



ANNA SHEPARD

My year of living sustainably

WEEK 31: TRYING DIY DEODORANT

It's a particularly warm week when we decide to make our own deodorant. Using a recipe by low-waste living experts Fairyland Cottage, we mix melted coconut oil with cornflour and bicarb and drops of lavender essential oil. It then hardens in a jam jar in the fridge.

It's a faff applying it with your finger, reports my teenager, but it smells decent. The bicarb neutralises odour and coconut oil is antibacterial. Although the hot weather provides a challenging test environment, trips to our local lido on most days takes the pressure off our concoction. We find it holds back odour, but doesn't stop you sweating.

For holidays, or quiet days at home, I'd use it – but I'm not chucking out my shop-bought roll-on just yet. Going from a spray to a roll-on is an easier shift, and an important one, according to a new University of York study. While harmful chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are no longer used in aerosols, these have been replaced with volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as propane and butane, which contribute to indoor pollution.

"The widespread switching of aerosols to non-VOC alternatives would lead to potentially meaningful reductions in air pollution," says Alastair Lewis, science director at the National Centre for Atmospheric Science. "Making small changes in what we buy could have a major impact on both outdoor and indoor air quality."

For a vegan and aluminium-free option, I like Mitchum Powder deodorant. For less packaging, the Natural Deodorant Company offers balms in glass jars. Another (cheaper) way to lower your deodorant's environmental impact is to just use it less, but that would mean several showers a day to stay fresh.



Illustration: Amelia Flower/Folioart



Illustration: Alex Green/Folioart

MY WEEK

Alvin Hall



Life is full of trials and decorating your home is definitely up there

These past few days have worked my last good nerve. I am currently living in my bedroom, with only a narrow path to the bed. I'm surrounded by stacks of art books, cookbooks, biographies, anthologies and fiction. Totemic African sculptures, ceramics and decorative objects are crowded together on my dresser, nightstands and every flat surface. Chairs, lamps and taborets are geometrically arranged next to and on top of each other in different ways – all to get as many pieces in the room as possible. And there's dust *everywhere*, even though I keep the bedroom door closed.

Before I get into bed at night, I want to shake off the sheets. When I wake, my first instinct is to shake the dust off my body, but I'm afraid of knocking something over and breaking it. I am having my apartment painted, a process that always seems to fall in the 'be careful what you wish for' column. At the end of June, I decided to refresh my place as a birthday present to myself. It was the beginning of a new decade in my life. It felt like the perfect time for new colours, a new installation of art, and a simplified furniture arrangement. I knew my spirits would be lifted each day just walking into the freshened rooms.

At the start of the week, the painter discovered more cracks in the plaster walls that need repair. This means the painting is likely to take longer – a lot longer – and cost more. When I heard his every word, I just had to sit down, but there was no

chair in that room. Since then, I find myself thinking about an old friend who told me that she'd rather move than have her apartment painted. At the time, I thought she was being dramatic. However, when her place eventually became an unsightly mess of unpainted patches from repairs, with sheets of cracked and peeling paint dangling from the ceiling, she sold the place as is and bought a freshly painted, new place that she wouldn't have to decorate for at least 10 years. I remember the happiness and relief she radiated when she moved in.

While my apartment is not nearly as bad as hers was, it needed freshening. During lockdown, my neighbours above me retreated to their country house. Unfortunately, during a heavy rainstorm, their terrace drains failed. The water collected and overflowed into my apartment, causing leaks in the ceiling and walls in almost every room of my place. More than a year ago, after everything dried out, I had the damage repaired and plastered, but I delayed having the areas painted.

This week's realisation is that I failed to fully anticipate how time-consuming, emotion-consuming, and crazy-making the process would be. It has slowed to the point of feeling torturous. Because of the rules of my apartment building, the painter can work only from 9am to 5pm on weekdays, and never on weekends or holidays. I have come to view every full-day break in his schedule as a gift. I spend time alone in my apartment dusting and cleaning. I know it is fruitless, but it makes me feel better. I told the painter, who is meticulous, that I needed one room that is in perfect order, so I can remember why I was going through this stressful mess. So, he beautifully completed the smallest bathroom.

I keep it spotless. It is my beaming light at the end of the tunnel. I retreat there with copies of *The World of Interiors* to calm myself, to remind myself of the reward that awaits me... whenever that may be!