

Greening Your Spring Cleaning

Basic Cleaning Agents

Vinegar

Naturally cleans like an all-purpose cleaner; disinfectant and deodorizer; safe to use on most surfaces; very cheap!; do not use full strength vinegar on tile grout as it can eat away at the grout; never use vinegar on marble surfaces; the smell disappears in minutes, as soon as it dries.

Uses for Full Strength Distilled White Vinegar

- Pour in toilet, scrub with toilet brush (you can also add some baking soda)
- Spray on stovetop, appliances, countertops
- Add ¼ to ½ cup to the laundry rinse cycle to soften clothes and reduce cling. Also helps break down laundry detergent to help those with sensitive skin
- Use full-strength to remove mildew in your bathroom or to remove carpet stains

Baking Soda

Use to scrub surfaces in much the same way as commercial abrasive cleansers; great deodorizer

Uses for Baking Soda

- Sprinkle on a damp sponge as a gentle non-abrasive cleanser for counter tops, sinks, bathtubs, ovens and fiberglass (for larger jobs simply make a paste of baking soda and water); can also remove crayon marks from walls
- Add ¼ to ½ cup to the laundry as a fabric softener
- Sprinkle on carpet before vacuuming to deodorize

Lemon Juice

Dissolves soap scum and hard water deposits; cleans and shines brass and copper; mix with vinegar and or baking soda to make cleaning pastes

Castille Soap

A basic bar of soap kills germs; To make liquid soap, simply add bar soap shavings to a spray bottle filled with water, let set a few days and shake, add a few drops of an essential oil for fragrance; can also be used as a bug repellent

Hydrogen Peroxide

Use to remove carpet stains; acts as a laundry bleach; can be used to eliminate mold and mildew; removes stains from white porcelain, and disinfects kitchen cutting boards

Recipes and Tips

All-Purpose Cleaner

2 cups white vinegar; 2 cups water; several drops essential oil (optional); combine in a spray bottle and use for cleaning practically everything in your home!

Tip: Warming in microwave until barely hot will boost cleaning power for tough jobs; Only microwave in a glass container.

All-Purpose Antiseptic Cleaner

Add 30-60 drops of grapefruit seed extract to 32 oz. water

Grapefruit seed extract (not to be confused with grape seed extract) is a natural antimicrobial agent that can also be added to kill germs. It is non-toxic to humans and animals and can even be taken internally to treat a variety of health problems.

Furniture Polish

1/4 cup olive oil; 4 tablespoons white distilled vinegar; 20-30 drops lemon essential oil (optional); Shake well before using.

Two teaspoons lemon juice may be substituted for lemon oil but then must be stored in refrigerator. Dip a clean, dry cloth into the polish and rub wood in the direction of the grain. Use a soft brush to work the polish into corners or tight places. *Tip:* To remove water spots rub well with toothpaste; to remove scratches use 1 part lemon juice and 1 part oil, rub with soft cloth

Drain Opener

First, try using a drain snake to remove clogs. Pour 1/2 cup baking soda down drain, then follow with 1/2 cup vinegar, cover and let sit, flush with boiling water.

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Credits and Additional Resources:

<http://www.care2.com/greenliving/make-your-own-non-toxic-cleaning-kit.html>

<http://www.grist.org/advice/possessions/2003/03/18/possessions-cleaning/index.html>

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Prairie/8088/clngrn.html>

<http://housekeeping.about.com/cs/environment/a/alternatclean.htm>

http://www.myorganicmarket.com/common/news/news_results.asp?task=Features&id=8957&storeId=A6B40AE98C7842A98FC8DE4784880288

<http://www.greendaily.com/2008/04/08/no-housework-day-is-over/>