

# Green Housecleaning Guide

*Make Your Household a Non-Toxic Sanctuary!*



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**Many commercial cleaners create pollution and are bad for your health.**

An EPA study (*A Comparison of Indoor and Outdoor Concentrations of Hazardous Air Pollutants*, 1998) showed that:

- Indoor pollution levels are often 2-5 times higher than outdoor levels.
- Cleaning supplies and hazardous household materials are often the cause of an increase in indoor pollution.
- Commercial cleaning products contain toxins (volatile organic compounds, ammonia, chloride, etc.)
- These toxins can create many problems for your health and the environment, especially if used over time or disposed of improperly.

## **What Can You Do?**

Switch to natural household cleaners—they are better! This improves indoor air quality for you and your family, saves money, **and** benefits the watersheds.

You can make effective and inexpensive cleaning products with common household ingredients. Forget commercial cleaners and make your own green cleaning products at home! Green cleaning is good for your pocketbook, the community and environment.

This kit gives recipes and products that can lessen these effects!

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### **Provided By:**



*West Michigan Environmental Action Council*

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[www.wmeac.org](http://www.wmeac.org)

### **How To Use This Kit:**

In this kit you will find a list of basic ingredients to use for green cleaning. You may already own many of the necessary items. Also included are recipe cards which you can cut out.

# Green Clean Basic Shopping List



Most of the products you will need for your new cleaning supplies can be found in your home. There are substitutes for some of the products, which are listed. When making your own cleaner, always do so in a designated area. Use gloves. Do not re-use a commercial bottle as chemicals could react. Follow the recipe—**order matters**. If you don't things could turn out clumpy or reactions could occur.

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>White Distilled Vinegar:</b> This versatile dilute acidic cleaner cuts grease. You can find it in the salad dressing section.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Baking Soda:</b> This base is used to clean and deodorize. It increases the cleaning power of soap, and is useful as a mild scouring powder. You can find it in the baking aisle.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Borax Powder:</b> A stronger base than baking soda that cleans, deodorizes and disinfects. You can find it in the laundry section.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Castile or Vegetable-Oil Based Liquid Soap:</b> An effective cleaning agent that biodegrades quickly and is found in the cleaner section or health stores. Plant based dishsoap may be substituted, but only use half the amount. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Olive Oil:</b> Non-toxic alternative to furniture polish. Food-grade linseed oil also works.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Salt:</b> Non-scratching abrasive cleaner with bacteria inhibiting qualities.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Distilled Water:</b> Better than tap water as it eliminates hard minerals.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Essential Oils:</b> See the chart on the following page for more information on which you might need or want. Keep in mind it is an optional ingredient.  |

# ESSENTIAL OIL GUIDE

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The essential oils are an optional ingredient you can add to make the mixtures more effective. This also gives the different cleaners a fragrance. They are fragrances from plants. Different oils have different benefits. Some possible benefits are: antiseptic, disinfectant, insecticide, insect repellent and fungicide. They also leave a great scent. They are concentrated, so a few drops go a long way.

*Avoid direct contact with skin, and use sparingly. Use only in diluted form. Some can ruin paint or other furniture finishes. Some are not safe to use when pregnant (basil and pennyroyal). The oils evaporate quickly, so tighten the lid and tape shut if possible. Essential oils can be found at health food stores or online.*

	Antiseptic	Disinfectant	Bactericide	Fungicide	Insecticide	Insect Repellent
Eucalyptus	X	X	X		X	
Lavender	X	X			X	
Lemon	X	X		X	X	X
Orange	X	X			X	X
Peppermint	X	X		X		X
Tea Tree	X	X	X	X		X
Rosemary	X		X	X	X	X
Thyme	X	X	X	X		X
Juniper (Cedar)	X	X			X	X



## All Purpose Spray Cleaner

- 1 16 oz. spray bottle
- 1 tsp borax
- 2 Tbsp vinegar
- 1/4 cup vegetable-oil based soap
- 1 1/2 cups hot water
- A few drops of essential oil

Add borax to hot water in 16oz. spray bottle, cap, and shake until borax is dissolved. Add vinegar and shake again. Then add soap and oil.

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## Easy All Purpose Spray Cleaner

- 1 Tbsp. vegetable-oil based soap (less if using dish soap)
- Warm water
- Spray bottle

Dilute soap with warm water in bottle. May need to rinse with vinegar after cleaning to remove any residue

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## Scouring Powder

- 1 cup baking soda
- 1 cup borax
- 1 cup salt
- An old jar

\*If there is leftover film, wipe with a vinegar/water mixture.

Mix together and put in an old jar. Punch holes in lid. Cover with plastic wrap when not in use. Wipe with sponge, rinse. A sliced lemon dipped in borax also works well.

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## Simple Window Cleaner

- Club soda
- Spray bottle



Simply fill a spray bottle with club soda and clean!

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## Outdoor Glass Cleaner

- 1 squirt/1 Tbsp. liquid dish soap
- Warm water

One squirt of liquid dish soap into a bucket. Fill bucket with warm water. To eliminate streaks, windows should be cleaned with the simple window cleaner after they dry.

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## Alternative Window Cleaner

- 1 part vinegar
- 1 part water

Fill spray bottle 1/4 full with warm water. Pour vinegar in until 3/4 full and shake. Finish filling with warm water—shake. To minimize streaking, use a dry piece of rag or paper. Also can remove laundry stains.

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## Linoleum/Tile Cleaner

- 22 oz squirt bottle
- 2 cups baking soda
- 1/2 cup vegetable-oil based soap (don't substitute this)
- 2/3 cup water
- 2 tbsp. vinegar

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Mix baking soda and liquid soap in a bowl with fork and dilute with water. Add vinegar last and stir until lumps are gone. Pour into bottle. Shake well before use. Squirt where desired. Be sure to rinse well.

## Disinfectant Spray

- 16 oz spray bottle
- 1 tbsp. borax
- 2/3 cups water
- 3 tbsp. castile soap
- 20-30 drops tea tree oil

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Fill bottle with water. Dissolve borax in water. Add soap and tea tree oil. Use this to clean urine, feces, vomit, etc. Use on areas frequently so germs do not spread.

## Scented Vinegar Disinfectant

- 5+ drops tea tree oil per cup
- 1 part white vinegar
- 1 part water
- 3-4+ drops castile soap (optional - use if needed)

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Add tea tree oil to vinegar. Dilute by half with water. Use to clean up around toilet, floors, or bad-smelling jobs. Soak dishrags and sponges in solution to disinfect and remove odor.

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## Silver Polish

- 1 sheet aluminum foil
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. baking soda
- Warm water

Put aluminum foil, salt and baking soda into a bowl or large container. Fill with warm water. Place silver into the container. Wait one hour, then wipe with a soft cloth.

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## Hand Dishsoap

- Baking soda
- Water

Sprinkle dampened, dirty dishes with baking soda and let sit for 5 minutes or more. Excellent for especially dirty, greasy dishes.  
Store-bought earth-friendly dishsoaps are phosphorus-free and biodegradable.

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## Toilet Cleaning Basics

- 1 cup borax or baking soda
- Disinfecting essential oil (optional)
- Pumice stone

Dump borax or baking soda and a few drops of essential oil into toilet bowl and let sit for a few hours. Then scrub.  
A wet pumice stone removes stains.

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## Foaming Toilet Cleaner

- 1/2 cup unscented castile soap
- 2 cups baking soda
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tbsp. vinegar
- Squirrt bottle
- Scented Vinegar

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Mix castile soap and baking soda together in bottle. Then dilute with water and vinegar. This will cause the foaming. Mix and pour into squirt bottle. Rinse and deodorize with scented vinegar.

## Green Clean Furniture Prep

- Castile soap
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- Gallon water

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Before using any homemade cleaner on wood, use this mixture to remove commercial product residue. Put soap in pail of warm water. Add vinegar. Wash and dry furniture thoroughly.

## Furniture Dusting

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 16 oz spray bottle
- 20 drops lemon oil
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- Purified water
- Clean, lint-free dusting cloth

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Put olive oil in bottle. Add lemon oil. Add vinegar. Fill the remainder of the bottle with purified water. Shake well and spray the solution on rag. Equal parts of olive oil, lemon juice, and vinegar can be used as polish.

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## Laundry Soap

- 1/2 cup baking soda
- 1/2 cup powdered castile soap
- 1/4 cup washing soda
- 1/4 cup borax
- 4 drops essential oil

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Mix all ingredients together thoroughly. Use 1/4-1/3 cup per load.  
Choose phosphate-free and biodegradable store-bought soap, or use one-quarter to half of the amount of detergent normally used.

## Alternative Laundry Enhancers

- 1/2 cup borax
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1+ cup vinegar
- 1 cup baking soda

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To improve detergent performance use 1/2 the amount of detergent, and add 1/2 cup borax.  
Lemon juice, vinegar, and the sun are all bleach substitutes.  
1 cup each of vinegar OR baking soda deodorizes.

## Green Fabric Softeners

### LIQUID

- 1/2 cup baking soda

Add baking soda to the rinse cycle - will soften water and clothes and reduces static.

### DRYER SHEET

- Dried lavender flowers
- Cloth tea bag

Fill cloth tea bag with dried lavender flowers.  
Use for 5-6 loads before replacing flowers.

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## Laundry Stain Remover

- 4 tbsp. baking soda or salt
- 1/4 cup warm water

Make paste with baking soda/salt and warm water. Rub paste on spot and let sit for an hour then wash as usual

- Eucalyptus oil

Eucalyptus oil works on old stains. Apply with cotton ball. Let dry, then wash.

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## Oven Cleaner

- Water
- Baking soda
- 50/50 water vinegar mixture (if needed)

Spray the oven with water and sprinkle with baking soda to cover and add more water. Let sit overnight and then scrub out stains. For any excess stains, use the water/vinegar mixture instead of plain water in the recipe.

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## Air Freshener

- Light bulb rings
- Essential oil
  
- Baking Soda
- Cleaned yogurt container

Add a few drops of essential oils to a light bulb ring.

Put scented baking soda in a yogurt container. Punch holes in the top of container—works well in problem areas.

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## Drain Cleaner

- 1/2 cup baking soda
- Vinegar

\*Drain clogs can be prevented by pouring boiling water down the drain once a month, using a plumber's snake, or a sink strainer.

Pour 1/2 cup baking soda into drain, then add about a cup of vinegar. Mixture will fizz, so cover drain with a plunger until fizzing stops. Rinse well with hot water.

## Rug & Upholstery Cleaner

- Baking Soda
- Vinegar

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To deodorize carpet, sprinkle on baking soda, and leave for 10-15 minutes, then vacuum.

Vinegar helps remove stains, smells and urine. Best if used in a 50/50 mix with water.

## Rug/Upholstery Spot Remover

- 1/4 cup castile soap
- 1/3 cup water
- Blender
- Vinegar
- Carpet brush (if needed)

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Put 1/4 cup castile soap into a blender and add 1/3 cup or more of water. Blend until foamy. Smear mixture onto spots and let sit for a few minutes. Scrub, and finish with a squirt of vinegar and soak remnants with towel.

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## Bug Control—Ants

- Soapy water
- Peppermint oil

\*The best preventative is to caulk points of entry.

Soapy or peppermint water can be sprayed onto ants to kill them or drops of the oil can be placed near entry points.

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## Weevil/Moth Control

- Rue, Lavender, Eucalyptus or rosemary oil
- Lavender petals
- Bay leaves

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Any of the oils can be saturated in cotton and placed in cupboard (do not put directly on clothes or wood). Lavender petals or Bay leaves can be placed in bowls in closets.

## Flea Control

- Lavender oil
- Pennyroyal oil
- Eucalyptus oil
- Rosemary oil
- Water
- Small spray bottle

Fill small spray bottle with water and add 10-15 drops of oil of your choice. Spray on pet beds to prevent flea infestation.

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