



Home Owner News



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87 Uses For Baking Soda

A safe, natural, economical environmentally-friendly alternative to many products that we use everyday.



Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) is a safe, natural, economical environmentally-friendly alternative to many products we use everyday. It can replace many of the expensive products currently used in the home that are potentially harmful to the environment. The following are 87 of the most practical uses for baking soda.

In the Kitchen

Clean your produce

Wax coatings and surface pesticides on fruits and vegetables are concerns for many people. Wash produce in a pot of cold water with 2-3 table-spoons baking soda; the baking soda will remove some of the impurities tap water leaves behind. Or put a small amount of baking soda on a wet sponge or vegetable brush and scrub your produce. Give everything a thorough rinsing before serving.

Tenderize meat

Got a tough cut of meat on your hands? Soften it up by giving it a rubdown in baking soda. Let it sit (in the refrigerator, of course) for three to five hours, and then rinse it off thoroughly before cooking.

Soak out fish smells

Get rid of that fishy smell from your store-bought flounder filets and fish steaks by soaking the raw fish for about an hour (inside your refrigerator) in 1 quart (1 liter) water with 2 tablespoons baking soda. Rinse the fish well and pat dry before cooking.

Reduce acids in recipes

If you or someone in your family is sensitive to the high-acid content of tomato-based sauces or coffee, you can lower the overall acidity by sprinkling in a pinch of baking soda while cooking (or, in the case of coffee, before brewing). A bit of baking soda can also counteract the taste of vinegar if you happen to pour in a bit too much. Be careful not to overdo it with the soda, though -- if you add too much, the vinegar-baking soda combination will start foaming.

Bake better beans

Do you love baked beans but not their aftereffects? Adding a pinch of baking soda to baked beans as they're cooking will significantly reduce their gas-producing properties.

Fluff up your omelets

Want to know the secret to making fluffier omelets? For every three eggs used, add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda. Shhhh! Don't let it get around.

Use as yeast substitute

Need a stand-in for yeast when making dough? If you have some powdered vitamin C (or citric acid) and baking soda on hand, you can use a mixture of the two instead. Just mix in equal parts to

equal the quantity of yeast required. What's more, the dough you add it to won't have to rise before baking.

Rid hands of food odors

Chopping garlic or cleaning a fish can leave their "essence" on your fingers long after the chore is done. Get those nasty food smells off your hands by simply wetting them and vigorously rubbing with about 2 teaspoons baking soda instead of soap. The smell should wash off with the soda.

Clean baby bottles and accessories

Here's some great advice for new parents: Keep all your baby bottles, nipples, caps, and brushes "baby fresh" by soaking them overnight in a container filled with hot water and half a box of baking soda. Be sure to give everything a good rinsing afterward, and to dry thoroughly before using. Baby bottles can also be boiled in a full pot of water and 3 tablespoons baking soda for three minutes.

Clean a cutting board

Keep your wooden or plastic cutting board clean by occasionally scrubbing it with a paste made from 1 tablespoon each baking soda, salt, and water. Rinse thoroughly with hot water.

Fire extinguisher

Every kitchen should have a container of baking soda near the stove. It effectively puts out cooking fires. If flames appear, quickly throw baking soda at the base of the fire. Be sure to stand at least an arm's length from the flames.

Baking soda extinguishes grease and electrical fires. Many commercial fire extinguishers, including dry chemical and foam, contain baking soda. Carbon dioxide is released when baking soda is heated (just like when dough rises) and water is produced. Since carbon dioxide is heavier than air and does not support combustion like oxygen does, it smothers the fire while the water that is formed cools the fire to below the ignition temperature. Baking soda both cools and smothers a fire unlike any other household chemical.

It's a good idea to keep a box by your stove, or in your travel trailer, with your camping gear, in your car, by the barbecue, etc. -- you may be glad you did!

NOTE: Baking soda should not be considered a replacement for a commercially available fire extinguisher.

Clear a clogged drain

Most kitchen drains can be unclogged by pouring in 1 cup baking soda followed by 1 cup hot vinegar (simply heat it up in the microwave for 1 minute). Give it several minutes to work, then add 1 quart (1 liter) boiling water. Repeat if necessary. If you know your drain is clogged with grease, use 1/2 cup each of baking soda and

salt followed by 1 cup boiling water. Let the mixture work overnight; then rinse with hot tap water in the morning.

Boost potency of dishwashing liquid

Looking for a more powerful dishwashing liquid? Try adding 2 tablespoons baking soda to the usual amount of liquid you use, and watch it cut through grease like a hot knife!

Make your own dishwashing detergent

The dishwasher is fully loaded when you discover that you're out of your usual powdered dishwashing detergent. What do you do? Make your own: Combine 2 tablespoons baking soda with 2 tablespoons borax. You may be so pleased with the results you'll switch for good.

Deodorize your dishwasher

Eliminate odors inside your automatic dishwasher by sprinkling 1/2 cup baking soda on the bottom of the dishwasher between loads. Or pour in half a box of baking soda and run the empty machine through its rinse cycle.

Clean & deodorize your refrigerator

To get rid of smells and dried-up spills inside your refrigerator, remove the contents, then sprinkle some baking soda on a damp sponge and scrub the sides, shelves, and compartments. Rinse with a clean, wet sponge. Don't forget to place a fresh box of soda inside when you're done.

Clean your microwave

To clean those splatters off the inside of your microwave, put a solution of 2 tablespoons baking soda in 1 cup water in a microwave-safe container and cook on High for 2-3 minutes. Remove the container, then wipe down the microwave's moist interior with a damp paper towel.

Remove coffee and tea stains from china

Don't let those annoying coffee and/or tea stains on your good china spoil another special occasion. Remove them by dip-ping a moist cloth in baking soda to form a stiff paste and gently rubbing your cups and saucers. Rinse clean and dry, then set your table with pride.

Clean a thermos

To remove residue on the inside of a thermos, mix 1/4 cup baking soda in 1 quart (1 liter) water. Fill the thermos with the solution -- if necessary, give it a going-over with a bottle brush to loosen things up -- and let it soak overnight. Rinse clean before using.

Freshen a sponge or towel

When a kitchen sponge or dish towel gets that distinctly sour smell, soak it overnight in 2 tablespoons baking soda and a couple of drops of antibacterial dish soap dissolved in 1 pint (450 milliliters) warm water. The following morning, squeeze out the remaining solution and rinse with cold water. It should smell as good as new.

Remove stains and scratches on countertops

Is your kitchen countertop covered with stains or small knife cuts? Use a paste of 2 parts baking soda to 1 part water to "rub out" most of them. For stubborn stains, add a drop of chlorine bleach to the paste. Immediately wash the area with hot, soapy water to prevent the bleach from causing fading.

Shine up stainless steel and chrome trim

To put the shine back in your stainless steel sink, sprinkle it with baking soda, then give it a rubdown -- moving in the direction of the grain -- with a moist cloth. To polish dull chrome trim on your appliances, pour a little baking soda onto a damp sponge and rub over the chrome. Let it dry for an hour or so, then wipe down with

warm water and dry with a clean cloth.

Get rid of grease stains on stovetops

Say good-bye to cooked-on grease stains on your stovetop or backsplash. First wet them with a little water and cover them with a bit of baking soda. Then rub them off with a damp sponge or towel.

Clean an automatic coffeemaker

Properly caring for your automatic coffeemaker means never having to worry about bitter or weak coffee. Every two weeks or so, brew a pot of 1 quart (1 liter) water mixed with 1/4 cup baking soda, followed by a pot of clean water. Also, sweeten your coffeemaker's plastic basket by using an old toothbrush to give it an occasional scrubbing with a paste of 2 tablespoons baking soda and 1 tablespoon water. Rinse thoroughly with cold water when done.

Care for your coffeepots and teapots

Remove mineral deposits in metal coffeepots and teapots by filling them with a solution of 1 cup vinegar and 4 tablespoons baking soda. Bring the mixture to a boil, then let simmer for five minutes. Or try boiling 5 cups water with 2 tablespoons soda and the juice of half a lemon. Rinse with cold water when done. To get off annoying exterior stains, wash your pots with a plastic scouring pad in a solution of 1/4 cup baking soda in 1 quart (1 liter) warm water. Follow up with a cold-water rinse.

Remove stains from nonstick cookware

It may be called nonstick cookware, but a few of those stains seem to be stuck on pretty well. Blast them away by boiling 1 cup water mixed with 2 tablespoons baking soda and 1/2 cup vinegar for 10 minutes. Then wash in hot, soapy water. Rinse well and let dry, then season with a bit of salad oil.

Clean cast-iron cookware

Although it's more prone to stains and rust than the nonstick variety, many folks swear by their iron cookware. You can remove even the toughest burned-on food remnants in your iron pots by boiling 1 quart (1 liter) water with 2 tablespoons baking soda for five minutes. Pour off most of the liquid, then lightly scrub it with a plastic scrub pad. Rinse well, dry, and season with a few drops of peanut oil.

Clean burned or scorched pots and pans

It usually takes heavy-duty scrubbing to get scorched-on food off the bottom of a pot or pan. But you can make life much easier for yourself by simply boiling a few cups of water (enough to get the pan about 1/4 full) and adding 5 tablespoons baking soda. Turn off the heat, and let the soda settle in for a few hours or overnight. When you're ready, that burned-on gunk will practically slip right off.

Deodorize your garbage pail

Does something smell "off" in your kitchen? Most likely, it's emanating from your trash can. But some smells linger even after you dispose of the offending garbage bag. So, be sure to give your kitchen garbage pail an occasional cleaning with a wet paper towel dipped in baking soda (you may want to wear rubber gloves for this). Rinse it out with a damp sponge, and let it dry before inserting a new bag. You can also ward off stinky surprises by sprinkling a little baking soda into the bottom of your pail before inserting the bag.

Around The House

Remove crayon marks from walls

Has Junior redecorated your walls or wallpaper with some original artworks in crayon? Don't lose your cool. Just grab a damp rag, dip

it in some baking soda, and lightly scrub the marks. They should come off with a minimal amount of effort.

Wash wallpaper

Is your wallpaper looking a bit dingy? Brighten it up by wiping it with a rag or sponge moistened in a solution of 2 tablespoons baking soda in 1 quart (1 liter) water. To remove grease stains from wallpaper, make a paste of 1 table-spoon baking soda and 1 teaspoon water. Rub it on the stain, let it set for 5-10 minutes, then rub off with a damp sponge.

Clean baby spit-ups

Infants do tend to spit up -- and usually not at opportune moments. Never leave home without a small bottle of baking soda in your diaper bag. If your tyke spits up on his or her (or your) shirt after feeding, simply brush off any solid matter, moisten a washcloth, dip it in a bit of baking soda, and dab the spot. The odor (and the potential stain) will soon be gone.

Deodorize rugs and carpets

How's this for a simple way to freshen up your carpets or rugs? Lightly sprinkle them with baking soda, let it settle in for 15 minutes or so, then vacuum up. Nothing to it!

Remove wine and grease stains from carpet

What's that? Someone just dropped a slab of butter or a glass of cabernet on your beautiful white carpeting! Before you scream, get a paper towel, and blot up as much of the stain as possible. Then sprinkle a liberal amount of baking soda over the spot. Give the soda at least an hour to absorb the stain, then vacuum up the remaining powder. Now ... exhale!

Freshen up musty drawers and closets

Put baking soda sachets to work on persistent musty odors in dresser drawers, cabinet hutches, or closets. Just fill the toe of a clean sock or stocking with 3-4 tablespoons soda, put a knot about an inch above the bulge, and either hang it up or place it away in an unobtrusive corner. Use a few sachets in large spaces like closets and attic storage areas. Replace them every other month if needed. This treatment can also be used to rid closets of mothball smells.

Remove musty odor from books

If those books you just took out of storage emerge with a musty smell, place each one in a brown paper bag with 2 tablespoons baking soda. No need to shake the bag, just tie it up and let it sit in a dry environment for about one week. When you open the bag, shake any remaining powder off the books, and the smell should be gone.

Polish silver and gold jewelry

To remove built-up tarnish from your silver, make a thick paste with 1/4 cup baking soda and 2 tablespoons water. Apply with a damp sponge and gently rub, rinse, and buff dry. To polish gold jewelry, cover with a light coating of baking soda, pour a bit of vinegar over it, and rinse clean. Note: Do not use this technique with jewelry containing pearls or gem-stones, as it could damage their finish and loosen the glue.

Get yellow stains off piano keys

That old upright may still play great, but those yellowed keys definitely hit a sour note. Remove age stains on your ivories by mixing a solution of 1/4 cup baking soda in 1 quart (1 liter) warm water. Apply to each key with a dampened cloth (you can place a thin piece of card-board between the keys to avoid seepage). Wipe again with a cloth dampened with plain water, and then buff dry with a clean cloth. (You can also clean piano keys with lemon juice

and salt.)

Remove stains from fireplace bricks

You may need to use a bit of elbow grease, but you can clean the smoke stains off your fireplace bricks by washing them with a solution of 1/2 cup baking soda in 1 quart (1 liter) warm water.

Remove white marks on wood surfaces

Get those white marks -- caused by hot cups or sweating glasses -- off your coffee table or other wooden furniture by making a paste of 1 tablespoon baking soda and 1 teaspoon water. Gently rub the spot in a circular motion until it disappears. Remember not to use too much water.

Remove cigarette odors from furniture

To eliminate that lingering smell of cigarette or cigar smoke on your upholstered furniture, simply lightly sprinkle your chairs or sofas with some baking soda. Let it sit for a few hours, then vacuum it off.

Shine up marble-topped furniture

Revitalize the marble top on your coffee table or counter by washing it with a soft cloth dipped in a solution of 3 tablespoons baking soda and 1 quart (1 liter) warm water. Let it stand for 15 minutes to a half hour, then rinse with plain water and wipe dry.

Clean bathtubs and sinks

Get the gunk off old enameled bathtubs and sinks by applying a paste of 2 parts baking soda and 1 part hydrogen peroxide. Let the paste set for about half an hour. Then give it a good scrubbing and rinse well; the paste will also sweeten your drain as it washes down.

Remove mineral deposits from showerheads

Say so long to hard-water deposits on your showerhead. Cover the head with a thick sandwich-size bag filled with 1/4 cup baking soda and 1 cup vinegar. Loosely fasten the bag -- you need to let some of the gas escape -- with adhesive tape or a large bag tie. Let the solution work its magic for about an hour.

Then remove the bag and turn on your shower to wash off any remaining debris. Not only will the deposits disappear, but your showerhead will be back to its old shining self!

Absorb bathroom odors

Keep your bathroom smelling fresh and clean by placing a decorative dish filled with 1/2 cup baking soda either on top of the toilet tank or on the floor behind the bowl. You can also make your own bathroom deodorizers by setting out dishes containing equal parts baking soda and your favorite scented bath salts.

Tidy up your toilet bowl

You don't need all those chemicals to get your toilet bowl clean. Just pour half a box of baking soda into your toilet tank once a month. Let it stand overnight, then give it a few flushes in the morning. This actually cleans both the tank and the bowl. You can also pour several tablespoons of baking soda directly into your toilet bowl and scrub it on any stains. Wait a few minutes, then flush away the stains.

In the Medicine Cabinet

Treat minor burns

The next time you grab the wrong end of a frying pan or forget to use a pot holder, quickly pour some baking soda into a container of ice water, soak a cloth or gauze pad in it, and apply it to the burn. Keep applying the solution until the burn no longer feels hot. This treatment will also prevent many burns from blistering.

Cool off sunburn and other skin irritations

For quick relief of sunburn pain, soak gauze pads or large cotton balls in a solution of 4 tablespoons baking soda mixed in 1 cup water and apply it to the affected areas. For a bad sunburn on your legs or torso -- or to relieve the itching of chicken pox -- take a luke-warm bath with a half to a full box of baking soda added to the running water. To ease the sting of razor burns, dab your skin with a cotton ball soaked in a solution of 1 tablespoon baking soda in 1 cup water.

Soothe poison ivy rashes

Did you have an unplanned encounter with poison ivy when gardening or camping recently? To take away the itch, make a thick paste from 3 teaspoons baking soda and 1 teaspoon water and apply it to the affected areas. You can also use baking soda to treat oozing blisters caused by the rash. Mix 2 teaspoons baking soda in 1 quart (1 liter) water and use it to saturate a few sterile gauze pads. Cover the blisters with the wet pads for 10 minutes, four times a day. *Note:* Do not apply on or near your eyes.

Make a salve for bee stings

Take the pain out of that bee sting -- fast. Make a paste of 1 teaspoon baking soda mixed with several drops of cool water, and let it dry on the afflicted area. *Warning:* Many people have severe allergic reactions to bee stings. If you have difficulty breathing or notice a dramatic swelling, get medical attention at once. (You can also treat bee stings with meat tenderizer.)

Fight diaper rash

Soothe your baby's painful diaper rash by adding a couple of tablespoons of baking soda to a lukewarm -- not hot -- bath. If the rash persists or worsens after several treatments, however, consult your pediatrician.

Combat cradle cap

Cradle cap is a commonplace, and typically harmless, condition in many infants. An old but often effective way to treat it is to make a paste of about 3 teaspoons baking soda and 1 teaspoon water. Apply it to your baby's scalp about an hour before bedtime and rinse it off the following morning. Do not use with shampoo. You may need to apply it several consecutive nights before the cradle cap recedes. (You can also treat cradle cap with baby oil.)

Acid indigestion and heartburn remedy

You can naturally neutralize painful stomach acids by adding ½ teaspoon of baking soda to an 8-ounce glass of water. Stir until completely diluted then drink. Do not use when your stomach is overly full. This remedy should not be used by anyone on a sodium-restricted diet.

Relieve itching inside a cast

Wearing a plaster cast on your arm or leg is a misery any time of year, but wearing one in the summertime can be torture. The sweating and itchiness you feel underneath your "shell" can drive you nearly insane. Find temporary relief by using a hair dryer -- on the coolest setting -- to blow a bit of baking soda down the edges of the cast. *Note:* Have someone help you, to avoid getting the powder in your eyes.

Alleviate athlete's foot

You can deploy wet or dry baking soda to combat a case of athlete's foot. First, try dusting your feet (along with your socks and shoes) with dry baking soda to dry out the infection. If that doesn't work, try making a paste of 1 teaspoon baking soda and 1/2 teaspoon water and rubbing it between your toes. Let it dry, and wash off after 15 minutes. Dry your feet thoroughly before putting on your shoes.

For Personal Hygiene**Use as gargle or mouthwash**

Did the main course you ordered include a few too many onions or a bit too much garlic? Try gargling with 1 teaspoon baking soda in a half glass of water. The baking soda will neutralize the odors on contact. When used as a mouthwash, baking soda will also relieve canker-sore pain.

Scrub teeth and clean dentures

If you run out of your regular toothpaste, or if you're looking for an all-natural alternative to commercial toothpaste, just dip your wet toothbrush in some baking soda and brush and rinse as usual. You can also use baking soda to clean retainers, mouthpieces, and dentures. Use a solution of 1 tablespoon baking soda dissolved in 1 cup warm water. Let the object soak for a half hour and rinse well before using.

Clean and sweeten toothbrushes

Keep your family's toothbrushes squeaky clean by immersing them in a solution of 1/4 cup baking soda and 1/4 cup water. Let the brushes soak overnight about once every week or two. Be sure to give them a good rinsing before using.

Remove built-up gel, hair spray, or conditioner from hair

When it comes to personal grooming, too much of a good thing can spell bad news for your hair. But a thorough cleansing with baking soda at least once a week will wash all of the gunk out of your hair. Simply add 1 tablespoon soda to your hair while shampooing. In addition to removing all the chemicals you put in your hair, it will wash away water impurities, and may actually lighten your hair.

Use as a hand and face wash

Make a mixture of three parts water to one part baking soda. Use this paste to scrub away stubborn stains like paint and grease or strong odors like fish and garlic. The same mixture can be used to naturally exfoliate and soften your face after washing away surface dirt with soap and water. For more sensitive skin, make the mixture four parts water to one part baking soda.

Use as a bath salt

Baking soda in the tub helps to relieve stress and soften skin. Add ¼- ½ cup to your bath. This is safe for most skin allergies and doesn't leave behind oily residue that many bath oils and detergents can.

Use as deodorant

Looking for an effective, all-natural deodorant? Try applying a small amount -- about a teaspoon's worth -- of baking soda with a powder puff under each arm. You won't smell like a flower or some exotic spice. But then, you won't smell like anything from the opposite extreme, either. For a combination deodorant/antiperspirant, mix four parts baking soda with one part cornstarch.

Control your dandruff

Got a bit of a flaking problem? To get dandruff under control, wet your hair and then rub a handful of baking soda vigorously into your scalp. Rinse thoroughly and dry. Do this every time you normally wash your hair, but only use baking soda, no shampoo. Your hair may get dried out at first. But after a few weeks your scalp will start producing natural oils, leaving your hair softer and free of flakes.

Clean combs and brushes

Freshen up your combs and hairbrushes by soaking them in a solution of 3 cups warm water and 2 teaspoons baking soda. Swirl them around in the water to loosen up all the debris caught between the teeth, then let them soak for about half an hour. Rinse well and dry before using.

Soothe tired, stinky feet

When your dogs start barking, treat them to a soothing bath of 4 tablespoons baking soda in 1 quart (1 liter) warm water. Besides relaxing your aching tootsies, the baking soda will remove the sweat and lint that gathers between your toes. Regular footbaths can also be an effective treatment for persistent foot odor.

Deodorize shoes and sneakers

A smelly shoe or sneaker is no match for the power of baking soda. Liberally sprinkle soda in the offending loafer or lace-up and let it sit overnight. Dump out the powder in the morning. (Be careful when using baking soda with leather shoes, however; repeated applications can dry them out.) You can also make your own reusable "odor eaters" by filling the toes of old socks with 2 tablespoons baking soda and tying them up in a knot. Stuff the socks into each shoe at night before retiring. Remove the socks in the morning and breathe easier.

In the Laundry**Boost strength of liquid detergent and bleach**

It may sound like a cliché, but adding 1/2 cup baking soda to your usual amount of liquid laundry detergent really will give you "whiter whites" and brighter colors. The baking soda also softens the water, so you can actually use less detergent. Adding 1/2 cup baking soda in top-loading machines (1/4 cup for front-loaders) also increases the potency of bleach, so you need only half the usual amount of bleach.

Remove mothball smell from clothes

If your clothes come out of storage reeking of mothballs, take heed: Adding 1/2 cup baking soda during your washer's rinse cycle will get rid of the smell.

Wash new baby clothes

Get all of the chemicals out of your newborn's clothing -- without using any harsh detergents. Wash your baby's new clothes with some mild soap and 1/2 cup baking soda.

Rub out perspiration and other stains

Pre-treating clothes with a paste made from 4 tablespoons baking soda and 1/4 cup warm water can help vanquish a variety of stains. For example, rub it into shirts to remove perspiration stains; for really bad stains, let the paste dry for about two hours before washing. Rub out tar stains by applying the paste and washing in plain baking soda. For collar stains, rub in the paste and add a bit of vinegar as you're putting the shirt in the wash.

Wash mildewed shower curtains

Just because your plastic shower curtain or liner gets dirty or mildewed doesn't mean you have to throw it away. Try cleaning it in your washing machine with two bath towels on the gentle setting. Add 1/2 cup baking soda to your detergent during the wash cycle and 1/2 cup vinegar during the rinse cycle. Let it drip-dry; don't put it in the dryer.

For The Do-It-Yourselfer**Clean battery terminals**

Eliminate the corrosive buildup on your car's battery terminals. Scrub them clean using an old toothbrush and a mixture of 3 tablespoons baking soda and 1 tablespoon warm water. Wipe them off with a wet towel and dry with another towel. Once the terminals have completely dried, apply a bit of petroleum jelly around each terminal to deter future corrosive buildup.

Use as deicer in winter

Salt and commercial ice-melt formulations can stain -- or actually

eat away -- the concrete around your house. For an equally effective, but completely innocuous, way to melt the ice on your steps and walkways during those cold winter months, try sprinkling them with generous amounts of baking soda. Add some sand for improved traction.

Tighten cane chair seats

The bottoms of cane chairs can start to sag with age, but you can tighten them up again easily enough. Just soak two cloths in a solution of 1/2 cup baking soda in 1 quart (1 liter) hot water. Saturate the top surface of the caning with one cloth, while pushing the second up against the bottom of the caning to saturate the underside. Use a clean, dry cloth to soak up the excess moisture, then put the chair in the sun to dry.

Remove tar from your car

It may look pretty bad, but it's not that hard to get road tar off your car without damaging the paint. Make a soft paste of 3 parts baking soda to 1 part water and apply to the tar spots with a damp cloth. Let it dry for five minutes, then rinse clean.

Give your deck the weathered look

You can instantly give your wooden deck a weathered look by washing it in a solution of 2 cups baking soda in 1 gallon (3.7 liters) water. Use a stiff straw brush to work the solution into the wood, then rinse with cool water.

Clean air-conditioner filters

Clean washable air-conditioner filters each month they're in use. First vacuum off as much dust and dirt as possible, then wash in a solution of 1 tablespoon baking soda in 1 quart (1 liter) water. Let the filters dry thoroughly before replacing.

Keep your humidifier odor-free

Eliminate musty smells from a humidifier by adding 2 tablespoons baking soda to the water each time you change it. *Note:* Check your owner's manual or consult the unit's manufacturer before trying this.

In the Great Outdoors**Keep weeds out of cement cracks**

Looking for a safe way to keep weeds and grasses from growing in the cracks of your paved patios, driveways, and walkways? Sprinkle handfuls of baking soda onto the concrete and simply sweep it into the cracks. The added sodium will make it much less hospitable to dandelions and their friends.

Clean resin lawn furniture

Most commercial cleaners are too abrasive to be used on resin lawn furniture. But you won't have to worry about scratching or dulling the surface if you clean your resin furniture with a wet sponge dipped in baking soda. Wipe using circular motions, then rinse well.

Use as plant food

Give your flowering, alkaline-loving plants, such as clematis, delphiniums, and dianthus, an occasional shower in a mild solution of 1 tablespoon baking soda in 2 quarts (2 liters) water. They'll show their appreciation with fuller, healthier blooms.

Maintain proper pool alkalinity

Add 1½ pounds (680 grams) baking soda for every 10,000 gallons (38,000 liters) of water in your swimming pool to raise the total alkalinity by 10 ppm (parts per million). Most pools require alkalinity in the 80-150 ppm range. Maintaining the proper pool alkalinity level is vital for minimizing changes in pH if acidic or basic pool

chemicals or contaminants are introduced to the water.

Scour barbecue grills

Keep your barbecue grill in top condition by making a soft paste of 1/4 cup baking soda and 1/4 cup water. Apply the paste with a wire brush and let dry for 15 minutes. Then wipe it down with a dry cloth and place the grill over the hot coals for at least 15 minutes to burn off any residue before placing any food on top.

For Your Pet

Make deodorizing dog shampoo

The next time Rover rolls around in your compost heap, pull out the baking soda to freshen him up. Just rub a few handfuls of the powder into his coat and give it a thorough brushing. In addition to removing the smell, it will leave his coat shiny and clean.

Wash insides of pets' ears

If your pet is constantly scratching at his ears, it could indicate the presence of an irritation or ear mites. Ease the itch (and wipe out any mites) by using a cotton ball dipped in a solution of 1 teaspoon baking soda in 1 cup warm water to gently wash the inside of his ears.

Keep bugs away from pets' dishes

Placing a border of baking soda around your pet's food bowls will keep away six-legged intruders. And it won't harm your pet if he happens to lap up a little (though most pets aren't likely to savor soda's bitter taste).

Deodorize the litter box

Don't waste money on expensive deodorized cat litter. Just put a thin layer of baking soda under the bargain-brand litter to absorb the odor. Or mix baking soda with the litter as you're changing it.