

HHW and Natural Cleaners - 10/01/07

The Isabella County Recycling Center's last Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) and electronic waste (E-waste) collection will held be on Wednesday, November 7th, 2007. Since it will be our one until March 2008, we will be having an all-day collection. These are by appointment only, so call 773-9631 to schedule your appointment. There are very few appointments for HHW left, and several E-waste openings. If you can't make the November collection, or we fill up, our tentative 2008 HHW schedule can be viewed at our web site, www.isabellacounty.org/recycles on the News and Events page. In addition, the items we accept during HHW can be viewed on our web site.

Not including the material collected during our August 14th HHW collection, in 2006-2007 the following HHW was removed from Isabella County residents and businesses: 4,539 pounds of pesticides, 246 pounds of mercury-containing devices, 11,759 pounds of oil-based paints, 1,509 pounds of solvents, 849 pounds of automotive liquids, 1,613 pounds of cleaners, 8,394 pounds of batteries, 50 pounds of lead-acid batteries, 1,275 pounds of fluorescent light bulbs, and 4,792 other miscellaneous hazardous items. That's a total of 30,241 pounds of Household Hazardous Waste and Electronic waste in 15 months! Thank you to those of you who participated in one of our collections. Now that you have rid your homes, garages, gardens and workshops of HHW, now is the time for prevention. Try using non-toxic and environmentally-friendly alternatives. Since most commercial cleaning products are based on age-old basic formulas, why not make your own? They work, save you money, and won't pollute the environment.

I found the following non-toxic cleaning recipes on www.care2.com/greenliving at "Healthy Home," "Nontoxic Cleaning": WINDOW CLEANER: ¼ to ½ tsp liquid detergent, 3 T vinegar, 2 C water. Put all the ingredients into a spray bottle and shake. A good way to save paper towels is to use newspaper to wipe off the window cleaner. ALL PURPOSE SPRAY CLEANER: ½ tsp washing soda, a dab of liquid soap, 2 C hot tap water. Combine the ingredients in a spray bottle and shake until the washing soda has dissolved. Apply and wipe off with a sponge or rag. CREAMY SOFT SCRUBBER: Simply pour about ½ C of baking soda into a bowl, and add enough liquid detergent to make a texture like frosting. Scoop the mixture onto a sponge, and wash the surface. This is the perfect recipe for cleaning the bathtub because it rinses easily and doesn't leave grit. FURNITURE POLISH: ½ tsp oil, such as olive or jojoba, ¼ C vinegar or fresh lemon juice. Mix ingredients in a glass jar. Dab a soft rag into the solution and wipe onto wood surfaces. Cover the glass jar and store indefinitely. OVEN CLEANER: 1 C or more baking soda, water, 1-2 squirts of liquid detergent. Sprinkle water generously over the bottom of the oven, then cover the grime with enough baking soda that the surface is totally white. Sprinkle some more water over the top and let the mixture set overnight. You can easily wipe up the grease the next morning. When you have cleaned up the worst of the mess, dab a bit of liquid detergent or soap on a sponge and wash the remaining residue from the oven. If this recipe doesn't work, you didn't use enough baking soda and/or water. VINEGAR DEODORIZER: Keep a clean spray bottle filled with 5% vinegar in your kitchen near your cutting board and in your bathroom. Spray the vinegar on the cutting board before going to bed and let set overnight. Straight vinegar is also great for cleaning the toilet rim. Just spray on and wipe off. MOLD KILLERS: Nothing natural works for mold and mildew as well as this spray. (The author) used it successfully on a moldy ceiling from a leaking roof, on a musty bureau, a musty rug, and a moldy shower curtain. Use 2 tsp Tea Tree Oil, 2 C water. Combine in a spray bottle, shake, spray on problems areas, do not rinse. You can store indefinitely in spray bottle. Tea tree oil is expensive, but a little goes a very long way. Note that the smell of tea tree oil is very strong, but will dissipate in a few days. Also, VINEGAR SPRAY reportedly kills 82% of mold. Pour some white distilled vinegar straight into a spray bottle, spray on the moldy area, and let set without rinsing. Smell will dissipate in a few hours.

Make sure to label your homemade cleaning products, and keep them away from children and pets. It's always best to only make the amount of cleaner needed. If you would like me to send or email the website page to you, please don't hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about natural cleaning products or recycling, please contact me at 989-773-9631 or recycling@isabellacounty.org. Happy Recycling!

[Marnie Basney is the Isabella County Recycling Center's Environmental Education Specialist]