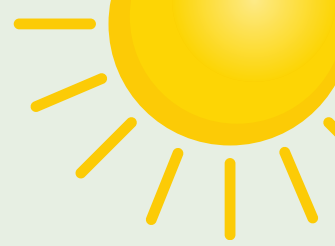


A guide to...



Conscious Spring Cleaning

Here's a quick how-to on cleaning out your home safely, and in a way that reduces waste, lowers your environmental impact, and ensures the protection of your local watershed.



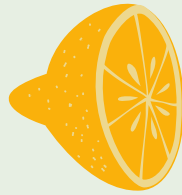
Whether it be decluttering or deep cleaning, taking the time to spring clean your home can be beneficial for both mental and physical health. However, this process can have many hidden impacts on our environment and watersheds. These tips, tricks, methods, and recommendations can help guide your cleaning practices to be more conscious and responsible.



Alternative Eco-friendly Home Cleaning Tips & Tricks

Vinegar, baking soda, and lemon are all you need to make natural cleaners for your home.

- Vinegar is a natural disinfectant and is 100% biodegradable
- Baking soda allows dirt and grime to dissolve in water
- The acid from lemons is a natural antibacterial and antiseptic



Dirty pots and pans? Grimy kitchen sink? Generously sprinkle baking soda over the dirty surface and squeeze lemon juice on top. Allow it to sit for a few minutes, and then scrub with half of a lemon to break up any leftover buildup. Rinse with warm water.

This method is most effective on stainless steel sinks.



Homemade All-Purpose Cleaner

- soak leftover citrus peels in distilled white vinegar for about two weeks
- strain the vinegar & remove the peels
 - bonus points if you are able to compost the peels!
- combine the vinegar with equal parts water & keep in a **reused** spray bottle or similar

This works wonders on most kitchen and bathroom surfaces (except for natural stones and some hardwoods). You can also use essential oils instead of citrus rinds.

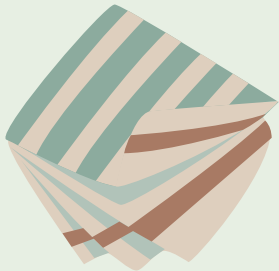
*Never mix vinegar with any bleach-based solutions. Ensure that your surfaces do not have any remaining bleach before using this cleaning method.



Upcycled Cleaning Rags

In addition to switching to natural cleaning solutions, swapping out paper towels with cloth rags is a great way to **reduce** waste in your cleaning process and **reuse** old household items.

Old towels can even be turned into ready-to-use rags in just a few simple steps. When you finish cleaning with them, they can be washed and reused as needed.



Turning an object that would usually become waste into something useful is called

UPCYCLING

To make upcycled cleaning rags, start by cutting an unwanted towel into squares, about 12 in. x 12 in.

- To neaten the frayed edges, fold them over about 1/2 inch. Sew with a needle and thread, or similar, to enclose the unfinished edge. This will keep the fabric from unraveling or getting tangled in the wash.



Hazardous Waste Disposal

What items are considered hazardous waste? Fluorescent light bulbs, paint & paint thinner, batteries, medicines, aerosol cans, and motor oils are classified as hazardous waste when we no longer have use for them. It is unsafe to dispose of hazardous products in your trash bin, and they need to be recycled or disposed of properly. These items should never be dumped in the drain or rinsed in the gutter, as storm drains carry water and pollutants directly to our creeks and the San Francisco Bay. Improper disposal increases the risk of polluting the bay, introduces harmful contaminants into local landfills, and is a public health concern.

Santa Clara County's Household Hazardous Waste Program (HHW) has a drop-off location in San Jose that allows you to make an appointment to drop off waste items free of charge.

*Always use caution when handling potentially dangerous waste items. Gloves, face masks, and eye protection are always recommended.

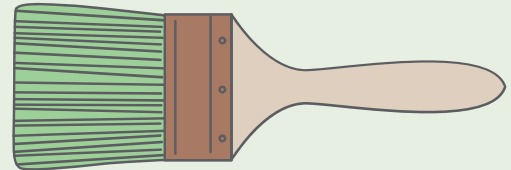


Paint & Paint Thinners

Many retailers accept unwanted paint as a part of the **PaintCare** program. Find a list of participating retailers on the [HHW website](https://www.hhw.org/) or visit [paintcare.org](https://www.paintcare.org/) for more information.

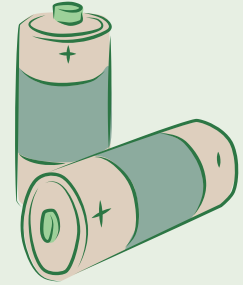
- If there is not enough leftover paint to be useful, the paint must be completely dry before disposal or **recycling**. To help the remaining paint dry faster, try slowly swirling the paint around the can to coat the sides.

Paint thinners are considered toxic and must be taken to a hazardous material drop-off location. Any rags or other materials used in your paint thinning process should not be rinsed or thrown away. It is essential to include those items in your drop-off as paint thinner is a highly combustible substance.



Household Batteries

Batteries contain toxic substances such as mercury, lead, or cadmium, but many household batteries can be **recycled**. The [HHW website](#) has a list of locations near you that accept dead batteries. For extra safety measures, tape both ends of the battery with electrical or transparent tape before dropping them off.



Light Bulbs



Incandescent and **halogen** light bulbs cannot be recycled but do not contain toxic materials and can be disposed of in your trash..

For safety, place them carefully in a **reused** paper or plastic bag before disposing of them.



Most **fluorescent** light bulbs contain **mercury**, a toxic heavy metal that needs to be disposed of safely. Nearly all other components of CFLs can be **recycled** or **reused**. Visit www.hhw.org to search for your nearest drop-off location. ✨

LED bulbs do not contain mercury but are considered electronic waste and should be responsibly recycled at an **e-waste** facility.

Electronic Waste

E-waste includes any electronic materials from cords, computers, keyboards, and phones, to printers, stereo equipment, microwaves, and more. Any of these items that are broken or reaching the end of their "useful" life can be **recycled**.

While most e-waste is not considered immediately hazardous, lead and other harmful chemicals pose a threat to groundwater quality when electronics are left to break-down in landfills.

- **Goodwill of Silicon Valley** processes unwanted electronics and recycles e-waste through the **Reconnect** Program, free of charge. The HHW website promotes other county-approved drop-off locations, some of which even take major appliances.



Clothing & Shoes

Give your clothes and shoes a second life! Items in good condition can be dropped off at the following locations for local nonprofit organizations.



1. For all clothes, shoes, & other household items:

- [The Goodwill of Silicon Valley](#)
- [American Cancer Society's Discovery Shops](#)
- [Hope Services Thrift Store](#)
- [The Salvation Army Thrift Store & Donation Center](#)

2. For professional & business attire:

- [Dress for Success](#)
- [Career Gear](#)

In addition, buying secondhand clothing is a great way to **reduce** your water footprint. The average t-shirt requires over 2,500 gallons of water during production, and textiles contribute to **1/5th** of the world's **water pollution**.

You can help to **reduce** your impact and support your local consignment store by trading in your old clothes.

Household Items

1. For building materials & furniture:

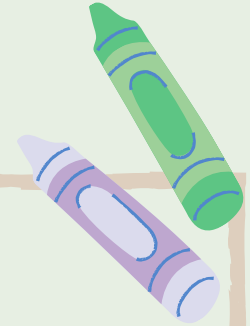
- [Habitat for Humanity, ReStore](#)

2. For school & office supplies:

- [Resource Area for Teaching \(RAFT\)](#)

3. For towels, blankets, & linens:

- [Humane Society Silicon Valley](#)



Crayons

Crayons are made mainly from paraffin wax, a **nonrenewable resource** made from crude oil, and can remain in landfills for hundreds of years.

Instead of tossing your old crayons, you can give them a new life through organizations like [The Crayon Initiative](#), which **recycles** old crayons to make new ones for children's hospitals across the country.

Personal Care Products

When chucking out old personal care or household cleaning products, double-check the packaging is recyclable by your waste management service. Most skin, hair, or cosmetic products have a #1 or #2 recycling symbol and are responsibly recycled by most trash services.

One additional step you can take is to check websites like the nonprofit [TerraCycle](#), which strives to provide **recycling solutions** for items that are generally not recyclable. Their website offers a comprehensive list of drop-off locations or shipping options for product packaging.



Before any form of recycling, dispose of the remaining product in a trash bin and rinse the plastic thoroughly. Removing residue will reduce plastic recycling contamination, which helps protect our planet by ensuring those plastics are diverted from landfills.

Additional Resources

For more information about Santa Clara County hazardous waste disposal, visit the **Household Hazardous Waste Program** at www.hhw.org or call (408) 299-7300. You can also check your city's website for all local and updated environmental services notices regarding preferred disposal methods.

The **Watershed Watchers** program is a partnership of the **Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program** (SCVURPP) and the **San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society**. To learn more about how you can protect your local watershed, visit our website at www.sfbws.com, or you can find additional resources from SCVURPP at www.mywatershedwatch.org.

