

# Alternative Cleaning Products

**Toxic household cleaners are not the only means of dealing with dirt.**

Many chemical products have a natural alternative. Almost everything in your home can be cleaned with just a few simple materials. Combinations of baking soda, borax and vinegar can be prepared to clean everything from toilets to clothes to ovens. Don't forget to store the left over solutions in well-labeled, sealed bottles for future use.



## Carpet Fresheners

Sprinkle carpet with baking soda before vacuuming for regular deodorizing.

## Abrasives

Scrub with half a lemon dipped in borax!

## Assorted Cleaners

**Brass:** Make a paste of equal parts of salt, flour and a bit of vinegar. Apply. Let sit for 10 minutes then shine with a soft cloth dipped in Worcestershire sauce.

## Drains

Pour boiling water down the drains regularly.

**For clogs:** Use a plunger or metal snake or let ¼ cup of baking soda and ½ cup of vinegar stand in the drain for 30 minutes to 1 hour (keep drain covered with a rag): flush with boiling water.

## Glass

Mix ¼ cup vinegar in 3 cups of water. Put in an old spray-pump bottle, use a soft linen rag to wipe.

## Grease

Rub with a damp cloth dusted in borax or baking soda, scrub with soap.

## Laundry

**To whiten clothes:** Use ½ cup of white vinegar or ½ cup of baking soda or borax (1/2 cup). If you feel bleach is necessary, use dried bleach flakes.

**To soften clothes:** Put ½ cup of vinegar in the rinse cycle.

**To wash clothes:** use natural soap flakes.

**For tough laundry stains (blood, butter, coffee, and urine):** Sponge ¼ cup of borax in 2 cups of cold water. Let dry then wash. If the stains persists, dab with glycerin soap and let stain soak in glycerin for 1 hour before washing.

**Save energy:** By using the warm and cold wash cycles, soiled clothes often come cleaner in a cool wash than in a hot one.

**Don't use detergents with phosphates:** Just because it is biodegradable does not mean it is phosphate free.

## Oven

Scrub with a paste of baking soda, salt and water. Use cookie trays or anything oven-proof that can be washed in your sink to collect spill-overs.

## Rugs and Upholstery

Sprinkle a mixture of 2 cups cornmeal and 1 cup of borax. Let sit and vacuum.

## Silver

Soak in hot water (1 cup) with 1 tbsp. of baking soda, 1 tsp. of salt and 1 piece of aluminum foil. Shine with a soft cloth.

## Toilets

Mix ¼ cup of baking soda, ½ cup of vinegar, 2 L water and scrub!

## Multi-purpose Cleaner

5 tbsp. baking soda + 10 tsp. ammonia + 10 tsp. vinegar in 1 gallon of water to clean floors, counter tops,... anything!

## Other Alternative Products

### Air Fresheners

Ventilate the area regularly and put out a dish of baking soda or vinegar or pure vanilla or boil some pot pourri. Commercial pot pourri is available, however, 2 cloves, 1 orange rind and 1 stick of cinnamon in 2 cups of water is also effective.

### Herbicides

If you can, dig out weeds by hand.

Once a month, dissolve a garlic tablet in warm water and water indoor plants with the solution.

For outdoor plants, insert a garlic tablet directly into the soil (some exotic plants may not react well to this treatment, contact a local nursery). Outdoors, plant marigolds or chrysanthemums to act as natural weed and insect deterrents.

### Insecticides

Encourage birds, lady bugs and spiders in your garden; they provide natural pest control.

### Cockroaches

Keep the area as clean as possible.

Fill cracks and crevices along walls with Borax. Seal possible entrances.

### Earwigs

Lay an empty bottle or piece of hose among your plants. The next morning empty the bottle into a pail of water.

When planting, mix together pest resistant plants such as thyme and marigolds.

### Fleas

Feed pets garlic tablets instead of buying flea collar (talk to your vet about the right dose for your pet).

If your pet contracts fleas, vacuum the house often, replace and tightly seal the vacuum bag with each vacuum and discard immediately.

### Garden Plants

Careful weeding and removal of infected leaves on outdoor plants will inhibit insect infestation.

### House Plants

A soapy solution (dried natural soap flakes in water) stored in an empty spray bottle can be sprayed on infected house plants.

### Mothballs

Cedar chips, dried rosemary, dried mint, dried lemon peels or dried lavender flowers are ideal, and your clothes will smell better!

### Paints, Stains and Solvents

Avoid enamel or oil-based products. Use latex- or water-based products such as limestone-based white-wash or casein-based paints.

Natural earth pigment finishes are effective as stains. Use latex- or water-based solvents and sandpaper (or a heat gun) to remove paint from furniture or fixtures.

### Conserve water!

Water your lawn only when absolutely necessary and water in the evening so that water will not evaporate.

### Rodent Control (Pesticides)

Be sure to remove any source of food from pest access. Use baited traps (or live traps) for mice, rats, squirrels, and other rodents.