

## **Environmental tip of the month – July 2021**

This month is all about laundry detergents. Laundry detergents are largely composed of surfactants (15%) and builders (50%). Surfactants work by reducing the surface tension of oil and water, allowing the stains & water to amalgamate. They can be made from plant oils such as coconut or from waste materials in the petroleum industry, the latter being highly toxic to aquatic life, eg degenerating the mucus layer coating fish which protects them from parasites and bacteria.

EU law requires surfactants in domestic detergents to be aerobically degradable and they must break down by 60% in 28 days. This law however only applies to the surfactant element, the remaining 85% of the product can still be a harmful cocktail, containing the likes of liquid polymers used as bulking agents.

Eco friendly brands are now common, Bio D is plant based and readily biodegradable, Greenscents and Faith in Nature products are recommended by the [ethicalconsumer.org](http://ethicalconsumer.org). Also Jack offers refills of Ecover in the shop. Planet Detox is a brand, hand-made in Totnes.

Alternatively, if you want to be more adventurous:

- Replace detergent with soapnuts. Soapnuts contain a completely natural detergent called saponin, they can be used up to 5 washes and composted afterwards – I swear by them!
- Ditch detergent altogether, the movement of water & clothes inside the machine is enough to release some dirt and freshen a lightly soiled load.
- Wash balls – plastic balls filled with pellets which claim to unleash “ionic cleaning power” and do not require a rinse cycle as there is no traditional detergent to wash away.

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