

# SIMPLE WAYS TO GO GREEN BY CHANGING YOUR CLEANING ROUTINE



-Allen Martin

# ABSTRACT

As "green" cleaning becomes increasingly popular, more and more eco-friendly products are lining the shelves at retailers. Not only are they better for the environment, but cleaning products sans harsh chemicals and fragrances are also safer to use around children and pets, as well as anyone in your household with sensitive skin (or a sensitive sniffer). If you're ready to dip into the green cleaning movement, try incorporating one or two of these sustainable swaps into your rotation. As you add more eco-friendly habits into your cleaning routine, notice the difference in your household waste, indoor air quality, and overall health of your home. Start with these simple strategies to see how easy it can be to go green with your cleaning routine.

## WHAT IS GREEN CLEANING?



Green cleaning refers to using cleaning methods and products with environmentally friendly ingredients and procedures which are designed to preserve human health and environmental quality. Green cleaning techniques and products avoid the use of products which contain toxic chemicals, some of which emit volatile organic compounds causing respiratory, dermatological and other conditions. Green cleaning can also describe the way residential and industrial cleaning products are manufactured, packaged and distributed. If the manufacturing process is environmentally friendly and the products are biodegradable, then the term "green" or "eco-friendly" may apply.

# WHY GREEN CLEANING IS SO IMPORTANT FOR YOUR HEALTH?



The debate over whether natural cleaning products clean as well as or better than chemically based products is something people have struggled with for years. How do traditional cleaning products and methods compare to commercial cleaning alternatives? Decades ago there was no ‘Mr Clean’ – people found successful ways to make natural solutions work. Yet even though this is known as fact, some are skeptical – can natural products and ingredients really clean as efficiently as chemical based products?

## The Numbers

There are over 17,000 petrochemicals available for home use, only 30 percent of which have been tested for their effects on human health and on the environment. Currently, we know very little about the implications of these products which we are all breathing in often unknowingly on a regular basis. What we do know is that 5 billion pounds worth of chemicals are being used in the institutional cleaning industry each year. In addition to this, over 23 gallons of chemicals (that’s 87 liters!) on average are used by cleaners alone each year and 25% of those gallons are hazardous.

## Safety and Health

Many household and commercial cleaning products are labelled irritants or hazardous. We are advised to wear gloves or surgical masks when using them and to only use the products in **well-ventilated areas** to avoid inhaling them. This suggests that these products don't contain pleasant ingredients that anyone would want to surround themselves with.

Many people struggle with the pungent smells of chemical cleaners getting to the backs of their throats causing them to cough and splutter. It's best to have windows and doors open when cleaning, as otherwise it's possible to feel the products on our lungs when we breathe.

People who are drawn to **"delicious smelling"** cleaners should note that these very products often smell the way that they do because of synthetic fragrances created by additional chemicals rather than natural scents.

**Additionally, allergy sufferers often find that their reactions can be worsened by typical cleaning chemicals used around the home.** While dusting is one of the most commonly cited cleaning activities to trigger allergies, natural products- such as vinegar and lavender- can help reduce reactions while most hard chemical products do not.

Natural cleaning solutions can also help save money by reducing a dependence on an expensive array of cleaning products, each of which are targeted to clean only one type of surface in our homes. A number of the key ingredients for natural cleaning are items commonly found in our kitchen cupboards.

**Lemon juice, baking soda and white vinegar are all ingredients** that are used in green cleaning. These items are cheap to buy and can be used in cooking as well as cleaning so they also have multiple purposes!

To add a splash of fragrance, add a small dose of essential oils to products – such a little amount is needed in the preparation that the cost works out very low and you can change the smell as and when you want to. Check out the video below for more tips on how to make your own green cleaning products at home!

Use micro fiber cloths because the different fibers in the cloths break up dirt and retain it, plus they can be used alone, with water or soap or anything at all really. It is said that the average UK household spends £109 a year on cleaning materials.

Micro fibre cloths are machine washable so they really can last years and years – bringing the cost of cleaning down even more and reducing waste generated through disposable one-use materials like paper towel.

# DO YOU HAVE ECO-FRIENDLY CUPBOARD?



Is your cleaning cupboard full of miscellaneous products, plastic spray bottles and old ragged cloths? These miscellaneous cleaning products often contain toxic chemicals that cause skin allergies and respiratory problems. These chemicals, combined with plastic bottles, are considered hazardous waste that ends up in Australia's landfills and causes environmental damage.

According to reports, Australia annually sends 4.6 million tonnes of hazardous waste to landfills. This massive amount of waste is damaging our surroundings and environment.

You can help reduce this waste by making your cleaning cupboard eco-friendly using all-natural cleaning ingredients. Bond cleaners also use these natural cleaners on Sunshine Coast to make your homes look amazing. You should add these natural ingredients to your cleaning cupboard, but first, you must understand the dangers of chemical cleaning products.

## How Do Household Cleaners Harm Us?

Many of our cleaning supplies contain chemicals like volatile organic compounds that vaporise at room temperature. These compounds can cause allergies like



asthma and lead to chronic respiratory illnesses and skin diseases. If your cleaning chemical contains bleach or ammonia, it can harm your lungs and prove fatal if inhaled over a long period.

Therefore you must be careful when handling these chemical substances and can get rid of this waste in the ways given below.

## **How To Dispose Of Chemicals**

You can dispose of these chemicals and waste by doing the following:

It would help if you rinsed each empty chemical cleaner to remove all toxic traces. Do not burn these containers, as they can release toxic substances. Instead, you can puncture and crush these containers.

Contact your local government body about where to dispose of these solutions. If the local body asks you to dispose at a site, you must check if the site has a depth between 50cm and 1m.

This site should also not be near any residential areas so that it cannot contaminate any houses.

You can also avoid these dangerous chemicals entirely by using eco-friendly alternatives like the ones below.

## **Natural Cleaning Solutions**

Here are some non-harmful natural cleaning solutions that expert cleaners who offer bond cleaning Sunshine Coast have recommended:

### **1. Baking Soda**

Baking soda is one of the best natural cleaning agents you can use in your home as it is a mild alkali that dissolves dirt easily. Baking soda helps lift grease and dirt from stubborn stains, which dissolve in water and can be easily wiped away. Since baking soda is a natural product, it is not harmful and does not release toxic substances.

#### **Uses**

You can use baking soda with white vinegar to remove stubborn toilet rings and stains.

Baking soda is a good deodoriser and will help eliminate even the worst pet urine smells from your carpet.

You can also shine your stainless steel surfaces by making a paste of baking soda and water.

The best way to get rid of grout naturally is by sprinkling baking soda on it and then scrubbing it off after ten minutes.

## **2. White Vinegar**

The acetic acid in white vinegar is effective enough to remove cooking oil and grease from kitchen surfaces. The 5% acid in vinegar is also suitable for disinfecting surfaces to kill and prevent germs and bacteria. White vinegar is one of the universal cleaning substances used anywhere in your home. But avoid using vinegar on stone and marble surfaces as the acid can scratch and damage the material.

### **Uses**

It would be best if you used white vinegar in combination with dish soap and lemons as an all-natural cleaner.

The best way to get rid of limescale and mineral deposits on your showerhead is by spraying it with white vinegar and leaving it overnight.

White vinegar is also a good disinfectant, so you can use it to clean your hardwood floors and prevent germs and bacteria.

You also clean your mirrors and glass surfaces with white vinegar and cornstarch to remove stains and streaks.

## **3. Lemons + Salt**

Lemon contains citric acid that naturally cleans and bleaches surfaces, while Salt is an abrasive substance that lifts dirt.

When you use these two natural substances in combination with each other, you get an excellent abrasive cleaner. The best part is that it smells good and can be used as a natural air freshener.

### **Uses**

You can cut lemon rinds in half, dip them in Salt and then clean your cutting boards to eliminate all the dirt and bacteria.

You can also use lemon and Salt to remove stains on your floors and walls. Bond cleaning experts on Sunshine Coast also recommend using lemon juice and Salt to remove soap scum from your shower glass.

You can also sprinkle Salt all over your greasy pans and then scrub them with lemon rinds to dissolve and remove all this grease and dirt.

## **GO - GREEN WITH NATURAL CLEANING PRODUCTS**

You just want to keep your house clean. Seems simple enough—until you hear that some of your cleaning supplies could be inadvertently damaging the environment, not to mention your health. For a lot of people, the instinct is to go back to the basics—vinegar, bleach, microfiber cloths, etc. Here, we help you to brush up on the powers—and limitations—of these cleaning staples.

### **Vinegar**

#### **Does: Sanitize.**

Yeah, the stuff you use for salad dressing is also great at slashing bacteria. "You can go a long way toward reducing organisms by rubbing a surface with distilled white vinegar and water," says Philip Tierno, PhD, clinical professor of microbiology and pathology at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine.

#### **Doesn't: Disinfect.**

To disinfect, an ingredient must kill nearly all the microbes on a surface, which vinegar does not do. It's strongest (and, unfortunately, smelliest) in its undiluted form, says Jason Tetro, a microbiologist and the author of *The Germ Code* (\$18, amazon.com; \$18, bookshop.org). The more water you add, the less effective it becomes.

#### **Good to know:**

You can use a vinegar-and-water solution on some kitchen and bathroom countertops, on glass, and in the washing machine, but avoid using it on marble, granite, stone, and wood, because the acidity can damage the surface. To lift stuck-on grime, add baking soda to your vinegar solution and watch it bubble up.



# ESSENTIAL OILS

## **Do: Make DIY cleaners smell great.**

"Essential oils help vinegar-based cleaning solutions become a bit more pleasant, especially if you're new to green cleaning," says Becky Rapinchuk, a cleaning expert and the author of *Clean Mama's Guide to a Healthy Home* (\$18, amazon.com; \$19, bookshop.org). Choose oils labeled "100 percent pure" (like those from Plant Therapy), she adds, to make sure they don't contain unnecessary additives.

## **Don't: Always sanitize or disinfect.**

Studies have shown that clove and cinnamon essential oils may possess antibacterial properties, but they're not powerful enough to be the only sanitizing agent in DIY cleaning solutions. If you're looking for an essential oil-based product that can serve as a natural disinfectant (and not just a sanitizer), go for one with thyme oil as the active ingredient, Tierno suggests.

## **Good to know:**

To keep your cleaning routine completely au naturel, remove the very top layer (avoiding the pith) from an orange or lemon with a vegetable peeler. Add it to your spray bottle of vinegar water for a pleasant aroma.

## Natural Cleaning Guide: Sponge



### Chlorine Bleach

#### **Does: Disinfect.**

No DIY solution disinfects quite as well as bleach, and even experts who clean mostly green have it on hand. "Under my sink right now, you'll find baking soda, vinegar, dish soap, and a bottle of bleach," says Charles MacPherson, author of *The Pocket Butler's Guide to Good Housekeeping* (\$13, amazon.com; \$16, bookshop.org). To properly disinfect surfaces after you or a housemate gets sick, use  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of bleach per gallon of water. To disinfect after handling raw meat, use 1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water.

#### **Doesn't: Lead to environmental catastrophe.**

Bleach can be harmful in high concentrations, but careful, every-once-in-a-while household use is fine. A bit of bleach diluted with water going down your drain is acceptable.

### **Good to know:**

Nonchlorine bleach is gentler than chlorine bleach (it uses hydrogen peroxide to lift stains from clothing). However, there are no nonchlorine bleach products registered as disinfectants with the Environmental Protection Agency.

## **Steam**

### **Does: Sanitize without the use of chemicals.**

Superheated vapor is the ultimate green cleaner because it's just water, says Donna Smallin Kuper, a certified housecleaning technician. It can significantly reduce bacteria (the high temps essentially incinerate them), and the hot moisture loosens embedded dirt and grime, letting you use less elbow grease.

### **Doesn't: Work everywhere.**

On painted surfaces, like walls and furniture, steam can cause peeling. On certain other surfaces, like brick, marble, and wood, it can lead to buckling or warping.

### **Good to know:**

You can sanitize floor tiles with a steam mop. Try a handheld version, like Bissell's Steam Shot Handheld Hard Surface Steam Cleaner (\$40; amazon.com), on sealed countertops, glass shower doors, and even mattresses. Allergy sufferers may benefit from steam cleaning, as the process helps kill dust mites.

## **Microfiber Cloths**

### **Do: Clean better than paper towels or cotton rags.**

As the name implies, microfiber cloths are made up of teeny-tiny synthetic fibers, each of which helps pick up more debris than that wad of paper towels. They can also leave windows streak-free, whereas cotton rags may deposit lint.

### **Don't: Biodegrade.**

When you wash them, they can shed microscopic strands of plastic that end up in our waterways. Consider installing a Filtrol (\$140; filtrol.net) in your washing machine to catch those fibers and minimize pollution from all your laundry.

### **Good to know:**

Cotton cleaning cloths and cellulose-cotton Swedish dishcloths are sustainable and biodegradable (when they eventually wear out).

# Natural Cleaning Guide: Scrub Brush

## Disposable Wipes

**Do: Disinfect when you're in a pinch.**

We agree. Keeping a tub of these in your car is incredibly convenient.

**Don't: Decompose.**

Most cleaning wipes are not bio-degradable and can clog up sewer systems. In 2017, an 820-foot-long "fatberg," or huge mass of solid waste containing sanitary products (like wipes) and cooking grease, was discovered in a London sewer.

**Good to know:**

A reusable cloth without disinfectant is a fine option for routine cleaning, according to the Environmental Working Group.

## Anti-bacterial Products With Triclosan

**Do: Kill microbes.**

For decades, Triclosan has been a popular additive to products like soap and toothpaste to prevent bacterial contamination.

**Don't: Keep you safe from all dangerous strains of bacteria.**

A few studies have suggested that when exposed to triclosan, bacteria can become resistant to antibiotics. Triclosan was banned by the FDA, but only in certain soaps.

**Good to know:**

The FDA requires manufacturers to list ingredients. Companies like Procter & Gamble and SC Johnson post ingredients online. Rapinchuk suggests also researching items on third-party sites (such as ewg.org) or apps (Think Dirty, Shop Clean).

Products with the Green Seal, Greenguard, or EPA's SaferChoice logo have been certified safer for people and the planet.

## Ways to Waste Less

In addition to cutting back on wipes, focus on the number of packaged cleaners you own and what you can live without. Consider using up what you have, even if it's not a product you'd purchase again, then thoroughly clean spray bottles and fill them with your homemade solutions, suggests cleaning expert Melissa Maker.

If you want to immediately get rid of the packaged goods, ask a friend or neighbor if they would like to finish them. Recycle whatever you can—check with your local recycling program on how to handle different types of plastics or aerosols.

## **GO GREEN: IN THE BATHROOM**



The bathroom is the room where we begin and end each day, with a variety of cleaning routines designed to help keep us healthy. Odd then, that the room in which we clean our teeth, our skin and the rest of our bodies (not to mention dispose of our waste) is often filled with toxic chemicals, and, even then, not very clean itself. So, how do you stay clean, promote good health, and go green in your bathroom?

As with many sustainable lifestyle subjects, when it comes to going green in the bathroom, one hand washes the other. Eschewing excessive water use -- and thousands of gallons of wasted water -- avoiding a deluge of disposable trash, and a myriad of toxic cleaners supposed to make the room "safe" for your use, all can come from a few simple steps that combine to help you live greener in the bathroom.

So, to make your bathroom a greener place, we've compiled a bevy of tips to help clear the air, go with the low-flow, and keep the toxics out of your way. Changing

up your habits and greening your bathroom will help make the planet greener, your home healthier, and your personal health more robust. Read on for more.

## **Top Green Bathroom Tips**

### **Don't Let So Much Water Down the Drain**

There are a trifecta of water-saving opportunities in the bathroom. By installing a low-flow showerhead, a low-flow faucet aerator, and a dual-flush toilet, you'll save thousands of gallons of water each year. The first two are easy DIY jobs, and a toilet can be done with a little homework. To really go for the gusto, and go for a water-free toilet, check in to composting toilets.

### **Flush the Toilet with Care**

When it comes to using the toilets themselves, be sure you're reaching for toilet paper created from recycled sources--remember, rolling over is better than rolling under--and avoid using products made from virgin boreal forest trees. The Natural Resources Defense Council has a solid list of recycled paper sources, so you aren't literally flushing virgin trees down the toilet. And when it comes time to flush, close the lid before hitting the button to prevent the spread of bacteria around your bathroom. Ready for the next step? Install a dual-flush toilet or dual-flush retrofit on your current toilet.

### **Ditch Those Disposables**

Toilet paper is about the only "disposable" product allowed in your green bathroom, so when it comes time to clean up, avoid the temptation to reach for disposable products. That means paper towels and other disposable wipes should be replaced by reusable rags or microfiber towels for mirrors, sinks, and the like; when it comes time to scrub the toilet, don't even think about those silly disposable one-and-done toilet brushes. In the same vein, more and more cleaners are being sold in refillable containers, so you don't have to buy so much packaging and can reuse the perfectly-good spray bottle, instead of buying a new one each time you run dry on glass cleaner.

### **Think About What Goes in Your Sink**

Once you have your low-flow faucet aerator installed, your behavior can also help keep water flow down. Be sure to turn off the water while you're brushing your

teeth--some dentists even recommend a dry toothbrush--and you'll save six gallons of water each day (assuming you're diligent about brushing twice a day). Boys: if you shave with a wet razor, put a stopper in the sink and don't leave the water running. Half a sink-full of water will do the job.

## **Clear the Air with Green Cleaners**

Bathrooms are notoriously small and often poorly ventilated, so, of all the rooms in the house, this is the one that should be cleaned with green, non-toxic cleaners. Common household ingredients, like baking soda and vinegar, and a little elbow grease will do the job for most everything in the bathroom (more on that in a sec). If DIY isn't your style, there are a bevy of green cleaners available on the market today.

## **Take Green Cleaning into Your Own Hands**

Doing it yourself is a great way to insure that you're going as green as possible, since you know exactly what went in to the products you're using. A few reliable favorites: Spray surfaces that need cleaning--sinks, tubs, and toilets, for example--with diluted vinegar or lemon juice, let it sit for 30 minutes or so, give it a scrub, and your mineral stains will all but disappear. Getting lime scale or mold on your shower head? Soak it in white vinegar (hotter is better) for an hour before rinsing it clean. And to create a great tub scrub, mix baking soda, castile soap (like Dr. Bronner's) and a few drops of your favorite essential oil--careful, a little bit goes a long way here.

### **Keep Your Skin Free and Clear with Green Personal Care Products**

Anything that's a struggle to say three times fast doesn't belong in your bathroom, and that certainly goes for personal care products like soaps, lotions, and cosmetics. For example "anti-bacterial" soaps often include endocrine disruptors, which, in addition to breeding "supergerms" resistant to these cleaners, may be doing your body serious harm and are wreaking havoc on fish and other organisms after they escape into the water stream after you flush. That's just one example; remember the rule goes like this: If you can't say it, don't use it to "clean" yourself.

## **Go Green with Towels and Linens**

When it comes time to dry off, towels made from materials like organic cotton and bamboo are the way to go. Conventional cotton is one of the most chemically-intensive, pesticide-laden crops on the planet--to the tune of 2 billion



pounds of synthetic fertilizers and 84 million pounds of pesticides each year--causing a whole laundry list of environmental health problems for those who apply the pesticides and harvest the crop--not to mention the damage done to soil, irrigation, and groundwater systems. Bamboo, in addition to being a fast-growing sustainable alternative to cotton, is also reputed to have antibacterial qualities when spun into linens.

## Shower Yourself with a Safe Curtain

If your shower has a curtain, be sure to avoid polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic--it's pretty nasty stuff. The production of PVC often results in creating dioxins, a group of highly toxic compounds, and, once in your home, PVC releases chemical gases and odors. Once you're done with it, it can't be recycled and is known to leach chemicals that can eventually make their way back into our water system. So, be on the lookout for PVC-free plastic--even places like IKEA carry them now--or go for a more permanent solution, like hemp, which is naturally resistant to mold, as long as you keep your bathroom well-ventilated. Read these tips for protecting your natural curtain, including using treatment sprays to slow down mildew.

## Maintain Your New Green Ways

Once you go green, you'll want to keep it that way, so remember to do regular light maintenance--unclogging drains, fixing leaky faucets, etc.--with green in mind. Be mindful of mold, too.

## Green Bathrooms: By the Numbers

**21 percent:** Household water use that comes from the shower.

**26 percent:** Household water use that comes from flushing the toilet.

**1.5 percent:** Household water use that comes from using the bath.

**80 gallons:** Amount of water the average American uses a day.

**2.5 gallons:** Amount of water used per day by the rest of the world.

**260 gallons:** Amount of water used by the average household in the developed world.

**67 percent:** Water heating costs for households for showers alone.

**22 gallons:** Amount of water flushed down the toilet daily in the U.S.

**\$5:** Cost of a low flow shower head that will cut your consumption by 45 gallons per day.

**15,000:** Amount of water you can save per year by taking a navy shower.

**60 gallons:** Average amount of water used in taking a shower.

**3 gallons:** Amount of water used when taking a Navy shower.

# Green Bathrooms: Getting Techie

## A Navy shower

That's the term used for a water-saving technique that was started in the Navy to help save precious freshwater aboard ships. The basic idea is to hop in the shower, get wet all over, turn off the water while soaping up, and then rinse clean. The small change in routine makes a huge difference: a regular shower can use as much as 60 gallons of water, while a Navy shower can check in at about 3 gallons.

## Bathing like the Japanese

Bathing is a succession of steps and separated functions. The datsuiba is the first step, a dry room where you change out of your clothes. This is also where there is a sink and vanity; the washer and dryer also often reside here -- makes sense, right?

You then proceed to the area beside the tub and sit on a stool, where there is a faucet and a bucket. You don't have a shower that is running all the time while you soap up; you fill the bucket (or maybe use a hand shower) and get yourself wet, then soap up carefully, then rinse with the bucket or the hand shower. You have only used as much water as you needed to get clean, and you can stay as long as you want without waste. It is like a navy shower, but fun.

## Dual-flush toilets

These offer two buttons -- one for "number one" and one for "number two" -- that flush different amounts of water through the toilet to help clear your waste. They save water by more closely matching the volume of water used to the job, so you aren't flushing more than a gallon when half that amount will do the job. They're available both as new toilets and in retrofit packages for your existing flusher.

## Composting toilets

These toilets remove water from the equation almost completely, instead utilizing nature's composting system to turn your waste into fertilizer. Some composting toilets use electricity, and some electrical systems use fans to exhaust air and increase microbial activity. Others require the user to rotate a drum within the composting toilet to allow for a predominantly aerobic breakdown of waste.

"Self-contained" composting toilets complete the composting "in-situ," usually requiring an electric fan or good natural ventilation to exhaust air and promote microbial activity. "Central unit" models flush waste to a remote composting unit away from the toilet itself -- often just beneath it. Vacuum-flush systems can flush horizontally or upward.

## **Why should you avoid "antibacterial" soap?**

Beware of any soap that says "anti-bacterial." They usually contain Triclosan, an anti-bacterial and anti-fungal agent that's also an endocrine disruptor -- the same disruptive substance that's helping Bisphenol A make all sorts of news lately.

Like Bisphenol A, Triclosan has the potential to do pretty serious harm to our bodies (and those of our children) and can have more wide-ranging impacts when it leaves our bodies and enters the water system.

Triclosan reacts with sunlight to create dioxin, a highly carcinogenic and toxic family of compounds, and can react with the chlorine in our drinking water to form chloroform gas, a probably human carcinogen. This all adds up to one simple conclusion: stay away from anti-bacterial soaps and cleaners, please.

## **Mold in the bathroom**

Leaky pipes and faucets, and inadequate ventilation are most often the culprits of a moldy bathroom, so be sure you aren't leaking water by regularly checking your plumbing and fixtures.

Run the exhaust fan after a shower until the mirrors aren't foggy anymore, and if you don't have a suitable exhaust fan, you can open a window or door to be sure your bathroom dries out and doesn't encourage mold growth.

Mold can cause or aggravate allergies, asthma, and other respiratory maladies and health problems, so stopping it before it starts is worth your due diligence.

# **CONCLUSION**

Green cleaning products are typically safer for the environment and people's health than their nongreen equivalents.

A person who is interested in green cleaning and other household products should look for ones that list all their ingredients and are nontoxic, biodegradable, and free from dyes and fragrances.

It is also important to remember that green does not mean it is completely safe, so people should still use precautions when using or storing these products.

If a person is interested, they can try creating green cleaning products at home by using natural ingredients, and by following the recipes this article provides.

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