

CORKSCREW SWAMP
SANCTUARY & BLAIR Audubon
CENTER



Clean Green

by Amy Fleischer

There are many advantages to making your workplace sparkle and shine. You want your office to be attractive to customers and comfortable for employees. But some cleaning products can have unintended, harmful effects – on your health and on the environment.

It's time to clean green!

The EPA estimates that most people spend 90 percent of their lives inside – and are, therefore, exposed to air pollutants indoors between 5 to 100 times more often than they're exposed to outdoor pollution. This is a specific concern in the workplace where the normal use and evaporation of cleaning products can commonly induce asthma, headache, nausea, fatigue, and skin and eye irritation. When cleaning products are improperly disposed off, they can have adverse effects on aquatic wildlife – for example, by disrupting reproductive hormones in fish – and decrease the quality of a body of water by increasing the level of nutrients within it.

Luckily, there is a wide array of green product alternatives available. When you're purchasing cleaning products for your maintenance staff, the following general guidelines will help you make healthy, environmentally friendly decisions and conserve energy. Choose products that are:

- Biodegradable and non-toxic to humans and aquatic life.
- Designed for use in cold water.
- Packaged in recycled, recyclable, and refillable containers.
- Shipped in bulk.
- Clearly labeled with information on use and disposal.
- Dispersed with pump sprays, not aerosols.

Here are three great ways to shop green:

- Buy direct from the manufacturer, using clearing houses like [Green Seal](#), a non-profit that evaluates products for their health and environmental impact, and [EcoMall](#).
- Shop online at stores that have green products like www.shaklee.com/company_greenclean.shtml.
- Shop local at:
 - Your favorite stores, looking for products that



have the Green Seal

- **Wild Oats**/ 239-513-1053
6424 Naples Boulevard Suite # 601
Naples, FL 34109
- **Food and Thought**/ 239-213-2222
2134 Tamiami Trail North
Naples, FL 34102

After you've changed your cleaning products, you can measure the impact of your actions by visiting The Green Cleaning Pollution Prevention Calculator at <http://www.ofee.gov/janitor/index.asp>.

Spray Smart

Limit the use of disinfectants to areas where people are likely to come into contact with contaminated surfaces – bathroom fixtures, doorknobs, countertops. Many cleaning tasks, such as the washing of walls and floors, don't require the use of disinfectants. In fact, overuse of disinfectant can actually make bacteria stronger and more resilient.

Non-Toxic Primer

How do you determine if a product is non-toxic? Sometimes advertising can be misleading. Check the labels to ensure that the product has:

- Surfactants derived from vegetable oils, such as d-limonene and pine oil solvents, not from petroleum.
- VOC (volume of concentration) of less than 10% of the weight of the product when diluted for use.
- Phosphate concentration of 0.5 percent or less by

- weight.
- Neutral pH.
- Alternatives to EDTA and NTA, such as citrate, sodium bicarbonate, sodium carbonate, and sodium silicate.
- No chlorine bleach or sodium hypochlorite.

Recipes for Success

You can make powerful, effective cleaning products out of common household ingredients, such as baking soda and vinegar. Find out how at www.greenerchoices.org/products.cfm?product=greencleaning&page=RightChoices

Bring It Home

Follow these tips to use less cleaning product at home.

- **Oven cleaner:** Put a layer of aluminum foil in the bottom of the oven and replace it periodically.
- **Drain cleaner:** Put fitted screens over drains and pour kitchen grease into empty containers that can be disposed of in the trash.
- **Bathroom mildew removers:** Wipe down the shower curtain and walls after showering.
- **Carpet cleaners:** Take off shoes at the door.

Your Feedback

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Audubon of Florida's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is a watershed system that is managed to maintain the native plants and animals and preserve the natural processes that have been occurring for thousands of years. The 13,000 acre property includes the last stand of virgin bald cypress trees existing in the United States. Visitors can enjoy the Sanctuary from a 2-1/4 mile boardwalk and expand their knowledge of ecosystems in southwest Florida at the Blair Audubon Center. Learn more at www.corkscrew.audubon.org.