

Garden Club of Dublin: 10 Week Challenge 2020

Week 2: Eco Friendly Cleansers

Introduction: Our homes are chock full of time saving quick fixes and modern conveniences that our grandmothers would not recognize, from plastic zip lock bags to Lysol sprays. As easy and practical as they seem, it's time to consider the long term effects of our household cleaning products and the high cost on the environment they have. We need to question how these toxic chemicals pollute our lives and endanger the planet.

The Environmental Protection Agency addresses the deleterious impact of toxic cleansers on 3 levels: on individuals, on wildlife, and on the environment, specifically on the air, land, and water.

1. If you have ever cleaned a room that has poor air circulation with brand name commercial cleansers, you may have been affected or almost passed out by the toxins released as I was when I helped a friend clean her DC rental before she returned home to Europe. These chemicals severely affect the respiratory system and irritate both our eyes and skin, even hours after using them.
2. Chemicals we use in cleaning our sinks, toilets, laundry rooms, and dishwashers are flushed down the drain, and either leaked into surrounding ground or passed on to a water treatment plant. However, it seems not all toxins are in fact removed, and these in turn contaminate nearby lakes and rivers, endangering local wildlife(resulting in genetic defects, among others) and harming vegetation (producing unnaturally dense plants).
3. The chemical compounds of brand name commercial cleansers are also problematic. Older aerosols cans are especially pernicious as they've been proven to harm the ozone layer, thus significantly contributing to global warming, and while those are now banned, the EPA claims that other aerosols contain " volatile organic compounds" which harm ground level ozone levels. Moreover, other chemical cleansers contain high levels of toxins such as phosphorous (found in 30-40% of common dishwashing detergent), nitrogen, and ammonia. Finally, the packaging of these commercial products is strategically designed for ease and convenience in bright plastic bottles: just spray and toss! Often consumers do not bother to recycle them and many municipal transfer stations do not accept them for recycling either. Their impact is severe as these plastics are not biodegradable and can sit in landfills for a lifetime.

So how to reduce chemicals by changing our cleaning routines? We have 3 suggestions:

1. Make cleansers from common pantry items (such as white vinegar, baking soda, lemon).
2. Whip up your own detergent adding essential oils.
3. Buy natural cleansers from small companies committed to eco-friendly living. Many new companies are emerging in the marketplace which provide affordable and superb alternatives. I particularly recommend a Brooklyn NY company, Common Good: its products clean well, have mild (bergamot or lavender) scents or come unscented(the dishwashing soap), and the company emphasizes both clean packaging and refillable bottles.

Better Homes & Gardens

13 Amazing Homemade Cleaners

By BH&G Editors, March 19, 2019

Whip up your own homemade cleaners that are easy on your wallet and on the earth. Get our natural cleaning recipes for homemade air freshener, laundry detergent, laundry rinse aid, upholstery-freshening spray, all-purpose cleaner, window and glass cleaner, and more!

#1 - MUST HAVE CLEANING ESSENTIALS

Stock your cleaning caddy with these natural cleaning solutions. Many of these natural cleaning ingredients can be used on their own or in any number of DIY natural cleaning products.

Baking Soda works best on proteins, grease, and animal messes, and because it's only slightly abrasive, it can scour surfaces without fear of scratching. It's also a natural deodorizer and less expensive than commercial scrubbing powders.

Distilled White Vinegar works on alkaline substances by dissolving scale, inhibiting mold, and cutting soap scum. A mild acid, it's terrific for removing coffee, rust, and tea stains. It's typically sold at a 5 percent concentration, but it's more effective at higher concentrations, so pay attention to the fine print.

Hydrogen Peroxide is simply water with an extra oxygen molecule (H_2O_2). It breaks down into harmless oxygen and water, so it's a more eco-friendly alternative to chlorine bleach.

Borax is an alkali that's good for cutting grease, oil, and dirt.

Essential Oils such as tea tree, lavender, eucalyptus, lemon, and lemongrass enhance a cleaner's scent. Tea tree oil is also naturally antibacterial.

Castile Soap is available in liquid or bar form and helps rinse dirt away. It's made with olive oil or a vegetable base and is available unscented or scented.

#2 - MUST-KNOW HOMEMADE CLEANER TRICKS

In addition to having the right natural cleaning ingredients, a few tricks and tips can make your journey to green cleaning easier:

Containers: Use clean containers for storing homemade cleaning products. Never use bottles that once held chemicals. Label concoctions when you make them to keep your family safe, and ensure you use the right solution for the application.

Test It: Before you spray a cleaner on any surface, test first in a hidden area to ensure the cleaner doesn't damage or mar the material.

When to Skip Vinegar: Never use vinegar solutions on stone surfaces such as granite or marble, cast iron, aluminum, or waxed surfaces. The acid in the vinegar can etch, pit, and strip finishes or otherwise damage these surfaces.

#3 - MUST-TRY HOMEMADE CLEANERS

Ditch the chemicals! These homemade cleaning solutions will help you achieve a sparkling space with ingredients from around the house. Water becomes a powerhouse when paired with microfiber cloths (watch and learn the technique), lemon is a saving grace for gunky pans (and more!), and baking soda and vinegar can tackle any number of jobs.

#4 - HOMEMADE ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER

Put this natural cleaning recipe to work as an all-purpose cleaner for bathrooms, kitchens, and more. Plus, the natural cleaning recipe reduces germs and leaves the whole room smelling fresh and clean.

What You Need:

- 3/4 cup hydrogen peroxide
- 1/2 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon unscented liquid Castile soap
- 10 drops tea tree oil
- 20 drops lavender essential oil
- 2 cups water

Add all ingredients to a 24-ounce spray bottle; shake before use. Use for general cleaning needs. For an extra boost when removing mildew and soap buildup, spray first, then sprinkle on baking soda and scrub with a sponge.

#5 - HOMEMADE AIR FRESHENER

Make your home smell amazing—naturally! Simmering a pot of ingredients you probably already have in your kitchen is a simple way to make the whole house smell divine. Vary the citrus and herbs in this natural cleaning recipe to create new scents, such as orange-basil, lemon-rosemary, or lime-lavender.

What You Need:

- 2-3 oranges, lemons, and/or limes, sliced
- Handful fresh herbs such as basil, rosemary, or lavender
- 2-4 cinnamon sticks
- 1 teaspoon whole cloves

Place ingredients in a medium saucepan. Fill about three-fourths full with water; bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer to infuse the house with a naturally fresh aroma. (Do not leave unattended.) The mixture can be stored once overnight: Place it in an airtight jar or container and refrigerate, then boil and simmer again the next day.

#6 - HOMEMADE LAUNDRY DETERGENT AND RINSE AID

Skip expensive detergents and save money with these simple recipes, which are laundry must-haves:

Homemade Laundry Detergent:

- 1 bar laundry soap (We like brands such as FelsNaptha, Pink Zote, and Dr. Bronner's Castile Soap.)
- 1 cup borax

- 1 cup washing soda (Look for it in the laundry aisle.)
- 1 cup oxygen bleach

Grate bar of laundry soap; you should have about 2 cups grated soap. (Or look for soap flakes online.) Mix all ingredients in a large container. Store in a lidded jar. Use 2 tablespoons for a light load and 4 tablespoons for a large or dirty load. Wash as normal.

Homemade Rinse Aid:

- 1 gallon distilled white vinegar
- 25-30 drops essential oil (optional)

Add the drops to the container of vinegar. Use 1/4 cup in the rinse cycle

#7 - HOMEMADE GROUT CLEANER

Don't miss these tips on how to easily clean grout and prolong the life of your tile. While you'll find plenty of commercial grout cleaners, you can call on baking soda to give grout a good natural cleaning. Watch and see more ways to get grout into shape.

#8 - HOMEMADE UPHOLSTERY-FRESHENING SPRAY

Banish stench from upholstery with this DIY natural cleaning product. Baking soda absorbs unpleasant odors while essential oils refresh the air. Customize the strength of the scent by varying the type and amount of essential oils used.

What You Need:

- 1/4 cup baking soda
- 10 drops essential oil, such as lavender
- 1-1/2 cups water

Use a funnel to add the baking soda to a 12-ounce spray bottle. Add the essential oil. Fill the bottle with water and shake gently to combine. Test on a small, inconspicuous area of upholstery (such as on the back or under a cushion) to ensure it won't leave a mark. Spray over upholstery whenever it needs freshening.

#9 - HOMEMADE SPRAY AIR FRESHENER

Skip the store-bought sprays, which can be irritating to people who are sensitive to smells or chemicals, in favor of this DIY natural cleaning product, which requires just three ingredients.

What You Need:

- 3 cups water
- 1 cup vodka
- 10-20 drops essential oil

Add all ingredients to a 32-ounce spray bottle and mist into the air as needed.

Note: Vodka is a favorite for homemade cleaners. It contains ethyl alcohol, a main ingredient in many store-bought air fresheners. Any kind of vodka will work, so there's no need to spring for a top-shelf bottle.

#10 - HOMEMADE WINDOW AND GLASS CLEANER

Get a streak-free sparkle with this simple cleaner, and enjoy a better view through your windows. Invest in a small stack of soft cotton or microfiber cloths for best results.

What You Need:

- 2 cups water
- 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon dish soap

Add all ingredients to a 24-ounce spray bottle. Shake to combine. Use on windows or glass fronts of appliances. Beyond this basic recipe, you can also call on rubbing alcohol and even dish soap for alternative homemade window cleaners.

#11 - HOMEMADE NATURAL FLOOR CLEANER

Again, vinegar saves the day to clean floors, the natural way. Use it as a natural cleaning product to get floors spic and span.

What You Need:

- 1 gallon distilled water
- 1/2 cup vinegar

Mix together distilled water and vinegar in a bucket and use to mop your floors.

Note: Vinegar and other acidic cleaners should not be used on stone floors. Follow one of these natural cleaning recipes for floors instead.

#12 - HOMEMADE CARPET STAIN REMOVER

Carpets are soft and fluffy underfoot, but unfortunately, the material is absorbent and prone to staining. However, natural carpet stain removing products like club soda to hydrogen peroxide come to the rescue. It's important to match the type of stain to the kind of cleaner you use. For example, this stain remover recipe is effective on protein-based stains like blood, bodily fluids, dairy products, baby formula, eggs, and baby food.

What You Need:

- 1/4 cup table salt
- 1/4 cup white vinegar
- 1/4 cup borax powder

Mix ingredients into a paste and apply to the stained area. Let it dry for 24 hours and vacuum. The paste kills bacteria and acts as a deodorizer as it removes the stain. After vacuuming, clean the area with water to remove residue. Blot well with a clean, dry cloth. Always test in an inconspicuous spot first

#13 - HOMEMADE DUSTING SPRAY

Give dust the boot with a DIY spray from cleaning specialist Leslie Reichert.

What You Need:

- 3 cups of water

- Two tea bags
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

Boil the water, add the tea bags, and let the mix cool. Put the mixture into a spray bottle with a teaspoon of lemon juice. To use, lightly spray the mixture on a microfiber cloth and dust.

Published online with links at:

<https://www.bhg.com/homekeeping/house-cleaning/cleaning-products-tools/homemade-cleaners/>



Gardeners Hand Scrub

March 11, 2014

I wear gloves in the garden, almost always...certainly when I am planning on working for a period of time, gloves are the first thing I grab. Despite this, my hands seem to always be stained. The thumbs and index fingers are split and cracked and always look dirty. It has been beginning to bug me!

On a one income family budget I am always on the hunt for new ways to make the budget go further. I admit to having a hankering for good quality. For us this means that we grow as much of our own fresh food in the garden as possible, ensuring that we are eating fresh organic produce often. We eat high quality meat, straight from a farm, but less of it and less often than in the past. We shop at farmers markets and farm gates. I buy organic Australian grains in bulk via a co-op – you get the picture. I have spent the last two years working out where to find the best quality at an affordable cost.

So that brings me to skin care.....I have been wondering what I could do to return my hands to their previous state. As with food, I could be described as obsessive. I will only use natural skin care. What you may not know about me is that I was a qualified Aromatherapist practitioner many many many years ago. As an Aromatherapist I created my own range of skin care that I sold to my clients and anyone else who was interested in using it. I have not practiced Aromatherapy for many years but I have continued to use essential oils on a daily basis and continue to be mindful of ingredients in products that I put onto my skin, and that of my family. That leads us here – why was I not getting out my old recipes and making my own skin care again????? Why indeed.

This recipe has worked beautifully to soften and heal my poor old battered gardeners hands. I use it each afternoon and if I have been in the garden I often use it again in the evening. When I first made it I used it daily to get my hands back into shape. Now I use it as required.

A natural hand scrub made from pantry ingredients. Give it a try. It also makes a fabulous body scrub.

Author: Kyrstie Barcak - A Fresh Legacy
Prep Time: 5 mins Total Time: 5 mins

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Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 lemon juiced a small lemon
- sprig of fresh rosemary chopped
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 1 tablespoon honey

Instructions:

- Combine in a bowl and stir to combine
- Add to a sterlised jar and store in a cool location away from direct heat
- To use the scrub wet hands a little and scoop out some of the scrub and rub your hands together. Focus on the areas of your hands that are rough
- Moisturise hands after scrubbing

Recipe Notes:

Depending on the weather the ingredients in this recipe may separate when not in use. Simply mix around with your finger prior to scooping out to use. Coconut oil will solidify in cold weather. If this occurs it will melt upon rubbing together of your hands.

Published online with links at:
<https://afreshlegacy.net/gardeners-hand-scrub/>



The 9 Best Green Cleaning Products of 2020

By Brigitt Earley, 03/26/20

Healthier products for your home and family

Our editors independently research, test, and recommend the best products; you can learn more about our review process here. We may receive commissions on purchases made from our chosen links.

Best All-Purpose: Dr. Bronner's Pure Castile Soap

"With 18 different uses—including as a floor cleaner, veggie wash, hand soap—Dr. Bronner's castile soap is a fan favorite for a reason."

Best Bathroom: Method Antibacterial Bathroom Cleaner

"Antibacterial doesn't have to be toxic: Method's bathroom cleaner kills 99.9% of household germs, and smells good while doing it."

Best for Glass: Aunt Fannie's Glass & Window Cleaning Wash

"Get zen while wiping down glass surfaces with Aunt Fannie's vinegar wash, whose effective formula is backed by essential oils."

Best Dish Soap: Common Good Dish Soap

"Free from questionable additives, this biodegradable soap isn't just better for you, it's better for the environment."

Best for Floors: Aunt Fannie's Floor Cleaner Vinegar Wash

"A natural floor cleaner is always a smart pick, particularly for those with pets or crawling kids."

Best for Toilets: ECOS Goose-Neck Bottle Toilet Cleaner

"For one of your home's dirtiest spots, opt for ECOS's toilet cleaner—backed by the Environment Working Group for its efficacy."

Best for Kitchen: ATTITUDE Multi-Purpose Cleaner

"Kitchen cleaners need to be versatile, and this hypoallergenic, vegan cleaner is up to the (citrus-scented) task."

Best for Laundry: Molly's Suds Laundry Detergent Powder

"Users love this old-school laundry powder for its effective formula, which is designed to be gentle enough for sensitive skin."

Best Reusable Packaging: Blueland The Clean Up Kit

"For those who want to make their own cleaners but have limited time, this reusable kit is the next best option."

Published online with links and more details at:

<https://www.thespruce.com/best-green-cleaning-products-4776786>

For other tips and formulas, please see: DIY Laundry Products (from “The Spruce” 5/20)

#1 DIY Powdered Laundry Detergent

What You Need:

- * Bar of pure soap (ivory etc) or pure flakes
- * Baking soda
- * Washing soda (sodium carbonate)
- * Borax
- * Resealable container

Directions: Using a grater, grate a 5 bar of pure soap to make 1 cup of flakes. In a large, resealable container, combine 1 cup soap flakes, 1 cup baking soda, 1 cup washing soda (sodium carbonate) and 1/2 cup borax. Wear rubber gloves. Mix well. Keep dry. Use 1/2 cup of mixture per load of laundry in a standard top load washer. Use 2 tablespoons in a high-efficiency top- or front-load washer.

#2 DIY Single Dose Laundry Detergent Pods

What You Need:

- * 1 1/2 cups washing soda to soften water
- * 1/2 cup pure soap flakes for stain removal
- * 2TBS epsom salt for fabric softening
- * 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar for odor reduction
- * 5-20 drops essential oil for fragrance (optional)

Directions: Using the hand grater, grate the soap bar until you have 1/2 cup of grated soap (or use soap flakes). Pour the soap flakes into the mixing bowl. Add the washing soda and Epsom salts next. Stir together until blended. Add the hydrogen peroxide and vinegar and the essential oil. After you have added the wet ingredients, your mixture should look like wet sand needed to build a sandcastle.

Use a measuring spoon to shape into individual pods, each about a heaping 1 TBS. Pack the measuring spoon well and place the pod on a waxed or parchment paper-lined cookie sheet. Spritz the pods with a bit of plain water to set the shape (the water melts the ingredients slightly). Dry overnight. This recipe will make around two dozen single-dose pods. Once dry, store the pods in an air-tight container.

#3 DIY Gentle Wool Wash (adios Woolite!)

What You Need:

- * 4 cups pure soap flakes
- * 4 cups boiling water
- * 1 cup denatured alcohol
- * 1 TBS essential oil lavender or eucalyptus)

Directions: Place the soap flakes and boiling water in a large mixing bowl and mix well with a whisk or an electric blender. Add the denatured alcohol and essential oil mixing well. Pour into a large preserving jar. Leave the jar overnight to set to a firm jelly. Rub a small amount into stains or dissolve 1 TBS of wool wash in lukewarm water. Soak the garment and then rinse well.
