



Cleaning Products Home Natural

Chemicals to avoid

Man made chemical ingredients found in traditional products are harmful to the environment. They do not readily degrade so they can exist in the environment for a long time. The longer they survive, the more damage they can do.

Phosphates, found in laundry detergents cause algal growths in lake and rivers, choking native plants and aquatic animals.

The antimicrobial chemical **Triclosan** is an organochlorine compound that accumulates in the food chain, and is suspected of being an endocrine-disrupter - a chemical that can interfere with the hormone system. It is found in antibacterial kitchen and bathroom cleaners.

Petroleum-based compounds are made from a non-renewable resource. Opt for products made from a sustainable (usually plant-based) source instead.

Chlorine, found in bleach is a highly corrosive substance, capable of damaging skin, eyes, and other membranes. Bleaches destroy beneficial bacteria that break down sewage. They can also trigger asthma.

• Recover refills: 8th Day, Oxford Road
Big supermarkets and oriental stores
• White vinegar - not white wine or malt!
(sometimes labelled "non-reversed condiment")

• Essential oils:
www.naturallythinkin.com, Holland & Barrett

• Soda crystals, borax, sodium bicarbonate:
www.dripak.co.uk, Unicorn Grocery in Chorlton,
Wilkinson, Sainsburys, ASDA, chemists

Stockists

• 1001 Little ways to save our Planet, Esme Floyd
• 1001 Natural Remedies, Laurel Vukovic
• How Clean is Your House? Channel 4
• generous.org.uk
• Surfers Against Sewage
• www.greenpeace.org.uk/toxics
• WWF Chemicals and Health campaign
borax, soap flakes, etc
A great site with info & tips on soda crystals,
www.dripak.co.uk

References & further info:

Natural alternatives

Salt: scourer, disinfectant.

Essential oils: antibacterial, disinfectant.

Lemon juice: general cleaner, removes limescale.

White vinegar: degreaser, descaler, sanitiser, stain remover. Although it has a mild odour, the smell soon disappears, unlike malt vinegar which is unsuitable for cleaning.

Washing soda/soda crystals: disinfectant, degreaser, stain remover, water softener.

Baking soda/bicarbonate of soda: deodoriser, mix with water to get rid of stains and grease.

Borax: laundry booster, stain-remover, multi-purpose cleaner, mildew remover, disinfectant.

Caution! These ingredients are less harmful to the environment, but should still be kept out of the reach of children. Essential oils should not be taken internally. Do not use washing soda on polished floors, lacquered taps & fittings or aluminium, and do not breathe dust. Don't mix vinegar or washing liquid with chlorine bleach.

Air freshener

Instead of chemical plug-ins and sprays try mixing your own oils, eg lavender & grapefruit for a light and refreshing air freshener, or sandalwood, pine and juniper for an earthy, forest scent.

Antiseptic air freshener

Use this when someone in the home has a cold or the flu. Juniper, eucalyptus, bergamot, tea tree and lavender essential oils all have antibacterial properties. Alcohol is a preservative.

1/3 teaspoon vodka

5 drops bergamot essential oil

5 drops eucalyptus essential oil

5 drops lavender essential oil

Mix the vodka and oils in a 150ml (5fl oz) spray bottle and shake well. Add water, shake again, and spray a fine mist into the air. Avoid spraying directly on fabrics or wood surfaces.

Bathroom cleaner

Natural essential oils in this all-purpose spray prevent the build up of mould & mildew, and leave your bathroom clean and pleasantly scented.

1 teaspoon borax

500ml (16fl oz) hot water

1/2 teaspoon natural washing up liquid

3 tablespoons white vinegar

15 drops lavender essential oil

10 drops eucalyptus essential oil

5 drops lemon essential oil

Mix the borax and hot water and let cool to room temp. Pour into a spray bottle and add remaining ingredients. Shake well before use.

Kitchen cleaning spray

This light spray is great for cleaning worktops and other surfaces. Vinegar helps to remove grease and the essential oils are antibacterial.

125ml (4fl oz) white vinegar

1/4 teaspoon natural washing up liquid

125ml (4fl oz) water

1/4 teaspoon lavender essential oil

1/4 teaspoon orange essential oil

Combine all ingredients together in a spray bottle. Shake well before use.

Drains

Use a drain sieve to stop hair/food clogging the pipes. Instead of corrosive drain cleaners opt for natural acid-alkali cleaning: sprinkle 60ml bicarbonate of soda followed by 125ml vinegar to fizz out accumulated gunk. Flush with boiling water.

As a maintenance measure, once a week mix 30ml each of bicarbonate of soda and salt and pour into the drain, rinse with a kettleful of boiling water.

Pan cleaner

Boil up some rhubarb or cooking apples to get rid of burnt on food.

Scouring

Mix borax with water, lemon juice or white vinegar for scouring.

Natural disinfectants

Make your own by infusing leaves of rosemary, eucalyptus, lavender, sage and thyme in water.

A scrub of cold water and salt works as well as bleach on cutlery and breadboards.

Wooden floor cleaner

Tea brings out the natural grain and shine of hardwood floors, especially older floors. Brew two teabags in hot water and cool to room temp. Apply with a mop or cloth. Using peppermint teabags adds antibacterial properties.

Tiled floor cleaner

1/3 part white vinegar

1/3 part surgical spirit

1/3 water

3 drops natural washing-up liquid

The alcohol is added to make it dry faster, you can leave it out if you like.

Wood furniture cleaner

A mixture of extra virgin olive oil and fresh lemon juice is excellent for cleaning wood furniture.

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Combine the ingredients in a small glass jar. Shake well. Apply to furniture with a soft cotton cloth.

Carpet cleaner

Clean and deodorise carpets by vacuuming, sprinkling bicarbonate of soda, leave one hour then vacuum again.

Homemade washing powder

This can be used in washing machines and for hand washing.

16 tablespoons of soap flakes

8 tablespoons of borax and

8 tablespoons of soda crystals

Add to an airtight container and shake up the ingredients. Use two to three tablespoons of the mixture in your washing load. The washing powder will last for approximately ten washes, with the average cost of 22p per load.

Fabric softener

White vinegar can be used instead of chemical-based fabric softeners with no residual odour. Add essential oils for natural perfume.

Grubby clothes

Try sponging white vinegar on collars and staining caused by underarm deodorants. (Check for colour fastness by first applying on an inconspicuous area of fabric).

Stain remover

Add dry washing soda crystals directly to the stain. Removes wine, food, ink and grass stains.

Add 125ml of washing soda to each wash load to whiten up whites and brighten colours.

Windows, mirrors, glass

Spray with a solution of water and white vinegar and a squirt of natural washing up liquid. If you don't like the smell add citronella, it also deters bugs.

Leave to dry a bit and polish with newspaper.

Microwaves and Ovens

Clean with a cloth dampened in equal parts of vinegar and water. To remove microwave odours, place some lemon slices in a bowl of water. Put on high for a few minutes.

Pets

White vinegar treats urine stains and the residual odour, and although undetectable to humans, will help deter your pet from returning to the same spot.

Garden

Greenfly: Spray trees or plants with a solution of 4oz (120gms) of soap flakes and 2oz (60gms) of soda crystals to two gallons of water.

Mossy paths: Sprinkle soda crystals directly on to moss, leave overnight and rinse off. Avoid spilling on to plants.

Barbecues: Soda crystals are renowned for their ability to cut through grease, so they're ideal for cleaning barbecues. Use a hot, strong solution.

Patio furniture: Grimy plastic garden furniture will come clean with soda crystals.

Decking: Wash down with a solution of warm water and soda crystals.

Less plastic packaging, cheaper, just as effective, kinder to the environment . . .