

PROTECTING WATER FROM POLLUTANTS

Kentucky Division of Water

Everything that goes into the air or is deposited in or on the earth will eventually find its way into surface and/or groundwater. To protect water from pollutants, first remember the three R's: reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Reduce the disposable materials you take into the home. Buy only the amount of a product needed, whether pesticide, paint, motor oil, transmission fluid, kerosene or other substance.

Use up all the substance or give it away to someone who can use it. Give leftover paint to a local community or theater group, donate leftover pesticides to a garden club, etc. Be sure products are in their original containers with labels intact and use and disposal instructions are included.

Reuse "greywater". "Greywater" is water that has been used to wash dishes or clothes. It can be reused for other cleaning tasks. Bath water may be used to water outdoor plants as well.

Recycle used oil and kerosene by taking them to an automotive service center, oil recycling station or authorized collection site. Do the same with your old car battery.

"Don'ts" of Protection

Dispose of household hazardous wastes in an acceptable fashion. Some DO NOTs to observe when disposing of household hazardous wastes:

- DO NOT dispose of any materials by pouring them onto the ground or into a storm sewer
- DO NOT dispose of any material in dumps by the side of the road
- DO NOT remove product labels
- DO NOT bury any containers –empty or full– in your yard
- DO NOT refill empty containers
- DO NOT dispose of unused medicines by pouring them down the drain or flushing them down the toilet. Instead, wrap them and put them into the garbage

Some Alternative Solutions to Hazardous Household Products

One way to reduce the use of household hazardous waste is to use alternative solutions. Many environmentally safe substances exist to do a job just as well as commercial products that produce possibly harmful side effects.

Alternatives Inside the House:

1. Pest Control

- Ants: use red chili powder at point of entry into the house.
- House Insecticide Spray: soapy water on leaves and then rinse. (This works for outdoor plants too. Be sure you use soap, not detergent).
- Roach control: use boric acid (sold as a powder) or chopped bay leaves and cucumber skins. A 50-50 mix of boric acid and brown sugar in a dish may also be effective. Additionally, you

PROTECTING WATER FROM POLLUTANTS

Kentucky Division of Water

can also make a “bug ball” with the following: combine 1/4 cup of shortening (or bacon dripping) and 1/8 cup sugar until its creamy. In a second container, mix 8 oz of powdered boric acid and 1/2 cup of flour. Then add the flour mixture to the sugar dough and combine well, adding just enough water to make the dough soft. Roll the dough into balls and place each one in a small open plastic bag. Place the bags under the sink, dishwasher, refrigerator, etc. When the dough becomes hard, mix a new batch.

- Mothballs: use cedar chests or place cedar chips in drawers or around clothes. Make lavender sachets for drawers and closets.

Caution: Boric acid can be poisonous, so keep these mixtures away from children and pets

2. Cleaners

- Brass cleaner: Worcestershire sauce or vinegar and water.
- Chlorine bleach: substitute baking soda and water, Borax, or natural sunlight (hang clothes outside on a line to dry to take advantage of this free, natural bleaching agent).
- Creamy soft scrubber: combine 1/2 cup baking soda in a bowl with vegetable-oil-based liquid soap, stirring into a creamy paste. Scoop onto a sponge and wash desired surface. Rinse thoroughly. If a disinfectant is desired, add borax; for heavy washing jobs, add washing soda.
- Copper cleaner: lemon juice and salt.
- Drain cleaners: use Borax followed by boiling or very hot water. Or use baking soda followed by vinegar. Then pour boiling water down the drain. Use a plunger or a plumber’s “snake” for clogged drains.
- Fabric Spot Remover: immediately soak in water, lemon juice, club soda or corn meal and water.
- Furniture polish: Make a nontoxic polish by melting 1 tablespoon Carnauba Wax into 2 cups of mineral oil. For lemon oil polish, dissolve 1 teaspoon lemon oil into 1 pint of mineral oil. Or mix olive oil and lemon juice into a pint of water. Spray or wipe on furniture and polish with a clean cloth. This mixture works exceptionally well to repair water rings left on furniture tops.
- General Household Cleaners: use an oil soap for floors (rinse well to prevent slippery surfaces) and woodwork. Add a couple of tablespoons of borax and of vinegar. Clean bathroom fixtures with soda mixed with a mild detergent and a small amount of bleach if absolutely necessary.
- Laundry and Dishwashing Detergents: Use phosphate free products. Excess phosphates in streams and lakes accelerate floating algae growth, blocking sunlight and depleting oxygen needed by aquatic animals and plants.

PROTECTING WATER FROM POLLUTANTS

Kentucky Division of Water

- Oven cleaners: Scour with baking soda. For baked on grease, heat oven to 200 degrees, turn off, and leave a dish with 1/4 cup of ammonia in the oven for several hours to loosen soil. Then scrub with baking soda. Save the ammonia to be used again.
- Silver Cleaner: Soak silver in 1 quart of very warm water with 1 teaspoon baking soda, 1 teaspoon salt, and a small piece of aluminum foil.
- Toilet Bowl Cleaner: make a paste of borax and lemon juice, or just borax, left in toilet overnight and wiped out in the morning.
- Tub and Tile Cleaner: Combine 1/2 cup baking soda, 1 cup white vinegar, and warm water.
- Window cleaner: fill up a pump sprayer with a solution of 1 teaspoon liquid soap and 3 tablespoons vinegar in 2 cups of water. Or rub newspaper on the glass.

Alternatives Outside the House:

3. Pest Control

- Plant pest resistant flowers, plants and vegetables whenever possible.
- To stop cut worms from damaging tomatoes, make cardboard collars from cereal or cracker boxes. Collars should be 1-1/2" wide by about 10" long; wrap the collar around the base of the plant, staple, and seat it down approximately 1/2" to 3/4" below ground level.
- Plant herbs and flowers that discourage pests; for example, marigolds help control tomato pests.
- Encourage ladybugs, praying mantises, and other insects that eat garden pests.

4. Other Outdoor Activities

- Deicing in Winter: Use sand or kitty litter instead of salt.
- Fertilizers: Start a compost pile using yard clippings and kitchen wastes (from fruit and vegetable preparation, as well as coffee grounds and filters). Dig compost into soil and/or use it as mulch.
- Herbicides: Mulch planting areas or pull weeds by hand. Cover area with black plastic to prevent weed germination.

5. Workshop or House Upkeep

- Paints and Solvents: Use water-based (latex, acrylic) paint whenever possible.
- Paint Remover/Stripper: Use heat guns for removing many paints, but only in well ventilated areas. Do not use on lead-based paints.