

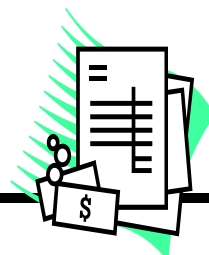


Serving the Puget Sound area since 1947



CONSUMER CORNER

Is your water heater 'draining' your checkbook?



Consider going "tankless" or investing in solar technology to bolster your system. On-demand or "tankless" hot-water heaters fire up only when you turn on the hot-water tap. As water runs through the heater, it's warmed instantly by an electric or gas-fired mechanism. Such appliances are considered more efficient in many cases than standard water-heater tanks, which continually consume energy to heat and store water you don't use most of the day.

Meantime, a growing number of homeowners are enlisting the sun to help heat their water. U.S. installations of solar water-heater systems nearly tripled between 2005 and 2007. Some states, such as Hawaii, are beginning to mandate them in new homes. What's more, residential solar water-heating systems can qualify for a 30% federal tax credit, while qualified tankless hot-water heaters can earn up to a \$1,500 federal credit; there also may be state incentives.

Resources:

www.dsireusa.org: Find information on federal and state tax credits and rebates for renewable-energy and energy-efficiency options.

www.findsolar.com: Find certified solar installers

www.energystar.gov: Lists manufacturers of energy-efficient tankless water heaters

MAJOR APPLIANCE MAILBOX

Q. The ice cubes in my icemaker cube storage bin always seem to be sticking and clumping together. They even seem to get smaller and sometimes 'disappear'. What's going on?
Signed—*Perplexed in Puyallup.*

A. Reply is on Page 3



Becha Didn't Know?

...the cost of making currency and coins:

- It costs 6.2 cents to print a paper note.
- It costs 1.67 cents to make a penny.
- It costs almost a nickel to make a dime.
- It costs nearly a dime to make a nickel.

The exact manufacturing costs vary depending on who you ask, but all agree that the sky-rocketing cost of metal is to blame!

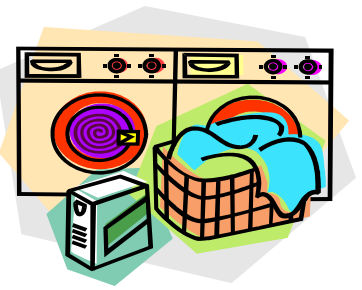
MARCH 2009 was Women's History Month.

Let's celebrate by recognizing some ingenious women for some can't-live-without-them inventions!

Take the Women's History Quiz on Page 4 of this newsletter!

All About ...

LAUNDERING YOUR LINENS



Here are some great ideas from the folks at www.iVillage.com to bring 'spring' to your linens!

Wash weekly and rotate. Wash your sheets weekly and rotate through two or three different sets. Your linens will stay new-looking for a surprisingly long time. In fact, good quality sheets can last up to fifteen years! Be sure to use only non-chlorine bleach on colored sheets, and bleach white sheets only when absolutely necessary. Over time, chlorine bleach weakens fabric fibers. A more gentle way to brighten white sheets is to add 1/4 cup of lemon juice to the wash cycle, and launder as usual in warm water. Tumble dry, or dry sheets in the sun to further increase the whitening effect.

Use your machines wisely. Resist the temptation to speed up the laundry process by overloading your laundry appliances. Your clothes and linens won't get as clean, and an over-full load puts a strain on your washer's motor. In the dryer, oversized loads will take longer to dry and your clothes will come out with plenty of wrinkles. Instead, sort your clothes by fabric weight, drying sheets and towels in separate loads. This reduces drying time and allows fabrics to dry more evenly.

If you've just purchased printed sheets, they may feel a bit rough at first. That's because the dye used in printing is extra thick and has a surface texture. These sheets will soften nicely after a few washings. In fact, sheets woven with a higher thread count will become softer each time you wash them. Tumble dry on a medium heat setting, and remove your sheets promptly from the dryer to reduce wrinkling.

When laundering towels, machine wash in warm water with similar colors. Be sure to wash brand new towels before use, to remove any excess dye from deep tone and brilliant colors. Always wash dark colors separately, and avoid chlorine bleach. Tumble drying will enhance the softness of your towels. Remove dry towels promptly from your dryer, shake them out, and fold.

Do NOT use fabric softeners or dryer sheets on your towels! Washing in fabric softener coats the terry fibers with silicones, and will actually make towels less absorbent. To freshen towels and keep them smelling sweet, add a half-cup of baking soda to the wash cycle. You'll end up with extra-fresh smelling towels!

If you're hanging your towels outdoors to dry, shake them out before hanging, and shake them again before folding. This fluffs up the terry fibers, making the towels soft and absorbent again. During summer's humid months, don't let wet towels hang in the bathroom all day. Toss them in the dryer for five or ten minutes, to speed drying. Then hang them up, and they'll dry in an hour or two. Remember that towels need more frequent laundering in warm, humid weather.

Make your linen closet work for you. First, get rid of any linens that you don't use or don't like. They're just taking up valuable space. Be sure that drawers or shelves are clean and either lined with paper or freshly painted, since untreated wood can stain fabrics over time. Organize your linen closet for greatest efficiency, sorting bedding for each bedroom, and towels for each bathroom. Then sort again, separating seasonal and special occasion items. Place freshly washed and folded items on the bottom of their stacks, and take new towels or sheets from the top. Keep items that you use most frequently at arm's reach, and store seasonal or rarely used items on those hard-to-reach shelves.

Give down comforters tender, loving care, and they'll last for years and years. Either wash your comforter in a coin-operated, extra large capacity commercial machine, or have it professionally laundered. Never dry clean your comforter, which causes colors to fade. When storing your comforter for the summer, protect it from dust and humidity by storing it in a zippered bedding bag.



A recent CareerBuilder.com survey uncovered the following bizarre excuses for missing work. Can you beat any of these?

- The dog was stressed out after a family reunion.
- Swallowed too much mouthwash.
- Hit a turkey while riding my bike.
- Got kicked by a deer.
- Psychic said to stay home today.

WANNA BE REALLY GREEN? IMPROVE INDOOR AIR QUALITY WITH PLANTS

All indoor plants will improve the quality of the air you breathe, but some are better than others. Here is a list of some of the better ones from *Garden.com*

- areca palm (*Chrysalidocarpus lutescens*)
- lady palm (*Raphis excelsa*)
- rubber plant (*Ficus robusta*)
- English ivy (*Hedera helix*)
- dragon tree (*Dracaena marginata*)
- Boston fern (*Nephrolepis exaltata*)
- peace lily (*Spathiphyllum*)
- poinsettia (*euphorbia pulcherrima*)
- florist chrysanthemums
- philodendrons
- Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*)
- spider plant (*Chlorophytum*)



MAJOR APPLIANCE MAILBOX (cont'd from page 1)

A. Dear *Perplexed in Puyallup*:

One of the main reasons for ice cubes sticking together is because you probably don't use a lot of ice. Unless you use LOTS of cubes daily, this situation will occur. Disappearing cubes has a name and it's called "sublimation". Our friends at Whirlpool tell us that this can occur at the molecular level even though freezer temperatures remain below freezing. The water molecules condense and then refreeze back onto the cubes, causing cubes to freeze together at points of contact and eventually will – like magic – disappear entirely if given long enough. By that time and even much sooner the cubes have an off-taste.



There are a couple of other reasons for ice clumping that you should be aware of and check for:

- Higher moisture levels in the freezer will accelerate the bonds between ice cubes. In this case, the water forming the bonds doesn't come from the cubes themselves, but from moisture in the air in the freezer. Check for frost on the cubes as a clue. Look for door gasket damage or air migrating in through the dispenser ice chute door. Unwrapped items in the fresh food section may also release moisture. Moisture-related ice clumping will typically occur in warmer and higher humidity environments.
- Intermittent warm temperatures in the freezer can also cause clumping when the ice visibly melts and refreezes. If this happens, check for possible, short-term power failures, freezer door left open or the ice dispenser door failing to shut completely.

BOTTOM LINE: Most consumers will find that all will be well if they merely DUMP OUT the entire ice bin once a week if ice usage is low. Use that ice in your cooler for a picnic or water your plants or garden areas with it!

Women's History Quiz



Your job is to guess the YEAR (I suppose that if you are within two years plus or minus, that would be pretty good) that a woman invented each one of the following 'modern' conveniences:

INVENTIONS:



1. the dishwasher
2. the modern curling iron
3. liquid paper. BONUS: Developed in what room of her house?
4. "Scotchgard" (a 3M trademarked name)
5. the windshield wiper

ANSWERS:

1. In 1886, Josephine Cochrane didn't like washing dishes by hand and created a machine holding dirty dishes in place while washed by a stream of internal water jets.
2. In 1946, Jessie T. Pope decided that she wanted a curling iron whose temperature could be controlled. Previously, these curling irons were heated on a stovetop or sometimes in a fire!
3. In 1956, Bette Nesmith Graham wanted somehow to correct her secretarial typos. BONUS: She whipped up this paint formula in her KITCHEN!
4. In 1955, Patsy Sherman – a scientist already – developed this emulsion that kept spills from penetrating treated fabric.
5. In 1903, Mary Anderson, tired of cleaning her windshield in nasty weather, designed a hand-operated, mechanical device to do it from inside the auto!

Safe Home Tip:

Laundry Rooms Are NOT Play Rooms!

A 4-year-old girl in Southern California died recently after she climbed into a front-load washing machine that began tumbling when her toddler brother hit its simple push-button start. Orange County Sheriff spokesman Jim Amormino said the machine's controls were only 20-inches from the floor and the start switch was a simple push button.

Here's some rules that would prevent a tragedy like this in your home:

1. Keep the laundry room an ABSOLUTE off limits for play.
2. Don't rely on a product's safety devices to prevent a startup on any machine.
3. If you can't shut a door or otherwise block access to the laundry appliances - UNPLUG the machines.



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