Inexpensive Cleaning Recipes

25¢

Folks used to trade hamburger recipes. Now they beat the high cost of living by trading cleaning recipes. The following recipes for home-made cleaners work well, cost little, and are easy to make. They use ingredients already on hand in most homes or at grocery, paint, hardware, and drug stores. These ingredients include ammonia, vinegar, baking soda, washing soda, whiting (sold at paint stores), kerosene, turpentine, and boiled linseed oil.

General Household Cleaner

Mix 2 tablespoons household ammonia, 2 tablespoons liquid detergent, and 1 quart water. Use for cleaning kitchen countertops, and the outsides of ranges and refrigerators.

Window and Mirror Cleaner

Try one of these –

√Add 4 tablespoons of household ammonia to 1 quart of warm water. Use this cleaner for the removal of heavy, greasy soil found on glass surfaces inside homes.

√Add 1 tablespoon kerosene to 2 quarts of warm water for light greasy soil.

√Use 2 tablespoons vinegar to 1 quart of warm water. Vinegar is a mild acid which may remove the rust or lime deposits left on the outsides of windows. (However, a commercial rust remover containing oxalic acid or hydrochloric acid may be needed to remove a stronger accumulation.)

Before using any cleaner, dust windows first with a soft cloth or paper towel. Put on the window cleaner with a cloth or sponge. Rub dry and polish with a newspaper or cloth. Be careful not to spill cleaner on the window sash or sill.

Kitchen Drainpipe Cleaners

Once a month, flush ½ pound washing soda to 2 cups boiling water down the drain. Then rinse.

To cut stubborn grease in a drain pipe, pour a little kerosene into the pipe at night. Let it stand overnight. Then flush the drain with water.

Removing Rust Stains

The brown rings around faucets and rust spots on faucets and window glass can be removed with an acid. Acids are also needed to remove lime deposits. A light stain or accumulation can be removed with a mild acid such as lemon juice or vinegar. For stubborn rust stains, it is best to obtain a commercial rust remover from a grocery store. You can, however, make your own rust remover with oxalic acid, which is sold at some drug stores. Rust removers for stubborn stains are dangerous.

Oxalic acid is a strong poison. There is danger of swallowing oxalic acid if it is transferred from sinks or cleaning cloths and brushes to foods, dishes, or toothbrushes. The area being cleaned should be thoroughly rinsed with water. Cleaning cloths and brushes should be disposed of.

Hydrochloric acid is a strong acid which can burn skin, eyes, and clothing.

Both of these hazardous substances should be stored where children can't reach them.

To make a rust remover –

- Dissolve 1 teaspoon of oxalic acid in 1 cup of hot water.

- Apply oxalic acid with a cloth. Rub area with a brush. Use repeated applications if needed.

- Rinse area thoroughly with water. Dispose of leftover oxalic acid solution and cleaning cloths and brushes.

Extension Circular 1208 • Oregon State University Extension Service • September 1984

Soap Jelly

In a wide-mouth quart jar put one cup of soap shavings or soap flakes. Place a metal spoon in the jar, then pour in very hot water and stir. Cover jar until all of the soap has dissolved. Let it stand until it jells. Combine soap jelly with other ingredients to make cleaners for porcelain, metal, or painted surfaces.

Ceramic Tile and Porcelain Cleaners

Ceramic bath tile and procelain – used in many bath tubs, sinks, and toilets – are easily scratched by commercial scouring powders. These surfaces can be damaged beyond repair and collect soil readily. New ceramic tile and procelain can be cleaned with granular or liquid detergents. Or used one of these homemade recipes for ceramic tile or porcelain:

- Mix 1 cup whiting or baking soda with ½ cup of pine oil. Store in a covered jar and use as needed.
- Add 2 tablespoons ammonia or kerosene to 1 cup of soap jelly. Keep in a covered jar and use as needed.
- Mix 4 parts whiting with 1 part soap jelly. Store in a covered jar and use as needed. This mild scouring agent will not injure most surfaces.
- Make a stiff paste by mixing a little ammonia or kerosene with whiting. Use as a stain remover. Wash with soapy water. Rinse well. (This cleaner may also be used as a stain remover on chromium faucets, aluminum window frames, and laminated plastic countertops.)

Cleaning Painted Surfaces

To make a gentle cleaner –

Add enough mild detergent or soap jelly to warm water to make light suds. Dust the painted surface thoroughly. Dip a soft cloth in the cleaning solution; wring it out Wash a small area at a time. Rinse well with a damp cloth then wipe dry with a dry cloth.

To remove finger prints or heavy soil –

√Mix thoroughly ¼ cup whiting and 1 tablespoon soap jelly. Apply the cleaner with a soft cloth and rub lightly Rinse well with a damp cloth to remove whiting, or

√Mix ¼ cup kerosene with ¼ cup vinegar. Rub over the soiled area. Wipe dry with a dry cloth. (This cleaner should be used only on light-colored painted surfaces.)

Dustless Cloth

Keep furniture clean with treated cloths which gather dust instead of scattering it. Find a clean, lintless cloth. Place it in a small screw-top jar which has been coated with a few drops of furniture-polishing oil, or wax. Cover tightly and leave overnight. The cloth will absorb just enough oil or wax to dust and polish at the same time. (On waxed furniture surfaces, use cloths treated with wax. Oil will soften wax.)

Furniture Polish

In a screw-top jar, mix equal parts of:

- Denatured alcohol (from a hardware store)
- Strained fresh lemon juice (not canned or frozen)
- Olive oil
- Gum turpentine

To apply:

Shake before using. Apply polish with a clean, absorbent, lintless cloth. Rub furniture. Polish with a dry woolen cloth. Cover jar and store polish for future use.

Furniture-Cleaner-Conditioner

A furniture-cleaner-conditioner for natural wood finishes improves wood in these ways –

√Cleans furniture which has natural wood finish. Use on varnish, lacquer, or shellac. But with shellac, use very little cleaner. To find out if the finish is shellac, sponge a little denatured alcohol on the underside of the furniture. If it is shellac, the finish will soften and come off.

√Hides scratches.

√Takes away cloudiness and dullness from smoke, grease, and dust.

√Protects from dryness and heat

To make the cleaner

Use pure gum turpentine and boiled linseed oil. (Hardware stores sell boiled linseed oil. Don't boil your own, because you could start a fire.)

Pour one part gum turpentine and three parts boiled linseed oil in a glass jar with a screw top lid.

For the job, you will need –

Old tooth brush, pad of number 000 steel wool, cleaner, clean cloths. small can of hot water, saucer, and pan.

To use

- Work outside or in a well-ventilated room. Inside, protect the work place with paper.
- Heat some water and pour into an old cup or small can placed on a saucer.
- Shake cleaner in the bottle well. Then pour enough cleaner into the can to cover the water. Do not stir.
- Dip a clean cloth into the oily layer in the can.
- Clean just a little of the furniture at a time with the cloth. Put very little on furniture joints because the glue gets soft.
- Use an old tooth brush to clean carvings and joints.
- If dirt is hard to get off, use number 000 steel wool (a fine steel wool). Dip steel wool in oil and rub lightly with the wood grain.
- Dip a clean cloth in clear, warm water; wring out water and wipe off furniture (wring cloth very dry if furniture has a shellac finish).
- When water gets cold, empty the container and start with fresh hot water. Do not reheat. It can cause a fire and also becomes gummy.
- Burn oily rags and papers when you are all done. Or keep them in a covered trash can until they can be picked up.
- Keep cleaner tightly covered in a jar.
- Use cleaner once a year – the rest of the time, dust furniture and polish with oil furniture polish, not wax.

The Oregon State University Extension Service provides education and information based on timely research to help Oregonians solve problems and develop skills related to youth, family, community, farm, forest, energy, and marine resources.

Extension's home economics program offers educational opportunities to help individuals and families manage their resources to meet needs for food, clothing, finance, shelter, parenting, and human relationships.

This publication reprinted from a Cooperative Extension Service of New Mexico State University publication. It was reviewed for use in Oregon by Extension home economics specialists.

Extension Service, Oregon State University, Corvallis, O. E. Smith, director. This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties.