

This Is The Old Fashioned Way To Wash Your Clothes In A Stream

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A massive EMP or other event that eliminates electricity and municipal water supplies means you'll have to find some other way to wash your clothes. Regardless of what is going on in your life and in the society around you, clean clothes are necessary for good health and proper hygiene.

If you have a stream of clean water nearby, or can reach one in a reasonable amount of time, you might use this resource for laundry, as well as many other water related needs.

Here are some tips for using streams to do laundry, as well as preserve the water for other purposes as much as possible.

Choosing the Best Place to do Laundry

There are five basic characteristics of a good location to do laundry.

Location should be as far downstream as possible from the area where you obtain water for drinking, cooking, and other needs. It should also be as far as possible away from areas where animals you plan to hunt may drink or use for their own needs.

Even though fast moving water can carry dirt and soap a long distance, the fact remains it will still add pollutants to the water and surrounding land. If you don't want those items on your clothes, consider that you also don't want to be consuming them with your beverages and food.

Water should be clean and fast moving. Fast moving water will make it easier to rinse clothes, and will also give you more options for automating the whole washing process. Needless to say, water that is muddy, full of algae, or other contaminants will not be suitable for washing clothes.

Choose an area where you can lean easily into the water without having to actually be in it while washing clothes. A stable rock outcrop or other location that leads into the water will give you a stable area to work, and also reduce the chance of slipping and falling in mud at the bottom of the stream.

Water should be deep enough to allow you to soak your clothes easily. It will also be of some help to choose an area where you can easily build a containment area to while you are working. You can use this area of slower moving water flow while using soap, and also for pre-soaking.

Washing Clothes Without Detergent

Many people are surprised that it is not always necessary to use soap or detergent to wash clothes.

Some people ruin their clothes, or shorten the lifespan of their garments by several years when they add too much soap. In fact, if you rinse out your clothes fully without using detergent or soap, you would find that more than half the "dirt" coming out is actually old laundry detergent. As a result, when you have nothing but a stream available for washing clothes, you can get clean clothes without using detergent or soap for routine cleaning.

To wash your clothes without using soap, you will need plenty of fast moving water and a means to

ensure the garments are agitated as briskly as possible without tearing them apart.

Among other things, you can use a series of buckets and water traps to create plenty of agitation as well as sufficient water flow to get your clothes clean.

<https://www.facebook.com/404644736386542/videos/769184203265925/>

While using this kind of system, bear in mind that more delicate fabrics may only be able to tolerate a small amount of agitation. You can try using a less turbulent system, or make some detergent for these fragile fabrics.

Ways to Make Laundry Cleansing Agents

If you hunt any kind of mammal, you can combine some of the fat from the animal with lye made from potash. Try to choose ferns, or hardwood trees that will yield the highest amount of potassium in the ash.

A homemade liquid soap will get your clothes clean, however you can expect them to be quite stiff. You will need to use lavender, white vinegar, or other softening agents to create a detergent that leaves your clothes feeling more comfortable. Peppermint and aloe are also often used in laundry detergent to improve the odor and cleansing capacity. Overall, as with any other kind of laundry detergent, the less you use, the better.

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Contrary to popular belief, you don't always need to use a detergent based cleanser to get your clothes clean.

Here are a few natural alternatives that you can try. Bear in mind that you should not use these every single time you wash clothes because they can also be retained by the fabric and accelerate rotting. If you use lye based detergent one week, you may want to try one of these the next time you wash, and then go back to the lye soap the next time you wash.

- Wash your clothes with baking soda. If you do not have baking soda on hand, you can make it from lye. Bear in mind, however, the chemical formula for baking soda is NaHCO_3 , which means it is best derived from sodium based lye, or NaOH . Potash, on the other hand, has a much higher potassium (K) content, so [the "lye" made from potash](#) carries the formula KOH . If you are going to try and make baking soda from potash, you will be best served by looking for plants like kelp and seaweed that have a higher sodium (Na) content.
- Use essential oils. There are many formulas for pre-treating stains as well as washing that you can use depending on what plants are available in your area.
- Try an [EcoEgg](#) – this fascinating device is easy to carry, and can do several hundred loads of laundry before it needs to be replaced. Since it works best with high levels of agitation, it may also be one of your best options for washing clothes in a stream.

Using Rocks as a Scrubber

One of the oldest methods for washing laundry in a stream requires little more than a large, smooth, clean rock, some detergent, and two buckets. In order to make the rock work as a scrubber, you must

first start off by soaking the clothes in water and ensuring that the detergent is already mixed in with the clothes.

Next, you will need to take each garment and slam it into the clean rock. The garment should spread out as much as possible so that the impact with the rock dislodges as much dirt and soap as possible. Once you are done slamming the garment into the rock, you can go ahead and set it up for rinsing.

As you saw in the video on washing clothes without soap, you can get plenty of agitation from running water to get your clothes clean. What happens, though, when you encounter a slow moving stream, or you don't have time to set up a bucket and water falling system to increase the water flow?

In these situations, you may still be able to adapt the system to use with rocks. For example, you can try tying rocks to one line or rope. In this case, palm sized, smooth, rounded rocks would work best for sturdy fabrics. Next, take another line and suspend your laundry from it. Place the two lines in the water together, and the rocks should beat into the clothes and increase the amount of agitation from the water.

Wood Based Agitators and Scrubbers

If you look at the history of devices used for laundry, you are bound to see many references to wooden paddles, poles, and scrubbing boards. Any one of these devices can be used with a fast moving stream of water. Even if you have only a few branches to work with, it is still possible to create a wash board that will provide a suitable surface for scrubbing clothes.

Make a Scrubbing Board and Bag

No matter whether you have to do just one load of laundry or several over the course of weeks and years, it can be a very time consuming and strenuous activity.

Therefore, even if you are in a crisis situation and settle down near the perfect stream for doing laundry, you may want to do something other than continue pounding your clothes against rocks. You may also grow tired of using wooden board or other methods that take a lot of time and labor. In a similar fashion, as time goes by, you may also need to look for a clothes washing method that is less harsh on delicate fabrics, as well as one that will conserve on soap and detergents.

As another advantage to consider, when washing your clothes in a bag, you can also avoid spilling soap and other debris into the stream. Instead, you can pour the dirty water into a hole, or some other location further away from the stream. Needless to say, if you must move away from the stream for other reasons, a scrubbing bag for laundry will also help you make the most of any water that you may have on hand.

Even though your current washing machine may use a hard tub, you can use a flexible, waterproof bag to wash your clothes. Unlike most other methods, this one will enable you to wash clothes using a minimal amount of soap and water. Here are a few ways that you can make a flexible, waterproof bag from natural resources:

- Properly tanned animal hides can be made into waterproof bags. You can make the bags just about any size, however a 1 ½" x 2 ½" internal area will work best of 5 or 6 garments. Remember, you will have to push and punch the bag with your hands to agitate the clothes. A

larger bag will only make this job hard to achieve.

- Layers of pine pitch mixed with animal fat will also make a flexible, waterproof material. You will also need to make sure the seams are waterproof, and find a way to ensure the bag remains closed during the wash cycle.
- Make Tincloth - if you have old canvas from a tent, or other suitable fabric, you can sew it into the shape of a bag, and then coat the fabric with equal parts linseed oil and beeswax. This will make a fireproof coating as well as a waterproof one. Be sure to coat both sides of the fabric as evenly as possible.

Once you have a waterproof bag, you will need to be able to open and close the bag easily without having to deal with leaks when the bag is sealed for washing. If you make the bag a few inches longer, you can probably get by with simply knotting the bag shut before washing. You may also want to try creating a clip that will hold the fabric together tightly enough so that no leaks will occur.

In order to get the most out of washing clothes in a bag, you will need to put something in the bag that will dislodge dirt and debris as the clothes are agitated. Wooden boards with slats will work well for this purpose.

Round out any rough or sharp areas so that they do not punch holes in the bag. You will also be well served by making different boards for different kinds of fabric. For example, if you are washing denim, or some other tough material, you can use a board with fairly large strips of wood and not worry about the fabric being damaged.

On the other hand, if you want to wash a summer weight cotton or something else that is more delicate, you might want to have a smoother surfaced board on hand.

Build a Waterwheel Box and Agitator

When it comes to simple, inexpensive, and low labor methods for doing laundry, you are likely to feel that a scrub bag will meet most of your needs. In fact, when compared to striking your clothes against rocks, or using a scrub board in an open stream, it is most certainly easier.

What happens, however, when you can't move your arms much because the weather is too hot or cold, or you are injured?

Under these circumstances, you may want a system available where you can just throw the clothes into a box and let the stream do the vast majority of the work.

At its simplest, if you can build a water wheel and a box, it is possible to combine these devices to create a stream powered washing machine. Here are the basic steps:

- Start off by building a waterwheel that will turn easily in the water. Leave an extended shaft on one end of the wheel.
- Create a T joint so that you can attach an upper and lower shaft to the central one. Make sure there is enough room between the shafts so that the laundry can be picked up out of the water, and then fall off the shafts easily enough as they rotate. Depending on the speed of rotation, you may also want to set the upper and lower shafts so that they angle inward toward the center of rotation. This may help ensure the clothes fall off the shafts instead of just getting wrapped around them.
- Next, make two boxes. One should have grates on it so that water can pass through easily. The

other should fit inside the grated box and be waterproof.

- Setup the waterwheel so that it sits outside the box, while the extended shaft sits inside the box. One of the shaft extensions should sit above the laundry and the water line.

To use this waterwheel washer, all you need to do is add clothes, soap, and water to the waterproof box. As the external wheel turns, it will also turn the internal shafts. They will, in turn, agitate the clothes and also keep the water in constant motion. Even though the shafts will not create a traditional back and forth agitation, they will still be entering and leaving the water, which will disrupt it considerably.

After you are done with the wash cycle, go ahead and remove the waterproof bucket. Water from the stream will flow in through the second bucket, and carry away the soap and dirt. This process should also go faster with the increased agitation provided by power from the waterwheel.

From extended camping trips to surviving hurricanes and major social collapse, the ability to do laundry is an obvious, yet often overlooked need.

While washing laundry in streams has been done for thousands of years, there are several ways to optimize in order to reduce the amount of water, labor, and detergent used.

As you consider different methods to experiment with, remember that sometimes building a simple device can make the difference between being able to have clean clothes even if you are injured or don't have the strength to utilize more labor intense forms of doing laundry.

In the end, this what our ancestors use to do too!



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References:

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