

# Homemade Cleaning Products – What You Need to Know

by M.D. CREEKMORE on FEBRUARY 1, 2012

This is a guest post and entry in our [non-fiction writing contest](#) by Lynn T

My first prepping goal was to stock a year's worth of everything we normally use that has a year plus shelf life. This took a few months but we were able to accomplish the goal. (We did allow for freezer storage for this interim goal, so we're really more prepared to not have to buy groceries for a year than being REALLY prepared if things hit the fan.

One thing I noticed is that the storage takes up A LOT OF ROOM! We have a bedroom, a walk-in closet, an upstairs 'landing area' plus several other small areas for all of the storage. We want to downsize when we buy land soon, so I've been trying to figure out how streamline as much as possible.

Over the past several months I have also started getting more concerned about many of the chemicals we bring into our house, and decided to try some of the homemade green cleaners I've read about. After using a few of them I realized how much less storage space they take up. Most of the homemade cleaners utilize common ingredients, so you could theoretically make all of the cleaners you need from a pretty short list of storage items. I also realized that most of the ingredients are a lot cheaper than buying pre-made cleaners. There are a few items that require an up front investment (like essential oils) but the amount used in these is very small so they will last a very long time.

They are also better for your family and the environment.

I've spent a lot of computer time looking for recipes. I read reviews, cross-searched ingredients to find other sources that use the same ingredients for cleaning, and looked for multiple blogs/forums/sites that 'touted' identical or very similar recipes. I compiled a group of recipes for my Home Notebook and would like to share these with you. I've also included an ingredient list explanation at the bottom.

**Disclaimer:** Although we have made and currently use several of these, I have not tried all of them. We are still in transition because we have so many products in storage. I wanted to give credit for the recipes, but since I didn't save the sources when I copied them, and since I visited many sites with the same recipes, I wasn't able to find many of the real sources, so my apologies!

## Homemade Cleaners

### Lavender Anti-Bacterial Spray

- 1 Cup water
- 20 drops lavender essential oil

It's smells great and lavender is naturally antibacterial.

### All-Purpose Cleaner

- 3 Tablespoons vinegar
- 1/2 Teaspoon washing soda
- 1/2 Teaspoon castile soap
- 2 Cups hot water

It's a great daily cleaner on everything from counters to floors. Be careful when mixing this. It will bubble a lot . . . so don't double up to fill up your container! And mix over the sink just in case.

### Scouring Powder

1. Make a paste of baking soda and warm water
2. Make a paste of baking soda with a few drops of castile soap and warm water

### Grease Cleaner

- 2 Cups water
- 1/4 Cup castile soap

- 10 drops lavender oil

### Bath & Sink Cleaner

This makes a thick paste like cleaner. So use a squirt bottle (like a plastic ketchup/mustard bottle from the dollar store)

- 2/3 Cup baking soda
- 1/2 Cup castile soap
- 2 Tablespoons vinegar
- 1/2 Cup water
- A few drops of Tea Tree oil

### Dishwasher Rinse Aid

Use plain white vinegar in the rinse aid compartment.

### Dishwasher Soap Recipe

- 1 cup borax
- 1 cup washing soda
- 1/4 cup kosher sea salt
- Two packets of Unsweetened Lemonade-Flavored Kool-Aid

\*\*\*\*Only lemon, other flavors will dye your dishwasher!\*\*\*\*

Put all of it in the container and shake it up. (It tends to get clumpy after sitting but a good shake will loosen it up). Per load you only need tablespoon or so into each cup of your dishwasher. I read that it can leave a film on dishes if you don't use rinse aid. So use the vinegar in your rinse aid compartment OR in the bottom of the dishwasher. It was also recommended to wash on hot cycle.

Source: [decorganizecrafts.blogspot.com](http://decorganizecrafts.blogspot.com)

### Homemade Fabric Softener

- 6 cups HOT water
- 3 cups white vinegar

- 2 cups Suave Refreshing Waterfall Conditioner {or other favorite scent}

Mix conditioner & hot water well, until conditioner is dissolved completely. Add the vinegar, and mix well. Store in a large container {empty fabric softener container, empty large vinegar bottle, etc} Pour into a downy ball... or use approx. 2 tbsp. in the fabric softener spot in your laundry machine... then wash!

Source: [thefrugalgirls.com](http://thefrugalgirls.com)

### Homemade Laundry Detergent

- 1 5.5 ounce bar Fels Naptha soap
- 1/2 cups washing soda
- 1/2 cups borax
- Water

Using a cheese grater or food processor, grate the entire 5.5 ounce bar of Fels Naptha, finely.

*Powdered laundry detergent:* In a container that has a tight-fitting lid, combine the grated Fels Naptha, washing soda and borax. Stir to mix well. Store in a sealed container that is properly labeled. Use 1 to 2 tablespoons in a front-loading machine, and up to 1/4 cup in a top loader. Note: The amount required depends greatly on the hardness of your water.

Experiment by using the lesser amount, and then increase as necessary.

Cost: About 15 cents per load when using 2 tablespoons.

*Liquid laundry detergent:* Place grated Fels Naptha into a cooking pot. Add enough hot water to cover and heat over low heat, stirring, until soap is melted, not boiling. Remove from stove and pour into a large bucket that has a lid. Add washing soda, borax and 3 gallons of hot water. Stir until well incorporated. Cover and allow to sit overnight. In the morning stir again. Use 1/2 cup to 1 cup per load, experimenting with the lesser amount to start, and then increasing as necessary. Note: The liquid version will be "gel-like." Some call it gloppy and gelatinous. This is normal. Simply give it a quick stir before each use. Cost: About 3 cents per load using 1/2 cup.

What, no suds?! This detergent does not produce suds. Suds should never be considered visual evidence that a detergent is working. Dirty water is the sign that the detergent is doing its job. Because it does not create suds, this

is the perfect product to be used in HE front-loading washing machines.  
Source: [debtproofliving.com](http://debtproofliving.com)

### Foaming Dish or Hand Soap

Re-use your foaming soap pump container! Mix your choice of liquid dish or hand soap with warm water at a ratio of 5:1 (water to soap), mix gently.

### Homemade 409 Recipe

- 2 Tbsp. Distilled White Vinegar
- 1 Tsp. Borax
- 1/8 cup Dawn Dish soap
- 1 cup Hot Water

Pour vinegar, borax and hot water into a spray bottle. Then continue filling spray bottle with cool water. Add Dawn last. {no need to shake}

Source: [thefrugalgirls.com](http://thefrugalgirls.com)

### Homemade Glass Cleaner

- 1/4c. rubbing alcohol
- 1/4c. white vinegar
- 1 Tbsp cornstarch
- 2c. warm water

Combine everything in a spray-bottle, and shake well. Shake well before using, too, as the cornstarch might settle at the bottom (and subsequently plug the spray mechanism if it's not mixed in well).

Source: [crunchybetty.com](http://crunchybetty.com)

**NOTE:** when beginning to use vinegar (plain or 50/50) to clean windows and mirrors after having used commercial glass cleaners, it may be necessary to add several drops of dish washing liquid to your solution for the first few cleanings to remove the buildup from the surface. I'm not sure if the cornstarch has the same effect or if the dish soap still needs to be added the first few times.

## Homemade Furniture Polish

- Olive oil, walnut oil, or jojoba (my preference as it doesn't go rancid)
- Water
- Lemon juice

Blend 1 teaspoon oil, 1 teaspoon water and a squeeze or two of lemon juice in a small bowl. Place a small amount of the mixture on a soft cloth. Wipe the polish onto a piece of furniture and give it a good buff.

The oil leaves furniture with a glossy shine, while the lemon juice cuts the oil so it doesn't go rancid (as well as giving a fresh scent that lingers in the air).NOTE: a small amount on the cloth goes a long way!

Make the mixture as you go, so as to create less waste. You don't want to leave this mixture sitting around because it will probably go bad before you use it again. If you want a more shelf stable version, use jojoba and replace the lemon juice with white vinegar. Use Olive or walnut oil to polish food surfaces (cutting boards, serving platters, wood bowls, etc).

## Ingredients

**Lavender Essential Oil** – Essential oils can be found online or at health food stores. I bought a collection at Sprouts Market on one of my trips to town. They are pricey but the small bottles last a LONG time.

**Tree Tea Oil** – can be found at health food store and at most drug stores. Tree Tea oil has a lot of other uses around the home. But it has a very strong odor!

**Castile Soap** – an all natural soap that is also very strong so a little goes a long way. I use Dr. Bronners and found it at CVS. It is also sold at health food stores and I believe Target.

**Washing Soda** – Sodium Carbonate is a strong base that works great as a laundry detergent and has a ton of uses around the house. I use Arm & Hammer Super Washing Soda, found in the laundry section of my grocery store. NOT TO BE CONFUSED with baking soda!

**Borax (Sodium Tetraborate)** – is a natural mineral compound. According to a chemistry.about.com article, it has many uses in the home as a natural laundry booster, multipurpose cleaner, fungicide, preservative, insecticide, herbicide, disinfectant, desiccant, and ingredient in making ‘slime’. Borax crystals are odorless, whitish (can have various color impurities), and alkaline. Borax is not flammable and is not reactive. It can be mixed with most other cleaning agents, including chlorine bleach. I found 20 Mule Team Borax in the laundry section of my grocery store as an ‘all natural laundry booster and multi-purpose household cleaner’.

**Jojoba oil** – is actually a wax ester. It is all natural, shelf stable, and is non-comedogenic. It has many health uses, including eye make-up remover, lip balm, massage oil, moisturizer. I found organic Jojoba at a health food store.

**Fels Naptha Soap** – this is a laundry soap found in a soap bar. Many people experience difficulties in finding it, but I found it in the laundry section at my local (rural) grocery store. It is also supposed to be good for poison oak and ivy. **HOWEVER**, this is not an all natural/pure solution. Many people have said they substitute Kirk’s Castile Bar soap, ZOTE!, or even Ivory if the ingredients in Fels Naptha bother them.