

# Green Cleaning

Chemicals from conventional cleaning products are found all around us. The ingredients found in many cleaners can have negative effects on the health of humans and of ecosystems. When many of these chemicals enter the environment, they can pollute water ways and bio-accumulate in plants, fish, and wildlife.<sup>1</sup> By taking simple steps to adopt greener cleaning practices, such as making your own cleaners at home, you can reduce exposure to harmful chemicals and help make the planet a healthier place.

## Hazardous Cleaning Ingredients<sup>2</sup>

- Acetone
- Aerosol products
- Alcohol ethoxylates
- Ammonia
- Bleach (sodium hypochlorite)
- Diethanolamine (DEA)
- D-limonene
- Ethoxylated nonyl phenol
- Formaldehyde
- Fragrance
- Methylene chloride
- Monoethanolamine
- Naphthalene
- Parabens
- Paradichlorobenzene
- Phosphoric acid/Phosphates
- Sodium dichloroisocyanurate dihydrate
- Sodium Lauryl Sulfate
- Toluene
- Turpentine
- Xylene



## Green Cleaning at the U of A

Sustainability is more than just the health of the environment, it includes the social aspect of human health.

The U of A is committed to healthy indoor environments for students, staff and faculty, which lead to the creation of the **Cleaning for a Healthy U** program in 2007. It promotes the use of cleaning products that meet “Green Seal” and “Environmental Choice” standards. Since the implementation of this program, cleaning related water use has decreased 33 per cent.

## Quick Tip

To learn more about the ingredients listed on the left and the effects they may have, visit [lesstoxicguide.ca](http://lesstoxicguide.ca) and click on Household Cleaners.

## Basic Household Cleaning Ingredients

Many items you have lying around the house can be used in place of conventional cleaners:

### **Baking soda**

effective all-purpose cleaner

### **Castille soap**

biodegradable, natural ingredient-based cleanser that effectively removes surface dirt and grime

### **Borax**

softens water to increase detergent efficiency, anti-mould and anti-fungal agent

### **Essential oils**

add scent, and some naturally contain antibacterial/germicidal properties. - lemongrass, clove, tea tree oil, ginger, patchouli, thyme, bergamot, lavender, oregano, pine, peppermint

### **7% white pickling vinegar**

effective all-purpose cleaner

### **Ketchup**

removes tarnish from copper and brass cookware

### **Rubbing Alcohol**

disinfectant

### **Club Soda**

stain removal, shines up scratched stainless steel sinks

### **Cornstarch**

clean grease spills on carpets

### **Natural Toothpaste**

mild abrasive, cleans tarnished silver

### **Hydrogen Peroxide**

a safer alternative to bleach, low concentrations (*i.e.* 3 per cent) are safe for use

### **Lemon**

acidic, disinfectant and bleaching properties

### **Salt**

softens water to increase detergent efficiency, granular texture is ideal for scouring

## Did you know?

Of the 17,000 petrochemicals available for home use, only 30 per cent of which have been tested for exposure to human health and the environment.

## Green Cleaning Recipes

Below is a list of green cleaners you can make at home. It's always a good idea to first test these cleaners on a small area to ensure that they work properly and don't harm any special finishes or fabrics.

### Multi-purpose Cleaner

- ¼ white vinegar, 7% or pickling
- 2 tsp Borax
- 3 ½ cups hot water
- 20 drops of essential oil
- ¼ cup Castile soap

Mix ingredients in this order, with castile soap added last. Store in a clean pump bottle.

### Disinfectant

- 3% hydrogen peroxide

Place in a spray bottle. Apply to kitchen and bathroom surfaces to kill bacteria and viruses.

### Laundry Detergent

- 3 Tablespoons Borax
- 3 Tablespoons Washing Soda  
*(alternatively, bake baking soda in the oven @ 400°F to make your own)*
- 2 Tablespoons Dawn Dish soap
- 4 Cups Boiling Water

Put first three ingredients into a one gallon jug. Add boiling water and swirl until ingredients dissolve. Let liquid cool, then fill to the top with cold water.<sup>3</sup>

### Carpet Freshener

- 4 cups baking soda
- 35 drops eucalyptus essential oil
- 30 drops lavender essential oil
- 25 drops rosewood essential oil

Mix ingredients in a bowl. Sprinkle onto carpet and leave for 15 minutes before vacuuming.<sup>4</sup>

## Did you know?

Indoor air pollution levels can be 100 times higher than outdoor air pollution levels.

– US EPA

## Carpet Stain Remover

- Vinegar
- Baking soda

Mix vinegar and baking soda into a paste. Scrub into carpet stain. Once dry, vacuum the residual baking soda.<sup>4</sup>

## Floor Cleaner

- 1/8 cup Castile Soap
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup white vinegar or lemon juice
- 20 drops of essential oil

Keep mixture in a small container. Add your desired amount to a bucket of warm water.

## Furniture Polish

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 2 tsp lemon juice

Mix ingredients and store in a clean pump bottle. Shake well and apply liberally to wood surfaces.

## Glass Cleaner

- 1/4 cup 7% vinegar
- 4 cups warm water

Pour ingredients into a pump bottle. For best results, spray the mixture on the glass surface and rub with crumpled newspapers.

## Scouring Powder

- 1 1/2 cups baking soda
- 5 to 6 drops of essential oil
- 1 tbsp Borax

Mix ingredients in an empty yogurt/sour cream container. Sprinkle on stove-top stains or bathroom sink. Be sure to label the container.

## Don't want to make your own?

Here are some eco-friendly brands you can buy:

- Small Planet
- Natura
- Nature Clean
- Seventh Generation
- Ecover
- Bio-Vert
- Murphy's Oil Soap
- Method



**Sources:**

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2. Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia. (2004). Guide to Less Toxic Products. Retrieved from: [www.lesstoxicguide.ca/index.asp?fetch=household](http://www.lesstoxicguide.ca/index.asp?fetch=household)
3. One Good Thing By Jillee. (April 30, 2012). Super Fast and Easy Homemade Laundry Detergent! Retrieved from: [www.onegoodthingbyjillee.com/2012/04/super-fast-and-easy-homemade-laundry-detergent.html](http://www.onegoodthingbyjillee.com/2012/04/super-fast-and-easy-homemade-laundry-detergent.html)
4. Patti Winters. (May 6, 2009). How to Make Your Own Natural Carpet Cleaners and Deodorizers. Retrieved from: [voices.yahoo.com/how-own-natural-carpet-cleaners-deodorizers-3268944.html?cat=7](http://voices.yahoo.com/how-own-natural-carpet-cleaners-deodorizers-3268944.html?cat=7)