

Conservation in Your World



Sandy Menke, Chairperson

Using Homemade Cleaners to Avoid Harmful Chemicals

Looking back over our 2015 Conservation articles made me wonder how many of you changed or added to your conservation habits. I hope you are choosing not to use any cosmetic products (including toothpaste) that contain "microbeads." Did you...try using essential oils to deter mosquitoes; cut your use of herbicides that kill the very blooms our bees need to survive; add a houseplant to your home to "soak up" some of those harmful indoor chemicals; plant milkweed; use your fall leaves as a mulch for plants rather than bagging and hauled away? And, are you using a device to keep water thawed for our birds this winter? And, a bit of exciting news...have you heard about all the bald eagle sightings on the Fox River between St Charles and Batavia?

On another note, how do you spend these cold winter days with so many hours you can't be outdoors very long? I usually find gloomy fall or winter days as an excellent time to do my "spring" cleaning. Don't you think it should now be called "winter" cleaning since I don't think any of us have coal dust in our house? The March/April 2015 issue of *Mother Earth Living* had some great ideas for inexpensive homemade cleaners that enable us to avoid using harmful chemicals found in commercial products. Many of these chemicals are linked to birth defects, reproductive problems, cancer, asthma, & nervous system disorders.

The worst ingredient in an All-Purpose Cleaner is Butyl cellusolve. A good alternative is: 1 gallon hot water, 1/2 cup liquid castile soap (make sure it is free from processed detergents and animal products), and 10 drops of thyme essential oil. Combine all and pour into a spray bottle. Shake before using.

If you have a hard time giving up your commercial cleaning products (as I do some), Google the ingredients to determine their safety. It will usually tell you if it is suspected or determined to cause health concerns, although environmental concerns are not usually mentioned.

Next on the list was an All-Purpose Scrub, with the worst ingredient being chlorinated phenols that are found in bathroom cleaners of all sorts. This is toxic to the respiratory and circulatory systems. I actually had an asthma attack many years ago from using a bathroom spray in a non-ventilated area. The best alternative is baking soda. A natural all-purpose scrub can be made by mixing 2 C baking soda, 1/2 C liquid castile soap, and 1/2 C water. Rinse well after use.

Glass & window cleaners are the easiest to replace. Commercial brands often contain glycol ethers, including diethylene glycol and 2-butoxyethanol that may adversely affect the kidneys and liver. To make a natural glass cleaner, combine 1 cup each of white vinegar and water. I keep a spray bottle available and love it. Cleans much better than commercial brands. I read another article that indicated Windex, Fantastik, Formula 409, Lysol and Simple Green formulas contain this chemical. It recommended using Earth Friendly Products (a brand name).

Now, if you aren't up for all this mixing and marking, here are some "green" brands I have seen locally: howardproducts.com, jrwatkins.com, mrsmeayers.com (smells fabulous), and seventhgeneration.com.

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Note: We welcome articles written by members...just contact Sandy Menke.