



# SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

## 22 ways to make your life easier

Smart answers to those little problems that life is always throwing at us...

### CULINARY CONUNDRUMS?

**Don't give up! Troubleshoot these cookery problems with the help of our food editor, Jane Curran**

**1 Avocados too hard for guacamole?** Pop in a paper bag with a banana and leave on a sunny windowsill – they should ripen in a day.

**2 Too much chilli in your curry?** If it's tomato-based, add 1tbsp tomato purée and 1tsp sugar. Or stir in some crème fraîche to taste.

**3 Food too salty?** If you've over-salted a dish, add a squeeze of lemon or lime.

**4 Herbs gone limp?** Wrap in a damp paper

towel and store in the salad drawer in the fridge.

**5 Want perfect pancakes?** Use a clean turkey baster to squeeze your pancake batter on to the hot pan.

**6 Need to transport cupcakes?** Cut crosses into a shoe box lid.

**7 Lemons not juicy enough?** Bring to room temperature and roll them on the counter before squeezing.

**8 Pan covered in burnt-on food?** Sprinkle with non-bio washing powder and soak for a few minutes.



### 10 Bottled beauty

*Get into the habit of saving unusual and pretty perfume and drinks bottles, then you can use them as individual vases for gorgeous blooms. >>*

### 9 FOUR HOLIDAY HELPERS

- ✦ When packing, slide necklaces through a drinking straw then fasten to stop them getting tangled.
- ✦ Don't forget to pack some baby powder – it really helps get the sand off your skin easily.
- ✦ Applying soap on to mosquito bites gives instant relief from itching.
- ✦ When you're packing to go home, store dirty shoes inside hotel shower caps to stop the soles rubbing against your clothes.



## 11 THE EXPERT'S GUIDE TO BUYING PERFECT SHEETS

**THE EXPERT:** John Lewis's sheet buyer Paul Deckland has been with the company for 19 years.

**Is Egyptian cotton still the favourite?** In its raw state, cotton is measured by its staple length

– the longer the staple, the better the cotton. Egyptian has one of the longest, which means it feels very luxurious. It's also incredibly hard-wearing. Pima, another type of cotton, also has a longer staple length and a smooth finish. Its sales are growing, but Egyptian cotton is still our customers' favourite.

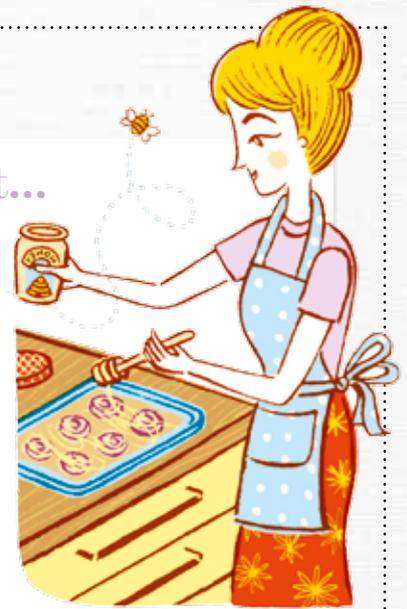
**How important is thread count?** Thread count is the number of threads per square inch. The highest is 1,000 but anything over 200 will be good quality. Higher thread counts mean the thread is very fine and will feel quite silky.

**What sheets do you recommend?** I'd recommend buying the best you can afford. Our Genuisa 100 per cent cotton sheets (£110 for a double) have a thread count of 1,000. They have a luxurious feel and are very easy to care for.



## 12 Waste not...

- ✦ Keep nuts in the freezer – they go rancid quickly due to the oil content. Use them frozen when cooking.
- ✦ Roast ripe tomatoes and store in olive oil in the fridge; they'll keep for an extra week.
- ✦ Halve plums, drizzle with honey and bake for 15 minutes at 180C, 160C fan, 350F, gas 4. They'll keep for several days in the fridge to have with yogurt or ice cream.



**13 Get a sweet-smelling bin**  
Stick a dryer sheet in the bottom of the bin to create a nicer scent. Also, store your roll of bin bags in the base so they're right where you need them.

## Great garden tips

### FOUR WAYS TO RID YOURSELF OF PESKY GARDEN PESTS

By Jane Curran, w&h food editor and passionate gardener

**14 SNAIL INVASION?** Clear out as many as you can find and put organic slug pellets on the soil. Buy a roll of copper tape from the garden centre to put around pots – it creates an electrical charge that snails and slugs can't cross. It's like using sticky

back plastic – so easy. **15 ANT ATTACK?** Small pyramid piles of soil in the lawn? It's likely you have ants. Brush away the pile before mowing and pour boiling water down the nest. **16 APHID INTRUSION?** Aphids on your house plants? Pop

them outside. Ladybirds and hoverflies will eat them up. **17 UNWANTED RED SPIDER MITES?** They love dry air so hose down the floor of the greenhouse to increase humidity. Keep leaves of indoor plants moist with a water spray.

### 18 FAKE TAN CRISIS?

If your skin looks orange, just relax – in a warm bath. Add three cupfuls of baby oil to the water and submerge your body for at least 20 minutes, then exfoliate with a loofah to fade the colour by about 80 per cent. To lighten a few streaks or spots, rub them with a cut lemon for two to three minutes.



## Classy cleaner

Summer's here and our homes editor Alison Davidson has found some great gadgets to help in the garden

**19 KEEP WATERING**  
The Growbag Waterer is the perfect solution to watering your plants and flowers while you're on holiday. Just place a growbag on the waterer, fill the 15-litre reservoir with water, and over 14 days, it gradually transfers the right amount into the compost; £24.99, hozelock.com.

**20 FLIES, KEEP OUT!**  
To stop annoying flies buzzing around the house, try the nifty "mesh" Snap Screen. You don't need screws, it fits your door with fibre pads. The opening has magnets, so when you walk through, it snaps shut, keeping out bugs. And it's just as easy to take down for the winter; £11.99, jmldirect.com.

**21 BRIGHTEN THE BBQ**  
If yours is less than pristine, give it a clean with BBQ Pride. It's an all-in-one solution that can be used on the entire barbecue, including the inside. Apply to the areas that need cleaning, leave to soak then remove residue with a cloth and some hot, soapy water; £3.99, supermarkets.

**22 SWEEP UP**  
The Garden Sack Dustpan is like having your own assistant. All you need to do is clip the bag on to the frame, which will keep it open, then sweep any grass and cuttings straight in the bag without it closing or blowing away. Brilliant and so simple. £6.99, lakeland.co.uk. **w&h**