

TRIED AND TRUE RECIPES FOR A LESS HAZARDOUS HOME

Household cleaning is an ancient chore and people tidied up without fancy chemicals for a long time. Simpler times called for simpler cleaners that still work today.

These remedies were drawn from a number of sources. Although they are usually less hazardous than popular products, they should still be used with caution. Their effectiveness has not been tested by formal research or consumer test groups. When trying a new alternative, test it on a small, inconspicuous area first to be sure you'll get the results you want.

Most jobs can be accomplished with six simple ingredients mixed with water, vinegar, soap, baking soda, washing soda, borax and ammonia. Even so, handle these compounds carefully. Ammonia in particular irritates eyes, nose and lungs. Wear gloves and eye protection when mixing and working with ammonia in these recipes and clearly label the containers of all cleaning solutions you concoct.

The Basic Cleaning Kit

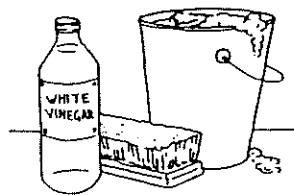
White Vinegar: Dissolves grease and mineral accumulation.

Borax: Disinfects and deodorizes.

Baking Soda: Deodorizes and is mildly abrasive.

Washing Soda: Cuts grease, removes stains, softens water.

Non-detergent soap: Loosens dirt.



Recipes

All-Purpose Cleaner: Mix one gallon hot water with 1/4 cup of white vinegar, or mix one teaspoon borax into one quart of hot water. Add a squeeze of lemon juice or a splash of vinegar to cut grease. Rinse with water.

Scouring Powder: Dampen a sponge with baking soda and scrub.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner: Pour one cup vinegar into the bowl, then toss a handful of baking soda. The mixture will foam. When the foam subsides, scrub and rinse.

Disinfectant: Mix 1/2 cup borax and 1/4 cup vinegar in two gallons of very hot water. For a stronger disinfectant, add more borax.

Air Freshener

Herbal potpourri or cotton balls soaked in vanilla are sweet-smelling. Also try boiling cinnamon and cloves in a small amount of water. An open box of baking soda absorbs refrigerator odors. Borax sprinkled in the bottom of a garbage can control odors.

All Purpose Cleaner

Mix one gallon hot water and 1/4 cup vinegar. This solution is safe for all surfaces and can be rinsed away with water.

Ant Control

Ants will avoid lines of powders and sharp crystals. Sprinkle barriers of talcum powder, chalk, bone meal, cayenne pepper or boric acid across their trails. Industrial grade boric acid crystals are especially effective as they have little odor. Keep boric acid away from children and pets.



Bathroom Cleaner

Use baking soda to scrub surfaces clean and wipe surfaces with a solution of 1/4 cup vinegar in a gallon of water.

Blood Stains

Club soda and cold water will remove fresh blood stains. Blot it up with a clean cloth or paper towel.



Chocolate Stains

Blot the stain with club soda.

Rust Remover

Vinegar's weak acid works wonders on rust stains. Warmed vinegar coupled with some scrubbing will remove rust from dishes, sinks and your teapot.

Silver Cleaning

Baking soda and water or buttermilk makes fine silver soaking solutions. The fine abrasives in toothpaste will also brighten your silver jewelry with mild brushing. Also try boiling silver for two to three minutes in a mixture of one cup water, one teaspoon baking soda, one teaspoon salt and piece of aluminum foil. Rinse pieces well in water and dry with a soft cloth.

Sinks and Countertops

Use vinegar mixed with water and salt.



Window Cleaner

Use newspaper dipped in vinegar to scrub windows. A mix of one quart water, a few drops dishwashing detergent and two tablespoons of sudsy ammonia works well.

Spot Removers

To remove grease from garage floors, sprinkle the spot with dry cement or fresh cat litter. Let stand for a few hours, then sweep it up. Grease is absorbed by the dry clay or cement.

Stains

General household stains can be cleaned and disinfected with borax solutions.

Wood Furniture Polish

Look for products containing pure oils like lemon oil, tung oil or almond oil without petroleum distillates. You can also make furniture polishes with a mixture of one part lemon juice to two parts mineral oil or other oil. Don't use vegetable oils to preserve wood because the oils eventually turn rancid and emit foul odors. Be aware that mineral oil is flammable and mineral spirits should not be used.

Wood Cleaning

Try a oil soap product, i.e. Murphy's.



Wood Scratches

Mix one spoon each lemon juice and mineral oil.

In Commercial Polishes

Look for products containing lemon oil or beeswax in a mineral oil base.

Finally, clean lightly, but more frequently to avoid the need for stronger cleaners. Use preventive strategies at home. Check you home for small spaces where pests can gain access. Learn about pest habits so you can apply the least hazardous alternative when pests are most vulnerable. And remember that your household can still be considered clean without a shiny, "spanking clean" look every day.

Shine Water-spotted Chrome and Faucets

Fill spray bottle with vinegar. Spray a little on fixtures and wipe away spots.

Ballpoint Pen Marks on Woodwork or Painted Walls

Dab with white vinegar on a clean cloth. Blot.

Wooden Cutting Board Used with Meat

Mix: 1 tablespoon household bleach, 1 quart warm water. Scrub with solution. Rinse under hot running water. Dry.

Plastic Storage Containers Stained and not Fresh Smelling

Make paste of baking soda and water. Apply paste with plastic scouring pad. Rinse clean.

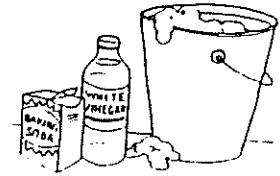
Grout and Bathroom Tile Dark and Stained Around Tub or Shower

Mix equal parts of baking soda, water. Make paste. Apply to grout; scrub with toothbrush. Rinse with water.

Kitchen Cupboard Polishes

Platinum

A little baking soda on a soft cloth will restore the bright shiny surface.



Stainless Steel

Sprinkle baking soda on a wet surface and scrub with a synthetic scouring pad. Rinse and buff dry with a soft cloth.

Pewter

Save the outer leaves from a head of cabbage. Rub the leaf over the surface of the pewter and buff with a soft cloth.

Silver

Combine 3 parts baking soda with 1 part water. Rub the paste on the surface gently, rinse and buff with a soft cloth.

Gold

Mix 1 teaspoon cigarette ash with enough water to make a paste. Rub the paste into the surface gently with a soft cloth, rinse and buff dry with chamois.

Bronze

Make a paste of 1 tablespoon of each: flour, vinegar and salt. Apply to the surface with a soft cloth. (It will immediately cut through film, making tarnish and grime disappear). Wash in warm, soapy water, buff to a soft satiny sheen with a dry soft cloth.

Brass

Combine 1 tablespoon each: salt, flour and vinegar. Apply with a soft cloth. Effective in making tarnish disappear and shine will reappear. Wash in warm soapy water and buff dry with a soft cloth to bring up shine.

Aluminum

Sprinkle surface with baking soda and wet surface. Using a synthetic scouring pad, spread around. Rinse and buff for shine.

Copper

Make a paste of 1 tablespoon of each - flour, vinegar, salt. Rub paste over surface. Wash in hot soapy water, rinse and buff to a high gloss.

Aluminum Cooking Pots Stained

Wet pot. Sprinkle with baking soda. Use scour pad to spread paste and clean stains. Rinse; dry.

Cast Iron Skillet Rusted and Food Sticks

Scour with steel wool pad. Rinse. Dry with paper toweling; wipe inside and out with cooking oil. Place in warm oven at 250°F for 2 hours. Wipe off excess oil.

Cockroach Control

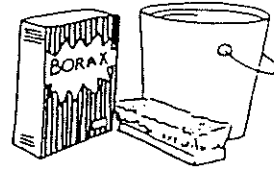
Try a light dusting of borax around the refrigerator, stove and duct work. You can also combine sugar, flour and boric acid to poison roaches; they'll carry the powder back to their nests. Keep pets and children away from these mixtures.

Copper Cleaner

Dip the copper in warm vinegar, then sprinkle salt on the piece and scrub with a soft cloth. Rinse well with clean water.

Disinfectant

Mix 1/2 cup of each: soap, borax and isopropyl alcohol.



Drain Cleaner

Keep drains open and clean with a plunger or metal snake. As a preventative or if a drain becomes clogged, pour in 1/4 cup baking soda, followed by 1/2 cup vinegar. Close the drain until all the fizzing stops, then flush well with boiling water.

Floor and Toilets

A mixture of two to three teaspoons each of borax and liquid dish soap in two quarts of hot water works well on tough jobs like floors and toilet bowls. Adjust the concentration of ingredients to fit the job. Likewise, baking soda and a mild detergent plus a little elbow grease can take the place of powder cleansers. Baking soda mixed with a small amount of bleach is an effective toilet bowl cleaner. **Remember, never mix ammonia with bleach.**

Hand Cleaner

To clean hands of paint or grease, massage them with baby oil, mineral oil, margarine or butter. Wipe them dry on a paper towel, then wash your hands with soap and water.

Laundry Pre-Soak

To remove tough stains; soak the spot in a mixture of 1/4 cup borax in two cups of cold water prior to washing. Rub corn meal and water into greasy stains and then rinse the stain with lemon juice before machine washing.

Moth Preventer

Cedar chips or lavender can be sprinkled in drawers to discourage moths or wrap sweaters in newspaper before storage.

Oven Cleaner

Dampen the spill and sprinkle salt on it while the oven is still warm. Scrape the spill away when cooled. Greasy spots can be removed with a vinegar-soaked rag. Really tough spots can be removed by dampening the area with water and lightly scrubbing with baking soda and steel wool pads.



Perspiration Stains

Weak water solutions of white vinegar, lemon juice or aspirin can be used as a pre-soak to remove perspiration stains or soak the clothes in a solution of cornmeal and water.

Pest Preventer

Clean up the pest's food supply. Repair holes in walls and screens. Caulk cracks and crevices. Add weather stripping to windows and doors. Place vapor barriers beneath buildings. Repair leaks, clean gutters and maintain good soil drainage to reduce dampness that attracts wood damaging pests.

Pet Stains and Odors

Try a mixture of 1/4 cup vinegar in 1/4 cup liquid soap. Rub in the mixture, blot the stain, then rinse with water.