

spring clean naturally

These days there are many commercial earth-friendly products with which to clean. While they may be perfectly eco-friendly, they can also be more expensive than common household products you likely have in your home right now. A few smart choices can help you clean your home or office naturally—and economically too! The addition of essential oils such as lemon, tea tree or eucalyptus adds a pleasant, fresh scent as well as disinfectant properties.

Here's how you can make your place squeaky clean naturally.

BAKING SODA It's not just for absorbing smells. Create a paste by mixing baking soda with some tepid water. This nonabrasive cleanser can be used to clean tile counters, sinks and even bath tubs. Add a cup to your laundry to reduce odors too.

DISTILLED WHITE VINEGAR Eastern European women have long cleaned windows with vinegar and water and wiped the surface to a streak-free shine with newspaper. Mix one part vinegar to one part warm water. Use it on floors as well, and mirrors and glass—but not on marble. Add it to laundry to soften fabrics. The distinctive odor fades as the liquid dries.

LEMONS Lemon juice dissolves soap scum and hard water deposits. Grind up a peel in your garbage disposal to cleanse the drain. Add baking soda to half a lemon (without juice) and use it scrub out your sink and tub.

POWDERED OXYGEN BLEACH This is an eco-friendly form of bleach that releases oxygen to clean clothes and other materials. Made by treating natural soda ash or natural borax with hydrogen peroxide, oxygen bleach gets rid of dirt in a nontoxic way. It brightens fabrics and disinfects too.

ESSENTIAL OILS Made from the essences of plant, flowers, and fruits, many essential oils have natural antifungal and antiseptic properties. Tea tree, lemon and eucalyptus work particularly well for cleaning. Blend 10–20 drops of any of these oils with water in a typical plant mister bottle. Shake well before use to distribute the oil. Use it as an air freshener or to wipe down counters. Keep the oils tightly capped. Citrus essential oils can go rancid and have a shelf life of about one year after opening.

ORGANIC PLAIN YOGURT AND CUCUMBER After all that cleaning, you deserve a break! Give yourself a refreshing facial by smoothing on some plain yogurt and placing a couple of cucumber slices on your eyes. Kick your feet up and relax for 10–15 minutes. Rinse off the yogurt with plenty of cool water. There's no need to wash—your skin will be so soft and smooth you may not even need a moisturizer.

clean 'n green

You want to be able to get your home and work environment clean but you don't want to use abrasive products that have the potential to harm the environment: What do you do? Today's marketplace has a variety of products that will give you the same great results while still being environmentally friendly. Following are a few companies that can help you get clean while remaining green:

UNIVERSAL COMPANIES

www.universalcompanies.com
info@universalcompanies.com
p: 800-558-5571

PRODUCTS: Universal Companies offers a wide array of cleaning products that you can feel good about using, including their line of Eco Concepts plant-based solvents. These products, ranging from all-purpose cleaners to glass and appliance cleaners, are biodegradable and manufactured using sustainable and energy efficient methods.

SEVENTH GENERATION

www.seventhgeneration.com
p: 802-658-3773

PRODUCTS: Seventh Generation has been making environmentally friendly cleaning products for 18 years. The products range from all-purpose cleaners to paper supplies — all of which are nontoxic and biodegradable.

FOR MORE TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE YOUR PRACTICE GREEN, READ THE 'GOING GREEN' ARTICLE IN THE FALL 2007 ISSUE OF MTJ.