

# Pine River Library Program in a Bag: DIY Green Laundry Upgrade



## Why green your laundry routine?

First off, many of the chemicals in common household laundry products have been proven to be hazardous to both humans and the environment. And it goes without saying that anything your clothes come into contact with during washing, eventually comes into contact with your skin! Scented laundry products are particularly concerning- One study found that these products emit more than 100 volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including some that are recognized as toxic or hazardous. Many of these chemicals are considered carcinogenic and also contribute to air pollution. Even the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) cautions that indoor air pollution from cleaning products is likely to be hazardous to health.

Here are a few tips to help you create a more eco-friendly laundry routine:

- Wash in cold water: Up to 90 percent of the energy used for clothes washing is used to heat the water. It turns out, most garments can be washed in cold water!
- Avoid bleach: Bleach can provoke respiratory issues. Bleach byproducts have also been proven to be toxic to birds and fish. For a natural alternative, add one-quarter to one-half cup of lemon juice to the washing machine's rinse cycle. It's a natural disinfectant and it also brightens your whites!
- Remove stains with bar soap: Wet a corner of the soap bar and rub it on the stain until covered.
- Make your own fabric softener: Add 20-30 drops essential oil to one gallon white vinegar.
- Scent your laundry the natural way: Stuff a sachet with dried herbs like lavender and toss it in the dryer with your clothes.
- Make your own dryer balls: Dryer balls cut down on drying time by separating clothes and letting hot air circulate more easily, cutting down on the energy use. They also reduce static and soften clothes, replacing dryer sheets.



## Liquid Laundry Soap

- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 cup grated Kirk's Original Fresh Scent Bar Soap or Fragrance Free Bar Soap
- 1 cup borax
- 1 cup washing soda (NOT BAKING SODA!)
- Wooden spoon or whisk
- 1 gallon warm water
- 1 clean bucket or pail

1. Grate soap with a cheese or vegetable grater.
2. Boil 2 cups water in a pot on the stove.
3. Add finely grated soap to boiling water and stir until soap is melted. You can keep the pot on low heat until the soap is melted.
4. Pour the soap water into a large, clean bucket/jar/pail.
5. Add Borax and washing soda to pail and stir until all is dissolved. Using a whisk helps here.
6. Add 1 gallon of additional warm water, stir until well mixed.

### TIPS

- Stir the soap each time you use it as the solution will gel over time. Feel free to add your favorite essential oil for added fragrance- lavender, lemon, lime or eucalyptus all work great.
- You can decant the soap into smaller containers, just make sure that it is completely mixed up before you decant.
- For HE washers use the amount you normally use for a load of laundry (1-2 tablespoons) and for regular washers use around 1/4 cup per load.

A NOTE ABOUT BORAX: Borax can be a great addition to your laundry routine. Borax has a pH level of 9.5 – which means it is highly alkaline. This makes it effective against many types of stains, especially those from food. For a pre-treatment solution to help soften and remove stains, dissolve the powder in water and apply the mixture to the targeted area. Borax can also help distribute the soap in the water, as well remove stubborn odors from clothes. That said, there are some safety concerns when using borax. Like all cleaning solutions, borax is hazardous when ingested. When storing, keep borax far away from the reach of children. You may also want to use a mask and gloves when scooping the powder from the box to prevent inhalation and direct skin contact with the substance.

## DIY Felted Dryer Balls

- Skein of 100% wool yarn
- Pair of old pantyhose or an old sock
- Cotton string, acrylic yarn (not wool), or dental floss for tying
- Scissors

1. Start by holding your first two fingers in a small peace sign. Wrap yarn around your fingers about 10 times



2. Pinch the middle of the bundle between your fingers and carefully pull it off your fingers. Wrap the yarn around the middle of the bundle several times

3. Now turn the bundle 90 degrees so the loops are positioned up and down. Now start tightly wrapping the string around the top and bottom of the bundle and then keep wrapping until the whole thing starts to look like a ball.



4. Continue wrapping the ball tightly until you reach the desired size. Try to aim for about the size of a tennis ball, as they will shrink during the felting process. When you get to the size you want, tuck the last few inches under a few different strands of yarn around the ball.

5. Once you finished making the number of balls you want to felt, grab a sock or old pair of pantyhose (cut off one leg). Put a ball into the bottom of the hose or sock and tie it off with the string/floss/yarn. Repeat with remaining balls, tying off between each one. If you don't tie off between the balls, they will all felt or merge together. Don't use wool yarn for this step or it will felt and be very hard to get off!

6. Put the dry ball snake in the washer on the hot water setting. You can throw this in with a load of towels or other laundry; just try not to use a ton of detergent for the load. Some recommend running it through two cycles if the balls don't seem very firm after one cycle. After washing, put the dryer ball snake into the dryer and dry on the hottest temperature.



7. Remove the snake from the dryer, and cut the string between each ball. If they are smaller than you prefer, you can always wrap several more layers around the dryer balls and re-felt them in the same manner.

TIPS: To use your new dryer balls, toss four to six into each load you put in the dryer! These work especially well for re-fluffing down jackets after washing!

**Resources:**

- [www.fix.com/blog/green-laundry-guide/](http://www.fix.com/blog/green-laundry-guide/)
- [www.kirksssoap.com/solution/liquid-laundry-detergent-bar-soap/](http://www.kirksssoap.com/solution/liquid-laundry-detergent-bar-soap/)
- [www.thelist.com/405816/heres-what-you-should-know-before-using-borax-in-your-laundry/](http://www.thelist.com/405816/heres-what-you-should-know-before-using-borax-in-your-laundry/)
- [www.livingonthecheap.com/how-to-make-wool-dryer-balls/](http://www.livingonthecheap.com/how-to-make-wool-dryer-balls/)