

# Alternatives to Toxics

**Keep toxics out of your home!  
Exposure to toxics may be harmful to  
humans, wildlife and the environment.**



- "Green" Shopping List
- White vinegar
  - Baking soda
  - Oxygenated cleaner
  - Castile soap
  - Citrus-based cleaner
  - Spray bottle
  - Scrub brush
  - Squeegee
  - Microfiber mops and cloths
  - "Zip-It" barbed drain strip
  - Weed puller
  - Cedar blocks
  - Digital fever thermometer
  - Water based paints and stains



# Alternatives to Household Toxics

Item	Choose	Notes
<b>Bathroom</b>		
Air Freshener	Rosewater in a pump dispenser; natural potpourri or boiled cloves and cinnamon.	Use houseplants for air purification.
All Purpose Cleaners	Bar or liquid soap, oxygenated cleaner (Oxyclean or comparable product), and citrus-based cleaner.	Real soap is made from vegetable oil. Detergent is made from petroleum and/or oleochemicals (derived from fats and oils).
Antibacterial Cleaners	Bar or liquid soap.	Antimicrobial cleaners don't work better than soap and may breed super germs.
Disinfectant	Hydrogen peroxide followed by white vinegar.	Source: Food Sciences and Technology Program at Virginia Polytechnic Institute.
Drain Cleaner	Barbed drain cleaning strip, snake, or plunger. Pour 1/2 cup baking soda and 1/2 cup vinegar and follow with a kettle of boiling water.	Avoid caustic products containing sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide.
Fever Thermometer	Digital.	Recycle mercury thermometers at the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility.
Mildew Remover	3% hydrogen peroxide or make paste of oxygenated cleaner (Oxyclean or comparable product). Wait 1 hour after applying.	Keep area clean and dry to prevent mildew.
Mirror/Window Cleaner	1/4 c. white vinegar added to 1 quart warm water. Mix in spray bottle, squeegee to remove.	Works well. Keep squeegee dry with a clean cloth. Use microfiber cloth to clean up drips.
Scouring Powder	Baking soda.	All you really need.
Sink and Toilet Bowl Cleaner	Add one tablespoon oxygenated cleaner (Oxyclean or comparable product), let sit, then scrub with brush.	Avoid products with bleach, acids or ammonia.
<b>Closet</b>		
Mothballs	Cedar blocks; cedar shavings in a paper bag, or lavender sachet.	Inhaling mothball fumes can cause a variety of health problems.
<b>Flooring</b>		
Laminate Floor Cleaner	Damp (not wet!) mop with water. Add a 1/4 cup of white vinegar. Check manufacturer's directions.	Laminate flooring resists stains.
Tile Floor Cleaner	Damp (not wet!) mop with water. Add a 1/4 cup of white vinegar.	Remove stubborn stains by hand with a weak detergent solution.
Wood Floor Cleaner	Damp (not wet!) mop with water. Add a 1/4 cup of white vinegar.	Remove stubborn stains by hand with a weak detergent solution.
<b>Furniture</b>		
Polish	Paste wax is recommended for finished wood by the Senior Furniture Conservator at the Smithsonian Institution.	Twice a year for high wear areas. Every three or four years for low wear areas. Avoid products with toluene, xylene or benzene.
<b>Kitchen</b>		
Brass Cleaner	Baking soda paste.	Polish with a soft cloth.
Copper Cleaner	Baking soda paste.	Polish with a soft cloth.
Detergents and Soaps	Avoid antimicrobial or antibacterial products.	Using detergents in water as soap may leave a residue on dishes.

Item		Choose	Notes
Drain Cleaner	Barbed drain cleaning strip, snake, or plunger. Pour 1/2 cup baking soda and 1/2 cup vinegar and follow with a kettle of boiling water.		Avoid caustic products containing sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide.
Oven Cleaner	Apply wet paste of baking soda, let sit, scrub with scouring pad. Or, use self-cleaning feature.		Place pan or foil in oven to catch drips. Clean up spills immediately before they become baked on.
Scouring Powder	Baking soda.		Make a paste. Add elbow grease.
Window Cleaner	1/4 cup white vinegar added to 1 quart warm water. Mix in spray bottle, squeegee to remove.		Works well. Keep squeegee dry with a clean cloth.
<b>Laundry</b>			
Fabric Softener	To reduce static cling, dampen your hands, then shake out your clothes as you remove them from the drier.		Line-drying clothing is another alternative that also reduces your energy costs.
Whitener	Oxygenated cleaner (Oxyclean or comparable product).		Do not use on silk or wool.
<b>Lighting</b>			
Light Bulbs	Fluorescent bulbs and tubes.		Dispose of as hazardous waste due to mercury content.
<b>Lawn and Garden</b>			
Lawn Fertilizers	Improve soil with compost. Use organic fertilizer.		
Weed and Feed	Accept some weeds in the lawn. Use mechanical weed pullers. Mulch plant beds. Reduce size of grass area.		
<b>Home Maintenance</b>			
Paints and Coatings	Water-based paints and stains.		Avoid oil-based paint.
Pressure-treated Lumber	Cedar, plastic lumber.		New pressure-treated lumber requires corrosion-resistant fasteners.
<b>Craft Supplies</b>			
Rubber Cement	Glue stick.		Look for products labeled non-toxic.
Markers	Water-based.		Avoid solvent based products.

### Pest Control for the Home and Garden

First, determine if the insect, fungi or pathogen is really causing a problem. Contact the WSU Extension Whatcom Insect Identification and Plant Pathology staff for proper identification. Call 360-676-6736 for the Master Gardener hotline for help and/or information.

If there is a problem, can you live with it? If it has passed a threshold of acceptability, use an Integrated Pest Management control approach. Select the least toxic control method that will manage the problem. This approach will have the least effect on people, pets and the environment. By anticipating and preventing pest activity and using the least toxic control method, you can achieve long-term results.

Select non-chemical management options as your first choice.

Plant disease and insect identification leaflet series:  
<http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/plantclinic/resources/pls-res.html>

Managing plant problems:  
<http://pep.wsu.edu/Hortsense/>

Managing common indoor pests:  
<http://pep.wsu.edu/pestsense/>

