



The Daily Gleaner

Tread more gently on the earth from the comfort of your own home

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In the next few months I'm planning a trip to visit my extended family. One person who I always love spending time with is Grandma Julia. Julia is an "old country grandma". She grew up on a farm during the 1930's Alberta dustbowl, and spent a great deal of her adult life raising her family on a farm. She is now in her 90's, and at her house there is still a general feeling of 'waste not, want not' and living a simple life. I sometimes think about all the changes our grandparents have seen in their lifetime and, though life seems more convenient now, what must go through their minds when they see all of our waste, consumption and pollution.

In Julia's house you will find lots of old twist ties, bread clips and will often find yourself cleaning out Ziploc bags to be used again many times over. The other thing I love about my visits with Grandma Julia is her knowledge of organic everyday household remedies, such as planting marigolds next to your vegetables to keep aphids and other pests away.

Over the years I have learned about some great old-time, tried and true, household recipes that are less expensive, environmentally friendly, and not all that inconvenient. Not surprisingly, these recipes all contain products we already use in our homes everyday. Some basic ingredients needed for household solutions are vinegar, baking soda, salt and citrus fruit or juice.

Here are a couple helpful recipes for both inside and outside the home that I have tried with great success:

Clogged Drains. Chemical drain cleaners may do the job quick but can be corrosive to pipes over time and cause bigger problems later on. They are also pollutants to our waterways. So the next time you have a clogged drain try this: pour 1 cup of baking soda into the drain, followed by 2 cups of vinegar. After 15 minutes, pour 2 to 3 cups of boiling water into the drain and the clog should be clear.

To keep drains from clogging, treat them regularly with this recipe: 1 cup of baking soda, 1 cup of salt and ¼ cup of cream of tartar (found with the spices in the grocery store). Pour ¼ cup of this mixture into each drain in the house, followed by 2 cups of boiling water.

Ants. To keep ants out of the house, fill a shallow lid from a yogurt or margarine container with baking soda and icing sugar, then place it near an entrance point to your house. To keep ants from eating plants in your garden place lemon or orange peels around the plants to detour them.

Here are some new recipes I have discovered and am eager to try in the laundry room:

Softening fabrics: add 1/4 cup (60 ml) white vinegar to rinse water.

Instead of using bleach: add 1/2 cup (125 ml) baking soda to each load of wash to whiten whites and brighten colours; or add lemon juice to the rinse cycle and hang your clothes outside in the sun which will bleach clothes naturally and will also save energy.

And for housecleaning, keep a good supply of rags made from old tea towels or cotton shirts rather than using one-use disposable wipes or paper towel.

The great thing is that all of these more environmentally-friendly actions will also save money on your household budget – cleaners are expensive, and so are ‘all things disposable’!

Many of our daily chores have an impact on the environment and often they are negative ones – like generating excessive curb side waste or putting toxic chemicals down our drains or on our lawns. So come on Fredericton - let's try to change some of our negative environmental impacts to positive ones. If you are not sure how – ask your grandmother!

For other practical ways to tread more gently on the environment, check out *101 Ways to be Green*, coming soon to the Green Matters website: www.greenmattersfredericton.com.

Valerie Hillier is a Frederictonian who looks for ways to conserve energy, waste less and challenge herself to do more for the health of our planet. In her weekly e-letter 'A Challenge to Inconvenience Yourself', she challenges people to live more responsibly and provides them with ideas about how to do it. If you are interested in signing up for her challenges go to www.greenmattersfredericton.com and check out ‘Green Matters Heroes’.