

March/April 2007 Don't Let Your Health Go Down the Drain by Jennifer Urezio

Cleaning is one of my least favorite household tasks. Until recently, I thought a house that smelled like a chemical factory was a safe house. That was until I read the labels on my cleaning products. Many of my favorite brands were classified as corrosive. According to the safety glossary of Physical and Theoretical Chemistry Laboratory, Oxford University, "...a corrosive material is one which causes damage to skin, eyes or other parts on the body on contact." I was shocked, alarmed and motivated to find alternatives!

I started looking for other ways to clean my home that wouldn't harm me or my pets. My first step on the road to "clean" living was to toss all those products out and to get my hands dirty in research. What I discovered was that most of the answers were already in my kitchen cabinets. Vim and Vinegar Found in any supermarket and inexpensive, plain white vinegar, is a versatile cleaner that can really pack a punch. Vinegar (aka acetic acid) is clear, colorless and organic. It's safe for humans and the environment and because it is an acid it just eats away at the dirt. Vinegar can be used right out of the bottle for really tough jobs or diluted in water (50/50) for surface cleaning. Just Not for Baking I live in an old Victorian house with a sink from the 1920s. My solution for getting years of dirt off the surface of the sink was baking soda. Its abrasive quality is great for ovens, counter tops, and sink stains. Simply shake some on the dirty area, add a little water, and scrub. Wipe down with a wet cloth and you will be amazed by the results. I use baking soda and a couple of drops of tea tree essential oil, which is an antiseptic on my sink and the shower stall. Essential Cleaning I also recommend cleaning with essential oils. Add a couple of drops to your cleaning bucket or a spray bottle full of water. Certain essential oils contain antiseptic and antibacterial properties that are perfect for cleaning. Some of my favorites oils are lemon (an antiseptic that removes gum, oil, grease and crayon), Young Living's Purification (a blend of Citronella, lemongrass, rosemary, Melaleuca alternifolia {tea tree}, lavandin and myrtle essential oils) that can be diffused to help purify and cleanse the air or put in a spray bottle to freshen up the garbage can) and Pine (bactericidal and antimicrobial). Now when I'm done cleaning the house it smells like the woods and sweet lemons.

(sidebar) Back to Basics Cleaning

Essential Oils Make sure any essential oil you use is therapeutic grade. These oils are typically more expensive but well worth every penny. Therapeutic grade oils can be ingested so you'll never have to worry about your cleaning supplies affecting your health. I recommend the following oils: Lemon: counter tops, dishcloths, bathroom fixtures Pine: non-wood floors, room deodorizer Eucalyptus: to kill dust mites (add ½ ounce to a bottle of liquid detergent)

Recommended Reading Green This! Volume 1: Greening Your Cleaning by Deirdre Imus

Naturally Clean: The Seventh Generation Guide to Safe & Health, Non-Toxic Cleaning by Emily Main

Clean & Green – The Complete guide to Nontoxic and Environmentally Safe Housekeeping by Annie Berthold-Bond

Going Green Cleaning Shaklee - shaklee.com With everything from laundry powder to stain removers -- this company believes that removing dirt shouldn't be at the cost of the earth.

Bio-Kleen – www.biokleen.com Earth friendly, non-aerosol, biodegradable, concentrated cleaners that control cost and optimize performance. Everything from dish detergent called Dish Demon to window cleaner called Glass Kleen.

Jennifer Urezio is the founder of Blooming Grove Herbal Remedies. She is a holistic educator and an intuitive. She teaches people about using essential oils, creating tranquil environments, and how to tap into their intuitive nature. She also has an all-natural line of bath and body products. For more information visit bloominggrove.net