

Uses for Fireplace Ashes

By Ellen Brown

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Question:

What is the best way to discard ashes from your fireplace? Is there another use for this ash? Any suggestions are welcome.

Thanks,
Martha

Answer:

Martha,
Wood ash has a lot of uses. Here are just a few suggestions.

1. A fertilizer for the yard and garden. Wood ash contains 10-25% calcium, 1-4% magnesium, 5-15% potassium and 1-3% phosphorus. This makes it a good (0-2-10) fertilizer for the garden. The types of wood you burn does play a role in the amount of nutrients it contains. Hardwoods generally produce 3 times more ash that contains 5 times more nutrients than softwoods. Ash will temporarily change (increase) the pH of garden soil, so you should only use it sparingly and not at all if your soil pH is already over 7.0. Two pounds of wood ash equals about 1 pound of ground limestone. When used as a fertilizer, wood ash should be applied at least two months before high nitrogen fertilizers because it promotes the loss of nitrogen from ammonia-based fertilizers. Don't use wood ash on acidic-loving plants like rhododendron, blueberries or azaleas and don't add wood ash to the compost pile.
2. As a glass cleaner. Wood ash is a key ingredient in lye soap. It can be mixed with a bit of water (or dabbed on a damp sponge) and used to clean dirty fireplace doors.
3. As an insect repellent. Sprinkle small amounts around the perimeter of your garden to deter slugs and snails.
4. As a spot remover on wood furniture. Mix it in with a small amount of water until you create a paste. Rub over rings left by water glasses or hot beverages, and follow up with a furniture polish. Test on a small area first.
5. As traction. In the winter, sprinkle wood ash on slippery walkways or driveways to improve traction. Wipe you feet before going inside, because the ashes will easily track indoors.

About The Author:

Ellen Brown is our Green Living and Gardening Expert. [Click here to ask Ellen a question!](#) Ellen Brown is an environmental writer and photographer and the owner of Sustainable Media, an environmental media company that specializes in helping businesses and organizations promote eco-friendly products and services. Contact her on the web at <http://www.sustainable-media.com>