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SPECIAL ISSUE

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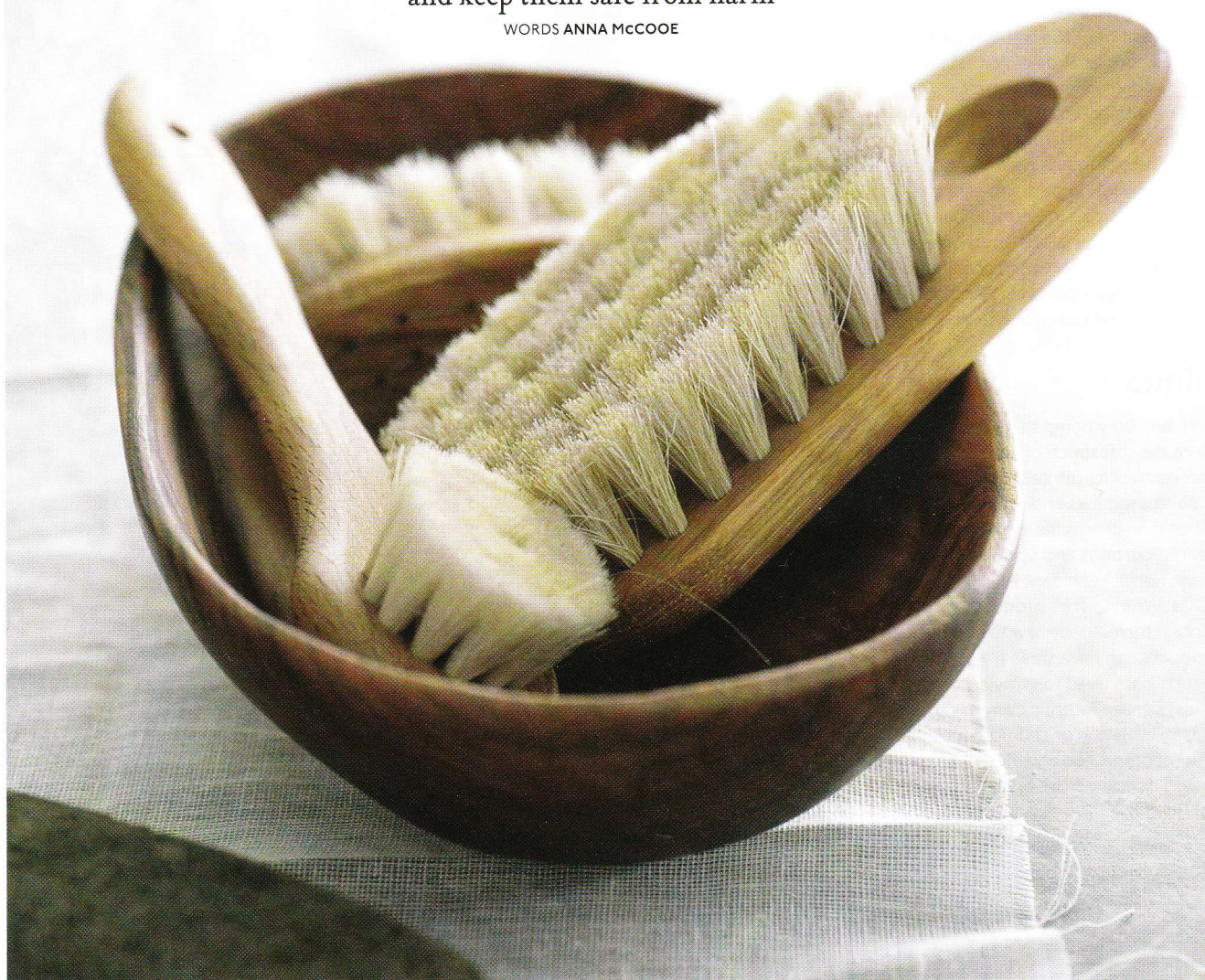


EASY EASTER SWEETS AND TREATS **SMALL SPACE** ORGANIC GARDENING IDEAS

detox your home

Create a healthy home to nurture your family
and keep them safe from harm

WORDS ANNA MCCOOE



Your home is your safe haven, a place for your family to feel secure, a respite from the fast-paced world. But it's not as simple as shutting the door and breathing a sigh of relief. Every choice you make, from the furnishings you buy to the cleaning products you use, has a direct impact on the health of your home.

"We expect our homes to be safe and healthy but the reality is that they can expose us to harmful chemicals, causing headaches, tiredness and serious illnesses," says Sarah Johnson of the Australian Conservation Foundation's GreenHome project. "Children are particularly sensitive and suffer from high incidences of asthma."

According to the CSIRO, the air we breathe indoors can be a major hazard. "Inside the home, there can be a number of sources of pollutants. If there is not a good exchange of clean external air with inside air, gases can build up to become more concentrated

than the general pollution we inhale outdoors in country or urban areas," says CSIRO air quality researcher Dr Melita Keywood.

Think about the smell of a freshly painted wall or new carpet – that odour is a build-up of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), a rather nasty collection of gases and particles that can aggravate asthma and allergies. The particle board within your furniture and cabinets may be leeching formaldehyde – a confirmed carcinogen – into your otherwise healthy home, while the products you clean with might be lacing your home and our waterways with toxic solvents. Did somebody say detox?

While you may be well-versed in looking after yourself, choosing healthy food for your family and avoiding known health risks like smoking, here's how to give the environment in which you live the same treatment. Enter the healthy, happy home... >



floors

Floors can be a source of airborne toxins. For timber, use oils, waxes or natural-based varnishes (try Bio plant-based floor varnish, from \$49/litre, www.thenaturalpaintplace.com.au). For carpet, seek out low-VOC options with natural jute backing and low-VOC adhesives (contact Godfrey Hirst or Woolset for information). Keep your space well-ventilated for 48 hours after installation, as about 90 per cent of VOCs will dissipate within a couple of days. Anti-stain coatings on carpets can also be riddled with toxins; green interior designer Sharon Hamilton of Your Abode recommends naturally stain-resistant wool carpets – to skip the extra chemicals. Linoleum, made from renewable materials, is another eco-friendly option; Forbo's Marmoleum Global 3 range comes in 164 colours and styles and can mimic timber.

fabrics

From heavenly hemp to lovely linen, we adore the soft touch of natural textiles. Seek out fabrics printed with water- or soy-based inks and sealed with heat rather than chemicals, and avoid overly treated curtains and upholstery: "Most flame-retardant fabrics contain VOCs. Wrinkle-free products can contain formaldehyde and cotton products can have traces of fertilisers used to grow and mill it," says green interior designer Sharon Hamilton of Your Abode, who recommends certified organic cotton bedding from Ecolinen; we also love the tablecloths at Neco.



Seek out FABRICS PRINTED WITH WATER- OR SOY-BASED INKS AND SEALED WITH HEAT RATHER THAN CHEMICALS.

plants

Like drinking warm water with lemon in the morning, indoor plants are a simple way to detox. Plants are known for turning carbon dioxide into oxygen, but they can also absorb and store pollutants. In testing by NASA, tropical and subtropical plants such as the peace lily and palm were found to work best in enclosed spaces, because their broad leaves and strong roots take in gases more effectively than more delicate houseplants. The University of Technology, Sydney, confirmed NASA's findings when it discovered that kentia palms eliminate benzene, another World Health Organization-listed carcinogen, from an enclosed room by up to 90 per cent after 24 hours. Keep in mind that all plants need sunlight to stay healthy. Rotate your houseplants and give each one its moment in the outdoors from time to time.

