

Living in Nature

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Ever wanted to make your own shampoo? Don't know what to do with your dirty water when camping?

Inspired by the Young Friends of the Earth Europe summer camp 2014 in the Rhodope mountains in Bulgaria, I've put together this list of tips for living creatively and responsibly with nature – both when camping and at home.

What to do with your dirty water

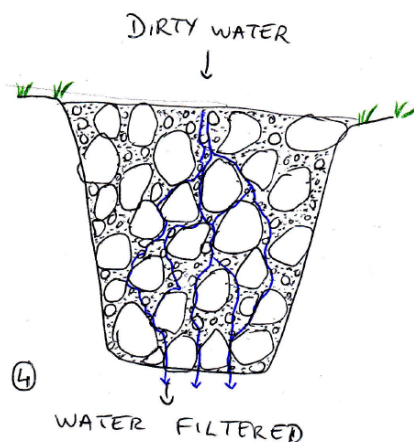
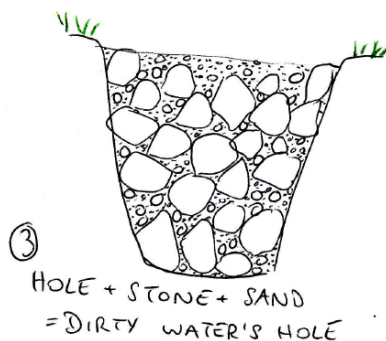
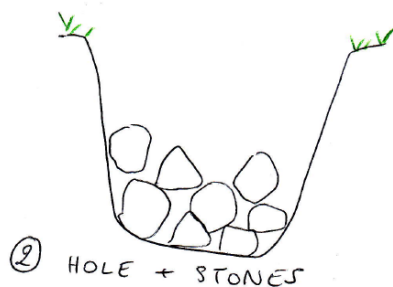
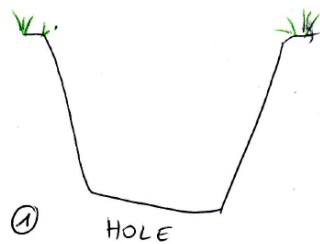
When camping in nature, it is a good idea to dig a hole for your dirty water – this way, soap and detergents can be filtered before they reach the groundwater, rivers, lakes and so on.

It isn't complicated to build, but the hole needs to be pretty big so it's always best done with friends to help out.

How to... prepare a dirty water hole

1. Dig a hole (the depth depends of the number of people at the camp, and the amount of time they are spending here... use common sense)
2. Fill it with stones and sand, and that's it! You can now throw away all your waste there ☺

DIRTY WATER'S HOLE



But it's also possible to avoid producing dirty water completely. How?

By producing your own detergents, soaps, etc., with natural and non-polluting products!

Make your own washing detergent – the eco-friendly way to wash your clothes

I have produced and used this detergent for 4 years, and have seen that it is just as effective as industrially produced ones. You will need:

- Water
- Ashes
- A container (a pot, basin or bucket)
- A strainer
- A funnel
- Coffee filters
- Bottles (I use glass ones)

The Method (see the next page for a diagram)

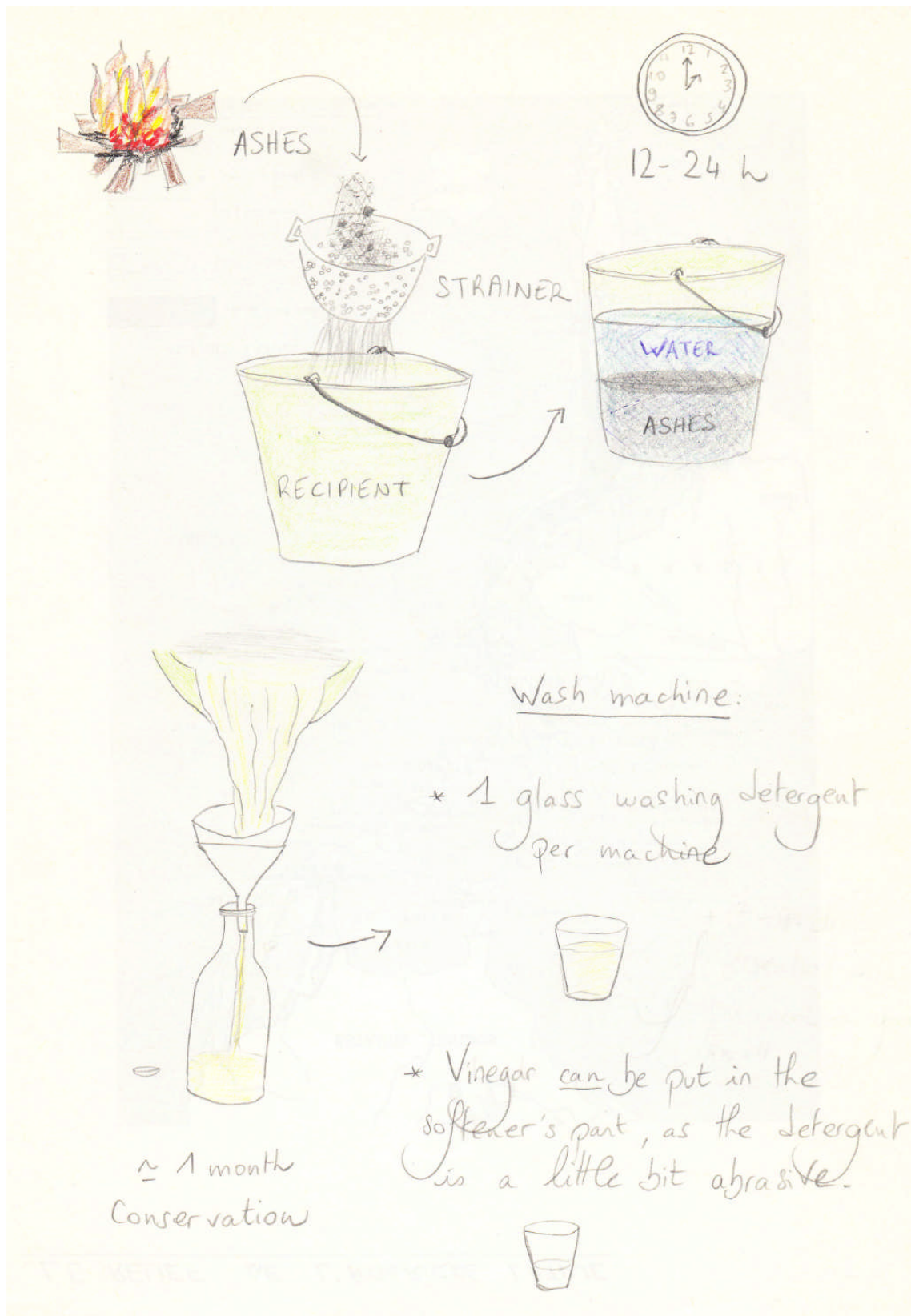
First, gather your ashes – the quantity depends of you, but half a bucket of ashes will give you around 4 litres of detergent.

1. **Filter** the ashes with a strainer. This isn't obligatory, but it makes it easier to avoid having other waste material like screws or bits of wood in your final product.
2. **Put** them in a container (labeled "recipient" in the picture below).
3. **Fill** the container with water until your mixture is double the ashes' original volume's (see the picture below).
4. **Wait for several hours**. I usually mix the ashes and the water at the end of the day and leave it overnight.
5. **Filter** (here you can use the funnel and the coffee filters) and put the filtered liquid into bottles.

To use the detergent: 1 glass of detergent for one wash is sufficient. You can add a few drops of essential oils if you want your clothes to smell good, but be careful not to use one which could irritate the skin (such as cinnamon). As the detergent is a little bit abrasive, you can add some vinegar half a glass of vinegar as a softener.

The liquid is kind of light yellow, soapy. There's no smell, and doesn't let any color on your clothes, and lasts for around three months. I tend to use it all up in one month, and I don't mind doing it again each month, because it is so simple! You can also use it as dish soap to wash your dishes.

How to make your own washing detergent



Soap

This recipe is kind of harder to do. I advise you to use the “Savon de Marseille” which is only made of vegetal oils and sodium. This is the soap that we ALWAYS use in camps, because it’s the only one without others inputs, and therefore non-toxic.

Deodorant

Mix 200mL of herbal distillate (see below) of sage (*Salvia*), rose (*Rosa*) or witch hazel (*Hamamelis*) with 2 coffee spoons of backing soda (sodium bicarbonate) in a flask, and use it every day.

Toothpaste

What I’ve tried is ashes, clay and sea salt (directly put into your mouth and then brushed). The ashes were kind of abrasive, so I don’t recommend it every day. But if it’s punctual, it works well 😊

If I’m travelling, I use for the moment “industrial” toothpaste without Fluor which is a toxic component. Unfortunately I only find that kind of toothpaste in the bishops, and in the pharmacies.

Shampoo

The most ancient and traditional shampoo from my point of view is a mixture of eggs and vinegar. It seems disgusting but it’s not! It gives your hair volume and brilliance, and is not toxic.

The method

Mix 2 eggs and 2 tablespoons of vinegar. You can add 2 tablespoons of herbal distillate (see below) if you want your shampoo to smell nice.

Then use half of it, rinse, and repeat the operation a second time. You can even wait a bit between washes to get a better effect!

Household products

To wash the **floor**, the **windows**, the **bathroom**, etc., I use vinegar or lemon juice, or a mix of both. It is efficient due to its high acidity. You can use it pure or diluted.

To wash **toilets** and other **plumbed fixtures**, I use coffee grounds – which are the best detergent I know :)

Coffee grounds are a multi-use product. If you're used to throwing them away, at least put them in your toilets or in the sink. It can also be used to wash your **hands** when they are very oily, or in the **garden** where it helps the soil with its nutrients and repels flies and nematodes.

What I haven’t tried yet is to use it to **remove fleas** from your dog (I don't have a dog), or to use it as a **fuel for a fire**..

Herbal distillate

Herbal distillate is a product with properties similar to those of essential oils, but without any toxicity.

You can make it at home. It won't be as elaborate as the ones you find in the shops, but it's still good quality, and can be used easily.

The method

Collect your plants (aromatic plants,...), and put them in a pot with water. The quantity of plants needs to be important compared to the level of water.

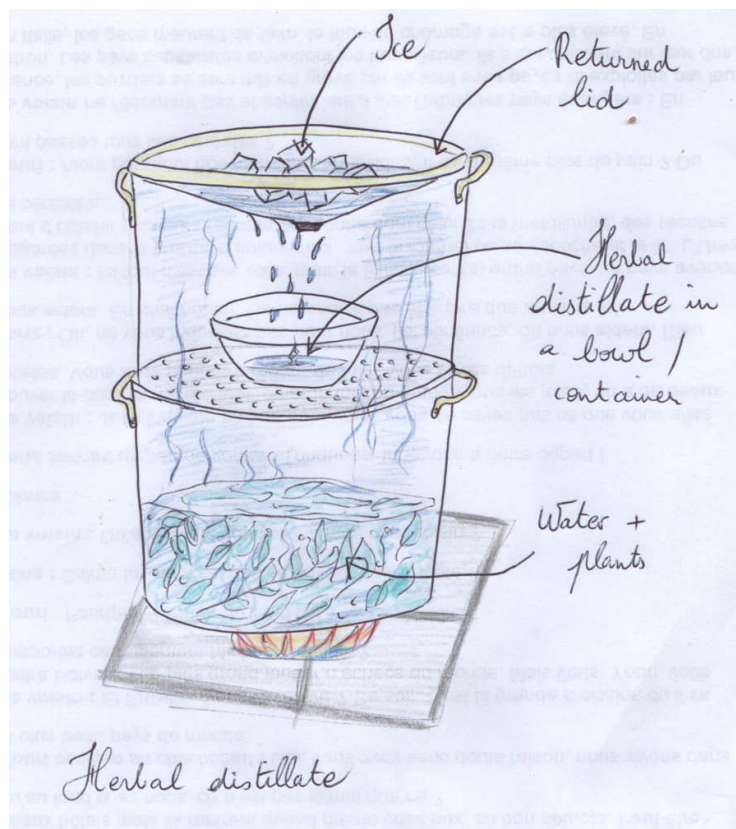
Then find a solution to put a container above your plants, and under the returned lid of the pot. On this lid you need to put ice, or cold water that you'll change regularly (without opening the pot!), in order to condensate the evaporated water coming out of the plants.

The process can take around one hour. You know that it is ready when the smell is more pronounced and embalming.

To obtain 1L of herbal distillate you need around 1kg of plants.

If you want to preserve it, keep it on the fridge. The shelf-life is shorter than the "commercial" one, around 3 months no more.

How to make your own herbal distillate



Toilet time

When you're nature, it's important to make sure that you don't go to the toilet near a water source – like a river or lake. A good rule of thumb is to do your business at least 30 metres away – in some countries such as the USA you can be legally prosecuted for not doing this, but in general it's a good 'rural code' to respect.

This applies to humans, but also to dogs if you have one. The main objective is to avoid polluting the rivers/lakes/groundwater etc. The rainwater which falls on your shit heads automatically to the closest water source in the area.

Furthermore, if you are ecologist enough, it's really good to burn your toilet paper after using it. How is it possible? Try! You'll see than even the 'wet' toilet paper burns ;)

And if you can dig a hole to bury your treasures... ☺
(by "treasures" I don't include the toilet paper)