

Essential Oils and Non-toxic Cleaning Around the House

by

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The same quality of cleanliness can be obtained whether using chemical cleaners or non-toxic cleaners. Non-toxic cleaners are healthier for people and better for the environment. Also, non-toxic cleaning can be enhanced by the use of essential oils. Essential oils not only have great aromas, but they also have great properties that can be useful and effective in cleaning. As a result, a home can be clean and smell great with the help of essential oils and without the use of toxic chemicals.

The products normally used to clean around the house, such as chlorine bleach, ammonia or formaldehyde, are harsh chemicals that may deodorize or disinfect but only cover up smells. Chlorine bleach, also labeled as hypochlorite, sodium hypochlorite, hydrogen chloride, and hydrochloric acid, is one of the oldest and harshest products used to clean around the home. It is an ingredient found in many laundry and dishwasher detergents and some disinfectant cleaners. Although chlorine bleach is effective in killing mold and mildew, it can be irritating to the skin and eyes.

Ammonia is typically used for removing grease and grime, cleaning windows and mirrors, and disinfecting; however, it can be really harmful to your health. Specifically, ammonia can cause irritation to the eyes, skin and respiratory system. Another dangerous chemical found in household cleaners is formaldehyde. This chemical can be found in air fresheners and deodorizers. Formaldehyde is a carcinogen and can be irritating to the eyes, nose, throat, and skin. The Mayo Clinic cautions that formaldehyde in our home can irritate the respiratory system and the skin and cause heart palpitations. When toxic chemicals are regularly used around the house, they can pollute the air; seep into the sinks, countertops, showers/baths, and floors; and get absorbed into the body through the skin. These toxic chemicals can negatively affect one's health.

Substituting toxic cleaning products with non-toxic products is better for one's health and the environment. Although harsh chemicals can kill mold and mildew, cut through grease, disinfect and deodorize, these same qualities can be achieved using non-toxic cleaners and essential oils. Hydrogen peroxide, white distilled vinegar, and baking soda are non-toxic products that can accomplish this. For example, hydrogen peroxide kills mold and mildew and sanitizes as well as removes stains. White distilled vinegar can be used to kill mold and mildew,

but it is also useful in getting rid of soap scum, and sanitizing and cleaning windows. Another useful non-toxic cleaner is sodium bicarbonate or baking soda. Baking soda is excellent for removing odors and as an abrasive for scrubbing. Non-toxic cleaning can effectively keep the home clean and with the addition of essential oils, the process can be even more efficient and aromatic.

Essential oils are very concentrated and powerful. The term essential oil generally applies to all aromatic products or extracts that are derived from a natural source. They are derived from various parts of plants, seeds, grasses, leaves, flowers, fruits, and wood. Essential oils have medicinal qualities, characteristics, and therapeutic effects. Some of which are antibacterial, antifungal, antiseptic, antioxidant, antiviral, and antimicrobial. Through the use of essential oils it is possible to remove imbalances and restore health. Essential oils assist in the effective removal of toxic waste and are the highest known source of antioxidants. The inclusion of essential oils when cleaning the house can only improve one's well-being and the environment.

A Huffington Post article entitled "3 Best Essential Oils for Cleaning" highlights three essential oils, (Lemon, Peppermint, and Tea tree), that gives cleaning products a delicious aroma and increases the cleansing properties of one's cleaning products. Specifically, lemon essential oil smells like a fresh, ripe lemon while helping to brighten and remove stains. The article suggests adding lemon essential oil to the water used to mop the floor and to use with homemade laundry detergent in order to brighten white clothes. Peppermint essential oil has a refreshing minty scent and powerful antibacterial properties. Areas of the home that need antibacterial attention, such as bathrooms and kitchens, would benefit from the peppermint. Lastly, the article indicates that tea tree essential oil offers antibacterial, antiseptic and antifungal properties. Tea tree is excellent for removing mildew and mold.

The varying properties of essential oils will improve the aromatics within the home as well as provide exceptional cleansing properties. Below is a chart from Aroma Apothecary Healing Arts Academy's Clinical Aromatherapy Level 1, by Shanti Dechen, that identifies essential oils with antibacterial, antifungal, antiseptic and antiviral properties. Using this chart one can create a blend of essential oils with specific cleansing properties to meet one's needs.

Antibacterial, Antifungal, Antiseptic and Antiviral Essential Oils

Properties	Top Notes	Middle Notes	Base Notes
Antibacterial	Basil Bay Laurel Bergamont Clary Sage Eucalyptus Lemon Lemongrass Myrtle Orange Oregano Palma Rosa Petitgrain Tea Tree Thyme	Black Pepper Chamomile Cypress Geranium Juniper Lavender Melissa Peppermint Ravensara Rosemary	Cedar Cinnamon Clove Frankincense Ginger Helichrysum Myrrh Neroli Rose Patchouli Sandalwood Tarragon
Antifungal	Basil Bay Laurel Bergamot Eucalyptus (<i>globulus</i>) Lemon Lemongrass Myrtle Orange Oregano Palma Rosa Tea Tree Thyme	Chamomile Cypress Geranium Lavender Melissa Peppermint Ravensara Rosemary	Cedar Clove Frankincense Helichrysum Myrrh Patchouli Rose Sandalwood Tarragon
Antiseptic	Basil Bay Laurel Bergamot Eucalyptus Grapefruit Lemon Lemongrass Myrtle Orange Oregano Palma Rosa Tea Tree Thyme	Cypress Fennel Fir Geranium Juniper Lavender Melissa Peppermint Ravensara Rosemary	Cedar Cinnamon Clove Frankincense Helichrysum Myrrh Nutmeg Patchouli Rose Sandalwood Tarragon Vetiver
Antiviral	Basil Bay Laurel Bergamot Coriander Eucalyptus Grapefruit Lemon Myrtle Orange Oregano Palma Rosa Tea Tree Thyme	Black Pepper Cypress Fennel Fir Hyssop Juniper Lavender Marjoram Melissa Peppermint Pine Ravensara Rosemary	Benzoin Cedar Cinnamon Clove Frankincense Ginger Helichrysum Myrrh Patchouli Rose Sandalwood Tarragon

*Highest levels of chemical components: antibacterial, antifungal, antiseptic, and antiviral.

**Common in the all the categories: antibacterial, antifungal, antiseptic, and antiviral.

Non-toxic cleaning around the home can range from simple to complex. One can easily add essential oils to a sponge to wipe down counter tops; or to water when mopping floors or even to laundry to assist in disinfecting. Additionally, one can create homemade green cleaning products that will effectively and efficiently clean the home.

Although the essential oils used can be varied, below are a few Do-It-Yourself recipes from Andrea Butje's *Essential Living eBook Aromatherapy Recipes for Health and Home*.

Disinfecting Surface Cleaner (Makes one 16 oz spray bottle)

Ingredients:

15oz water
1 oz white vinegar
20 drops Eucalyptus essential oil
30 drops White Pine essential oil
30 drops Lemon essential oil

Directions:

1. Simply add the drops of essential oil into a 16 oz spray bottle full of water and vinegar.
2. Close well, shake and you are ready to spray

Deodorizing Bathroom Spray (Makes one 2 oz spray bottle)

Ingredients:

2 oz water
20 drops essential oil
For a Citrus Aroma use 8 drops Grapefruit essential oil, 7drops Lemon essential oil, 5 drops Orange essential oil
For a Floral Aroma use 5 drops Geranium essential oil, 5 drops Jasmine essential oil, 10 drops Lavender essential oil

Directions

1. Fill 2 oz spray bottle with 2 oz water.
2. Add the essential oils.
3. Shake vigorously before using.

Grout Scrub (Makes on 8 oz tub of grout scrub)

Ingredients:

1 cup baking soda (8 oz)
3 tablespoons castile soap
1 tablespoon white vinegar
10 drops White Pine essential oil
10 drops Tea Tree essential oil
10 drops Lemongrass essential oil

Directions:

1. Pour the baking soda into a 10 to 12 oz wide mouth plastic container (that has a fitted top)
2. Add the castile soap and mix.
3. Add the white vinegar and mix (it will bubble a little)
4. Add all the essential oils and mix, then put the cover on.

5. Place a small handful of the scrub on an abrasive sponge and clean the grout. (A toothbrush works well also!)

Window cleaner (Makes one 16 oz bottle)

Ingredients:

14 oz water
2 tablespoons white vinegar
2 tablespoons Lavender hydrosol¹
25 drops Lavender essential oil

Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients in spray bottle add the essential oils last. Then clean windows with paper towels, cloth or newspaper.

These are just a sample of recipes that can be created to green clean the home. Recipes are also available for everything from laundry and dish detergent to wood polish. A home can be truly cleaned and smell great, without harsh chemicals and sprays that simply cover up odors. Through the use of a few non-toxic products and essential oils, anyone can have a clean, healthy home.

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¹ Hydrosols are pure healing waters produced during distillation.

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