

March 2011

*Spring House Cleaning, Natural Cleaning Products*

*By Karen Mayne*



**Spring house cleaning. Ugh! Does anyone actually do the kind of spring cleaning our grandparents did? In earlier times, every spring families would take the rugs outside and beat them clean, take down all the curtains and bed linens and wash them, and scrub the house from top to bottom. There was a reason for this intensive cleaning – soot. Coal and wood were the primary sources of heat and by the end of the winter, the insides of homes were coated with a layer of soot.**

Luckily, we don't have to do the intensive cleaning of earlier generations. But our grandparents used some cleaning products we might want to try again. There are old-fashioned household cleaning products that will make our homes greener and are better for our families. Here are a few to try. Just make sure to use gloves when scrubbing with these products because, even though they are green, some can still hurt your skin and eyes.

**Baking Soda** . this has been a cleaning staple for years. A paste of baking soda and water can be used to clean up grime on any hard surface, ovens, and refrigerators.

**White Vinegar** . Another staple, it can be diluted with water and used to clean floors, kitchens, and bathroom surfaces. Use it at almost full strength to remove lime deposits from coffee makers and bathtubs. To clean windows, make a solution of 3 tablespoons vinegar, ¼ teaspoon of liquid dish detergent, and 2 cups of water and put in a spray bottle.

An all purpose cleaner can be made by mixing ½ cup vinegar, ¼ cup baking soda, and 2 quarts of water.

**Hydrogen Peroxide** . This is a product we keep in the medicine cabinet but it has real benefits as a household disinfectant. It is great for killing mold, bacteria, and viruses. Just be careful getting it on your skin since it is a strong oxidizer (which is why we use it on cuts). Put full strength in a spray bottle to clean mold from grout in bathrooms and elsewhere in the house. Mix a quarter cup of hydrogen peroxide in a spray bottle filled with distilled water to clean fresh vegetables and fruit before eating. You can also use this mixture to wash lettuce in a bowl. Rinse thoroughly before eating.

**Toothpaste** . Use a little dab of this to clean a whiteboard. Just rub it on, wipe it off with a paper towel, and then wipe the board with a wet sponge to remove all the residue. (The board is now ready to list the next day's errands and chores!)

**Air Fresheners** . Many folks like the smell of plug-in air fresheners or reed diffusers, but these products are often made from hydrocarbons or can aggravate asthma and allergies. Try a pot of cinnamon in water on the stove, a bowl of dried herbs, or essential oils like lavender, rosemary, lemon, or orange.

There are also some modern products that can help with cleaning chores. A microfiber cloth can be used for dusting . it picks up dust but doesn't leave a sticky residue on furniture like spray waxes (which are actually bad for wood). The product Magic Eraser is a white sponge that really is magic at removing marks on walls, cleaning dirty caulk, and just about any grime on hard surfaces. Rumor says it can even remove crayon marks. Murphy's Oil Soap is an old-fashioned product that is good for cleaning kitchen cabinets and wood floors.

These are just a few of the home remedies that can replace stronger cleaning products. If you want more ideas and actual cleaning recipes, just type in 'homemade cleaning products' in your Internet search engine. After all, spring is on its way . and after this long, cold winter, we all want to get outside!

*Karen can be reached by e-mail at*

*[KarenLMayne@aol.com](mailto:KarenLMayne@aol.com) or by phone at 587-1287*