

Homemade Natural Cleaners

Formulas:

All-Purpose Cleaner: Mix 1/2 cup vinegar and 1/4 cup baking soda (or 2 teaspoons borax) into 1/2 gallon (2 liters) water. Store and keep. Use for removal of water deposit stains on shower stall panels, bathroom chrome fixtures, windows, bathroom mirrors, etc. Or use a citrus-based natural all-purpose cleaner.

Bathroom mold: Mold in bathroom tile grout is a common problem and can be a health concern. Mix one part hydrogen peroxide (3%) with two parts water in a spray bottle and spray on areas with mold. Wait at least one hour before rinsing or using shower.

Dishwasher Soap: Mix equal parts of borax and washing soda, but increase the washing soda if your water is hard.

Dishwashing Soap: Commercial low-phosphate detergents are not themselves harmful, but phosphates nourish algae which use up oxygen in waterways. A detergent substitution is to use liquid soap. Add 2 or 3 tablespoons of vinegar to the warm, soapy water for tough jobs. Or use a citrus-based natural dish soap.

Fabric softener: Mix 1 part vinegar, and 2 parts water together. Use 1/4 to 1/3 cup during the final rinse cycle.

Laundry Detergent: Mix 1 cup Ivory soap (or Fels Naptha soap), 1/2 cup washing soda and 1/2 cup borax. Use 1 tbsp for light loads; 2 tbsp for heavy loads. Commercial natural, biodegradable laundry detergents are also now available online and in select stores.

Fabric Whitener: mix in 1/2 cup vinegar and 1/2 cup borax to your white loads

Scouring Powder: For top of stove, refrigerator and other such surfaces that should not be scratched, use baking soda. Apply baking soda directly with a damp sponge.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner: Mix 1/4 cup baking soda and 1 cup vinegar, pour into basin and let it set for a few minutes. Scrub with brush and rinse. A mixture of borax (2 parts) and lemon juice (one part) will also work.

Tub and Tile Cleaner: For simple cleaning, rub in baking soda with a damp sponge and rinse with fresh water. For tougher jobs, wipe surfaces with vinegar first and follow with baking soda as a scouring powder. (Vinegar can break down tile grout, so use sparingly.)

Window Cleaner: Mix 2 teaspoons of white vinegar with 1 liter (qt) warm water. Use crumpled newspaper or cotton cloth to clean. Only use the black and white newspapers, not the colored ones. Don't clean windows if the sun is on them, or if they are warm, or streaks will show on drying. Be sure to follow the recipe, because using too strong a solution of vinegar will etch the glass and eventually cloud it. The All-Purpose Cleaner (above) also works well on windows, or you can buy CitraClear natural window and glass cleaner.

Drain Cleaner: For light drain cleaning, mix 1/2 cup salt in 4 liters water, heat (but not to a boil) and pour down the drain. For stronger cleaning, pour about 1/2 cup baking soda down the drain, then 1/2 cup vinegar. The resulting chemical reaction can break fatty acids down into soap and glycerine, allowing the clog to wash down the drain. After 15 minutes, pour in boiling water to clear residue. Caution: only use this method with metal plumbing. Plastic pipes can melt if excess boiling water is used. Also, do not use this method after trying a commercial drain opener--the vinegar can react with the drain opener to create dangerous fumes.

Mothballs: The common mothball is made of paradichlorobenzene, which is harmful to liver and kidneys. Cedar chips in a cheesecloth square, or cedar oil in an absorbent cloth will repel moths. The cedar should be 'aromatic cedar', also referred to as juniper in some areas. Cedar chips are available at many craft supply stores, or make your own using a plane and a block of cedar from the lumberyard. Homemade moth-repelling sachets can also be made with lavender, rosemary, vetiver and rose petals. Dried lemon peels are also a natural moth deterrent - simply toss into clothes chest, or tie in cheesecloth and hang in the closet.

Oven Cleaner: Moisten oven surfaces with sponge and water. Use 3/4cup baking soda, 1/4cup salt and 1/4cup water to make a thick paste, and spread throughout oven interior. (avoid bare metal and any openings) Let sit overnight. Remove with spatula and wipe clean. Rub gently with fine steel wool for tough spots. Or use Arm & Hammer Oven Cleaner, declared nontoxic by Consumers Union.

Rust Remover: Sprinkle a little salt on the rust, squeeze a lime over the salt until it is well soaked. Leave the mixture on for 2 - 3 hours. Use leftover rind to scrub residue.

Stain Removal

For Ink or Paint Stains: Soak in rubbing alcohol for 30 minutes or (ink only) spray with hair spray and wash out.

Tea or Coffee Stains: Immediately pour boiling water over the stain until it is gone, or if it is already set, scrub with a paste of borax and water and wash immediately.

Grass stains: Scrub with liquid dish soap or treat with a 50/50 Hydrogen Peroxide and water mix

Mud stains: Let dry and brush off what you can, then scrub with a borax/water paste and wash immediately

Tomato Based Stains: Treat with white vinegar directly on the stain and wash immediately.

Dingy Whites or Underarm Deodorant Stains: Soak the stain directly in a mix of 50/50 hydrogen peroxide and water for 30 minutes and then add 1 cup of hydrogen peroxide to the wash water.

Other Food Stains: Treat with a mix of 50/50 Hydrogen Peroxide and water and soak.

Grease and Oil Stains: Sprinkle the stain with dry baking soda to remove any loose oil or grease and brush off. Then, soak in undiluted white vinegar for 15 minutes, rinse and scrub with liquid dish soap before washing

Vomit, Urine, Poop, Blood, Egg, Gelatin, Glue or other protein based stains: DO NOT WASH IN WARM WATER!!!!!! This will set in the smell. Soak in cool water and then wash with an added mixture of 1/2 cup hydrogen peroxide and 1/2 cup baking soda in the washing machine.

Common Alternatives to Commercial Cleaners

There are many inexpensive, easy-to-use natural alternatives which can safely be used in place of commercial household products. Here is a list of common, environmentally safe products which can be used alone or in combination for a wealth of household applications.

Baking Soda - cleans, deodorizes, softens water, scours.

Soap - unscented soap in liquid form, flakes, powders or bars is biodegradable and will clean just about anything. Avoid using soaps which contain petroleum distillates.

Lemon - one of the strongest food-acids, effective against most household bacteria.

Borax - (sodium borate) cleans, deodorizes, disinfects, softens water, cleans wallpaper, painted walls and floors.

White Vinegar - cuts grease, removes mildew, odors, some stains and wax build-up.

Washing Soda - or SAL Soda is sodium carbonate decahydrate, a mineral. Washing soda cuts grease, removes stains, softens water, cleans wall, tiles, sinks and tubs. Use care, as washing soda can irritate mucous membranes. Do not use on aluminum.

Isopropyl Alcohol - is an excellent disinfectant. (It has been suggested to replace this with ethanol or 100 proof alcohol in solution with water. There is some indication that isopropyl alcohol buildup contributes to illness in the body. See <http://drclark.ch/g>)

Cornstarch - can be used to clean windows, polish furniture, shampoo carpets and rugs.

Citrus Solvent - cleans paint brushes, oil and grease, some stains. (Citrus solvent may cause skin, lung or eye irritations for people with multiple chemical sensitivities.)

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