

Green cleaning

The green cleaning alternatives below have minimal impact on the environment, are cheaper to buy and require less plastic packaging than commercial cleaners.

If buying commercial cleaners, avoid chlorine – a by-product of this is the highly-toxic dioxin – and phosphates, which cause algal blooms in waterways. Choose products with plant oils as the surfactant, rather than petrochemicals. Look for the biodegradability standard – Australian Standard AS 4351 or the International Standard ISO 7827, which is stricter.

Microfibre cleaning cloths

Microfibre cloths are used with just water and no other cleaning agents.

The densely packed microfibers (made from polyester and nylon blends) attract dirt and grime, which are then trapped in the fibres until the cloths are rinsed out.

They are made to suit different applications, from floors to cars, to spectacles and windows.

Dampen the cloth for cleaning surfaces such as stoves, baths and benches. Use dry for dusting.

Bicarbonate of soda

Bi-carb is an effective, lightly abrasive general-purpose cleaner. Mix with water to form a light paste for cleaning baths, sinks, toilet bowls etc.

To clean the **oven**, apply the paste with a bit of lemon juice mixed in to a warm oven and leave overnight. Wipe off with a damp sponge.

Note: putting some aluminium foil or an old baking tray on the bottom of the oven will prevent spills from sticking in the first place. Also, cleaning up any spills immediately makes the job much easier!

Drains can be unblocked by putting ½-1 cup bi-carb soda in the drain and pouring vinegar down a bit at a time until it stops fizzing (2-3 mins). Follow with hot water.

Fridges can be deodorised with bi-carb – just put an open packet in the fridge after cleaning. It will absorb any odours.

Grease can be removed from **fabrics** by pouring hot water on stains and covering with dry bi-carb.

For dirty **saucepans**, add cold water and one or two tablespoons of bi-carb to the saucepan, then bring to the boil. When cool, clean off with a scourer.

This mixture can also be used to remove **mould**.

White vinegar

Vinegar is lightly acidic (good for dissolving grease) and mildly antiseptic.

For cleaning **windows and mirrors**, use ½ to 1 cup of vinegar to one cup of water. Use old newspaper to wipe these surfaces clean.

To remove **mould** in the bathroom, wipe vinegar onto surfaces and leave overnight. Rinse with plain water.

For **floors**, use a cup of vinegar in half a bucket of warm water.

For **toilets**, sprinkle on a cup of vinegar and leave overnight. If badly stained, scour with bi-carb.

Use as a **natural fabric softener** by adding ½ a cup of vinegar to the rinse cycle of your washing machine.

To remove carpet stains, sprinkle with corn flour and leave for 20-30 minutes, then scrub with 1 cup vinegar mixed with 3 cups of warm water.

Clean **microwaves** by boiling a cup of vinegar in the microwave. Wipe surfaces clean with a cloth afterwards.

Important note: DO NOT mix vinegar with bleach or ammonia – the combination produces toxic fumes.



Lemon

Lemon dissolves soap scum and hard water deposits.

Use lemon to clean and shine brass and copper.

Cut a lemon in half and sprinkle with bi-carb to scrub dishes, sinks and countertops.

Mix ½ cup of lemon juice with 1 cup of olive oil to polish wooden furniture.

Hot water

Hot water is great from cleaning EVERYTHING.

Hot water is especially effective for mopping floors.

Pure soap

Pure soap is 100% biodegradable.

For washing dishes, use a cake of pure soap in a soap shaker.

For washing clothes, dissolve soap as above, or use pure soap flakes dissolved separately in hot water.

For cleaning laminates, tiles and stainless steel use soap with a plastic scourer.

Essential oils

Essential oils can be added to one of the above products or to water to enhance their performance when cleaning toilets, floors, walls, basins etc.

Eucalyptus oil removes sticky substances from hard surfaces. It also cuts oil/grease in clothing and is a strong antiseptic.

Tea tree oil is a natural disinfectant with antibacterial properties. It also kills mould and mildew.

Lavender oil disinfects and smells great.

Pine oil is often used to clean and deodorise.

Citrus oils cut and absorb grease and can be used to oil furniture and flooring.

Thyme oil is antifungal, antiviral and antibacterial.

Jasmine oil cleans, whitens and kills mould and mildew.