

## **GREEN CLEANING TIPS**

*Formatted, Printed and Distributed by the Environmental  
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Perhaps the most compelling reason to use green cleaners is to keep potent toxins out of your home and our environment. The U.S. EPA notes that many household cleaners contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as formaldehyde and harsh acids. Per the EPA, since indoor VOC levels are often two to five times greater than outdoor levels, humans can experience eye, nose and throat irritation; headaches; decrease in coordination; nausea; and sometimes damage to liver, kidney and central nervous systems from indoor exposure to these chemicals.

**All Purpose Cleaner:** An all purpose cleaner is something you can use for just about every surface in your home, from kitchen counters and appliances to bathroom surfaces and walls. A recipe for an all-purpose cleaners is: put 2 tbsp. white vinegar and 1 tsp. of borax into a 16 oz spray bottle. Fill the rest with very hot water and shake to blend, until the borax is dissolved. Add ¼ cup of liquid castile (vegetable based) soap after completing the above steps.

**Hard Floor Cleaner:** Combine ¼ cup of liquid castile soap, up to ½ cup white vinegar or lemon juice, and close to 2 gallons of warm water in a large plastic bucket. Use with a mop or sponge.

**Carpet Cleaner:** To clean and disinfect a carpet, blend ½ cup baking soda, 1 cup borax, and 1 cup cornmeal. Sprinkle mixture over rug and rub with a cloth. Let rest for several hours or overnight, then vacuum. To remove stains from a carpet, mix ¼ cup liquid castile soap and 1/3 cup water until well blended. Spread the mixture on the carpet and let sit for a few minutes, then scrub the stain with a brush or clean rag. Also, club soda will remove many acidic stains, like coffee, wine or juice. To deal with big carpet spills, pour cornmeal on the spill, wait 15 minutes, then vacuum.

**Glass Cleaner:** To make windows shine, one can simply use club soda in a spray bottle. Add 1 tsp. of lemon juice to increase the window cleaner's degreasing power. Using a terry-cloth cotton rag provides the best results.

**Bathroom Surface Cleaner:** One can use the all-purpose cleaner recommended above or, for even simpler bathroom cleaning, use baking soda or borax as a scouring powder. Club soda works wonders on plumbing fixtures.

**Toilet Cleaner:** Sprinkle baking soda or borax, or pour white vinegar into the toilet, then let sit for a few minutes. Then scrub with a good toilet brush.

**Mold Remover:** Combine ½ cup of hydrogen peroxide or white vinegar with 1 cup of water. Spray on the mold and do not rinse. Alternately, you may spray on a mixture that is 2 tsp. tea tree oil and 2 cups water.

**Wood Polish:** To polish wood furniture, dab olive oil onto a soft cloth and rub.

If you prefer over-the-counter products, look for green cleaners with natural ingredients in a local health food store, or see the screened green cleaning product companies listed in the National Green Pages (published by Co-Op America).

From an article by Tracy Rysavy of Co-Op America (July '06)