

# REDUCE

If you don't want to make your own cleaners, choose the least hazardous alternative and try using less than manufacturers suggest. Buy multi-purpose cleaners to limit the number of chemicals in your home.

## WARNINGS:

Choose the least hazardous alternative!

Avoid products with these warnings:



**POISONOUS**  
Toxic to humans, plants and animals.



**FLAMMABLE**  
Catches fire easily



**CORROSIVE**  
Eats away skin and other materials



**EXPLOSIVE**  
Gives off deadly or flammable vapours

# RESEARCH

For more ideas, education resources and information on other environmental issues including natural yard care, water conservation and air quality:

**GVRD**  
4330 Kingsway  
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4G8  
Phone: 604-432-6200  
Fax: 604-436-6901  
gvr.com.munications@gvr.com.bc.ca  
www.gvr.com.bc.ca

*Fewer chemicals going down the drain also means fewer chemicals in biosolids — the processed, organic matter that is recovered from wastewater at treatment plants and recycled as a plant fertilizer and soil conditioner. Visit [www.nutrifor.com](http://www.nutrifor.com) for more information.*

For more ways to replace, reduce, recycle, donate or properly dispose of products: **RCBC Recycling Hotline** 604-732-9253 [www.rcbc.bc.ca](http://www.rcbc.bc.ca)

For information on disposing of paint, flammables, pesticides and petroleum products, visit [www.productcare.org](http://www.productcare.org)

To recycle used oil, filters and containers, visit [www.usedoilrecycling.com](http://www.usedoilrecycling.com)

For more information on environmentally-friendly cleaners and practices, check with your local library.

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Tips and recipes to help you take care of your home, your health, and local waterways

# BETTER SOLUTIONS



## DID YOU KNOW?

Wastewater treatment plants can't remove all the chemicals we put down the drain.

Everyday items we use in our homes — like cleaning products, detergents, cooking oil, engine fluids, yard care products, and paint — can negatively impact our health, corrode and clog pipes and contaminate the environment.

Turn the page and discover some choices and better solutions to **Replace, Reduce and Recycle** products that contain hazardous substances.



# REPLACE

Try the recipes and tips found in this brochure — they can save you money, storage space, and protect local waterways. Because they use milder ingredients, these recipes are safer to use than most commercial products. You may have to leave these cleaners on a surface longer or scrub harder, but you'll still get good results.

## WHAT ARE THE CHOICES?

Recipes for safe alternatives to household cleaners

### Multi-purpose cleaner

60 mL (1/4 c) vinegar  
125 mL (1/2 c) baking soda  
1 L (4 c) water  
Mix in a large container (it will foam). Once foaming stops, pour into a squeeze bottle. Shake before using.

### Glass cleaner

In a spray bottle:  
Club soda OR  
250 mL (1 c) vinegar or lemon juice  
750 mL (3 c) water

### Scouring paste

Mix then pour into a squeeze bottle (add more water if necessary):  
415 mL (1 2/3 c) baking soda  
125 mL (1/2 c) liquid castille\* soap  
125 mL (1/2 c) water  
30 mL (2 tbsp) white vinegar (after mixing other ingredients)

\* Available at health food stores

### Stain remover

Mix in a squeeze or spray bottle:  
60 mL (1/4 c) clear dishwashing liquid  
60 mL (1/4 c) glycerin\*  
375 mL (1 1/2 c) water  
\* Available at health food stores  
Treat stain ASAP; apply small amount and leave on for 2 hours; rinse well or launder.



Save on the cost of products such as laundry soap, dishwashing detergent, and shampoo.

With our region's soft water, you can get great results by using half (or less) the amount manufacturers suggest!

At the same time, you'll help protect your local waterways, because fewer chemicals go down the drain.

## AROUND THE HOME

### Bathroom

#### Tub and tile

Apply **scouring paste**. Use a stiff brush on grout. Spray **glass cleaner** and wipe with a damp cloth or sponge.

#### Disinfectant

After thoroughly cleaning with **scouring paste**, spray with **glass cleaner** – vinegar and lemon juice are natural disinfectants.

#### Toilet

Sprinkle with baking soda, let stand overnight. Scrub with toilet brush. Use **glass cleaner** for the outside of the bowl.

Don't use the toilet as a garbage can. Put dental floss and feminine hygiene products in the garbage.

#### Medications

Do not put unused or expired medications or vitamins down the drain or toilet or throw them in the garbage. Check with a pharmacy for safe disposal.

### Laundry

#### Soap

Use chlorine- and phosphate-free detergents. Use half (or less) the amount recommended.

#### Bleach

250 mL (1 c) baking soda in the wash cycle OR  
Look for non-chlorine, chlorine-free or hydrogen peroxide bleaches.

#### Fabric softeners

60 mL (1/4 c) vinegar in the rinse cycle OR  
In the dryer, use small pieces of sponge or an old cloth saturated in liquid fabric softener.

### Odours

#### Quick odour remover

In a pot on the stove, heat on low:  
500 mL (2 c) water  
60 mL (1/4 c) vinegar OR  
30 mL (2 tbsp) vanilla extract

#### Air freshener

In a bowl, combine:  
250 mL (1/4 c) baking soda and 10 drops scented oil.  
Stir. Replace monthly.



### Kitchen

#### Prevent clogged drains.

Install a drain trap to collect debris. Pour used cooking oil into a milk carton or other non-recyclable container and put in the garbage when it's full.

Resist the convenience of garburators. Food waste puts an extra load on wastewater treatment plants. Try composting — it saves money, energy and water.



#### Clog preventer and freshener

**WARNING:** Do not use this recipe if you have recently used a corrosive drain cleaner.

Handful of baking soda  
125 mL (1/2 c) vinegar  
Kettle of boiling water  
Pour the baking soda, then vinegar down the drain. After 15 minutes, carefully pour the boiling water down.

If you do get a clog, use a plunger, or rent a mechanical snake and use it with your garden hose.

#### Oven

Clean spills as they occur. Apply **scouring paste** to the inside of the oven. Spray thoroughly with **glass cleaner** through the day and before bed. The next day, wipe out the dry soda. Finish with **glass cleaner**.

## CAUTION:

### Use only tested recipes!

Random mixing of chemicals can create dangerous results. Some chemicals, such as chlorine bleach and ammonia, produce a toxic gas when mixed together.

### Label cleaning supplies and list ingredients.

For safety, keep all cleaning products out of reach of children and **never** put them in old food containers.

## AROUND THE YARD

### Car washing

Wash your car on grass or gravel, using biodegradable soap. Use a spring-loaded shut-off on the water hose. Pour leftover soapy water down the sink.

### Car maintenance

Return used oil, filters and containers for recycling. Call the RCBC Recycling Hotline at 604-732-9253 or visit [www.usedoilrecycling.com](http://www.usedoilrecycling.com) for a list of local depots. Use drop cloths when doing vehicle maintenance or until you can fix a fluid leak.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Storm drains flow directly to your local streams and lakes.

Fish and other marine life can be harmed and your local waterways contaminated when soap, engine fluids, chemical fertilizers and pesticides – even excess water from sprinkling – wash into storm drains. Just one litre of used oil can contaminate up to *one million litres* of fresh water.



### Paints

Choose water- or latex-based paints that don't need toxic thinners or solvents. Avoid aerosol cans; they reduce air quality. Share leftovers with neighbours or community groups, or safely dispose of them. Call the RCBC Recycling Hotline at 604-736-9253 or visit [www.productcare.org](http://www.productcare.org).

### Garden

#### Weeds

Remove weeds by hand.

Fill a spray bottle with white or apple cider vinegar. On a dry day, spray leaves and root area until wet. Protect nearby plants from overspray (cardboard or newspaper used for this purpose can be recycled afterward).

#### Fertilizers

Improve soils with compost and other organic products.

#### Slug trap

In a non-recyclable plastic container: Remove lid, cut four 2.5 cm<sup>2</sup> (one inch<sup>2</sup>) notches out of the top edge. Pour in 2.5 cm (one inch) of beer; replace lid. In the garden, bury the container to the bottom of the notches. Check and empty trap frequently.