

Green cleaning is a safer, lower cost and less wasteful way to clean your home.

Most homes contain many more household cleaners than needed. These cleaners create packaging waste that is disposed of in landfill and the chemicals in the cleaning products can damage human health and the environment. Natural cleaning substitutes traditional cleaners with cleaning solutions that contain fewer or less-toxic substances.

Adopting different cleaning practices can also aid in keeping a clean home while minimising the need to use toxic substances, for example use of large entryway mats and damp-mopping instead of sweeping, reduces airborne bacteria, fungi and dust. The use of vacuums with high-performance filters are used to minimise dust in the home.

To clean cheaply, naturally and safely throughout the home, there are many alternatives that involve using basic ingredients (plus a little elbow grease).

#### A natural cleaning kit could include –

- **White vinegar** which cuts through grease and is a deodoriser.
- **Bicarbonate of Soda** (Baking Powder) cleans, deodorises, softens water and is a good scouring powder.
- **Pure soap** is a general purpose cleaner that is completely biodegradable.
- **Lemon juice** is a whitener, a deodorant and a cleaning agent.
- **Washing soda** cuts through grease and removes stains.
- **Salt** can be used to scour cookware and polish copper pans.
- **Borax** is a naturally occurring mineral salt. It cleans, deodorises, bleaches and disinfects. Borax is also used to control pests such as ants and cockroaches.

#### General rules for green cleaning

- **Reduce** the use of household cleaners by buying less, using less and looking for natural, safer alternatives.
- **Be smart** when you shop, read the label to avoid buying the more toxic product and buy only what you need.
- **All purpose cleaner** - Warm water with pure soap or white vinegar is a cheap and easy general cleaner for use throughout the home.

#### In the living room

**Carpet cleaner** - Sprinkle bicarbonate of soda on the carpet before vacuuming to deodorise. It's also a great stain remover. Just vacuum or brush up when dry.

**Window cleaner** - Add half a cup of vinegar to a litre of warm water for an effective window cleaner. Wash the window first with warm soapy water if especially dirty. Use crumpled newspaper moistened with vinegar to get a beautiful sheen.

#### In the car

**Battery cleaner** - Clean battery terminals with a mixture of two teaspoons of bicarbonate of soda to 1 litre of water and apply generously. Vaseline smeared around the base of the terminal will prevent further build up.

**Chrome polish** - Use flour or bicarbonate of soda with a dry, clean cloth.

**Tar remover** - Moisten a cloth with eucalyptus oil and rub clean.

**Car windows** - A soft cloth moistened with vinegar is great for cleaning windscreens and windows.

#### In the bathroom

**Toilet cleaner** - Make a paste from borax and lemon juice for cleaning toilet bowls.

**Ceramic cleaner** - Clean tiles, sinks, toilets and baths with bicarbonate of soda using a damp cloth.

**Glass and mirror cleaner** - Use newspaper with vinegar. To prevent mirrors fogging apply eucalyptus oil with a wad of newspaper.

**Tiles** - Apply a borax (or bicarbonate of soda) paste then scrub. Rinse well.

**Air freshener** - Use fresh flowers or sprigs of rosemary, lavender or mint.

**Shower heads** – remove calcium build up by soaking in vinegar for 24 hrs.

#### In the kitchen

**Surface cleaner** - Use bicarbonate of soda on a damp cloth to clean bench tops, sinks, windows and your refrigerator or freezer surfaces.

**Dishwashing detergent** - Use pure soap to wash dishes and add white vinegar to the rinse water to give glasses an extra shine.

**Oven cleaner** - Avoid caustic oven cleaners. Wipe the oven down while it is still warm with a soapy cloth or a damp cloth sprinkled with bicarbonate of soda.

**Odours in fridge** - Place a small dish of vanilla essence on the bottom shelf or leave an open packet of bicarbonate of soda in the fridge to absorb food odours.

**Drains** - Boiling water can be used to flush drains and avoid build-up of residue.

#### In the laundry

**Bleach** - Use one cup of lemon juice in a half bucket of water and soak overnight, or substitute half a cup borax per wash load to whiten whites and brighten colours.

**Stain remover** - Rinse in cold water before stain can dry. Apply bicarbonate of soda.

Hint: Oil, grease, tar, gum, ink, grass stains and other stubborn stains can be removed by adding a few drops of eucalyptus oil before washing.

**Laundry detergent** - To make a cheap, environmentally friendly and safe washing detergent, mix one third of a cake of pure soap (grated) with one third of a cup washing soda. Dissolve in hot water in a bucket and top up with water. The mixture will set to a soft gel. Use 2-3 cups per wash.

**Fabric softener** - Vinegar acts as a fabric softener. Soak garment overnight in a solution three parts water to one part vinegar then wash as normal.

#### Warnings

- Ingredients such as essential oils and borax should be handled with care as if they are ingested they can be poisonous.
- It is advisable to wear gloves to prevent any skin irritation. Always test products on a small section of fabric/material prior to use.
- Keep all cleaning solutions out of reach of children and pets. Think safe when handling and storing cleaners and dispose of them legally and safely.
- Wollongong City Council is not liable for damage to property or to self from using these recipes.

#### Sources:

The Environmentally Sound Guide to Cleaning your Home by Linda Mason Hunter and Mikki Halpin. Andrews McMeel (30 Sep 2005)

The Green Cleaner by Barbara Lord  
Melbourne : BAS Publishing, 2004

Chemical Free Home by Robyn Stewarts

The Easy Guide to Natural Cleaning by NSW Waste Boards

For more information call Councils Customer Service Unit on 4227-7111.

#### Disclaimers

This Fact Sheet was believed to be correct at the date of its approval.

This Fact Sheet is for general information purposes only.