

Environmentally Friendly Car Washing

By **MICHAEL BLOCH**
GreenLivingTips.com

I used to be a clean car freak; not only regular washing, but a wipe down every single day in the mornings—courtesy of overnight dew on the vehicle. Then I moved to state that had dust in place of humidity and after a few months gave up—it was futile.

These days, my vehicle gets a wash once every 12 months or so—and whatever nature provides in the form of rain. Instead of my vehicle making a statement about me or seeing it as a status symbol, I see it only as a tool now.

That's probably okay for my own situation, spending much of my time in the bush in a vehicle with little resale value; but in the city I guess appearances need to be kept up for a number of reasons; be it to preserve resale value, for work or just so you're not known as "that person with the dirty car" who drags down neighborhood property values.

Also, if you live in an area known for high corrosion, such as near the ocean, then it makes sense to wash your car to protect it.

There's a few things you can do to make your car washing a little less harsh on the environment and water resources. Here's some tips:

Wash Your Car on the Grass

This will give the grass a drink, the soil will help to break down impurities and prevent the water from entering stormwater drains and winding up in local waterways. Some of the chemicals in car wash detergents are nutrients for algae; so this water getting into waterways can add to algal bloom and eutrophication problems.

Be Hose Wise

The only time you should have the hose on is when rinsing. Also use an adjustable trigger nozzle to improve pressure while reducing water consumptions

Detergent

Use an earth friendly detergent or consider not using any at all if

possible. If you do use detergent, don't use in excess of manufacturer's recommendations; you'll only waste money, put more chemicals into your lawn and you won't get a better result.

Use a Bucket More

The hose should only be used for the final rinse. Sure, it's easier to sit there and blast off grime with the hose, but it uses a ton of water. A bit of elbow grease using a sponge and bucket is good exercise too.

Wash in the Shade

Hot metal evaporates water incredibly quickly. The more that evaporates, the more you'll need to use so try and either wash your car in the shade, wait for a cloudy day or do it early in the morning or late in the evening.

Wash Less

Back in the day, it wasn't unusual for guys to wash and polish their vehicles every Sunday - it became somewhat of a tradition. If you're washing your car purely out of habit rather than necessity, take a deep breath and try and go cold turkey for a while. It can be done and your car won't fall apart.

Automatic Car Wash

Is an automated car wash greener? The answer is - it depends. If you pass a car wash on your way to and from work, or during any of your regular driving, it could be a more environmentally friendly alternative. Modern car washes use far less water than a home wash and they recycle their water. Automated car washes use anywhere from 20 to 45 gallons of water, but home washing can easily use in excess of a hundred gallons.

If getting to a car wash requires a special trip, then it's likely not a green option when you consider the emissions of your vehicle and gas consumption to and from the car wash.

Waterless Car Wash

I've noticed a lot of products



CAR WASHING: This necessary activity that we periodically do when the weather warms up can be less than friendly to planet Earth unless we make a few adjustments to our car-washing habits. STRINGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

on the market now claiming to be waterless car washes that are also environmentally friendly. I can't say I've ever used them, but I have read some encouraging reviews. These earth friendly products are made primarily from vegetable extracts and silicone. They are said to attract dirt via electrostatic means and then coat it. It's a matter of wiping on and wiping off. I was always taught that wiping off dirt in such a manner scratches the paint job, but if these products do really coat dirt, I guess it wouldn't be such an issue.

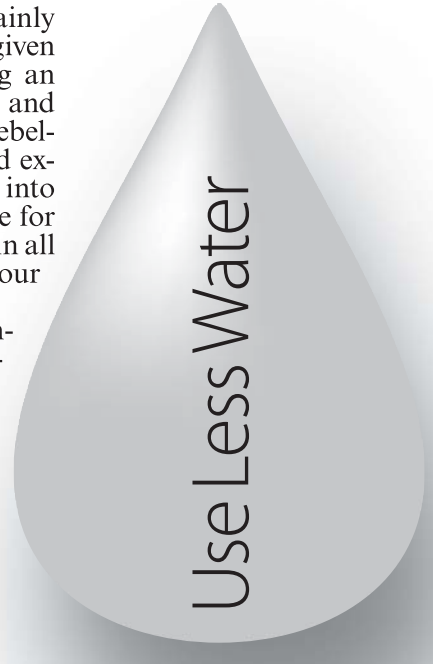
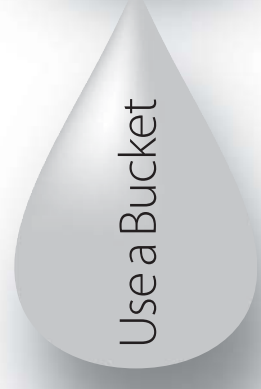
Perhaps these waterless car-washing products could make a good alternative for when your car has only light grime or could be used every other time in order to reduce overall consumption of water. As always, with any product claiming to be environmentally friendly, read the label and

do a spot test first.

A nice shiny car is certainly a pleasure to behold, but given that fresh water is becoming an increasingly scarce resource and the general environment is rebelling against all the toxins and excess nutrients we've pumped into it over the years, it's now time for us all to practice moderation in all things—including washing our cars.

Have some tips for environmentally friendly car washing? Please add them below!

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Environmentally Friendly Ways to Get Rid of Bugs

By **A. DARIN**
Epoch Times Staff

As the weather begins to warm up, so do the birds, bees, and other wildlife. They're beginning to wake up and come out from hibernation. In recent weeks, you may have already noticed some critters of the creeping, crawling variety on the move, making a new home in your home.

Methods of getting rid of them can sometimes be frustrating, expensive, ineffective, or environmentally damaging—but it doesn't have to be.

Over the years, I have often been the unhappy host of many tiny uninvited guests from the insect world. Their presence makes your home seem unsanitary. It can be embarrassing if you have guests over because it gives the impression that your place is dirty and not well kept. Most civilized human beings don't like to have them around.

Squashing them is an easy solution. However, apart from being morally questionable, it often does not prevent them from returning.

There are many products on the market that kill insects effectively and are pretty good at keeping them from coming back. However, they often contain chemicals that are not only harmful to the bugs, but harmful to you, your family, pets, and the environment as well.

Prevention

Keeping things clean, especially of food particles is very important. Most of the time when bugs enter

your home, they are drawn in because they are attracted to small particles of food. By keeping your kitchen and dining areas clean of food and debris, you will decrease the likelihood of inviting insects. This includes prompt washing of dishes and kitchen utensils, and serving trays.

Although your home may be spotless, insects may show up sometimes if things are left open or exposed. You might not sense it, but the bugs have that innate instinct. Food and drinks—especially anything with sugar or sweeteners—should be kept sealed, covered, and put away, possibly refrigerated.

Adopting preventive measures will decrease the possibility of bugs settling in your domain. However, sometimes this just isn't enough. You have done all these things almost obsessively and you still have bugs, then what?

Oils and Natural Repellants

I have searched far and wide in a variety of natural and health food stores for an already marketed product that serves as a bug repellent. There is a wide variety of products that fall under the category of topical bug repellent for purposes of hiking, camping, or backpacking, but nothing to keep bugs out of my home.

There were a couple of items sold in these places that would do the job, but when I looked closer, I noticed they were unsafe for humans. As a general rule, anything with a warning label is probably not the safest alternative.



FUMIGATION: There are many less noxious and more eco-friendly ways of getting rid of unwanted house guests. YURI CORTEZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

After digging deeper, I discovered there were some natural essential oils that bugs find very unpleasant. Among them are cedarwood oil, peppermint oil, and citron (citronella) oil. These oils can be found at some grocery stores, health food stores, spas, or ordered online.

Some common food items have a similar effect, such as hot peppers, onions, ginger, garlic, and citrus fruits.

For indoor purposes, to get rid of bugs in the kitchen, bathroom, or wherever, I don't recommend using onions, garlic, or hot peppers. Although they are not harmful, they can be unpleasant to humans.

Citronella seems to work the best for outdoor flying insects, but if you like the smell, it will work indoors.

I recommend making a mixture

of equal parts cedarwood and peppermint essential oils. Look for where the bugs are entering or their most desired pathways. Using an eye dropper or cotton swab, you can spread the liquid directly. A few drops is all you will need. The liquid is clear, so it won't stain hard surfaces, but because it is an oil, I would not recommend using it on or near fabrics or porous materials.

This mixture will get rid of the bugs, temporarily. An unfortunate drawback is that this method requires periodic reapplications of the oil to keep them from coming back.

Another option that is effective is a hot pepper solution. This will work indoors but because of its noxious nature, I would recommend it only for outdoor areas such as gardens, potted plants, and the like.

This method is simple. Take a few (five or six) hot peppers such as jalapenos, serrano chilies, or habaneros, slice them in half long-ways, and boil them in water for about 10 minutes. Make sure that when you are doing this, there is plenty

of ventilation and you don't breathe any fumes—and avoid direct contact with sensitive body parts like the eyes and nose, and face. You may use the peppers however you wish. The water used for the boiling can be placed in a spray bottle to become your outdoor bug spray.

Finally, another alternative is to purchase a sonic emitter that creates a high-pitched frequency that dispels a variety of pests. These small electronic devices can be found at any home appliance store like Home Depot, Menard's, or even Walgreens. Some people who use these devices are bothered themselves by the sound they put out, but it may be worth trying if all else fails. There is also some debate that these devices may cause health problems for humans, but currently there is no sufficient evidence to back up this claim.

The above are some effective ways to get rid of common bugs like ants, earwigs, centipedes, roaches, and even small rodents. However, for pests like termites or large rodents, I would consult a professional.

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