



BACK TO THE FUTURE IN THE BATHROOM

An A-Z guide to problems you can solve
without hazardous products

We've put together this list of safer, effective and thrifty solutions to common bathroom problems. For some problems, there's even a couple of solutions for you to try.

Before you leap into these jobs, however, always use your judgement and test the application on a small area first. And please be careful using hot or boiling water. You're one resource that can never be replaced.

Air freshener

Commercial air fresheners try to copy the scents of nature. But it makes sense that chemicals couldn't beat the real thing. So why not place a bowl of roses, a vase of lavender, a posy of geraniums, sprigs of rosemary or mint, or a bowl of pot pourri on the bathroom shelf? Especially if they're freshly cut from your own garden: priceless.

Bad stains

If you like, you can pre-soak the stain in pure lemon juice for about 30 minutes. That often softens it enough to rub clean with bicarb soda.

Otherwise, rub the stain with a paste made of bicarb soda and vinegar. If the stain persists, leave the paste on the stain for a while. Now apply a little more 'elbow grease', then rinse clean with hot water.

You can also try leaving a paste of borax and lemon juice on the stain until it dissolves.



It's a marketing myth that you need smartly packaged, expensive chemicals to do all your household chores effectively. Instead of being the boon for mankind they're purported to be, many actually have the potential to harm your health as well as the environment.

Remember: Buying chemicals in bulk doesn't save you money if you throw half away. Consider the safer alternatives to household chemicals.

For those really stubborn stains, apply some eucalyptus oil and leave for 1 hour. Then, use fine steel wool to clean away the stain. Rinse with hot water.

To give a final shine, wipe over the surface with a cloth moistened with white vinegar. If your bathroom's really got out of hand, make up a paste using borax, a few drops of your favourite oil (eucalyptus, lavender, citronella, tea tree or peppermint), a squeeze of environmentally friendly detergent and some vinegar, then scour clean.

Bath, vanity basin and shower recess

A quick vinegar wipe may be all that is required to leave the surface clean, deodorised and shiny.

For lightly soiled surfaces, use bicarb soda on

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a moist cloth. To get right in and clean the grout between the tiles, an old toothbrush is ideal with bicarb soda.

Ceramic tiles

- 1) Wipe with a soft cloth moistened with white vinegar. Or...
- 2) Apply a paste of borax (or bicarb soda) to the tiles, then scrub clean with a small brush. Rinse well.

Combs and brushes

Soak in a vinegar-and-water solution, followed by a warm, soapy wash. Use an old toothbrush to scrub extra-dirty combs.

Rinse well and dry in the sun.

Alternatively, dissolve 1 tablespoon of bicarb soda in a basin of very hot water. Soak the combs, then clean with an old toothbrush and rinse and dry in the sun.



Drains (blocked)

- 1) Flush the drain by pouring in 1 cup of washing soda and a jug of boiling water. Or...
- 2) Pour in half a cup of washing soda (also called bicarb soda) and a cup of vinegar. Seal with the plug and leave for 30 minutes. Then, pour in a jug of boiling water to complete the cleaning process. A final half-cup of vinegar will help remove any odour.

Dripping-tap stains

Rub with a paste made from borax and lemon. Leave for five minutes, then scour clean. Rinse well and dry with a soft cloth. If the stain is stubborn, you may need to repeat this several times.

Mirrors

Clean with vinegar using either a cloth or a ball of newspaper.

To remove fly spots and polish the surface, apply

cold tea on a soft cloth.

To reduce fogging, use a ball of newspaper moistened with eucalyptus oil.

Or, rub over the mirror with equal parts methylated spirits and glycerine.

Rust

Moisten some bicarb soda (or salt or borax) with lemon juice and rub into the stain. Leave for a few minutes before rinsing clean.

Septic toilet

It's very good practice to flush a cup of bicarb soda down the toilet once a week to cleanse, reduce acidity and encourage the growth of waste-digesting bacteria.

Shower curtain mildew stain

- 1) Wash the shower curtain in hot, soapy water, rinse, then apply lemon juice to the stain and leave to dry in the sun. Or...
- 2) Moisten with lemon juice and salt, or vinegar and salt. Leave for half an hour or so, then rinse well and dry in the sun. Or...
- 3) Apply a bicarb soda paste (or borax and vinegar), leave for half an hour, then wash in hot, soapy water. Add vinegar to the rinse water. Drip dry in the sun.





Shower curtain soap build-up

1) Apply a paste of salt and lemon juice (or bicarb soda and vinegar). Rub, then rinse clean and hang out in the sunshine to dry. Or...

2) Soak in vinegar, then machine wash with your normal soap powder and half a cup of bicarb soda, along with a couple of towels. Add 1 cup of vinegar to the rinse water. Hang out in the sun, without spin-drying.

Shower screen glass

Clean with a soft cloth moistened with either vinegar or bicarb soda on a damp cloth.

If the soapy film is difficult to move, try a paste of salt (or borax) and lemon juice. Rub with a scourer and rinse clean.

Alternatively, mix up your own paste using either bicarb soda or borax, a little eucalyptus oil, some environmentally friendly detergent and vinegar.



Taps

Clean with a cloth moistened in vinegar. For stubborn stains on and around taps, rub with a salt and lemon juice paste, rinse well and polish dry.

Toilet

You can use these techniques for both septic and sewer systems.

Toilet seat: wipe with a cloth moistened with vinegar to give a clean, shiny, odourless surface.

Bowl: add 1 cup of vinegar and leave overnight to soak. Scrub with a toilet brush the following morning. (Incidentally, it's a good idea to train your family to brush the pan when they use it, so stains are removed before they settle.)

To remove stains, apply a paste of bicarb soda (or borax) and lemon juice. Rub clean after a half an hour or so.

A few drops of eucalyptus oil or vanilla can be dropped into the toilet bowl for a pleasant, fresh smell.

References:

Stewart, R (2002). Robin Stewart's Chemical Free Home. Black Inc. Melbourne, Victoria.

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