

Flora & Fauna

## Decorations from the Shoreline

Looking for an inexpensive and fun way to create unique decorations for your home? Take a stroll along the shoreline and see what Mother Nature has to offer. Seashells, beach glass, glass bottles, and smooth river rocks can all make wonderful accents throughout your home. Here are a few ideas on how you can get them clean, and then use them:

**Seashells.** If you live near the beach or if you're planning to take a vacation to a sandy shore, seashells can be wonderful souvenirs – but only if they're cleaned properly. Otherwise they become a rather stinky reminder of low tide. So, be sure to soak your shells in a solution of equal parts bleach and water. There's no set amount of time to soak the shells, just leave them in long enough for the algae and periostracum (that flaky, leathery outer covering) to dissolve completely. Once they're smooth, wipe them with a bit of mineral or baby oil to give them a beautiful shine. **Craft Ideas:** Attach a few seashells to the inside of one or more shadow boxes and hang them on the wall for a beautiful wall decoration. You can also place your seashells in a small basket to decorate a bathroom, countertop or side table.

**Sea glass** (also known as beach glass or mermaid's tears) is glass found on beaches that has been tumbled and smoothed by the water and sand, creating small pieces of smooth, frosted glass. Some people mistake "smooth" for "sanitary." Like seashells, it's important to clean sea glass to get rid of that pungent aroma. Soak the sea glass in a bucket full of soapy water and then carefully remove and rinse each piece. Set them out to dry completely (which will help remove the odor), before using a soft bristle brush and soapy water to gently scrub any residual grime off each piece. Rinse and set out the pieces to dry once more. **Craft Ideas:** Create a beautiful mosaic using sea glass and some mosaic grout (which you can find at your local hardware or craft store). You can put your mosaic around the edge of a mirror, on the walls of a birdhouse, even decorate the headboard of your bed. The only limit is your imagination!

**Glass bottles** can make interesting decorations, but like sea glass, should be cleaned thoroughly. Soak the bottles in a sink of soapy water and one cup of bleach. Use a bottlebrush to clean deep inside the bottles. Rinse and set out to dry. **Craft Ideas:** Place 3-5 bottles of varying colors and sizes on an end table, desk, or windowsill to create a unique accent. You can add a few flowers to the bottles and create interesting vases, too.

**River rocks** are stones and pebbles of various sizes that have been made smooth by the water and sediments in the river. Use an old toothbrush and some soapy water to remove any dirt and grime on the rocks. **Craft Ideas:** Use acrylic paint to transform ordinary river rock into bunnies, bugs, or just paint a unique design. Add a few coats of glaze to seal your design and you've got some handmade gifts you can give to family and friends. This is also a great activity for children.

## **GUARANTEE SYSTEM.**

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## *Cleaning Corner*

### Five Unexpected Shortcuts for Tedious Chores

In The Ultimate Accidental Housewife: Your Guide to a Clean-Enough House, author Julie Edelman offers these and other cool cleaning tips:

1. To prevent a sticky film from forming on cheese graters, apply a thin layer of cooking spray.
2. Pick up shards of glass with a slice of bread.
3. Vinegar disinfects almost any surface, but if you don't like the smell, use cheap vodka or leftover white wine.
4. To clean the inside of a microwave, zap a bowl of water and lemon juice for five minutes; let it cool before opening the door and wiping down the walls.
5. A toilet will shine if you drop two Alka-Seltzer tablets into the bowl – no scrubbing required.

# April

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| 1578 | William Harvey of England discovers blood circulation   |
| 1614 | In Virginia, Native American princess Pocahontas marries English colonist John Rolfe  |
| 1778 | Oliver Pollock, a New Orleans businessman, creates the US dollar sign "\$"  |
| 1789 | On the balcony of Federal Hall on Wall Street in New York City, George Washington takes the oath of office to become the first elected President of the United States |
| 1853 | Cincinnati became first US city to pay firefighters a regular salary  |
| 1923 | Insulin first became generally available for use by diabetics   |
| 1924 | Rand McNally publishes its first road atlas   |
| 1955 | Ray Kroc opens his first franchise of McDonald's restaurant in Des Plaines, Illinois  |

## Health Tips: Maintain a Healthy Mouth

**OK** – so we all know that brushing our teeth is important, but are you doing everything possible to keep your mouth healthy?

1. **How old is your toothbrush?** Don't use the same toothbrush for longer than three months (electric toothbrush heads can be used up to six months). Over time, the bristles wear out, collect bacteria and food bits, and just get plain dirty. If you have gum disease problems, use a new brush every six weeks. It's even a good idea to use a new brush after you've recovered from a bout with the flu.
2. **Use proper brushing techniques.** Proper brushing entails more than just a few quick strokes. Always make sure you brush away from the gum line toward the chewing surfaces and use gentle, circular motions. Brushing too hard will wear down the enamel on your teeth. Also, brushing for too short a time means you're probably missing lots of plaque and tartar. Hum your ABCs at least 2-3 times to make sure you're brushing long enough.
3. **Take care of your tongue.** The cause of bad breath isn't usually from dirty teeth – it's a dirty tongue. Millions of bacteria congregate on the surface of your tongue, along with food residue (like that garlic pizza from last night). Make sure you always brush your tongue thoroughly. If you have chronic halitosis (chronic bad breath), you can use a special plastic or stainless steel tongue scraper to tackle the problem.
4. **Finish up by brushing the roof of your mouth.** The roof and sides of your mouth also collect bacteria; so give these areas a few quick strokes with your toothbrush to get them clean.
5. **Floss – really, we mean it!** Thorough brushing won't get rid of all the plaque and tartar in between your teeth. You've got to floss to get rid of all that gunk and keep your gums healthy. If your gums bleed when you floss, it means you haven't been taking good care of them. Continue thorough brushing and flossing every day. If they continue to bleed or even start to hurt, see your dentist.
6. **Eat teeth-healthy foods.** There are some fresh fruits and vegetables that are especially good for keeping your mouth healthy. Strawberries are one of nature's most delicious teeth whiteners. Yup, you read that right – those sweet little red fruits actually make your teeth white (though you may have to floss to remove those tiny seeds). Crunchy vegetables like carrots, radishes and celery naturally remove plaque and tartar buildup around your teeth, too.
7. **Cut back on your sugar intake.** This one should go without saying, but eating lots of candy and drinking lots of soda is not good for your teeth.
8. **Lay off the coffee, soda, and cigarettes.** These three things in particular will make your teeth look brown and yellow. Yellow teeth are not only unattractive, but they even make you look older. So switch to water, chew some sugar-free gum, and watch the years (and yellow stains) fade away!

### Kid Corner: Adopt a Grandparent

**I**t is estimated that today, one in eight Americans is over the age of 65, and by 2030 that number is expected to double. With aging friends passing away and the handicap of limited mobility, seniors often need interaction with others. If your children have grandparents who have passed away or are unable or unwilling to be part of their lives, inviting them to spend time with a senior citizen can bring many benefits to both your children and the elderly individual. Here are some ways you can reach out and make a difference by "adopting" a grandparent.

**Ask around at church.** There are probably many elderly individuals at your church or temple who would be delighted to befriend you and your family. You'd be surprised at what each of you can share with the other: baking tips, sewing and knitting secrets, advice on household repairs, moral support, etc. You can consult with your church leader about getting in contact with elderly church members who may need a bit of friendship, or even help set up an adopt-a-grandparent ministry.

**Volunteer at an assisted living facility.** Most senior centers, nursing homes and other assisted living facilities are eager for volunteers willing to spend time with residents, and staff members will know which ones are most interested in making new friends. While the first visit may feel awkward, over time you will be surprised at how much wisdom and laughter your new friend can share. **Note:** Human service agencies are required to perform a criminal background check on all volunteers.

As an extra special project (and a terrific icebreaker), you can interview senior citizens about their lives and record their favorite memories and stories from their youth (i.e., the first time they drove a car, their first job, the day of their wedding, etc.). You can then type up their story, add their picture to make a cover, and give it back to them. They can then send their story to their children and grandchildren who are sure to treasure the wonderful memories you helped capture.

**Become a pen pal.** Write regularly to distant relatives or seniors you have met at church or other community organizations. Encourage your children to write letters and/or draw pictures, too. For e-mail savvy seniors, visit [Elderswithoutwalls.com](http://Elderswithoutwalls.com), a site that connects aging adults across the country to younger people looking to befriend someone with more life experience. Scroll through the profiles, which include information about the seniors' hometowns, former occupations, military service and hobbies and write to someone who catches your interest. **Note:** If you choose to send an email to [Elderswithoutwalls.com](http://Elderswithoutwalls.com), be sure to put the recipient's name in the subject line because many of the registered seniors live in the same assisted living facility and share email addresses.

**Go global.** If time is an issue but you still want to support the cause, consider making a financial donation to international groups that fight for the rights of seniors in poverty. *Adopta un Abuelito* raises money for the elderly poor in El Salvador, Peru. Ten dollars provides a roundtrip taxi ride to and from the hospital, and \$65 pays for a new roof on a senior's home. For details, visit [www.adopt-a-grandparent.org](http://www.adopt-a-grandparent.org).

**Yield** 1½ cups    **Time** 10 minutes

### Ingredients

- 2 cup fresh basil, packed
- 3-5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup chopped pine nuts or walnuts
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 5-6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

### Directions

1. Put everything except the olive oil in a blender and process until finely chopped. Stir in the olive oil. (If you don't have a blender, chop the basil until it is dark green, pasty, and no longer resembles basil. This will take about 5 minutes. Then mix with all other ingredients)
2. Serve over pasta or with lightly toasted bread and cheese. You can even turn it into delicious pesto pizza or use it as a spread over a bagel. You can also freeze any leftover pesto and use it later.

**Note:** Be sure to use good Parmesan cheese and extra virgin olive oil. There's no point in eating pesto that's not made with the best ingredients available.

### History of Pesto

Pesto is considered by many to be the most ancient oil-based sauce. It is first believed to have originated around the 1600s, possibly earlier, from Liguria, a beautiful region along the northeast coast of Italy. The ancient method of preparing pesto is with the marble mortar and the wood pestle. It is still considered to be the best way of preparing pesto at home although today very few persons do actually follow this process.

### Help Your Household Go Green

By now, it's clear that "going green" is not just some passing fad. There is a growing movement of environmentally conscious citizens who are making big changes in all aspects of their daily lives to help preserve the environment. Here's what you can do to be part of the solution:

**1. Reduce.** Instead of a paper bag, use a washable lunch bag or lunch box when packing lunches. Skip plastic sandwich bags and plastic wrap and use washable containers. Stop buying a water bottle every day; use a washable Nalgene bottle instead. Instead of buying products wrapped in layer after layer of plastic and paper that you'll only throw out moments after opening it, choose ones that have the least packaging.

**2. Reuse.** Transform your used grocery bags into trash bags for small trashcans. Keep gift boxes and bags you receive on birthdays and holidays and use them to wrap up future presents. Donate old clothes and toys. Even old tennis shoes can be reused as doggie chew toys, funky flowerpots, or modern sculptures. By sending worn out athletic shoes to Nike's Reuse-a-Shoe program, they can actually have a new life as padding under a basketball court, an athletic track, or a playground surface.

**3. Recycle!** You can recycle just about anything these days: cell phones, computers, motor oil, and batteries – so there's no excuse not to do it! Sort plastic bottles, aluminum cans, cardboard and newspapers. If your town doesn't offer recycling, petition the local government to incorporate a recycling program, or take your recyclables to the nearest recycling center. Visit [earth911.org](http://earth911.org) to find a center nearest you.

**4. Use less energy.** Turn off lights when you leave a room. Even better, switch your old incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs. They cost more initially, but last much longer, emit less heat and CO<sub>2</sub>, and save you bundles on your electricity bill. Lowering your thermostat a few degrees in winter and raising it a few degrees in summer will also translate into big energy savings. Also, putting a water heater blanket around your water heater will reduce the energy needed to heat water for your home. Best of all? Turn off all the electronics in your home and go out for a nice walk!

**5. Drive less.** The price at the gas pump is crazy. But you know what's even crazier? Making unnecessary trips in the car. Combine errands and plan your route so you don't have to make circles to go from the bank to the dry cleaner to the grocery store, etc. And, if you can walk or pedal a bike to go somewhere, do it!

### **Carpet Talk: Cleaning Tile and Grout**

Just about everybody has some tile and grout in their home, usually in the bathroom or kitchen, that could use a little cleaning. If you have some grout that looks a bit discolored and needs to be lightened, try this at-home remedy.

**Step 1:** Add enough household bleach to a scouring powder to make a cleaning paste. Make sure to use a powder that does not contain ammonia, which produces a dangerous reaction with bleach.

**Step 2:** Scrub the paste over the dirty grout with a soft bristled brush. (An old toothbrush works great.) Then rinse with cool water.

**Step 3:** To clean particularly stubborn stains, leave a small amount of the cleaning paste on the stain and cover with plastic. This essentially creates a poultice that keeps in moisture and helps draw out the stain and reduce scrubbing time. Remove it the next day and continue the cleaning procedure.

**Note:** Be sure to wear rubber gloves and keep the area well ventilated. Once you've finished scrubbing, rinse thoroughly with water.

Of course, if serious cleaning needs to be done, call **Guarantee System at 616-451-0787**. We've got specially designed tools and products that can power through the worse dirt and grime.



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