

all you
 SPRING-CLEANING
special

Whip up your own cleaning products

Save money and go green at home with super-simple recipes

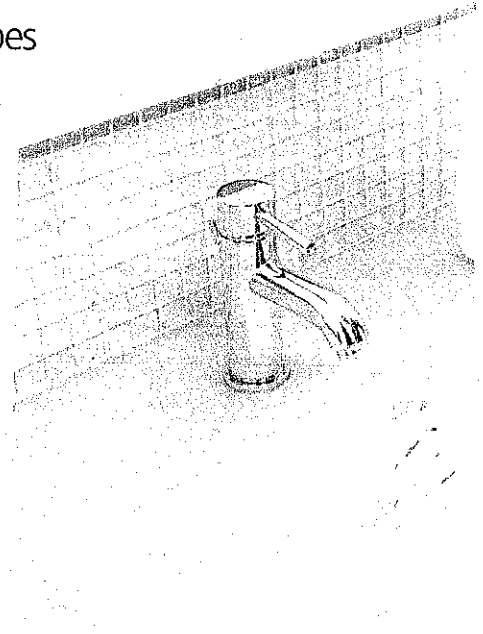
You want a sparkling home, but is it possible to clean your house without using harsh chemicals or spending a lot on products? Yes, especially if you use the most old-fashioned approach imaginable: Concoct your own cleaning formulas. The ALL YOU-tested recipes that follow are not only affordable compared with store-bought cleaners but also safe and effective. Although you might need a little more elbow grease here or an extra minute's wait there, the results are sure to impress you.

By Allegra Muzzillo

Words to the wise

You won't be working with toxic chemicals, but follow these pointers nonetheless:

- ✓ Don't use recycled food containers to store homemade cleaners; a family member could mistake them for something to eat or drink.
- ✓ Prepare only what you'll use for six months—some formulas can start to lose efficacy past that point. Note: Cleaning solutions made with fresh lemon juice should be used or tossed within a day.
- ✓ The Environmental Protection Agency sometimes suggests bleach for mold removal, but mixing bleach with acids, ammonia or anything containing them creates a toxic gas. That's why you won't see bleach (or ammonia) in any of the following recipes.



In the kitchen Use DIY cleaners to power through the dishes.

❁ Liquid dishwashing soap

This formula doesn't suds up much, but it's effective and gentle on your hands.

Prep: 2 min. Cost: \$2.48
 Yield: 16.5 oz.

YOU'LL NEED ❁ Funnel

- ❁ Measuring cup and spoon
- ❁ 24-oz. squirt bottle (or empty dishwashing-liquid bottle)

INGREDIENTS

- ❁ ½ cup liquid castile soap
- ❁ 3 tsp. vegetable glycerin
- ❁ 5 drops tea-tree essential oil
- ❁ 20 drops lemon essential oil
- ❁ 1½ cups water

INSTRUCTIONS

Using funnel, pour soap, glycerin, tea-tree oil, lemon oil and water into bottle. Shake well to emulsify. Place soap beside sink and use on dishes and hands. This fragrant formula also will clean your kitchen countertops beautifully.

❁ Automatic dishwasher detergent

Dishes, silverware and glassware come out shiny and clean thanks to this simple three-ingredient powder containing antibacterial grapefruit essential oil.

Prep: 4 min. Cost: \$2.45
 Yield: 32 oz. (enough for 32 loads)

YOU'LL NEED ❁ Rubber gloves

- ❁ Measuring cup ❁ Mixing bowl ❁ 32-oz. lidded plastic container

INGREDIENTS

- ❁ 2 cups washing soda
- ❁ 2 cups borax
- ❁ 25 drops grapefruit essential oil

INSTRUCTIONS

Put on gloves. Add washing soda, borax and oil to bowl, stirring with your hands to mix and eliminate clumps. Transfer powder to plastic container. Use 2 Tbsp. detergent per wash. You also can add 1 tsp. vinegar, if desired, to the rinse cycle to prevent spots on silverware and glasses.



In the bathroom

Fight bacteria and mildew safely and naturally.

☼ Toilet bowl blaster

This recipe harnesses baking soda's gentle abrasiveness, vinegar's acidity and the stain-lifting power of the fizz created by mixing the two, plus tea-tree oil's antibacterial capabilities.

Prep: 2 min.
Cost: 48¢

Yield: 1 cup (enough for 1 use)

- YOU'LL NEED**
- Measuring cup
 - Toilet brush
- INGREDIENTS**
- ½ cup baking soda
 - 10 drops tea-tree essential oil
 - ½ cup distilled white vinegar

INSTRUCTIONS

Pour baking soda directly into the toilet bowl, add oil, then vinegar—in that order. Let water effervesce for several minutes, then scrub bowl with brush. Flush.

☼ Tub and tile scrub

Borax and vinegar remove (and stave off) mold and mildew growth and soap scum.

Prep: 3 min.
Cost: 15¢

Yield: Approximately 28 oz.

- YOU'LL NEED**
- Funnel
 - Measuring cup and spoons
 - 32-oz. spray bottle
 - Rubber gloves
 - Sponge
- INGREDIENTS**
- 2 tsp. borax
 - ½ tsp. liquid castile soap
 - ½ cup distilled white vinegar
 - 3 cups hot water

INSTRUCTIONS

Using funnel, pour borax, soap, vinegar and water into spray bottle. Shake well to mix. Put on rubber gloves and spray surfaces, scrubbing with sponge as you work. Rinse with water.

Prevent mildew.

Allow the air in the bathroom to circulate. Open a window or turn on a fan for at least 30 minutes after showering. Natural light is also helpful, so open the shade as well.



☼ Antibacterial spray

Use this germ killer on sinks, vanities and toilet seats. White thyme oil, although expensive, inhibits bacterial growth.

Prep: 2 min. Cost: \$11.57

Yield: Approximately 18 oz. (a 2- to 3-month supply)

- YOU'LL NEED**
- Funnel
 - Measuring cup and spoon
 - 24-oz. spray bottle
 - Microfiber cloth

- INGREDIENTS**
- 2 cups water
 - 2 Tbsp. liquid castile soap
 - 1 Tbsp. white thyme essential oil (amazon.com)
 - 10 drops lavender essential oil

INSTRUCTIONS

Using funnel, pour water, soap and oil into bottle. Shake. Spray and let sit for 20 minutes. Wipe down surfaces with damp cloth.

Boost your cleaning power

Try out double-duty products that add some extra elbow grease wherever it's needed most.

CLUB SODA

☼ Add club soda to glass-cleaner recipes for extra dirt-lifting action, or dab it on a rag to make metal fixtures sparkle. Alas, it loses its efficacy when flat.

CREAM OF TARTAR

☼ Along with baking soda, this baking staple is a faintly acidic tub-and-tile scourer. Combined with lemon juice, it makes a mildly abrasive grout cleaner.

DENTURE TABLETS

☼ Drop one tablet into the toilet bowl, wait 20 minutes, then flush—no brushing needed. Use two, with a dash of white vinegar, to unclog a drain.

HYDROGEN PEROXIDE

☼ Use it to pinch-hit for bleach on laundry stains. Wipe bathroom surfaces with white vinegar, followed by a 3-to-1 water-peroxide spray.

VODKA

☼ Spritz this alcoholic beverage on ceramic bathroom tiles to remove pesky soap scum that cleansers didn't remove. Wait 10 minutes, then rinse clean.

WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE

☼ Mix this condiment into homemade furniture polish and apply to mask nicks and dents in dark finishes. The results will astonish you!

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Soften fabrics

Vinegar breaks down detergent buildup on clothes without harming them. Add ½ or 1 cup (for small and large loads, respectively) to the rinse cycle to prevent yellowing and static cling.

In the laundry room Wash clothes with no chemical residue.

HE-friendly detergent

High-efficiency washers use less water than their conventional counterparts, so this detergent produces less lather and easily rinses out.

Prep: 15 min. (includes grating soap) Cost: \$4.03
 Yield: 18 oz. (enough for 12 loads)

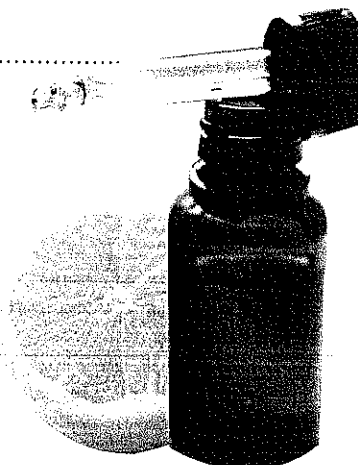
YOU'LL NEED • Rubber gloves • Measuring cup • Lidded 24-oz. plastic container

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup washing soda
- ½ cup borax
- 1 bar lavender castile soap, grated (about 1 cup)
- ¼ cup baking soda
- 15 drops lemon essential oil

INSTRUCTIONS

Put on gloves. Add washing soda, borax, grated soap, baking soda and oil to lidded container. Cover and shake well. Use 3 Tbsp. detergent per load, or slightly more for very soiled clothes.



Stock your pantry with six all-natural staples

Keep these items on hand so you're ready to whip up a cheap cleaner.

1 Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate)
 This mild alkaline compound not only acts as a detergent to neutralize and cut fatty acids in dirt and grease but also effervesces when combined with acids, like vinegar and lemon juice, to lift soil. Plus it has gentle scouring and bleaching abilities.

2 Borax (sodium borate)
 Sold in supermarkets as a laundry booster, this product is a moderately alkaline mineral that, like baking soda, cuts dirt, stops the growth of mold and mildew, softens water and deodorizes (by eliminating odor-causing acids).

3 Castile soap (liquid)
 Because it's made from olive oil, castile soap is purer and milder than detergent-based soaps.

4 Distilled white vinegar (5 percent acetic acid)
 This acid solution is powerful enough to dissolve mineral deposits from glass and acts as an adhesive solvent, a soap scum and stain remover, and a grease cutter. (It even kills mold and mildew!)

5 Lemon juice or rind (citric acid)
 The juice and rind from this fruit are quick, capable deodorizers, degreasers and bleaching agents.

6 Washing soda (sodium carbonate decahydrate)
 This alkaline salt is touted for laundry use because it's an excellent water softener. It's also a powerful scourer. (Because it's caustic, handle with gloves.)

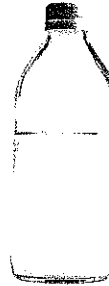


Around the house

Wash, clean and polish, then take a deep breath—these formulas are as fragrant as they are effective.

⊗ Floor wash

Vinegar is a safe, nontoxic antiseptic that you can let dry on nearly any type of flooring including linoleum, vinyl, tile and wood. The castile soap offers just enough detergent to dislodge stubborn dirt.



Prep: 2 min.
Cost: 25¢ Yield: 2 gallons

YOU'LL NEED

- Measuring cup
- 2-gallon bucket
- Mop

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- ½ capful liquid castile soap
- 2 gallons warm water

INSTRUCTIONS

Add vinegar and soap to bucket, then add water (stopping about 7 inches from the top). Swish with mop to mix. Wring out mop and wash floors, but don't get them too wet. Let air-dry—no rinsing necessary.

⊗ Furniture polish

Apply this formula to clean and restore luster to wood furniture. It also may be used to help remove superficial water rings on wood tables.

Prep: 1½ min. Cost: 34¢
Yield: Approximately 2½ oz.

YOU'LL NEED

- Funnel
- Measuring cup and spoons
- Lidded 8-oz. plastic squirt bottle
- Microfiber cloth (or clean, soft rag)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- ¼ cup distilled white vinegar
- ¼ tsp. lemon oil (or fresh lemon juice)

INSTRUCTIONS

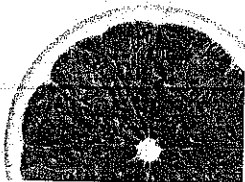
Using funnel, pour olive oil, vinegar and lemon oil into bottle. Shake well to emulsify. Squirt polish onto microfiber cloth and rub onto finished-wood furniture. Always go with the grain and evenly distribute polish. Remove any excess polish with a clean cloth.

Wipe right. Step up your cleaning arsenal by substituting microfiber cloths for plain rags or paper towels. The cloths, which add extra dusting and polishing power every time you wipe, are completely lint-free, so they don't leave behind any pesky residue.

Add a heavenly scent

Sure, they smell great, but essential oils are also packed with natural healing, antifungal and antibacterial properties.

GRAPEFRUIT is an antibacterial disinfectant on its own; when paired with vinegar, it forms a mighty all-purpose spray.



LAVENDER, a well-known insect repellent, has been shown to help treat people's skin conditions such as acne and eczema—which is why it's great for laundry.



LEMON conditions wood, imparts shine, kills bacteria and is a mild astringent. Add a few drops to furniture polish and soap recipes.



TEA TREE, or *Melaleuca alternifolia*, is an extremely powerful fungicide. Mold and mildew don't stand a chance against it.



WHITE THYME has been shown to stave off *E. coli* bacteria and is an all-around antiseptic. Keep a thyme-infused spray handy in the kitchen or bathroom.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: DREAM PICTURES/STOCK/GETTY IMAGES, IAN BATCHELOR/GETTY IMAGES, VISUAL CUISINES/GETTY IMAGES, STEVE GORTON/GETTY IMAGES, ISTOCKPHOTO (3)



✿ Glass cleaner

Use rubbing alcohol and white vinegar to clean windows, mirrors and car windshields.

Prep: 2½ min. Cost: 29¢
Yield: 27 oz.

YOU'LL NEED

- ✿ Funnel
- ✿ Measuring cup and spoons
- ✿ 32-oz. spray bottle
- ✿ Newspaper

INGREDIENTS

- ✿ 3 cups water
- ✿ 2 Tbsp. rubbing alcohol
- ✿ ¼ cup distilled white vinegar
- ✿ 5 drops lavender essential oil (optional, for scent)
- ✿ ½ Tbsp. liquid castile soap

INSTRUCTIONS

In a well-ventilated area, use funnel to pour water, alcohol, vinegar and oil, if desired, into bottle. Shake. Add soap. Shake well. Spray windows; wipe with newspaper.

Eliminate streaks

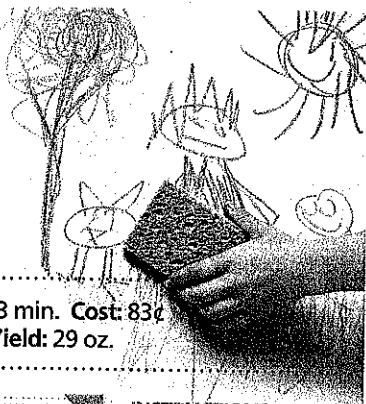
Achieve crystal-clear, streak-free windows by wiping off cleanser with newspaper or paper coffee filters.



✿ Wall spritz

Meant for use on painted walls, this spray has germ-killing capabilities and can remove a variety of marks, including crayon.

Prep: 3 min. Cost: 83¢
Yield: 29 oz.



YOU'LL NEED

- ✿ Funnel
- ✿ Measuring cup and spoons
- ✿ 32-oz. spray bottle
- ✿ Rubber gloves
- ✿ Sponge

INGREDIENTS

- ✿ 2 Tbsp. borax
- ✿ 3 cups warm water
- ✿ ½ cup distilled white vinegar
- ✿ 6 drops grapefruit essential oil
- ✿ 1 tsp. liquid castile soap

INSTRUCTIONS

Using funnel, add borax, water, vinegar and oil to bottle. Shake well to emulsify. Add soap. Shake well. Put on gloves. Lightly spray on walls and wipe with a damp sponge, rinsing sponge as needed. (Work from the bottom up so streaks don't form.)

✿ All-purpose grease cutter

This formula combines the antimicrobial and scouring powers of borax and washing soda—and good old soap and water—and imparts a lovely scent.

Prep: 5 min. Cost: \$1.74
Yield: Approximately 23.5 oz.

- ### YOU'LL NEED
- ✿ Rubber gloves
 - ✿ Funnel
 - ✿ Measuring cup and spoons
 - ✿ 32-oz. spray bottle
 - ✿ Sponge

INGREDIENTS

- ✿ 1 tsp. washing soda
- ✿ 2 tsp. borax
- ✿ 2 Tbsp. distilled white vinegar
- ✿ 2½ cups hot water
- ✿ 5 drops lavender essential oil
- ✿ 7 drops lemon essential oil
- ✿ ¼ cup liquid castile soap



Put on gloves. Using funnel, pour washing soda, borax, vinegar, water and oils into bottle. Shake well, add soap and shake again. Spray on walls, countertops and other surfaces. Wipe with damp sponge.

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