



WAGES' ECO-FRIENDLY CLEANING TIPS

We love the fact that you can use edible, non-toxic and inexpensive products like baking soda and vinegar for many everyday household chores. Baking soda can scrub shiny surfaces without scratching, deodorize refrigerators and drains, and can be used as a clothes-softener and stain remover. Vinegar can dissolve mineral deposits and grease, remove traces of soap, and deodorize. All of the following tips and recipes incorporate natural ingredients, such as these, as their main cleaning components.

Freshening air can be as simple as opening your windows and doors circulate and air out unpleasant smells and pollutants—most indoor air is actually more toxic than outdoor air. You can also distribute partially filled dishes of vinegar around the kitchen to combat unpleasant cooking odors, and sprinkle ½ cup of baking soda in the bottom of garbage pails or diaper pails to help neutralize odors.

Gentle multi-purpose cleaner can be made from a few drops of soap in water. Our favorite recipe uses 7 drops of 7th Generation Free & Clear dishwashing liquid with 14oz. water in a 16 oz. spray bottle. Shake well to mix thoroughly. Spray this solution directly onto most surfaces or onto a cotton rag, when cleaning a surface that might be damaged by excess water.

Floor cleaner can be as simple as a bucket of water. We like to first use water to clean wood floors, or add a few drops of vinegar in a bucket of water to remove soap traces and help floors shine. We recommend Murphy's Oil Soap as another least-toxic solution. To polish wood, apply a thin coat of 1:1 mineral oil and vinegar and rub in well. For vinyl or linoleum, add a capful of mineral oil to water to preserve and polish.

Oven cleaner. Sprinkle baking soda on tough spots and spray area with water until very moist. Let sit at least 20 minutes or as long as overnight. Grease and stains should come away easily, or you can also use a steel wool to scrub. Another less-toxic solution is Arm & Hammer Oven Cleaner, declared nontoxic by Consumers Union.

Scouring powder can be made from baking soda or dry table salt, or try Bon-Ami Cleaning Powder or Bon-Ami Polishing Cleaner as a long-standing brand that contains no bleach.

Toilet bowl cleaner can be made from baking soda and vinegar, or borax and lemon juice.

Tub and tile cleaner can be as easy as rubbing in baking soda with a damp sponge and rinsing, or wiping with vinegar first and following with baking soda as a scouring powder. We've also found Ecover Cream Scrub to be very effective as another less-toxic cleaning agent for the bathroom.

Window and glass cleaner can be made by mixing 3 teaspoons white vinegar with 14 oz. water in a 16 oz. spray bottle. Shake well to mix thoroughly. Preferably you should spray this solution on a cotton rag, when cleaning a surface that might be damaged by excess water. If you spray solution directly on surface, use extra care to avoid wood trim or other unprotected surfaces.

Vacuum with a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filter. HEPA filters were designed to capture particles down to 0.3 microns in size, like pollen and dust mite feces, which may help reduce allergies and improve indoor air quality.

Mold or mildew can be removed from your bathroom or windows by mixing 2 teaspoons of tea tree oil with 2 cups of water in a spray bottle and shake up before spraying the problem areas. For an odorless solution, try using 20 drops of grapefruit seed extract with 2 cups of water. You can also use a spray solution of borax and water—borax is also known to inhibit the growth of mold.

References:

"Fact Sheet: Safe Substitutes at Home: Non-toxic Household Products," *EnviroSense*. 1995. Environmental Protection Agency <<http://es.epa.gov/techinfo/facts/safe-fs.html>>. Dadd, Debra Lynn, *Home Safe Home*. Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin: New York, 2004.



Natural Cleaning Products

We use a combination of natural and eco-friendly cleaning products in our worker-owned cooperatives. Below is a partial shopping list of non-toxic and least-toxic cleaning products we recommend for your home. You can now find many of these products in your local supermarkets, or you should ask your grocer to carry products, such as these, that reduce the amount of toxins released into the environment.

PRODUCTS WE USE MOST:

7th Generation Dishwashing Liquid
Baking Soda
Washing Soda
White Vinegar
Bon Ami

PRODUCTS WE USE OCCASIONALLY:

Dr. Bronner's Castile Soap Concentrate
Ecover Cream Scrub

PRODUCTS WE USE ONLY FOR THE TOUGHEST JOBS:

Borax
Ecover Floor Soap
Sal Suds
Murphy's Oil Soap
Mineral Oil

More Information and Resources

Web Resources

Check out these websites on eco-friendly cleaning and ways to avoid toxic products to protect your home and the environment.

WAGES Product Screen	http://www.wagescooperatives.org/prod_screen_eng.pdf
Seventh Generation	http://www.seventhgeneration.com/
Green Cleaning advocate Debra Lynn Dadd	http://www.dld123.com/
Waste Reduction	http://www.ecocycle.org/
Safe Substitutes at Home	http://es.epa.gov/techinfo/facts/safe-fs.html

Books

For a "one-stop shop" on non-toxic ways to clean your home, here's a great guide to keep around the house:

Green Clean: The Environmentally Sound Guide to Cleaning Your Home by Linda Mason and Mikki Halpin (Melcher Media, Inc., 2005).

For a more in-depth look at the effects of toxic products on your body and the environment, and background and information on Seventh Generation products:

Naturally Clean: The Seventh Generation Guide to Safe & Healthy Non-Toxic Cleaning by Jeffrey Hollender and Geoff Davis, with Meida Hollender and Reed Doyle (New Society Press, 2005).

For those with a bit more time and a desire to get very familiar with organic substitutes for household maintenance:

Organic Housekeeping by Ellen Sandbeck (Scribner, 2006).

WAGES (Women's Action to Gain Economic Security) is dedicated to promoting the economic and social well-being of low-income women through cooperative business ownership. Since 1998, our focus has been on starting and expanding environmentally responsible cleaning cooperatives in the San Francisco Bay Area. Through these businesses, WAGES is pioneering a viable alternative to the low-paid, unsafe working opportunities available to immigrant Latinas.

Contact Information:

Women's Action to Gain Economic Security
1904 Franklin St. Suite 801
Oakland, CA 94612
Tel (510) 451-3100
Fax (510) 451-3111
<http://www.wagescooperatives.org>