



CLEANING PRODUCTS

Open the cupboard under any sink in an average Irish kitchen or bathroom and you will find a wide range of cleaning products. Over the years more and more products have been developed, a large proportion of these products are specific to tasks, rather than multi-purpose. In other words they have been developed to treat a particular household chore such as cleaning the sink, removing stains from the carpet or washing the floor. Both brand loyalty and advertising also play a crucial role in our consumer decision making process.

Cleaning products are necessary for maintaining attractive and healthy conditions in the home and workplace. In addition to the obvious aesthetic

benefits of cleaning, the removal of dust, allergens, and infectious agents is crucial to maintaining the indoor environment. However cleaning products can present several health and environmental concerns. Many of these products carry hazardous symbols such as flammable or irritant or their packaging has a negative impact on the environment. Products such as aerosols are particularly difficult to treat.



A HOUSEHOLDERS GUIDE TO HAZARDOUS WASTE PREVENTION



LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT SOME OF THESE IMPACTS:

Cleaning products are released to the environment during normal use through the evaporation of volatile components and rinsing down the drain of residual product from cleaned surfaces, sponges, etc. so householders and cleaning staff, in fact anyone using these products, are in danger of being exposed to the ingredients contained within concentrated cleaning products. Certain ingredients in cleaning products can present hazard concerns (e.g., skin and eye irritation in workers) or toxicity to aquatic species in waters receiving inadequately treated wastes. For example, alkyl phenol ethoxylates, a common surfactant ingredient in cleaners, have been shown in laboratory studies to function as an "endocrine disrupter," causing adverse reproductive effects of the types seen in wildlife exposed to polluted waters.

Ingredients containing phosphorus or nitrogen can contribute to nutrient-loading in water bodies, leading to adverse effects on water quality for example algal blooms on inland waterways & lakes.

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in cleaning products can affect indoor air quality and also contribute to pollution and in particular smog formation.

In order to prevent hazardous waste arisings from cleaning at home, in small businesses or on the farm, we could revert to a time when convenient cleaning products were less prevalent and many were actually "home-made" rather than purchased commercially. Many ingredients traditionally used for cleaning purposes are "everyday" products that are readily available and are not hazardous; they are phosphate free and biodegrade quickly. Examples of traditional and/or natural cleaning products which are not hazardous include: vinegar, lemons, baking soda, oil and pumice stones to name just a few.

The other tip to "green cleaning" and preventing household hazardous waste is to "use less product and a little more effort". Using natural products such as some of these listed below will also save you money as these products can be sourced very cheaply. Here are some ideas, tips and recipes:



Cleaning With Vinegar

Vinegar will help tackle all those 'tough' tasks where we might ordinarily reach for bleach or a strong chemical cleaner. Vinegar is mildly acidic so will give an anti-bacterial clean to worktops and sinks. Just wipe the vinegar on with a clean cloth and buff to shine. Boiling a 50% mix of vinegar and water in metal kettles will dissolve all lime scale, but don't use on aluminum appliances! Vinegar is also excellent for cleaning windows, buff off with scrunched up newspaper. A 250ml bottle of vinegar costs as little as 90c

Cleaning With Bicarbonate of Soda (Baking Powder)

Bicarbonate of soda (baking soda or bicarb) is granular so it can be used as a scrub to clean really tough stains or dried in dirt. Mixed with vinegar, bicarb cleans even the grimeiest ovens and baked on grease. Bicarb is also an odour eliminator. A sprinkle in the bottom of bins keeps them smelling fresh. Baking soda will clean plastics without scratching them, while removing any nasty smells (very handy for sandwich boxes which have been 'forgotten' in a bag under the stairs!). Also good used dry to lift stains from carpets (e.g. red wine) and marks from surfaces and very good for cleaning shower curtains. A 200g pack of baking Powder cost as little as 80c

Cleaning With Salt

Salt is antibacterial and another great 'scrub' item. Salt water can be used to disinfect toilet bowls or sinks. Salt will absorb grease. So sprinkling salt on any greasy spots at the bottom of the oven will make them easy to wipe away with a soapy rag. Salt is very abrasive and can be used to remove stains from ceramic and stainless steel sinks. Rust marks on our stainless steel sinks will disappear when rubbed with a little salt and lemon juice. Leave for a few hours then rub off to remove the rust stain. Value Packs of salt cost as little as 50c.





Household Cleaning With Lemons

Any citrus fruits can be used as they are all acidic and fresh smelling. Lemon is one of the most popular scents for cleaning products.

Half a lemon placed in the door rack of the fridge improves odour. A rub over stainless steel cooker tops and sinks with a lemon brings up a fantastic sparkle and gets the whole kitchen smelling zesty. Mix lemon juice with salt to clean copper and brass.

Mix lemon juice with water to whiten whites and brighten colours in a low degree wash cycle. Lemons retail for as little as 30c each.

Olive Oil Furniture Restorer

3 parts olive oil to 1 part vinegar makes great furniture polish for wood.

2 parts olive oil to 1 part vinegar makes a nourishing feed and polish for leather (furniture, boots, coats etc).

In both cases shake the oil and vinegar in a jam jar till it emulsifies and resembles a salad dressing. Rub on with one soft clean rag then buff off the excess with another. Make sure you remove

all the excess to prevent your sofa becoming sticky! You don't need much to keep wood and leather looking fresh. Cleaning furniture with olive oil is not as extravagant as it may sound. You need very little and you don't need to use the best oils, prices vary but you can purchase a 750ml bottle for as little as €3.15

Sunlight

Sunlight acts as a bleaching agent, it's excellent for whitening infants' nappies and tea towels and it's free!

Tea-tree oil

Tea Tree oil is both antiseptic and disinfectant; it effectively eliminates mould and mildew or can be diluted as a deodorizer for musty clothing.

Soda Crystals

Soda crystals (Washing Soda) are the "multi-tasking" agent of home made cleaning products and have a multitude of uses. Here are just 20 uses for soda crystals in your home and garden:

1. As a degreaser in the kitchen. Dissolve in hot water prior to use (the hotter the better to remove grease). Then use with a cloth, sponge or scourer to clean cooker tops, hoods, ovens, tiles, floors, etc.
2. By adding half a cup of Soda Crystals to your wash load you will soften the water and need to use less of your usual powder.
3. Remove heavy stains on cottons or linens including grease by soaking in a strong solution of Soda Crystals or use Liquid Soda Crystals directly on the



- stain. Soda Crystals can shift grease, blood, ink, tea and coffee stains.
4. Soda crystals can be used to remove tarnish from metals such as cutlery, and gold and silver jewellery, but please take advice before immersing precious stones or valuable items. Place tin foil in a dish, add soda crystals and pour on boiling water. Immerse the item, leave for a few minutes, rinse, dry and polish.
 5. To clean greasy cooker hoods a 10 minute soak in strong Soda solution will melt the grease away.
 6. Great for getting brown stains out of mugs. Half a teaspoon per mug (or a whole one if they are really bad), top up with boiling water, and by the time it's cold the stains will wash out easily. Stand your teaspoons in the cups and do 2 jobs for the price of one.
 7. A strong soda solution or Liquid Soda Crystals are very effective for removing burnt-on grease and food from pans, dishes and grill pans. Soak stubborn debris overnight. NB Soda Crystals are NOT suitable for aluminum pans.
 8. Scrub chopping boards with Liquid Soda Crystals or a regular solution to remove stains and odours. Soda Crystals will leave no residual smell or taste once rinsed.
 9. Descale your kettle by boiling a regular Soda Crystals solution and a raw potato inside. Rinse thoroughly before use but do not use if your kettle has any aluminum components.
 10. Flush some Soda Crystals down the loo to clean and freshen, and to help prevent blockages. Use a regular solution to clean toilet brushes too.
 11. Use a strong hot solution of Soda Crystals to help keep waste pipes clean and fresh. A regular flushing will help keep waste pipes clear of blockages.
 12. Clean wall tiles with a regular solution, or use Liquid Soda Crystals to leave them clean and sparkling. Soda Crystals will bring new life to grouting too.
 13. Freshen them up and get rid of that 'greasiness' on sponges, flannels and combs with a soak in a hot regular solution of Soda Crystals.
 14. Paintwork (and upvc window frames) will brighten after a wipe-down with Liquid Soda Crystals or use a regular solution of Soda Crystals in warm water. You can prepare bare wood for painting too with a regular solution.
 15. A wipe with a regular solution of Soda Crystals will brighten Venetian blinds, and help to shrug off dust.
 16. Red wine and food stains can be treated with a strong solution of Soda Crystals. Large spillages can be treated by applying dry crystals directly to the stain, followed by rinsing in clean water. Use Soda Crystals for ink and grass stains too.
 17. To clean outdoor wooden floors and decking, dissolve a medium solution of



Soda Crystals in hot water and mop as usual. To prepare wooden flooring for varnishing or painting, make sure that all debris and flakes are removed and mop with a strong Soda Crystals solution.

18. To clear moss and rotting leaves and to get rid of slime on drives, patios & steps, sprinkle Soda Crystals directly onto the area and leave overnight before brushing off with a stiff broom and plenty of water.
19. Barbecues, grills and utensils - Make up a solution of Soda Crystals (1 cup in 5 Litres of water), soak grills and utensils before cleaning with a wire brush. For barbecue body casings, apply with a sponge or brush and leave for an hour before washing off with a sponge soaked in the solution. Rinse off with clean water. A wire brush or scouring pad will help remove burned-on grease and food.
20. Drains, gutters and waste pipes - Pour half a bag (500g) of Soda Crystals directly down the drain and leave for ten minutes before rinsing with very hot water to keep them clear of grease and blockages. Wash gutters with half a cup of Soda Crystals per litre of water to remove rotting leaves etc.

