

Sustainable Product Guide

Homemade Cleaning Products:

Below is a list of money-saving, safe, and simple solutions to cleaning our homes! Choose plastic free options for ingredients as often as you can to help reduce your waste as well. Once you've made a cleaner, put it in a glass bottle or other container.

All- Purpose (i.e. countertops, floors, other hard services)

- Combine 2 Cups white distilled vinegar, 2 cups water, and 20-30 drops essential oils (optional, see page 8)
- Tip: Warm in glass bowl in microwave for dirtier jobs

Carpet Freshener

- Combine 10-20 drop of an essential oil with 1 cup of baking soda and sprinkle of carpet. Let sit for a couple of hours before vacuuming.

Carpet Stain Remover

- Combine equal parts white distilled vinegar and water in a spray bottle. Spray on the carpet stain and let sit for 5 - 10 minutes. Then, clean with a brush or sponge and warm, soapy water.
- For fresh Grease spots, sprinkle cornstarch onto spot and wait 15 - 30 minutes before vacuuming.

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Drain Cleaner

- **Caution: Wait for multiple uses of the drain before trying these methods after using a store-bought drain cleaner.**
- First, remove as much hair/gunk as you can with tweezers. Next, pour a ½ cup baking soda down the drain. Then, pour ½ cup white distilled vinegar down the drain. After 15 minutes, run hot water down the drain to clear the residue.

Fabric Softener

- Purchase reusable wool dryer balls. These are biodegradable, reusable, safe, and effective. Dryer sheets and fabric softener often include toxic chemicals

Floor Cleaner

It is wise to test this on a small portion of your floor before using it broadly

- **Brick and Stone Tiles:** Use a mixture of 1 cup white vinegar in 1 gallon of water. Rinse with water.
- **Linoleum/Vinyl:** Use a mixture of 1 cup vinegar, 1-gallon warm water, and a few drops of olive oil.
- **Painted Wood:** Use a mixture of 1 teaspoon washing soda and 1 gallon of warm water.
- **Wood:** Use a mixture of ¼ cup vinegar and ½ cup warm water to clean. Apply a thin coat of 1:1 mixture of vegetable oil: vinegar to polish

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Glass/Mirrors

- Clean with a mixture of 2 teaspoons white vinegar and 1 quart warm water. Use a cotton cloth or black and white newspapers to clean and avoid streaks. Alternatively, dampen one microfiber cloth with water, clean the surface, and then dry the surface with a dry microfiber cloth.

Shower/Tub/Tile

- Rub in baking soda with a damp sponge and rinse with warm water. For really tough jobs, spray surface with a 1:1 mixture of vinegar: water first, then rub in baking soda with a damp sponge and rinse with water.

Toilet Bowl

- Sprinkle with baking soda, and then drizzle with vinegar. Let the mixture soak for 30 minutes before scrubbing with a reusable toilet brush

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Homemade Clothing Stain Removers

All- Purpose Clothing Stain Remover

- Add 1 ¾ Cup water to a spray bottle, Swirl in ¼ cup Dr. Bronner's Sal Suds. Spray on clothing stains before laundering normally.

Coffee/ Tea Stains

- Immediately pour boiling water over stain until it goes away. If stain is set, scrub with a paste of borax and water and wash immediately.

Dingy Whites/ Underarm Stains

- Soak the stain in a 1:1 hydrogen peroxide (3%):water mixture for 30 minutes. Then, add 1 cup hydrogen peroxide to the wash mixture and let sit for another 10 minutes. Finish by washing as normal. For tough stains, make a hydrogen peroxide and baking soda paste to scrub the stain with. Leave paste on stain for 5 minutes before rinsing off and washing as normal.

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Grass Stains

- Scrub with liquid dish soap or treat with a 1:1 hydrogen peroxide (3%): water mixture.

Grease and Oil Stains

- Sprinkle the stain with baking soda to soak up excess grease/oil and then brush off. Next, soak in white vinegar for 15 minutes, rinse, and scrub with liquid dish soap. Finally, wash as normal.

Mud Stains

- Let the mud dry, and brush off loose dirt. Then, scrub with a paste of borax and water and wash immediately.

Protein Based Stains

(e.g. blood, egg, gelatin, glue, poop, urine, vomit)

- Soak in cool water and then wash with a mixture of ½ cup hydrogen peroxide and ½ cup baking soda in the washing machine
- Tip: Do not use warm water, as this will set in the smell.

Tomato- Based Stains

- Spray with white vinegar directly on the stain and wash immediately.

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Store Bought Cleaners

When buying store-bought cleaners, be aware of these terms and ingredients. Avoid harmful ingredients as often as you can, store products away from children and pets, and use the appropriate protective wear when using cleaning products. Do your own research about ingredients as you come across them and always use with caution as research findings continue and sometimes change!

Active Ingredients

Why: Often contain pesticides that harm aquatic life and cause allergic reactions.

Antibacterial

Why: Often contain pesticides that harm aquatic life and can lead to bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics.

Biodegradable

Why: The use of the term is unregulated so we cannot know that the product is safer than others without the label. Some products that biodegrade still remain in the environment as a harmful substance.

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Chlorine-free/Bleach Alternative

Why: Oxygen bleach is usually used in these products and is still harmful to our lungs and skin and the environment. When bleach is desired, these products are better than chlorine bleach but should still be used with caution and as sparingly as possible.

Corrosive/Caustic

Why: Can cause serious burns to eyes, lungs, and skin. Bleach, oven cleaners, and drain cleaners are often labeled in this way.

Enzymes

Why: Harmful to workers who manufacture products with enzymes. Enzymes have not been shown to harm users of the products, but they should be used with caution because of the harm seen at the manufacturing level. Additionally, boric acid is often used to stabilize enzymes in products, and boric acid is harmful to reproductive systems.

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Essential Oils

Why: Can be harmful to humans and pets at varying concentrations. Never apply pure essential oils to human or animal skin; dilute essential oils appropriately. Do your research about essential oils benefits and harms for humans and pets before diffusing or using in cleaning products.

Tip: Some essential oils that are gentler for pets include lavender, rosemary, chamomile, and cedarwood.

Fragrance/Dye

Why: Often is a mixture of multiple substances that have not undergone extensive safety testing.

Inert

Why: Can contribute to skin and lung irritation. Though inert substances do not contain pesticides, they are often still petroleum-based and/or contain preservatives and fragrances.

Natural/Plant-based

Why: Can be misleading only because the use of the words is not regulated. Additionally, though it probably indicates that less petroleum-based substances were used, it is often unclear how much of the product is natural/plant-based.

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Non-toxic

Why: Does not mean non-harmful to people or the environment. The term is not standardized, so it isn't overly helpful when choosing products.

Optical Brightener

Why: Can cause skin irritation and harm aquatic life. This is sometimes included in laundry detergents and works by coating clothes even after washing.

Organic

Why: Can be misleading because the use of the word is not regulated. If a product is marked "Certified Organic," then it is legally obligated to be made with products that were not raised with pesticides. Some marketers use the word "organic" to mean made of carbon, which would include petroleum-based substances.

Pesticide

Why: Can be harmful to people, pets, and aquatic life. Pesticides are usually added to kill bacterium, viruses, and fungi, but if a product without pesticides can disinfect, consider choosing it instead.

Phosphate-free

Why: Phosphates have been banned in 25 states (including Michigan) because of toxic algae blooms in bodies of water, so the term is unneeded in some regards but still helpful to know.

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Sensitizing

Why: Can cause allergic reactions and asthma attacks after repeated exposure.

Solvent

Why: Can cause respiratory impairment, neurological impairment, reproductive and developmental harm, and cancer. Solvents are particularly harmful to the environment too, so be sure to dispose of them at Household Recycling Collections.

Surfactant

Why: Can be toxic to aquatic life and breakdown slowly. Some are safe to use and are necessary for breaking down grease and loosening dirt. Be sure to research these to find safer surfactants.

Toxic

Why: Harmful to the environment or to people if inhaled, swallowed, or absorbed through the skin. If a product is labeled as toxic, be sure that it discloses which ingredients are toxic so you can learn the harms associated before purchasing.

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's)

Why: Contaminate the air and contribute to smog and are related to severe health effects.