

## Green Cleaning

Want to go green as you clean? Today, more and more people are seeking natural cleaning methods to reduce their exposure to harsh chemicals. You can reduce handling, use, and disposal hazards associated with dangerous household products by substituting safer alternatives. Some of these alternatives are as simple as immediately mopping up spills with water or club soda. In some cases, using these alternatives may require more effort to get the desired results. Many use products that you will find in your kitchen cupboards, such as white vinegar, lemon juice, baking soda and salt, in various combinations. These products can do an effective job of cleaning and also improve the environment and reduce waste. Discover the green way of cleaning for your home!

To help you get started, the following suggestions give some alternatives for common household cleaning products. These alternatives are relatively free of toxic effects.

<b>Air Fresheners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Open the windows, use an exhaust fan, or both.</li> <li>■ Use the air conditioner to dry the air and keep odors down.</li> <li>■ Sprinkle baking soda in odor-producing areas.</li> <li>■ Place an open box of baking soda in the refrigerator to absorb food odors.</li> </ul>
<b>Aluminum Cleaners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Scour badly abraded aluminum containers with whiting (calcium carbonate,) and soap jelly (see General Purpose Cleaners). Use very fine steel wool.</li> </ul>
<b>Bathroom Cleaners/ Disinfectants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mildew and other stains can be removed from grout with a solution of ½ cup of bleach and 1 cup water. Let stand 5 minutes and rinse with clear water.</li> <li>■ Scrub with washing soda (sodium carbonate).</li> <li>■ Scrub with borax (sodium borate).</li> </ul>
<b>Brass &amp; Copper Cleaners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Make a paste of:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-1 pint soap jelly (see General Purpose Cleaners)</li> <li>-1 cup whiting (calcium carbonate)</li> <li>-1 teaspoon household ammonia</li> </ul>                             Add whiting and ammonia to soap jelly before it congeals, and beat together.                              After using the paste, wash article in hot suds, rinse and dry.                         </li> <li>■ Tarnished copper also can be cleaned with salt dissolved in hot white cider vinegar or lemon juice.</li> <li>■ Brass with antique finish can be polished with boiled linseed oil or lemon oil.</li> </ul>
<b>Carpet &amp; Rug Cleaner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Clean the carpet on a sunny day. Open the windows to speed drying. Don't soak the carpet since it may mildew.</li> <li>■ Test the shampoo first on an inconspicuous area to check for possible discoloration.</li> <li>■ Use a mix of baking soda with water.</li> <li>■ Prepare a liquid detergent and boiling water solution (see Upholstery Cleaners section). Rub the foam in 4 x 4 foot sections. Continue the same process as for upholstery.</li> </ul>

<b>Ceramic Tile Cleaner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Prepare a mixture of 2 tablespoons of trisodium phosphate (TSP) in 1 gallon of water. Apply to tile and grout with a brush or cloth. Mop up dirty water with sponge or cloth. Needs no rinsing unless higher concentration of TSP is used for heavy cleaning.</li> </ul>
<b>Drain Cleaners</b>	<p><b>To keep drains clean:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cover drains with screens.</li> <li>■ Flush pipes with ½ pound of washing soda in 2 cups boiling water, then rinse. Do this once a month.</li> </ul> <p><b>To unclog drains:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mix 1 cup of baking soda, salt and white vinegar. Wait 15 minutes. Pour in drain and flush thoroughly with boiling water. Use a rubber plumber's snake if drain is seriously clogged.</li> </ul>
<b>Furniture Polish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Dust with cloths that gather dust rather than scatter it. Make dust cloths by putting cloths in a tin container or jar in which a few drops of oil or wax have been placed. Cover tightly and leave overnight. The cloths will absorb just enough oil or wax to remove dust and polish the surface at the same time.</li> <li>■ Use lemon oil and beeswax.</li> <li>■ Use beeswax and olive oil</li> <li>■ Mix 2 teaspoons lemon oil and 1 pint mineral oil in a spray bottle.</li> <li>■ Mix 1 tablespoon mild soap powder, 1 quart water, 1 tablespoon household ammonia, and 2 tablespoons boiled linseed oil or a good furniture polish.</li> <li>■ Mix equal portions of denatured alcohol, strained fresh lemon juice (not canned or frozen), olive oil or boiled linseed oil, and gum turpentine. Shake mixture each time before using. This polish keeps indefinitely.</li> </ul>
<b>General Purpose Cleaners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Vinegar with salt and water.</li> <li>■ Vinegar mixed with water.</li> <li>■ Baking soda on a damp sponge (rinse with water and polish to shine).</li> <li>■ Most soap pads (example, SOS pads.)</li> <li>■ 2 tablespoons of ammonia, 2 tablespoons liquid detergent, 1 quart warm water.</li> <li>■ Soap jelly (used in other formulas). To make, dissolve 1 cup of shaved soap or soap flakes in 1 quart boiling water. When entirely melted or dissolved, pour into a wide mouth jar. Let stand in a cool place until it jells.</li> </ul>
<b>General Purpose Metal Polish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ ½ cup household ammonia, ½ cup denatured alcohol, and 1 cup diatomaceous earth. Mix ammonia and alcohol. Stir in the diatomaceous earth. Add water to make a creamy mixture. Store in bottle which has been labeled, and shake before using.</li> </ul>
<b>Oven Cleaners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Wipe grease and spills after using the oven. Wipe away charred spills with a non-metallic bristle brush. If the oven is wiped out after each use, there will not be a need to use harsh chemicals for cleaning.</li> <li>■ To remove baked-on-grease and spills, scrub with a baking soda, salt, and water paste. Or sprinkle with dry baking soda, then scrub with a damp cloth after 5 minutes. (Do not let baking soda touch wires or heating elements.) Scour racks and burner inserts with steel wool.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Painted Surfaces</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To prevent streaking, wash walls by starting at the baseboard and working upward. If soiled water runs down on the clean surface, clean it up immediately. Gloss enamel-painted walls are easier to clean than flat-painted walls because they can withstand stronger washing solutions.</li> <li>■ For general cleaning, use a mixture of soap jelly (see General Purpose Cleaners) or liquid detergent and warm water. Add enough water to make light suds. Dust all painted surfaces thoroughly before washing, then wash with a soft cloth dipped in the cleaning solution and wrung out. Rinse well and then dry with a soft cloth. Wash only a small area at a time.</li> <li>■ Whitening paste will remove fingerprints and clean heavily soiled places. Make it by mixing four parts of whitening with one part soap jelly. Keep it in a small jar. Apply with a soft cloth, rubbing lightly, then rinse.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Toilet Bowl Cleaner</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Clean with borax and lemon juice.</li> <li>■ Pour ½ cup liquid chlorine bleach into toilet bowl. Let stand for at least 30 minutes, then scrub with a long-handled brush and flush. <b>Remember, NEVER mix ammonia and bleach.</b></li> <li>■ Salt and water.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Upholstery Cleaner</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mix ½ cup mild liquid dishwashing detergent with 1 pint boiling water. Let cool. Whip into a thick foam using an electric mixer. Pretest a small area before proceeding. Apply the foam to the fabric with a damp sponge. Wipe off the suds with a clean cloth. To rinse, add 1 cup of white vinegar to 1 gallon of lukewarm water. Rinse well, using as little liquid as possible, and change the water often. Put pressure on a clean white towel to remove the moisture (do not rub).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Window &amp; Mirror Cleaners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Remove surface soil with paper towel or soft cloth. Apply cleaning liquid with a sponge. Rub dry and polish with a newspaper or cloth.</li> <li>■ On windows, rub the inside in one direction and the outside in another to determine which side the streaks are on. Avoid spilling the cleaner on painted or varnished wood work because it can damage the finish.</li> <li>■ Add 1 tablespoon of vinegar to 1 quart water. Apply with a wadded-up newspaper.</li> <li>■ Mix 3 tablespoons of ammonia, 1 tablespoon white vinegar, and ¾ cup water in a clean spray bottle.</li> <li>■ Mix ¼ cup cornstarch, ½ cup ammonia, and 1 cup vinegar in a jar. Wear gloves, if necessary, because vinegar is a mild acid. It will remove rust or lime deposits on the outside of the windows.</li> </ul>

**Where to Purchase  
Products Mentioned in this Publication:**

- |                                  |                         |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ammonia                          | Grocery Store/Pharmacy  |
| Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) | Grocery Store/Pharmacy  |
| Boiled linseed oil               | Hardware Store          |
| Borax                            | Grocery Store/Pharmacy  |
| Cream of tartar                  | Grocery Store/Pharmacy  |
| Denatured alcohol                | Hardware Store/Pharmacy |

Diatomaceous earth	Pool Chemical Supply Company
Gum turpentine	Hardware Store/Pharmacy
Salt (sodium chloride)	Grocery Store/Pharmacy
Trisodium phosphate (TSP)	Hardware Store/Pharmacy
Vinegar	Grocery Store
Washing soda (sodium carbonate)	Grocery Store
Whiting (calcium carbonate)	Paint Store

## General Rules for Managing Toxic Household Products

- Select the least toxic products for your home.
- Buy only as much as you will use.
- Read the label. It will list ingredients, instructions for use, storage, and disposal, and hazards associated with use.
- Avoid aerosol spray cans whenever possible. Buy liquid, paste or powder forms of products.
- Dispose of toxic waste as recommended. Call your County Department of Environmental Services for specific information about amnesty days and other disposal options.

## Preventive Measures

- An aggressive home maintenance plan will reduce the amount of cleaning products and hazardous household products needed in the home. For example, roaches and other insects are discouraged by good housekeeping practices.
- Store food in sealed containers.
- Wipe up spills.
- Bathe pets frequently to eliminate fleas.
- Put a piece of screen over drains to catch food particles or hair.
- Avoid hard-to-clean baked-on stains in the oven by wiping up after each use and/or using liners to catch spills.
- Air out the house occasionally to avoid the use of chemical air fresheners.

## Safety Considerations

- Never mix chlorine bleach with any other cleaning agent such as ammonia or vinegar. It may create toxic fumes.
- Store all cleaning solutions out of reach of children.
- To avoid accidental poisoning, never transfer a product to a container that once held food or drink.
- Be sure that each container has a label.
- Mix cleaning solutions in a well-ventilated area.
- Clean up after using toxic substances.
- Never smoke or eat when handling hazardous materials.
- Keep the container closed. Harmful fumes may escape from an open container

### References:

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