

# Homemade Cleaning Products

Cleaning for a Healthier Home and  
Planet

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## CLEANING RECIPES AND INSTRUCTIONS

### ***Kitchen***

***All around surface cleaner*** – 100% vinegar in a spray bottle. Use it on bench tops, stoves, splashbacks just like you would spray 'n' wipe.

*Note: If you have a stone bench top vinegar is too acidic, use the stone bench top cleaner listed below.*

***Deodoriser*** – Baking soda absorbs odours quite well. Put a small open dish of baking powder in your fridge or sprinkle some in the bottom of your rubbish bin.

***Coffee and tea stains*** – make up a solution of 1 cup baking soda with 1 litre of warm water and leave in you coffee maker pot and coffee cups to soak.

***Dishwashing liquid*** – I get my washing liquid from Mountain Wholefoods in Griffith so I haven't tried this yet but I sourced the recipe from the Towards Sustainability website. Mix 3 tablespoons of liquid castile soap, 2 cups of warm water, 2 teaspoons of vegetable glycerine, 2 tablespoons of vinegar or lemon juice and 10 drops of lemon essential oil.

If buying one make sure it's free from sodium lauryl (or laureth) sulphate, phosphates or artificial colours or fragrances.

***Dishwasher powder*** – mix 50% borax with 50% washing soda and use it the same as you would a regular dishwashing powder.

***Dishwasher rinse aid*** – use 100% vinegar. You can also use a little vinegar in your rinse water when you wash up by hand.

**Dishwasher cleaner** – to clean the dishwasher, occasionally fill the soap container with Epsom salts and run a cycle with nothing in the dishwasher.

**Drain cleaner** – tip half a cup of baking soda down the drain chased with a cup of vinegar. When the fizzing stops pour a kettle full of boiling water down the drain.

**Heavy duty cleanser** – for cleaning grease spots sprinkle the area with baking soda and then spray with vinegar and leave to fizz for a few minutes. Alternatively for sprinkle some baking soda on your cleansing cloth and then spray it with vinegar for isolated spots.

You can also sprinkle baking soda and spray vinegar on greasy pots and pans to help lift the grease before scrubbing.

**Microwave cleaner** – Put some lemon juice or vinegar in a cup of water and boil it in the microwave. Let the boiling water sit for a couple of minutes to avoid scalding yourself then take it out and wipe the interior with a cloth with a little dishwashing liquid on it. Rinse with a damp cloth.

**Oven cleaner** – Use the heavy duty cleanser listed above or mix equal parts lemon juice and coarse salt and apply liberally to the inside of your oven. Leave for a few minutes then clean off with clean, damp, warm cloth. Do not use this method on self-cleaning ovens.

**Stone bench top cleaner** – 250ml water, 250ml vodka and 10 drops of essential oil (eucalyptus and tea tree oil make good disinfectants but you could mix with other pure essential oils depending on preference)

## **Bathroom**

If you can, use castile soap which is soap made from vegetable oil. Vegetable based soaps (bar or liquid) don't produce soap scum like the commonly used soaps made from animal fat. This means the amount of cleaning you'll need to do will be greatly reduced.

Another great time saver is to keep a squeegee handy and have the last person to use the shower wipe the water off the glass before they get out.

**Disinfectant** – The stone bench top cleaner from the kitchen section is a good disinfectant that's also perfect for using on bathroom vanities, taps, toilet seats and door handles.

**Glass and mirror cleaner** – You can use 100% vinegar for cleaning glass and mirrors. Or you can mix 2 tablespoons vinegar with 2.5 cups of water and a quarter of a cup of vodka. Both of these options can be put in a spray bottle and used as you would any glass cleaner. However if you have been using commercial glass cleaners you may have a build up of wax on the surface so first you will need to remove this. Using vinegar will only smear the wax on the surface of the glass. After you have cleaned off the wax you will not have to do it again so just plain vinegar will do the job fine.

To remove the wax, mix 2 cups of water with half a cup of vinegar and half a teaspoon of dish liquid. Put the solution in a spray bottle and spray it on the glass and leave it for 30 seconds the polish the glass with a clean cloth.

**Heavy duty glass cleaner (in showers)** - make up a paste of two parts salt to one part vinegar.

**Mineral deposits on taps** – soak a rag in vinegar, tie it around the tap and leave it for a couple of hours. Remove the rag and rub the deposits off with a clean wet cloth and then dry.

**Mould remover** – If the vinegar alone doesn't work, scrub mouldy tiles with a paste made of baking soda and water.

**Shower cleaner** – use the heavy duty cleaner listed in the kitchen section or just vinegar alone may do the trick.

**Sinks and Bathtubs** – spray with vinegar and sprinkle with baking soda.

**Soap scum cleaning** – to remove soap scum from porcelain, enamel and fibreglass just wet the surface, sprinkle a little borax on a scrubbing brush and scrub. For bathtubs and showers you can also use some hot vinegar you've heated in the microwave. Just apply it with a sponge or rag and scrub with a scrubbing brush.

**Toilet cleaner** – If you have a deodoriser or "automatic toilet cleaner" attached to the inside of the toilet bowl it is important to remove it and flush the toilet before you use vinegar as the mixture can produce chlorine gas. These products are full of toxins so if you can live without them so much the better. Spray bowl and seat with 100% vinegar then sprinkle inside the bowl with baking soda. Leave for 20 minutes then scrub as normal.

## **Laundry**

**Bleaching agent** – Instead of bleach use hydrogen peroxide for light coloured clothing.

**Dry cleaning** – If you have any clothes dry cleaned hang them outside for a few hours before bringing them inside.

**Fabric softener** – add one cup of vinegar to your rinse cycle. If you like you can mix a couple of drops of essential oil (tea tree, eucalyptus and lavender oils are antibacterial) in to the vinegar before you add it to the machine.

**Ironing aid** – Mix one part vodka to 4 parts water in a spray bottle. Add a few drops of essential oil if you like and use as you would a normal ironing aid.

**Stain remover** – squeeze some lemon juice on the stain and leave for a while then wash as normal. To remove sweat stains from the neck and underarms of shirts, rub area with a paste made of 1 tablespoon of vinegar and 1 teaspoon of baking soda and leave overnight before washing as normal.

**Washing powder** – Mix 4 cups of soap flakes with 2 cups of borax and 2 cups of washing soda. If you have a grey water system swap the borax for baking soda or you will kill your plants and worms.

If you like some fragrance in your washing powder, mix 10 drops of your favourite essential oil into a cup of the borax (or baking soda). Mix really well to ensure the oil is evenly distributed then mix in with the rest of the ingredients.

**Washing liquid** – Bring 1 litre water to the boil, turn heat down to low and add 2 cups of soap flakes and stir until melted. Pour mixture into a large bucket and add 2 cups of

borax and 2 cups of washing soda. Stir until dissolved. Add 7 litres of water. When the mixture has cooled add 10-15 drops of essential oil if desired. Use a quarter of a cup for a load of washing. The mixture will gel overnight so a narrow neck bottle doesn't work as it doesn't pour easily. A nappy bucket with a lid is perfect for this as the mixture needs to stay covered.

## **General Household**

**Air freshener** – fill a small spray bottle with vinegar or water and add 10-15 drops of essential oil. Peppermint is perfect if you have flies as it repels them.

**Bin deodoriser** – sprinkling half a cup of borax in the bottom of bins and nappy buckets will inhibit mould and bacteria growth that can cause odours.

**Carpet deodoriser** – mix 2 cups of baking soda with a couple of handfuls of aromatic flowers and leaves (roses, rosemary, lavender etc.) and add a drop or two of essential oil. Mix well and store in a glass bottle with holes pierced in the lid for easy sprinkling. Shake it all over your carpet and leave it for an hour or overnight then vacuum up.

If you have a bug or flea problem make the deodoriser up with a half cup of borax and 1.5 cups of baking soda.

**Carpet stain remover** – mix one cup of baking soda and four cups of water. If it doesn't fully dissolve store the bottle on its side as the undissolved baking soda can clog the bottom of the spray tube.

**Floor Cleaner** – Add one cup of vinegar to your hot water to mop the floor. You can also add a couple of drops of essential oil if you like.

**Furniture polish** – mix a half a cup of vegetable oil and a half cup of vinegar and put in a spray bottle.

**Glass and mirror cleaner** – see bathroom section.

**Silver cleaning solution** – Place a sheet of aluminium foil in the bottom of a pan, add 5 cm of water, 1 teaspoon baking

soda, 1 teaspoon salt, and bring to a boil. Add silver pieces, boil for 2-3 minutes, making sure the water covers the silver pieces. Remove silver, rinse, dry, and buff with a soft cloth.

**Silver cleaning paste** - Apply a paste of baking soda and water. Rub, rinse, and polish dry with a soft cloth. Alternatively sprinkle baking soda on a damp cloth and rub it on the silverware until tarnish is gone. Rinse and dry well. Please note if your silver pieces include gems, professional cleaning is advised because this method may loosen the stones.

**Sticky label remover** – Use tea tree oil or eucalyptus oil to rub off the adhesive residue from stickers and labels.

## **Pest Control**

**Ant repellent** – add a pinch of borax to your bucket when you're mopping the floor. Alternatively drizzle peppermint oil or sprinkle paprika across the ant line to force them to retreat (hopefully). You can also dust borax into cracks between benches and tiles.

*Note: make sure any essential oils and borax are kept out of reach children. Applied to the floor in a weak solution is fine but getting their hands on the concentrated ingredient can be very dangerous.*

**Ant bait** – Mix 1 and a half teaspoons of borax with a third of a cup of sugar and 1 cup of water. Soak some cotton balls in the solution and put them in a jar or disposable plastic container. Put holes in the lid or sides of the container to allow the ants access.

**Fly spray** – fill a small spray bottle with vinegar or water and add 5-10 drops each of geranium, sandalwood, lavender, rosemary and lemon essential oils.

**Moth repellent** – mix together 2 tablespoons each of dried rosemary, dried mint, 1 tablespoon each of dried thyme and dried ginseng, 4 whole cloves and a few drops of sandalwood essential oil. Place the mix in the centre of a small square of cotton cloth and tie up with ribbon or string. Attach it to the hanging rod in the wardrobe or place it in your clothes drawer or linen cupboard.

**Rodent repellent** – wipe pantry doors and cupboards with a towel dampened with tea tree oil.

## **Personal Care**

**Toothpaste** – mix 3 tablespoons of baking soda, half a teaspoon of salt, 4 teaspoons of stevia, approximately 1 tablespoon of water and 20-30 drops of peppermint essential oil. Store in an airtight container.

**Head lice tincture** – Mix 250 ml vodka with 750ml water and 250g of any mix of fresh tea tree, peppermint, lavender leaves and flowers and lemongrass. Pour the mix into an airtight jar and place in a cool place for two weeks, shaking every couple of days. Sieve through muslin or a fine strainer squeezing as much liquid as possible from the herb mass. Spray this on your child's hair before the go to school each day. This tincture will last for two years in a cool, dark place.

## **SOURCING INGREDIENTS**

**Baking Soda** – you can get 5kg bags from some supermarkets but it can be hard to find. I haven't seen it for a while at the supermarket in larger than 500g or 1kg boxes in the baking aisle. ANU food coop sell it in bulk (take your own container), but they don't always have stock.

**Borax** – I have only found it at the hardware store with the laundry cleaning products.

**Castile\* Soap** – ANU Food Co-op and Mountain Wholefoods stock both liquid and solid castile soap. You can also often find solid castile soap at many weekend markets. As long as it is made from only vegetable oil (rather than animal fat) it is castile soap.

**Epsom Salts** – I found these at Mountain Wholefoods in Griffith (I don't use it that much) but you could probably find them in the cleaning aisle at supermarkets.

**Hydrogen Peroxide** – you can get this at chemists.

**Soap Flakes** – You can buy Lux soap flakes in a box but it's cheaper to buy Sunlight soap bars and grate them in a food processor. You can find both of these items in the laundry aisle at the supermarket.

**Stevia** – This is a natural calorie free sweetener made from the naturally sweet stevia plant. You can find it in the supermarket with the artificial sweeteners.

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\* Originally, castile soap was solid soap made from olive oil in the Castile region in Spain but now it commonly refers to soap that is made from any type of vegetable oil.

**Vinegar** – Get white vinegar rather than any other variation. I haven't found it in bulk anywhere but buying 2 litre generic brand at the supermarket is cheap.

**Vegetable Glycerine** – you should be able to find this in the baking section of the supermarket or at cake decorating supply stores.

**Washing Soda** – you can get this in crystals and powder form. Avoid the crystals as they don't dissolve as easily. I have found the powder at Supabarn and the crystals at Coles.

## EQUIPMENT

Based on the information in this guide the following is a list of the equipment you will need:

- Spray bottles
- Glass jars (I used spaghetti sauce bottles and jam jars) with holes pierced in the lid
- Rags, cloths
- Scrubbing brush
- Mop

## **PRECAUTIONS**

### ***Borax***

While borax is a natural substance it is mildly toxic so when using it you should wear gloves when handling and avoid inhalation. Don't use it on food surfaces and keep it out of reach of children.

### ***Essential Oils***

During pregnancy avoid the following essential oils:

- Clary Sage
- Rosemary
- Juniper
- Melissa
- Chamomile
- Lavender

If you have applied any of the following essential oils to your skin avoid sunlight for 12 hours as they can make your skin very sensitive to sunlight.

- Bergamot
- Lemon
- Lime
- Mandarin
- Sweet Orange

Keep all essential oils out of reach of children.

### ***General***

All cleaning products should be kept out of reach of children.

## ***Medical Conditions***

Safety warnings – if you suffer from any of these medical conditions please take note of the warnings.

*Allergies:* Test your sensitivity to oils before you use them.

*Epilepsy:* Avoid fennel, hyssop and sage.

*High blood pressure:* Avoid hyssop, rosemary, sage and thyme.

*Alcoholics or anyone who is drinking alcohol:* do not use Clary Sage.

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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