

My Top 10 Favorite Cleaning Formulas By Annie B. Bond (aka Berthold-Bond)

Here are my favorite cleaning formulas, gleaned from years of researching the old folk remedies, and the best from my four books, including *Clean & Green: The Complete Guide to Nontoxic and Environmentally Safe Housekeeping*.

Most modern synthetic cleaning products are based on age-old formulas using natural ingredients that were passed down through the generations because the chemistry was based on good science. Going back to naturally-derived ingredients can be a way to make cleaning products that work, don't pollute, and save you money. Most are found in your kitchen cupboards. Mix and match with well-chosen and environmentally-friendly green cleaning products found in health food stores, and you can easily and simply transform your home into a nontoxic and healthy haven.

Nontoxic cleaning can give you a deep feeling of gratification in knowing that your family's health is protected, and that your home is more of a place for your bodies to rest and recuperate rather than promote harm.

As an added bonus, ounce for ounce homemade cleaning formulas cost about one-tenth the price of their commercial counterparts -- and that includes costly, but worthwhile essential oils and concentrated, all-purpose detergents for homemade recipes.

Note: Make sure to label all your homemade cleaning products, and keep them away from pets and children.

1. CREAMY SOFT SCRUBBER

Simply pour about 1/2 cup of baking soda into a bowl, and add enough liquid detergent to make a texture like frosting. Scoop the mixture onto a sponge, and wash the surface. This is the perfect recipe for cleaning the bathtub because it rinses easily and doesn't leave grit.

Note: Add 1 teaspoon of vegetable glycerin to the mixture and store in a sealed glass jar, to keep the product moist. Otherwise just make as much as you need at a time.

2. WINDOW CLEANER

1/4 - 1/2 teaspoon liquid detergent
3 tablespoons vinegar
2 cups water
spray bottle

Put all the ingredients into a spray bottle, shake it up a bit, and use as you would a commercial brand. The soap in this recipe is important. It cuts the wax residue from the commercial brands you might have used in the past.

3. OVEN CLEANER

1 cup or more baking soda
water
a squirt or two of liquid detergent

Sprinkle water generously over the bottom of the oven, then cover the grime with enough baking soda that the surface is totally white. Sprinkle some more water over the top. Let the mixture set overnight. You can easily wipe up the grease the next morning because the grime will have loosened. When you have cleaned up the worst of the mess, dab a bit of liquid detergent or soap on a sponge, and wash the remaining residue from the oven. If this recipe doesn't work for you it is probably because you didn't use enough baking soda and/or water.

4. ALL-PURPOSE SPRAY CLEANER

1/2 tsp. washing soda
a dab of liquid soap
2 cups hot tap water

Combine the ingredients in a spray bottle and shake until the washing soda has dissolved. Apply and wipe off with a sponge or rag.

5. FURNITURE POLISH

1/2 teaspoon oil, such as olive (or jojoba, a liquid wax)
1/4 cup vinegar or fresh lemon juice

Mix the ingredients in a glass jar. Dab a soft rag into the solution and wipe onto wood surfaces. Cover the glass jar and store indefinitely.

6. VINEGAR DEODORIZER

Keep a clean spray bottle filled with straight 5 percent vinegar in your kitchen near your cutting board, and in your bathroom, and use them for cleaning. I often spray the vinegar on our cutting board before going to bed at night, and don't even rinse, but let it set overnight. The smell of vinegar dissipates within a few hours. Straight vinegar is also great for cleaning the toilet rim. Just spray it on and wipe off. Straight vinegar reportedly kills 82 percent of mold.

7. LIGHTLY LAVENDER ANTIBACTERIAL SPRAY

1 cup water
20 drops pure essential oil of lavender

Pour the water into a spray bottle. Add the lavender essential oil and shake to blend. Spray on the surface and let set for at least 15 minutes, or don't rinse at all.

Makes: 1 cup spray

Shelf Life: Indefinite

8. LIGHT AND LEMONY DUSTING CLOTH

This simple-to-make formula will give your home a lovely lemon fragrance, while the acid in lemon juice works particularly well to pull dirt right out of the wood, leaving your

furniture sparkling clean. These fresh and clean smelling dusting clothes are great for your wood furniture.

2 or 3 tablespoons lemon juice
a few drops food-grade linseed oil or jojoba oil

Place the lemon juice in a bowl, add a few drops of the oil, and saturate dusting cloth with the liquid. Use the cloth to dust with.

9. MOLD KILLERS

Tea Tree Treasure

Nothing natural works for mold and mildew as well as this spray. I've used it successfully on a moldy ceiling from a leaking roof, on a musty bureau, a musty rug, and a moldy shower curtain. Tea tree oil is expensive, but a little goes a very long way. Note that the smell of tea tree oil is very strong, but it will dissipate in a few days.

2 teaspoons tea tree oil
2 cups water

Combine in a spray bottle, shake to blend, and spray on problem areas. Do not rinse.

Makes 2 cups

Preparation Time: Under a minute

Shelf Life: Indefinite

Storage: Leave in the spray bottle

10. HEAVY-DUTY ALL PURPOSE CLEANER

1 bucket warm water
1/2 cup washing soda

Wash surface, wearing gloves; then rinse.

For really tough jobs, make a thick washing soda paste by mixing it with water, and then spread the paste on the soot. Keep the paste damp by spraying every hour or so with a spray bottle. Leave the paste on overnight, and then rinse. Make certain to only use this formula on inert surfaces such as glass and stone, as this amount of washing soda can peel off paint, wax, etc.