

The Green Team



Get to know these useful ingredients & their properties

- **Vinegar:** This humble liquid serves as the mightiest tool in your green-cleaning pantry. Use it as an effective disinfectant to kill germs and bacteria, as a deodorizer to fight unpleasant odors, and to shine mirrors and glass, streak-free. You'll find jobs for vinegar in every room of the house. Its acidity helps break through dirt and dissolve grease, making it a perfect mild cleaning agent and polisher. Buy it in the largest recyclable jugs you can find, since it has so many uses. Choose distilled white vinegar, as cider or red vinegars may stain (and are more expensive).
- **Baking soda:** Another ingredient already stocked in your kitchen, baking soda's grit and fizzing action make it a powerhouse for scrubbing and loosening grime, without scratching delicate surfaces. It absorbs odors everywhere from the refrigerator to the carpets, and even polishes metals like chrome, silver, and stainless steel. It's also great in the laundry as a fabric softener. Again, buy the largest box—you'll be amazed at all the uses you discover.
- **Borax:** Homemakers have relied on the cleaning and freshening power of borax for more than a century, and this naturally occurring mineral composed of sodium, boron, and oxygen remains a useful multipurpose cleaner around the house. Use it as a laundry booster to deodorize, fight stains as an alternative to colorsafe bleach, and soften hard water. In the bathroom, borax scrubs porcelain and fiberglass without scratching (or chemical fumes), and even tackles the toilet bowl. In the kitchen too, borax freshens drains and garbage disposals, and boosts the power of your dishwashing detergent. 20 Mule Team brand, in the green box, is the most commonly available.
- **Lemons & lemon juice:** You can't get much more natural than lemons, which cut grease, provide a naturally fresh fragrance, and act as a mild brightener. Buy juice in recyclable glass or plastic bottles, or forgo the packaging entirely by choosing whole fruit to squeeze as needed.
- **Soapnuts or soapnut liquid:** The dried fruit of the Chinese Soapberry tree, soapnuts contain saponin, a natural low-sudsing cleanser. Especially popular for laundry applications thanks to its hypoallergenic status, soapnuts leave even the most delicate clothing clean and soft without petroleum derivatives or chemical fabric softeners, and can combine safely with green bleach alternatives. In liquid form, a concentrated tea of soapnuts, water, and essential oil fragrance can be used as the basis for other cleaning formulas, all over the house.
- **Castile soap:** A plant-based alternative to petroleum-based soaps (and suitable for vegetarians), castile soap is traditionally made from olive oil, though other natural



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oils may also be used. In bar form, it can be grated and dissolved in hot water for great suds. Liquid forms are also popular, in recyclable bottles. It's great on wood floors and furniture, dishes, and more.

- **Hydrogen peroxide/oxygen bleach powder:** Two nontoxic alternatives to chlorine bleach. In addition to its familiar medicinal uses, hydrogen peroxide disinfects around the house and bleaches stains and laundry. Oxygen-active powders brighten colors and surfaces with a gentler action than chlorine bleach.
- **Isopropyl (Rubbing) Alcohol:** You're already familiar with this disinfectant, too. Add a few capfuls to hot soapy water to add disinfecting power. Try it on laundry stains as well. (Always use alcohol diluted with water; it can irritate skin at full strength.)
- **Tools:** Replace the wasteful packaging you're no longer buying with Olivine's reusable spray bottle, preprinted with

three recipes. Recycle old toothbrushes for scrubbing. Repurpose worn tees to replace paper towels. Opt for reusable dusters over disposable products. And don't be surprised if your newly greened utility cabinet suddenly seems a lot less cluttered!

- **DIY Know-how:** With knowledge comes confidence. According to Women's Voices for the Earth (www.womenandenvironment.org), scientific studies have proven these green cleaning ingredients are as effective or nearly as effective as commercial products—eliminating 90-98% of harmful bacteria, such as *E. coli*.



Once you're familiar with the ingredients and their properties, you may find yourself tempted to experiment, perhaps adding essential oils for a personalized scent, trading recipes with friends, or customizing formulas for certain jobs. Let your home inspire you.

DIY Caution: Do not mix commercial cleaners, and never mix anything with chlorine bleach or ammonia, because of the risk of dangerous fumes. Better still, avoid these altogether, now that you know how!



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Oven Cleaner

Option 1:

Use the “self-cleaning” option on your oven to avoid using any chemicals. Self-cleaning ovens use extremely high temperatures to burn away cooking deposits. Manufacturers of self-cleaning ovens recommend that their owners avoid using chemical cleaners, as these products may give off harmful gases while the oven is in its self-cleaning mode.

Option 2:

Turn the oven on to 200 or 250 for up to one hour to let grease and food particles start to melt. Turn oven off and begin work on it when it is warm, but never hot enough to burn you. You will need:

- 1-2 cups of baking soda (depending on how dirty the oven is)
- 2 or more cups of water
- 1-2 squirts of liquid dish soap (depending on how dirty the oven is)

Begin by pouring 1/4 cup of water on the bottom of your oven. Then, cover water with baking soda and then add a little more water on top of it. You may leave the baking soda paste in the oven for a few minutes or overnight; it depends on how dirty the oven is. Then, scrub the oven thoroughly.

Mix 1 to 2 squirts of dish soap with 1 cup of water. The liquid dish soap will help scrub off any remaining food particles or grease. Use this mixture to wipe the baking soda out of the oven. Then, use the remaining water to rinse the soap and baking soda out of the oven.

Carpet stain remover

General guidelines: Test in an inconspicuous area first. The sooner a stain is dealt with, the more likely the stain can be removed. Never scrub carpet in a back and forth motion, as this can distort the fibers. Do not pour cleaning agents directly on the stain, use a spray bottle or clean cloth instead. Do not soak the carpet with cleaning agents. Different stains will respond to different cleaning agents.

Here's a list of common yet effective carpet stain removers:

Vinegar: The all-purpose stain remover. Use equal parts water and white distilled vinegar for all types of stains.

Club Soda: Works well on coffee, wine, and other dark liquids. The carbonation helps lift stains from the carpet fibers while the salt acts as a buffer to keep the stain from setting.

Rubbing Alcohol: Helpful in removing ink, marker or grass stains.

Hydrogen peroxide: Works well on fresh blood stains. Use the common 3% concentration, as anything strong might bleach the carpet. Rinse the whole area clean with water.

Borax: Blot up the spill and sprinkle borax to cover the stain. Let the area dry and then vacuum.

Shaving Cream: Works well on a variety of food stains. Resist the temptation to rub in. Spray on and let stand for 5-15 minutes. Rinse the area clean with vinegar and water solution.





Laundry Stain Remover

General guidelines: Test in an inconspicuous area first. The sooner a stain is dealt with, the more likely the stain can be removed. Read the care label on garments and follow instructions. Avoid treating stains in hot water or placing in a hot dryer, as this may set the stain. Different stains will respond to different cleaning agents.

Liquid Dish Soap: Works well on food stains. Can be used as a pre-treater. Apply directly to the stain and let soak in until garment is ready for regular laundry.

Hair Spray: Excellent for ink stains. Spray directly onto stain, rinse with cool water, and repeat as necessary until stain is removed.

Borax: Works to remove soils as well as brighten and freshen clothes. Can be used as a pre-treater or in the machine as part of the regular washing cycle. Either pre-treat the stain with 1 tablespoon borax mixed with water, or, add ½ cup to the wash along with detergent.

Hydrogen Peroxide: An effective alternative to chlorine bleach. Works well on blood and chocolate. Spray or soak garments then wash within 30 minutes.



Drain opener

General guidelines: Prevent clogs in the sink and shower by using a drain trap to catch food or hair. Collect grease and cooking oils in containers, rather than pouring down the drain. A plunger, which is inexpensive and chemical free, can be used to break up the clog and allow it to float away.

Recipe

- ½ cup baking soda
- ½ cup vinegar

Pour baking soda down drain and follow with vinegar. If possible, cover the drain and let sit for 30 minutes. Flush with boiling water.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner

Option 1:

Sprinkle ¼ cup borax into bowl and scrub with brush. Add essential oil, such as tea tree or pine for extra disinfecting. Let stand for 30 minutes or even overnight.

Option 2:

Sprinkle ¼ cup baking soda and drizzle white vinegar into bowl. Let stand for 30 minutes and scrub with toilet brush.



Many of us have already started changing our cleaning routine by buying more natural, less toxic products or even mixing our own. Here are a few additional easy-to-implement suggestions to help you keep a home that is as green as it is clean.

Take off your shoes

- ✓ When you leave your shoes at the door you prevent unwanted pesticides, dirt, fertilizers, and other toxins from getting tracked in.
- ✓ This is an especially commonsense approach for homes with a lot of carpeting and young children who spend more of their time on the floor.

Use houseplants to improve indoor air quality

- ✓ According to the EPA, the air in our homes is 2-10 times more polluted than outdoor air.
- ✓ Houseplants produce oxygen, remove carbon dioxide, and help absorb a host of unwanted chemicals, such as formaldehyde and volatile organic compounds.

Limit your use of antibacterial products

- ✓ Unless you have a compromised immune system, scientists agree that antibacterial products do not demonstrate health benefits to a healthy household.
- ✓ Over-reliance on these products is contributing to bacterial resistance, which compromises our ability to fight serious infections.
- ✓ Triclosan, a common ingredient in synthetic antibacterial products, ends up in our waterways and has been found to be harmful to aquatic life.

Avoid synthetic air fresheners and candles

- ✓ Instead of masking offensive odors it is better to find the root cause. Find ways to well-ventilate your home, such as opening windows and turning on fans.
- ✓ These products are loaded with artificial fragrances that contribute to headaches, allergic reactions, and skin and eye irritations. Of particular concern are *phalates*, a hidden ingredient found in synthetic fragrances. Studies have linked phalates to hormone disruption and reproductive disorders.
- ✓ Opt for natural air fresheners made with essential oils and candles made from 100% beeswax, as the artificial versions are made with petroleum, a non-renewable resource.

