

Alternatives to Household Hazardous Products

About 1/2% of the total waste stream is hazardous materials, which if not disposed of properly, can harm the ecosystem and possibly leak into the water system. Currently, Shelby County residents are encouraged to dispose of their hazardous materials through the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event held two times per year.

This web page is designed to help reduce the amount of household hazardous waste in Shelby County by providing less toxic alternatives to some of the problem products. The problem with hazardous waste is growing -- more and more people are using toxic chemicals instead of the enviro-friendly alternatives. Try some of these alternatives -- some may require a little more muscle, but you'll be helping the environment!

AEROSOLS Use pump-spray or other non-aerosol versions of cleaning and grooming products. For example, use liquid, paste or powder oven cleaners; use cream, stick or roll-on deodorants and pump hair sprays.

AIR FRESHENERS AND DEODORIZERS First, try to locate the source of the odor. Open windows, or use an exhaust fan -- or try both. Sprinkle baking soda in odor-producing areas or set vinegar out in an open dish. Place an open box of baking soda in the refrigerator to absorb food odors. Another solution is to place an herbal mixture in an open dish or simmer herbs on the stove (cinnamon sticks, cloves and grated orange peel makes for a great mixture)!

NOTE: Air fresheners don't really "freshen" the air; instead, they deaden our sense of smell by lining the inside of our nose with a waxy film, or they counteract one odor with another.

CARPET/RUG SHAMPOOS The main problem with carpet spot removers is the difficulty getting the cleaners out of the carpet. For non-oily stains, use club soda. The foaming action helps to loosen dirt, with no toxicity and no discoloration. Avoid soaking the carpet to keep dirt from being washed down into the carpet backing or the pad. Pour a little club soda on, scrub with a damp sponge or soft bristle brush and then wipe with clean cloth to pick up the dirt. Continue with clean cloths until the dirt no longer shows up on the clean cloth. For oily stains or pet urine spots, use white vinegar, following the same procedure described for non-oily stains. If you do not have white vinegar, you can use rubbing alcohol, but check colorfastness -- try under a chair or sofa to make sure there is no change in the carpet color.

CARPET DEODORIZERS Sprinkle baking soda over the entire carpet. Use approximately 1 cup per medium-sized room. Wait 30 minutes and then vacuum. Baking soda will absorb smoking, cooking and pet odors that settle into the carpet. Do not use on damp carpet.

CERAMIC TILE/TOILET BOWL CLEANERS Measure 1/4 cup baking soda, 1/2 cup white vinegar and 1 cup ammonia into a bucket. Add 1 gallon of warm water and stir until the baking soda dissolves. This solution also works well as a general multi-purpose cleaner.

DISINFECTANTS AND GERMICIDES Wash items with soap and water or sodium carbonate (washing soda) in water. Mixing 1/2 cup of Borax in a gallon of water will disinfect and deodorize.

DRAIN CLEANERS Prevent clogging by covering drains with a screen to keep out grease, food scraps, hair, etc. To loosen blockage, mix 1 cup each of salt and baking soda and pour

down drain; follow with 1 cup of white vinegar poured down drain. Wait 15 minutes; flush drain thoroughly with boiling water. Repeat if necessary. If drain is seriously clogged, use a rubber plunger or plumber's snake.

FLOOR WAX/STRIPPERS To polish linoleum and vinyl floors without commercial wax (which is toxic): mix 1 part thick boiled starch with 1 part soap suds. Rub the mixture on the floor and polish dry with a clean, soft cloth. To remove old wax: Pour a small amount of club soda on a section of floor. Scrub well; let soak for a few minutes, then wipe clean.

FURNITURE POLISH Use olive oil, 100% lemon oil, beeswax or beeswax and olive oil. Or, polish with 1 part lemon juice to 2 parts oil of any kind. Some natural products on the market are good such as those containing lemon oil or beeswax in mineral oil.

MOTHBALLS Place cedar chips or sprigs of dried tansy around clothes or store clothes in a cedar chest. Lavender flowers are also an effective preventive measure.

OVEN CLEANER Wipe away grease and spills as they occur. Wipe away charred spills with a nonmetallic bristle brush. To remove baked-on grease and spills, scrub with a baking soda, salt and water paste. Or sprinkle with dry baking soda; scrub with a damp cloth after 5 or 10 minutes. (Don't let baking soda touch wires or heating elements.) Scour racks and burner inserts with steel wool. Aerosol oven cleaners are among the worst contributors to indoor air pollution. No matter how thoroughly you try to rinse these cleaners, a residue remains that begins to emit additional fumes the minute you heat the oven again.

PAINT STRIPPERS, GLUES, AND VARNISH For glue, use white or yellow Wood Glue instead of solvent suspended glues. Use an electric sander, heat gun, or sandpaper instead of toxic furniture strippers. Always use latex or water-based paint instead of oil-based paint. Try to do work outdoors or in a very large room with a steady current of dry air. Always ventilate well. Solvents used in furniture refinishing can cause headaches, drowsiness, blurred vision, impaired motor response, and chemical intoxication.

PEST AND WEED CONTROL Repel ants with chili powder, talcum powder, or powdered chalk sprinkled at places of entry. For cockroaches, use a baking soda/powdered sugar mixture or light dusting of borax around stove and refrigerator. Use an herbal collar or citrus oil on pets to rid them of fleas. A bit of brewers yeast added to pet's food will also help. Use an agitator vacuum twice weekly and then dispose of vacuum bag in the trash. Wash pets and pet bedding regularly; if infestation occurs, restrict pet access to human living areas. Fly swatters are the safest solution to ending a fly problem, or try locating the source of their breeding and clean that area. To keep plants free of pests, spray them weekly with lukewarm soapy water and rinse well. Cut down on weeds by hand weeding or using a hoe and clippers. Fungicides can be avoided by keeping the area clean and dry and not over-watering. To help control insects, import insect predators like ladybugs, lacewings, and praying mantises. Drown slugs and snails by setting out a pan of white vinegar or beer.

SILVER CLEANERS Pour enough water into a pan to cover silver. Add 1 teaspoon of baking soda, 1 teaspoon of salt, and boil in water. Add tarnished silver, cover pan with aluminum foil, and boil for 3 minutes. The tarnish should collect on the aluminum foil. Remove silver, wash in soapy water, and polish dry. (Not for use on silver jewelry or flatware with hollow handles). Toothpaste and a soft cloth will also polish silver. For brass and copper, scrub with a used half of lemon dipped in salt.

SPOT REMOVERS For butter, coffee, gravy, or chocolate stains: Sponge up or scrape off as much as possible immediately. Dab with a cloth dampened with a solution of 1 teaspoon white vinegar and 1 quart cold water. For stains that have set, try a dab of full-strength white vinegar. Try applying a solution of equal parts ammonia and water (If an ammonia stain remains, blot it with a solution of table salt and water). Water or rubbing alcohol will help to remove wine stains.

WINDOW CLEANERS Measure 3 tablespoons ammonia, 1 tablespoon of white vinegar, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water into a clean spray bottle. Or use a solution of 2 tablespoons vinegar in 1 quart of water. Adding a drop or two of soap will help to clean the windows fully and remove any extra film left by previously used commercial cleaners.

CAUTION: Never mix products containing ammonia with chlorine bleach, toilet-bowl cleaners, rust removers, or oven cleaners. The combination releases pungent, poisonous gases.