

BEST PRACTICES FOR Household Cleaners

Some chemicals in commercially-available household cleaners can make our environment “dirty”. Fortunately natural ingredients like vinegar, baking soda, and lemon juice provide safe cleaning alternatives. Whether you are on sewer or have a septic system, what you put down the drain makes a difference.



What happens to commercial household cleaners

In the Sewer?

Some cleaning products are effectively removed or broken down during wastewater treatment. Others can pass through treatment or break down during treatment to form other potentially harmful chemicals. Treated wastewater from our sewers is **discharged to the Strait of Georgia**.

In your Septic System?

Your septic system’s helpful bacteria generally recover quickly after small amounts of household cleaning products enter the system. However, some **chemical products can inhibit or kill the bacteria**. Septic systems discharge treated wastewater to the ground in your yard.



What are some best practices for household cleaners?

1. If you are using commercial detergent in the kitchen, bathroom, or around the house, you can use half of the manufacturer’s recommended amount of detergent.
2. Read the labels. Products with a “Danger” or “Poison” label signal a highly toxic cleaner; those with a “Warning” label are less hazardous; and products with a “Caution” label are the least toxic (though can still be dangerous).
3. Try the affordable “green” cleaning recipes listed on the back.

Why should I use less detergent?

The directions on detergent packaging are written for water conditions across the entire country that are, on average, much harder than ours. Water hardness is primarily the amount of calcium and magnesium and, to a lesser extent, iron in the water. Harder water requires more detergent. The very soft water in much of the RDN means that less detergent will still produce the expected results.

I have a well and am not on municipal water. Should I still use less detergent?

Perhaps. If the hardness of your well water is below 123 mg/L, then you can probably **use less detergent and get the same result**. Well owners can have their water tested to determine the hardness and quality of the water.

What is wrong with detergents?

Detergents (also known as surfactants) are added to laundry soap, dishwashing soap and shampoo to produce suds and provide the cleaning power. **Some surfactants are not completely broken down** with conventional treatment processes while some breakdown products can have harmful effects on organisms – **even after treatment**.

Is there still a problem if I use “natural” or “biodegradable” detergents?

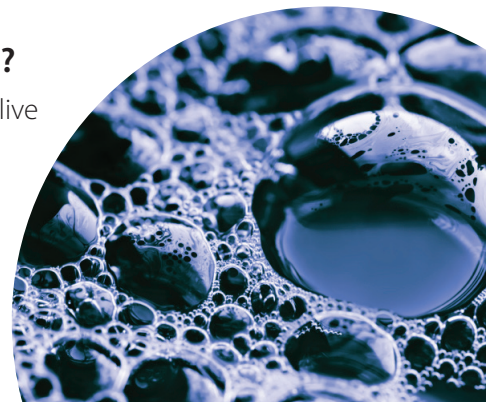
Yes. “Natural” and “biodegradable” cleaning products commonly use a coconut-, palm- or olive oil-derived surfactant. All are oil-based and break down over time, as do synthetic surfactants.

Still, their environmental impact is similar to synthetic surfactants.

What is Source Control?

Source Control is an **economical and effective way** to influence the quantity and quality of wastewater entering RDN systems.

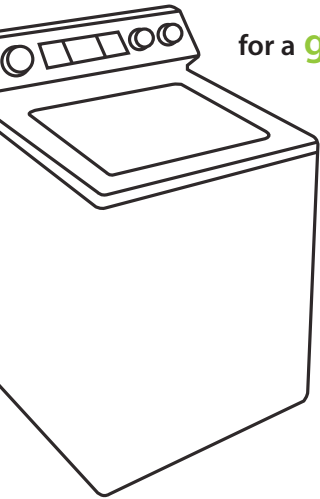
Follow these best practices to reduce pollution at the source so it doesn’t end up in our environment.



TRY THESE Cleaning Recipes



for a **greener alternative** to commercial varieties.



Natural laundry whitener

To whiten whites, add 1/2 cup baking soda to each load.

Solar powered laundry whitener

Start with washed, wet clothes. Spray diluted lemon juice on the stains (optional) and hang laundry to dry in the sun. Let the sun's ultraviolet light do the bleaching. Bring inside when dry.

Fabric softener

Add 1 cup of white vinegar just before the final spin cycle. Dry laundry will not smell like vinegar.



Tip: Make sure you label your bottles and store them safely away from children and pets.



Tip: Essential oils of citrus fruits, tea tree, lemongrass, lavender and eucalyptus are optional if you are not sensitive to scents.

Simple

Liquid Laundry Soap Use 1/2 cup per load

- 7 L hot water
- 1 cup liquid castile soap
- 1 cup baking soda
- 1/2 cup coarse salt
- 10-20 drops essential oil (optional)

Combine dry ingredients in hot water.
Add soap and essential oil. Stir.

Simple All Purpose Cleaner

- 1/2 cup Vinegar
 - 1 cup to 1 litre of warm water
- Mix ingredients together for a good surface cleaner and apply.

Drain Cleaner

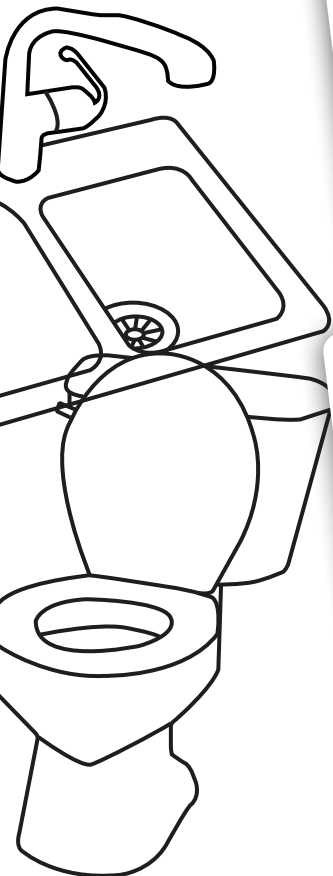
- 1/2 cup baking soda
 - 1/2 cup white vinegar
 - 2 litres boiling water
- Pour baking soda down the drain, followed by white vinegar. Cover and let stand for 15 minutes. Flush with boiling water. If this is done weekly, greases that may have built up will melt.

Note: Do NOT use on ceramic toilets, as the boiling water may crack them.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner

- 2 T baking soda
- Lemon juice

Sprinkle a few tablespoons of baking soda and scrub with a brush. Add a few drops of lemon for freshness.



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For More Information, contact RDN Wastewater Services (250)390-6560 (250)954-3792 Oceanside (Toll Free)1-877-607-4111