

## ***Sail Cleaning D.I.Y.***

### **What You'll Need**

Sails (Mainsail, jib sail, spinnaker)

Bucket

Clean sponge

Mild detergent

Water

Large flat area

Responsible sailboat maintenance includes keeping its parts clean and in good working order. The components work in concert with one another, from the mast to the keel. The sails, when working properly, catch the wind that propels the boat and for this reason should be constantly checked for tears and other damage. Cleaning the sails, too, is a necessary chore. If the sails are allowed to get excessively dirty, not only does it reflect poorly on the quality of the sailboat and the attitude of the skipper, but an unclean sail can cause mildew to thrive, especially when stowed. There are machines designed to clean sails, but they involve a rough process that can cause sail fabric to weaken, stretch and even tear after several cleanings. For this reason it is advisable to clean your sails by hand with water and a light detergent.

### **Step 1: Locate an Appropriate Cleaning Area**

In order to properly clean the boat's sails, you need a large, flat clean area to lay them out on. If there is space on the dock where your boat is moored, that will work provided the sail is kept out of the way. A well-groomed grassy area will work too.

### **Step 2: Unfold the Sail**

If the sail is being stowed, remove it from its bag. If it is attached to the mast or the stay, take it down. Bring the sail to the cleaning area and unfold it completely.

### **Step 3: The Cleaning Products**

Because machines are not recommended for cleaning sails, it is best to do it by hand. It may take a little longer, but it will save the life of the sail. Have a bucket filled with clean, warm water, a bottle of mild liquid detergent and a large sponge.

#### **Step 4: Dilute the Detergent**

Dilute the liquid detergent in the bucket of water. Much like washing a car the water should have soap suds, although you do not have to use very much soap concentrate to do the job.

#### **Step 5: Lightly Scrub the Sail**

With the sponge, lightly scrub the entire sail. There is no need to clean it vigorously, for cleaning should be a somewhat frequent routine, so it should never get too dirty. Its purpose is to keep it in good shape and looking nice. After it has been cleaned, rinse it thoroughly with fresh water, turn it over and repeat the process for the other side.

#### **Step 6: Let the Sail Dry**

The sail should be completely dry on both sides before you refold it and stow it. This step is not necessary if you are planning to re-hoist the sail immediately, for it will dry in the wind. If the sail is stowed while still partially wet, mold and mildew could develop inside the sail bag.

Cleaning the sails is a routine part of sailboat maintenance. A responsible sailor stays on top of their vessel, and no job is considered unimportant. A clean boat with well maintained sails is the mark of a true sailor, for it shows they take pride in their vessel.