



Green, Greener, Greenest

with Lori Bongiorno

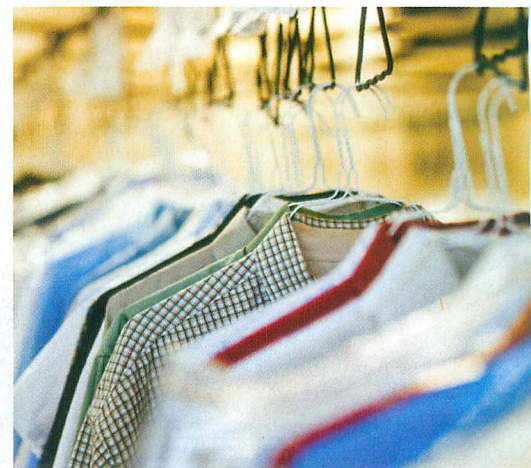
Question: Is it true that dry-cleaning my clothing is a health hazard and can harm the environment? If so, are there any eco-friendly alternatives?

The solvent used by most dry-cleaners, perchloroethylene (aka, perc), does pollute the environment. There's also a long list of potential health effects ranging from headaches and dizziness to liver and kidney damage. The EPA calls it a "probable" human carcinogen. Given that, it's not a bad idea to limit your exposure. Luckily, there is a range of options for you, from easy and inexpensive to those requiring more effort and commitment. Below is a three-tiered system of solutions I call Green, Greener, Greenest.

GREEN If you do go to a traditional dry-cleaner, minimize your exposure to perc: Remove your cleaned clothes from their bags and air them outside or in a well-ventilated area before storing them in your closet. Open car windows when driving home with your dry-cleaning.

Lori Bongiorno's book Green, Greener, Greenest: A Practical Guide to Making Eco-Smart Choices a Part of Your Life is out now (Perigee Trade Paperback Original).

GREENER Try a cleaner that uses an alternative method. Wet cleaning uses water and nontoxic soap. It's best for items made of fabrics that you would consider hand washing at home, such as silk or linen. Another option is carbon dioxide dry-cleaning, which uses liquid CO₂ to clean clothes in high-pressure machines: Hangers (hangerskc.com) is a national chain of CO₂ cleaners, or you can visit findco2.com to find a local option. These are the only two processes considered environmentally preferable by the EPA.

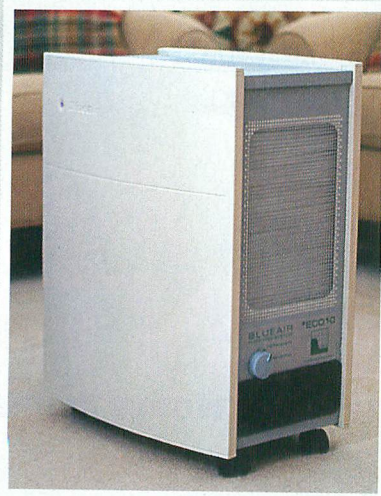


GREENEST Cut down on professional cleaning. Here are some suggestions: Buy fewer clothes that require dry cleaning; spot clean when possible; invest in a steamer; hand wash all appropriate clothes or use the delicate cycle on your washing machine; and air out garments after wearing, only sending out stained and soiled items. You'll save time, money, and the environment with fewer trips to the dry cleaners.

Ask Lori your questions at greengreenergreenest@plentymag.com.

BEST OF THE REST >>> SPRING CLEANING

It's the time of year for clearing unwanted clutter from your home, so why not spruce up your air while you're at it? The Blueair EC010 is the most energy-efficient air purifier on the market, running on only 10 watts of power at high speed and consuming 95 percent less energy overall than other units of its class. The ultra-quiet EC010 is



bulky—attention, small apartment dwellers—but the unit can handle a 20-by-15-foot room, and its patented HEPASilent filter needs changing only once a year. While cigarette odor wasn't completely eradicated after a houseguest's visit, the EC010 did pull billowing smoke into its filtration system—and out of nonsmokers' lungs. **\$899, blueair.com**

TRADE THIS FOR THAT >>>

Despite years of predictions to the contrary, the digital age we live in still smiles *on the* recordable compact disc (CD-R). Unfortunately, CD-Rs can't be rewritten—once you're done with the data, the disc is trash. Recycling efforts are scattered, and each year millions of discs and their plastic cases end up in landfills or incinerators, leaching chemicals into the soil, water, and air. Rewritable CDs (CD-RWs) have been around for a while, but the product hasn't caught on. Eco-friendly office supplier Green Earth packs CD-RWs in recycled plastic cases (the first we've ever seen), and they sell the discs in bulk, making it easy to stock up. After all, CD-Rs aren't going anywhere—at least for a little while.



\$2.75 each, \$24 for ten, greenearthofficesupply.com