANT CONTROL:

- Mix 2 tablespoons of boric acid, 2 tablespoons of sugar and 1 cup of water. Soak paper towels with mixture, place flat on a dish, and set out for ants.
- Pour a line of cream of tartar where ants enter.
- Put a light coating of petroleum jelly around the base of your pet's feeding dish to keep ants out.

DRAIN OPENER: Use a plunger or mechanical snake. If that does not work…

- Pour 2 cups of baking soda and hot water into drain, then pour 1 cup of vinegar. This mixture will expand fast.
- Immediately plug the drain with rubber gasket or plunger and allow the clog to be pushed downward.
- Flush drain weekly with boiling water to prevent future clogs.

FLEA & TICK REPELLENT: Scatter pine needles, fennel, rue or rosemary on pet's bed. Feed pet brewer's yeast, vitamin B or garlic tablets.

CARPET & UPHOLSTERY CLEANER: Clean stains immediately with club soda. Sprinkle cornstarch on rug and vacuum. Use a soap-based, non-aerosol rug shampoo.

FURNITURE POLISH:

- Combine ½ cup olive oil with 1 teaspoon of lemon oil in a bottle.
- Shake well and pour into a microfiber towel.
- Rub onto finished wood furniture.

METAL POLISHES:

Steel/Chrome:

- Mix baking soda and water to the consistency of toothpaste.
- Rub paste into the grimy area with a sponge, adding more as needed.
- Rinse area with warm water.

Silver:

- Line the bottom of a large glass bowl or plastic bin with aluminum foil. Do not use a metal container.
- Place a generous amount of baking soda into container and then place the silver item to be leaned on top of the baking soda.
- Pour hot (not warm) water into container until the silver item is completely submerged.
- Soak silver for ten minutes to a half hour depending on the degree of tarnish. Tarnish will move to aluminum foil.
- Polish silver with clean dry cloth.

Copper:

- Mix 1 part of salt with 10 parts white vinegar.
- Submerge copper in solution and stir for 20 seconds (or more if needed.)
- Rub remaining tarnish off with a damp cloth.
- Rinse copper thoroughly with clean water when done.

Brass:

- Cover brass surface with regular ketchup; the salt and vinegar will remove the tarnish.
- Leave on surface for 10 minutes and then rinse clean. Repeat the process for heavily tarnished brass.

FURNITURE POLISH:

- Combine ½ cup olive oil with 1 teaspoon of lemon oil in a bottle.
- Shake well and pour into a microfiber towel.
- Rub onto finished wood furniture.

GLASS CLEANER:

- Mix 1 cup distilled (or filtered) water with 1 tablespoon of white vinegar. Distilled water works best because it has no minerals and will not leave residue on glass.
- Add 1 bay leaf and let soak overnight to reduce the vinegar odor.

MILDEW REMOVER: Dissolve ½ cup Borax and ½ cup vinegar in warm water.

INSECT SPRAY FOR PLANTS: Blend 6 cloves crushed garlic, 1 minced onion, 1 tablespoon dried hot pepper and 1 tablespoon pure soap in 1 gallon of hot water. Let sit 1 to 2 days; strain and use.

MOTHBALLS: Wrap dried lavender or cedar chips into small towels or cloth bags and place with clothes.

MULTI-PURPOSE CLEANER: Mix ½ cup ammonia, 1/3 cup vinegar and 1/4 cup baking soda in 1 gallon of warm water.

SHOWER HEAD CLEANER: Pour ½ cup vinegar into 1 quart water. Put shower head in mixture and boil for five minutes.

CARPET & UPHOLSTERY CLEANER: Clean stains immediately with club soda. Sprinkle cornstarch on rug and vacuum. Use a soap-based, non-aerosol rug shampoo.

TAPE ADDHESIVE REMOVER: Cover the tape residue with generous amounts of peanut butter. Let sit for five minutes and wipe clean with warm water.

WINDOW CLEANER:

- Mix 1 cup distilled (or filtered) water with 1 tablespoon of white vinegar. Distilled water works best because it has no minerals and will not leave residue on glass.
- Add 1 bay leaf and let soak overnight to reduce the vinegar odor.

For more information, contact the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Household Hazardous Waste Program at (603) 271-2047 or hhw@des.nh.gov.