

# Spring Cleaning with Homemade Products



*Try these DIY cleaning products to get your home sparkling clean this spring.*

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As spring approaches, our thoughts are turned to...spring cleaning! We've been cooped up in our houses all winter and

we're ready to see the shine of clean walls, windows, and floors! But with the plethora of products available, it is difficult to decide on which ones to choose and which ones we can afford! So the answer is...homemade cleaning solutions. Now is a great time to revive an article written by Carolyn Washburn, a USU professor from Washington County. Thanks to her list of homemade cleaning products, we can have products that are less expensive, less toxic, and are safe and effective.

Some of the basic supplies needed include baking soda, vinegar, lemon juice, borax, cornstarch and salt. Here are a few of her recipes:

### **Four recipes for general cleaning:**

- 1 tablespoon ammonia, 1 tablespoon liquid detergent, 2 cups water.
- 1 cup vinegar, 1 gallon water.
- 2 tablespoons vinegar, 1 teaspoon borax, hot water.
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup ammonia,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup vinegar,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup baking soda, 1 gallon water

### **Five recipes for cleaning windows:**

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup vinegar and 1 gallon water (2 tablespoons to 1 quart).
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup ammonia and 1 gallon water.
- 1 tablespoon ammonia, 1 tablespoon vinegar, 1 quart water.
- 3 tablespoons denatured alcohol, 1 quart water.
- 3 tablespoons dish detergent and 1 tablespoon "Jet Dry" in  $\frac{1}{2}$  pail of water for outdoor windows.

Other cleaning solutions she suggests include:

## **Baking Soda**

Baking soda neutralizes acid-based odors in water and absorbs odors from the air. Sprinkled on a damp sponge or cloth, baking soda can be used as a gentle, non-abrasive cleanser for kitchen countertops, sinks, bathtubs, ovens and fiberglass. For laundry, add up to a cup per load to eliminate perspiration odors and neutralize the smell of chemicals. It is also a useful air freshener and carpet deodorizer.

## **Vinegar and Lemon Juice**

White vinegar and lemon juice are acidic and neutralize alkaline substances such as scale from hard water. They are natural cleaning products as well as disinfectants and deodorizers. Acids dissolve gummy buildup, eat away tarnish and remove dirt from wood surfaces. Vinegar can be used as a softener in laundry cleaning. Lemon juice can be mixed with vinegar and baking soda to make a cleaning paste.

## **Borax**

Borax is a natural cleaner and bleach. It can boost other cleaning products, but be cautious when using it since it can cause skin, eye and respiratory irritation. Don't use borax around food, keep it out of the reach of children and pets and be sure to rinse it out of clothes and off surfaces.

## **Cornstarch**

Cornstarch can be used to clean windows, polish furniture and clean carpets. As a window cleaner, use it with water, vinegar and ammonia. To use on stains and to polish, use a mixture of water and cornstarch. Sprinkle on carpets to remove stains and odors.

# Salt

Salt as a cleaner is one way to be a little “greener” at home. It is inexpensive, does not harm the environment and is readily available. Salt mixtures can remove yellowing, clean tarnish, remove lipstick, get rid of mold and can work as a drain cleaner.

## Soap vs. Detergent

Liquid dish soaps and detergents are necessary for cutting grease, but they are not the same thing. Soap is made from fats and lye. Detergents are synthetic materials. Unlike soap, detergents are designed specifically so they don't react with hard water minerals and cause soap scum. If you have hard water, buy a biodegradable detergent without perfumes. If you have soft water, you can use liquid soap.

## Ammonia and Denatured Alcohol

Additional cleaning products are ammonia and denatured alcohol. Be careful not to mix ammonia with a bleach product, as it can produce a harmful gas. These toxic products need to be stored carefully and used in well-ventilated areas. Be sure to keep all homemade formulas labeled and out of the reach of children.

Happy Cleaning!

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*This article was written by Gaelynn Peterson. Gaelynn is a long-time resident of Wayne County where she serves the residents as Utah State University faculty with an emphasis in FCS and 4-H. She has an M.S. in Psychology and has worked with at-risk students before joining the USU family. As a mother of seven and grandmother of 28, she has had a lot of experience working with youth, and she loves it! She enjoys traveling, camping, Lake Powell, and any beach.*

*Learn more about homemade cleaning products:  
<https://extension.usu.edu/admin/files/uploads/mpp-2009-04-01-s-004.pdf>*