

Homemade Household Cleaners¹

Amanda Griffin and Randall A. Cantrell²

Are you on a budget? Running low on those household cleaners? Instead of heading to the store to buy those more expensive cleaners, make your own! Many homemade household cleaners can be made with just a few inexpensive products that will last a lot longer.



Figure 1. Budget-friendly homemade cleaners can save you money.
Credits: iStock/Thinkstock.com

The Basics

Cleaning Equipment

- Broom
- Vacuum cleaner (if you have carpets)
- Mop

- Cloth (you can use soft material from worn-out clothing, but first remove buttons, zippers, and anything that might scratch surfaces)
- Measuring cup
- Jars for mixing and/or storage (do not use containers that children associate with food)

Ingredients in Many Homemade Cleaners

The basic ingredients in many homemade cleaners are:

- Vinegar
- Rubbing alcohol
- Washing soda (can be found near the laundry detergent in most stores)
- Borax (also near the laundry section)
- Mild dish detergent
- Liquid bleach
- Baking soda
- Ammonia
- Water

Inexpensive Homemade Cleaners

Floors

VINYL FLOOR CLEANER

- 1 cup of white vinegar
- 1 gallon of warm water

WOOD FLOOR CLEANER

- ½ cup of vinegar

1. This document is FCS3319, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date July 2014. Revised October 2017 and July 2021. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.

2. Amanda Griffin, former Extension agent I, UF/IFAS Extension Jackson County; and Randall A. Cantrell, associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611. Adapted from *Keeping It Clean: Cleaning Supplies* by Mary Harrison.

- 1 gallon of water

The most important thing to keep in mind while cleaning wood floors is that they should never get overly wet. When you use this wood floor cleaner mixture, dip your sponge mop into the solution, squeeze until almost dry, and then begin to mop. Never put the cleaner directly on the floor. Dry any streaked or wet area with a clean towel as you clean the floor.

CERAMIC TILE FLOOR CLEANER

- ¼ cup of white vinegar (or more depending on how dirty)
- 1 gallon of water

Typically requires little-to-no scrubbing to remove most dirt, and doesn't leave a film like soap sometimes does when using hard water.

Windows/Glass WINDOW CLEANER

- ¼ cup rubbing alcohol
- ¼ cup white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 2 cups warm water

Combine all ingredients together in an empty spray bottle and shake well. You will need to shake it a little with each use if you see cornstarch accumulating at the bottom of the bottle. Use crumpled-up newspaper to shine the windows.

WINDOW AND GLASS CLEANER

- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 quart water

Apply to surface and wipe dry. To get a nice shine, use a natural linen or soft cloth. Newspaper also works.

General ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER

- 4 oranges
- White vinegar

Put the peel from four oranges in a quart jar, and fill with white vinegar. Let the product sit for about one week. Pour the product into a spray bottle and clean away.

EVERYDAY HOUSEHOLD CLEANER

- 2 tablespoons of liquid detergent/soap
- 2 tablespoons of ammonia
- 1 quart of water

Use for all general cleaning jobs.

SANITIZING SOLUTION

For hard surfaces such as cutting boards, counters, toys, doorknobs, cribs, and trashcans.

- 3 tablespoons of liquid bleach
- 1 tablespoon of liquid soap detergent
- 1 gallon of water

Wipe the surface and let stand for two minutes. Rinse and air dry.

DISINFECTING SOLUTION

For cleaning toilet bowls and for scrubbing grout in tile and tub areas, trashcans, and other surfaces you need to disinfect. The disinfecting solution can be placed in a spray bottle and sprayed onto surfaces. Note that all visible debris should be cleaned from surfaces before sanitizing or disinfecting.

- ¾ cup of household bleach
- 1 teaspoon of liquid soap
- 1 gallon of water

Laundry POWDER LAUNDRY DETERGENT

- 1 cup of Borax
- 1 cup of washing soda
- 1 bar Fels-Naptha soap
- Oxi Clean or other stain remover (optional)
- Fabric Softener Beads (optional)

Finely chop the bar of soap in a food processor. Combine all ingredients, and store the powders in a canning jar or other recycled container. Use 2 tablespoons (tbsps.) per load of laundry.

LIQUID LAUNDRY DETERGENT

- 4 cups of hot tap water
- 1 bar Fels-Naptha soap
- 1 cup of Arm & Hammer Super Washing Soda
- ½ cup of Borax
- Essential oils (optional)

Add 4 cups of hot water to a small saucepan. Grate the Fels-Naptha soap and add it to the saucepan. Heat at low temperature until the soap is melted. Stir the melted soap and water to mix the solution. Fill half of a 5-gallon bucket

with hot water. Add the melted soap, Borax, and washing soda. Fill the bucket to the top with more tap water. Let sit overnight to thicken. Stir, and dispense thickened soap into clean laundry-soap dispensers (use empty containers from commercial brand laundry detergent). Fill one half of each bottle, then top the container off with water. Shake before using. (Yields 10 gallons. For high-efficiency machines, use 1/4 cup per load. For top-loading machines, use 1/2 cup per load.)

Kitchen

REFRIGERATOR CLEANER

- 2 tablespoons of baking soda
- 1 quart of warm water

Wash the inside thoroughly using the refrigerator cleaner recipe (soap leaves an odor—do not use), including the shelves and drawers. Rub hard-to-clean spots with dry baking soda.

MILDEW CLEANER

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of chlorine bleach
- 1 gallon of water

Mix and put in a spray container, or apply with a brush. Apply to mildewed area, let stand for five minutes, and rinse with clear water.

Remember

Not only are you saving money by making homemade cleaners, you are also helping the environment. The materials in homemade laundry soap have no phosphates. Borax and washing soda are naturally occurring compounds. You can also recycle old milk jugs and reuse canning jars for dispensers. When making your own products, you can be reassured that your family isn't being exposed to harsh or harmful chemicals. (If you want to buy a cleaning product, find a multipurpose one.)

With all cleaning products remember:

- It is best to mix just what you need, and use it all.
- Be sure that the container has a label. If you make your own cleaner, always label it.
- Never put cleaners in food containers.
- Store cleaning solutions out of children's reach.

Note: Use caution when making homemade cleaners! Mixing bleach with ammonia or vinegar will create toxic fumes that are very dangerous to you lungs and breathing!

Reference

Non-Chemical Cleaners for the Household

https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-06/documents/lesson2_handout.pdf

<https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice>