

# Alternative Household Cleaning Solutions For Septic System Owners

Many of the ready-made solutions we purchase to clean and maintain our homes contain poisonous or toxic chemicals. While the labels on these products contain signal words (caution, warning, danger or poison) to alert us about proper use or potential harm, many do not list the chemical ingredients in the product or hazards associated with the chemical. These chemicals can damage the effectiveness of your septic systems by killing the bacteria that breakdown the sewage sludge in your septic system.

There are safer alternative cleaners. The basic ingredients listed below can be mixed or used alone for many household cleaning tasks. Also, in the event of an accident, these ingredients can be identified by most consumers and healthcare professionals.

## SELECTED BASIC CLEANING INGREDIENTS

<b>Ingredient</b>	<b>General Use</b>
Baking Soda	cleaner, deodorizer, fire extinguisher, scouring powder
Boiling Water	drain cleaner
Borax	cleaner, disinfectant, laundry aid, water softener
Lemon	cleaner
Salt&	cleaner
Soap	cleaner
White Vinegar	cleaner, deodorizer, grease cutter
Washing Soda	cleaner, laundry aid, grease cutter, stain remover, disinfectant

The following "recipes" offer less toxic alternatives to common cleansers.

## ALL PURPOSE CLEANERS

- Mix 1 teaspoon borax with 1 quart of warm water. Add a splash of lemon juice or vinegar to cut grease.
- Mix 2 teaspoons borax and 1 teaspoon soap in 1 quart of water. Can be stored in a spray bottle.
- Mix 3 tablespoons of washing soda per quart of warm water.

## DISINFECTANT

- Mix ¼ cup borax in 1/2 gallon hot water.

## DRAIN CLEANERS

- Prevention is the best method. Use a drain strainer. Do not pour grease down the drain.
- For maintenance, pour about 1 gallon of boiling water down the drain weekly.
- Pour ½ cup baking soda and ½ cup vinegar down drain. Close drain tightly until fizzing stops. Flush with one gallon boiling water.

## FLOOR CLEANERS

- Wood or vinyl floors – mix ¼ cup oil soap with 1 gallon of warm water.

## METAL POLISHES

### **Brass, Bronze, and Copper**

- Mix equal amounts of salt and flour with a small amount of vinegar. Rub with a soft, damp cloth. Rinse and polish with a dry cloth.
- Make a paste of lemon juice and salt and rub with a soft cloth; rinse with water and dry.
- Use a slice of lemon sprinkled with baking soda. Rub brass with the lemon slice; rinse with water and dry.

### **Silver**

- Rub with a paste of baking soda and water.
- *Place a piece of aluminum foil to cover the bottom of pan. Add 2 to 3 inches of water. Add 1 teaspoon baking soda and 1 teaspoon salt per quart of water and bring to a boil. Add silver pieces and boil 2 to 3 minutes. Make sure the water covers the silver pieces. Remove silver, rinse, dry, and buff with a soft cloth.*

### **OVEN CLEANERS**

- Prevention. Put sheet of aluminum foil on the oven floor. Be careful not to touch the heating element.
- Mix 3 tablespoons of washing soda per quart of warm water. Spray on and wait 20 minutes. Scrub with a fine steel wool pad if necessary.

### **TUB, TILE AND TOILET CLEANER**

- Use soap and sponge, or a stiff brush and one of the following: baking soda, borax and salt.

### **WINDOW AND GLASS CLEANERS**

- Mix 1 part water to 1 part vinegar in a spray bottle. Wipe off with cleaning cloth.

### **WOOD POLISHES**

- Polish with a cloth dipped in olive or soybean oil.
- Light polishing – use a damp cloth to clean most surfaces and dry immediately with a soft dry cloth.

### **LIME AND MINERAL DEPOSIT REMOVER**

- Soak cleaning cloth in vinegar. Apply the cloths to the lime deposits. Leave them for approximately one hour. The deposits will soften and can be removed easily.

**For more information, please contact:**  
Uvalde County Health Department

(830)486-6227