There is an abundance of cleaning products available today. We, in fact, need just a couple of all-purpose products to keep our house sparkling. Vinegar and baking soda are effective cleaning agents that do not harm the environment. Commercially popular laundry detergents are mostly using a petrochemical process. But if we buy one 50-ounce jug of laundry detergent made of vegetable oils, instead of petrochemicals, we can save 130,000 barrels of oil -- enough to heat and cool 7,500 homes for a year. Certainly, that is energy efficiency!

Petrochemicals make all synthetic fragrances, used in our aromatic shampoos, soaps, shaving creams, hairsprays and the so-called "air fresheners". We can opt for eco-friendly non-aromatic products, but we can also use natural fragrances such as an essential oil. We will save on oil consumption every time we make that choice.

Many construction materials release dangerous chemical gases that pollute the environment. We can pick materials that are made from sustainable products. Green chemistry develops products and processes to reduce or eliminate the use and generation of hazardous substances.

Many ready-made built-in cabinets we use in family rooms, are made of thin wood veneer covering, made of wood shavings pressed together with a lot of glue -- a blend that can silently give off formaldehyde gases for years. Instead, we may opt for cabinets made of solid wood like hard pine. Choose stains that contain no VOCs (volatile organic compounds), ditto for wall paint.

For carpeting, we should choose the "green minded" companies. They consciously use green technology for manufacturing and installation of their products. Products need to be made with minimal wastage in mind, and with materials that preserve indoor air quality as opposed to letting-off harmful chemicals. We should opt for furniture made of organic fibers avoiding synthetic glues, dyes, or finishing sprays during production. The cost is a little more, but the resultant benefit to the environment, including within our homes, is worth it. We use five to seven pounds of pesticides to spray an acre of lawn every year. That is as much, often more than farmers use to spray their sizeable crops. Switch to a service that uses all-natural lawn care. Within a year, the lawn would be greener and healthier than the neighbours' ones. And we will not have to worry about side effects when we walk across it.



Imagine a green Bangladesh. We hold the key to its mysteries.

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