

Sanctuary One comes clean... one cup of vinegar at a time

BY BECKY OWSTON

To say that the folks at Sanctuary One are committed to caring for the earth is a bit of an understatement. On any given afternoon, a stroll around the property reveals stewardship at every level: a corps of sun-hatted volunteers lovingly tending to permaculture-inspired gardens; interns diligently adding vegetable scraps, manure and other organics to compost piles, working to create healthy usable soil from materials that would otherwise be turned into waste; groups of visiting schoolkids enjoying up-close encounters with rescued pets and farm animals. A cistern catches rainwater for use in the garden, while a drip irrigation system throughout the property conserves as much water as possible. The street-side commingle recycling bin is filled with cans, glass jars and empty cereal boxes, while two newly installed 30-gallon tubs harbor items from baling twine to plastic feed bags slated for fall's plastic roundup.

And starting this month, volunteers are taking Sanctuary One's sustainability efforts to the next level by creating homemade cleaning products for use at the farm. From herbal disinfectant to laundry powder to sink and tile cleanser, the possibilities for producing do-it-yourself (DIY) safe, highly effective cleaners are practically endless. And the benefits

are myriad: it's yet another hands-on opportunity at Sanctuary One, and a great way for staff, interns and volunteers to take ownership of one more important aspect of farm duties. (You'd be amazed at the amount of cat and dog towels, beds and blankets that need to be laundered on a regular basis!) Because all of the ingredients can be purchased in bulk, fewer trips to the store are required. And the cost? A fraction of what you'd pay for a comparable product at the supermarket.

Of course, special consideration is required when using certain natural ingredients in proximity to animals. "Tea tree and some cedar essential oils, for example," says Dr. Jeff Judkins of Animalkind Veterinary Clinic, "are toxic to cats and should always be avoided." As for the efficacy of natural cleaning products in an animal boarding facility? "The goal is not to sterilize (it can't be done), but to sanitize," says Judkins. "Lemon balm and lavender oil have antiviral and antibacterial properties and can be used just as effectively as conventional disinfectants."

The concept of homemade cleaning products is nothing new. Folks have been making their own cleaning supplies since, well, the beginning of dirt. Long before commercial household products were



developed, cleaning was carried out using natural products like vinegar, lemons, salt and bicarbonate of soda. But around the start of the 20th century, things began to change. Commercial household products started showing up on shelves, convincing us of the need for harsh toxic degreasers, defoamers, solvents, descalers, additives and inhibitors to make our countertops shine and our bathtubs sparkle.

But ironically, while keeping our floors glossy and our socks perfumy with these industrial-strength products, we're also exposing ourselves to some pretty serious endocrine disruptors, carcinogens and neurotoxins, which are especially worrisome for people with allergies, asthma and compromised immune systems. Not to mention all the packaging we're adding to the garbage stream.

As we become increasingly conscious

of what goes into our bodies, as well as the impact we have on the planet, it's good to know we've got options. Of course, the market is currently saturated with all sorts of "eco-cleaning" alternatives for those who strive for a chemical-free household, but aren't quite ready to take the DIY plunge. But the high price of these products can be prohibitive. And just because a product has the word "green" on its label or in its marketing verbiage, don't automatically assume it's eco-friendly!

Think you might like to give homemade cleaners a try yourself? An ideal "gateway product" is a simple all-purpose cleaner, one of the easiest sprays to make, requiring ingredients you probably already have in your kitchen. Simply create a 50/50 mix of water and distilled white vinegar. If you like, add a couple drops of lavender, lemon or other essential oil. Pour it into a spray bottle et voilà—it's that easy.

You can find lots of nontoxic household recipes on the Internet. Just search around, read other peoples' comments and don't be afraid to experiment to determine what works best for you. A good resource is http://library.oregonmetro.gov/files/green_cleaners_brochure_2012.pdf.

Another excellent resource is *The Naturally Clean Home: 150 Super-Easy Herbal Formulas for Green Cleaning* by Karyn Siegal-Maier.

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Note: *Becky Owston is a volunteer at Sanctuary One and a 2012 graduate of the Jackson County Master Recyclers program.*

Applegate has a lot to pull for

BY BARBARA SUMMERHAWK

It's not the zombie apocalypse that's going to get us, it's those creepy invasive aliens like star thistle, blackberries, garlic mustard, Japanese knotweed, poison hemlock and puncture vine settling into our fields and roadways that will wreak quiet havoc with our local flora (and consequently fauna) that we should worry about.

In order to educate local citizens about noxious weed control, the Cooperative Weed Management Association (CWMA) is planning a "Let's Pull Together" event scheduled for June 15 from 9 am to 1 pm at the Coyote Trails Nature Center in Medford. Two hours of pulling followed by a barbecue and raffle will be informative as well as fun.

"Mainly, we will be pulling ivy, puncture vine and yellow star thistle," explains Sam Whitridge of the CWMA. The CWMA, funded by the Bureau of Land Management, holds monthly meetings of its volunteers to coordinate weed control, and an annual weed pull that Whitridge hopes will "gather as many volunteers as possible" in this outreach on managing the noxious invasive.

Star thistle is no stranger to valley residents. It is a native of Eurasia that made its way via South America into California about the time of the Gold Rush. As most residents surely know, star

thistle infests roadsides and open areas, rapidly depleting soil moisture. Lovers of strong light, star thistle can have a seed output as high as 30,000 seeds per square yard. Control cannot be completed in one season and has to be ongoing, according to weed management authorities. Mowing and cultivation types of control have to be accurately timed. Burning, grazing goats, sheep or cattle on star thistle can also be effective. (Star thistle is, however, poisonous to horses.) There are also a variety of biological management possibilities using certain insects.

The Himalayan blackberry, which attracts pickers along Oregon roadsides later in the summer, is a European shrub that was introduced to the U.S. as a crop in the late 19th century, but escaped cultivation and invaded low-level stream areas. Blackberries can provide some erosion control and stream cover, but native plants are superior for these purposes. Management involves mowing or hand slashing, then removing or killing the roots and seeding native vegetation.

A summer annual broadleaf weed native to southern Europe is the puncture vine. It has a deep taproot system that competes aggressively for soil water and nutrients. Management can be achieved through reducing the amount of seeds in the soil by removing the plants before they

produce seeds, at or before flowering. This is usually accomplished by hand removal, hoeing and raking.

Introduced from Europe as a food plant, the garlic mustard is rapidly becoming a serious concern in forests across the land. Like the other weeds mentioned here, garlic mustard has a very high seed production rate and needs to be controlled by hand-pulling entire individual plants or by herbicides. Plants can grow three feet tall and have small, white, four-petaled flowers. The leaves often smell like garlic when they are crushed. Although mechanical control (hand-pulling, hoeing, etc.) would be ideal when thinking of environmental impact, it may not be sufficient, making herbicides an alternative for large, dense infestations of not only garlic mustard, but also all of these noxious invaders. Contact the CWMA or the local county extension office for recommendations on herbicides and how to use them.

Poison hemlock is the beautifully green, tall, white flowering perennial commonly found near wetter disturbed areas. This invasive plant looks like Queen Anne's lace, but don't be fooled: this species is toxic to humans and animals. Poison hemlock can be eradicated by mechanical means or hand-pulling, but be sure to wear protective gloves and clothing.

Last to be listed, but not the final invasive species found in the Rogue basin, is the Japanese knotweed, which has recently made its debut in the Applegate Valley near the Williams Creek area. This



Japanese knotweed, the latest noxious weed to hit the Applegate area.

species will overrun native riparian buffer plantings. The stems emerge in late March to mid April and can be over six feet tall before May. It is a spreading noxious weed that has to be controlled through the rhizomes.

Residents who want to read in depth about these noxious flora can check out the link on the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) website at <http://www.apwc.info/news-events/invasive-species-information/>. We are one of this year's sponsors of the "Let's Pull Together" event in June and hope to continue providing the Applegate Valley with important information about invasive weeds. The first level of management is education, and by "pulling together" with neighbors and friends we can learn how to rid the valley of these noxious invaders. The CWMA along with the APWC and other sponsoring groups hope to see you out there on June 15.

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For more information about Invasive Plant Species please visit the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council's website
<http://www.apwc.info/news-events/invasive-species-information/>

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