

By Susan M. Botich

The cold, bleak days of winter are finally over. Sunshine spills through the windows to warm every room, giving your home new cheerfulness and filling your mind with plans for the spring season. It also brings to mind something else – spring cleaning.

But before you reach below the sink for an armful of heavy-duty chemical cleansers, think earth. Think friendly. And consider this: you can whip up your own cleansers from earth- and health-friendly ingredients. Save the earth, and save money, too.

Easy formulas for household cleaning

All-purpose cleanser. Mix one teaspoon of liquid soap or borax with one gallon of hot water. Lemon juice or white vinegar added to the mix will cut grease and leave a fresh scent. Use to mop tile or linoleum floors.

Spray cleanser. Mix one cup white vinegar, 2 teaspoons borax, 32 ounces hot water, 20 drops of essential oil (optional), one-quarter cup liquid dish soap (add last) in a spray bottle. Use on kitchen and bathroom countertops, appliances, and wherever you need a sanitizing degreaser.

Rust Remover. Sprinkle a little salt over the rusted area, squeeze lime juice over the salt until it is soaked. Leave mixture for two to three hours. Use the lime rind as a handy scrubber. Good-bye rust.

Carpet deodorizer. Sprinkle generous amounts of baking soda over carpet and let sit for a few minutes. Vacuum. Pet and smoke odors disappear.

Oven cleaner. Sprinkle or spray the inside of your oven with warm water. Sprinkle with baking soda. Let sit overnight. Wipe down with a plastic scrub pad. Rinse with warm water and white vinegar solution.

Upholstery cleaner. Clean silk and leather upholstery by spraying full-strength white vinegar onto fabric and wiping clean with a soft cotton cloth. (Test a small, discreet sample area first.)

Indoor plants. Plants are a great way to help counter-act air toxins that can be harmful to humans and pets. The ten most effective plants: Areca Palm (Butterfly Palm), Reed Palm, Dwarf Date Palm, Boston Fern, Janet Craig Dracaena, English Ivy, Australian Sword Fern, Peace Lily, Rubber Plant, and Weeping Fig. *

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Earth-friendly supply list

Baking soda
White vinegar
Salt
Vegetable oil
Lemon juice
Lime juice
Liquid dish soap
(Seventh Generation, Palmolive, Ivory,
or other earth-friendly brands)
Cornstarch
Borax
Bon Ami cleanser

Seven new uses for vinegar

Vinegar and water is a well-known wonder-cleanser for sparkling windows, but it has many more housekeeping uses as well.

The top seven:

1 Furniture polish

Combine equal parts vinegar and vegetable oil. Wipe on. Buff with soft cloth

2 Brassware

Mix one part vinegar with 10 parts water. Soak or gently rub with soft cloth. All green and black tarnish comes off in no time.

3 Carpet stains

Soak a clean, white cloth with full-strength vinegar and gently scrub spot. Dissolves most substances except for wax stains.

4 Grout

Pour vinegar full-strength over grout area. Gently scrub with a toothbrush.

5 Dishes and dishwasher

Pour vinegar into the rinse dispenser of your dishwasher. Your dishes will be spot-free and your dishwasher won't get soap buildup.

6 Shower, tub, tile and fixtures

Spray your shower, tub and fixtures with full-strength vinegar. Wipe with sponge and rinse. Good-bye soap scum! Also works great to prevent mildew on plastic shower curtains. Spray curtain after every shower.

7 Floors

Add one-half cup vinegar to a gallon of water to keep your no-wax floors clean and shining.