

MSU Extension Publication Archive

Archive copy of publication, do not use for current recommendations. Up-to-date information about many topics can be obtained from your local Extension office.

Cleaning “on a Shoestring”
Michigan State University
Cooperative Extension Service
(N.D.)
4 pages

The PDF file was provided courtesy of the Michigan State University Library

Scroll down to view the publication.



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Departments of
Human Environment and Design
Agricultural Engineering
Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension Bulletin E-818

CLEANING "ON A SHOESTRING"

FILE COPY
DO NOT REMOVE

Cleaning on a shoestring can be approached two ways--from the standpoint of time or money. You can create your own home-care products or buy commercial products. Home-created products often are less expensive but require time to prepare. Many cleaning products are basic ingredients that have been pre-mixed, perfumed and packaged in bottles or aerosol cans. These products may cost more but take less time to prepare.

Read labels of commercial products carefully, since many products are abrasive and damage surfaces. Try your own home-care products. You may like them better!

Basic Ingredients for Creating Home-Care Products

Home-care recipes include ammonia, vinegar, baking soda, washing soda, whiting, mineral spirits, linseed oil and soap jelly. Look for them at supermarkets and paint, hardware or drugstores.

Remember: Never mix chlorine bleach, or any cleaner with chlorine as an ingredient, with ammonia or any other cleaner.

To make soap jelly, use: 1 cup shaved bar soap or soap flakes and 1 quart boiling water.

Dissolve shaved soap or soap flakes in boiling water. When entirely melted or dissolved, pour into wide mouth jar. Let stand in a cool place until it jells.

General Household Cleaners

Try this homemade cleaner: 2 tablespoons ammonia, 2 tablespoons liquid detergent, 1 quart water. Mix and use for general household cleaning.

Windows and Mirrors

Try one of the following solutions:

- Add 4 tablespoons household ammonia to 1 quart of warm water (for heavy, greasy soil).
- Add 2 tablespoons vinegar to 1 quart of warm water (for water spots).
- Use 1 tablespoon washing soda to 1 quart of warm water.

First remove surface soil with tissue or soft cloth. Then apply cleaning liquid with a soft cloth or sponge. Rub dry and polish with newspaper or cloth. Avoid spilling ammonia on painted or varnished woodwork, as it may injure the finish.

Porcelain

Porcelain enamel on sinks, bathtubs and lavatories is a glass surface. Strong scouring powder may scratch the finish beyond repair. Use these cleaners for porcelain enamel:

- Add 2 tablespoons ammonia or kerosene to 1 cup of soap jelly. Store in covered jar and use as needed.
- Mix 4 parts whiting and 1 part soap jelly. Store and use as needed. (This mild scouring agent will not injure most surfaces.)
- Mix 1 cup of whiting or baking soda with 1/2 cup pine oil. Use as needed.
- Make stiff paste of whiting mixed with ammonia. Wash with soapy water and rinse well. (Try this for removing stains.)

Light rust stains may be removed with lemon juice. Rinse thoroughly. For more stubborn rust stains, try a weak solution of oxalic acid (1 teaspoon of oxalic acid in 1 cup of hot water). Rinse immediately with ammonia solution. Then rinse well with water. CAUTION: Oxalic acid is poisonous. Handle it carefully. Label it "poison" and keep out of reach of children.

Toilet bowls are made of vitreous china, which can stand strong cleaners. Clean them frequently with detergent. Washing soda can be used only inside the bowl. It is too strong to use on other surfaces.

Drain Pipes

Flush with 1/2 pound washing soda to 2 cups boiling water. Then rinse.

Furniture

Keep furniture clean with dustless cloths which gather dust instead of scattering it. Make dust cloths from soft cloth that does not leave lint:

1. Put cloth in tin container or jar in which a few drops of furniture-polishing oil or wax have been spread. Cover tightly and leave overnight. The cloth will absorb just enough oil or wax to remove dust and polish at the same time. (Do not use oil to dust waxed surfaces, because it softens the finish).
2. Mix 1 tablespoon of mineral spirits with 1 quart of hot water. Dip squares of clean cloth into this solution, wring out, dry and store.
3. 1 tablespoon of mild soap powder
1 quart warm water
1 tablespoon of household ammonia
2 tablespoons of boiled linseed oil or a good furniture polish.

Mix above ingredients well and dip soft, cotton cloths into the solution. After a few minutes, squeeze out, dry and store.

Store dust cloths in covered containers such as glass jars or coffee cans. Keep them clean; wash them often. Treat cloths after each washing.

Painted Surfaces

For ordinary cleaning, use a mixture of soap jelly and warm water. Add enough soap jelly to water to make light suds. Dust painted surfaces thoroughly before washing, then wash with a soft cloth dipped and wrung out in cleaning solution. Rinse well and dry with soft cloths. Wash only a small area at a time. Whiting paste may be used for very soiled places. Make it with 4 parts of fine whiting to 1 part of soap jelly. Mix thoroughly and keep in a small jar. Apply with soft cloth; rub lightly. Rinse thoroughly.

Papered Walls

Fresh grease spots may be removed partially by placing a clean blotter on the spot and pressing with a warm iron. Change the blotter often. For further treatment and more stubborn spots, make a paste of water and magnesia powder or Fuller's Earth. (Use powdered magnesium oxide available at drugstores.) Apply the paste to the spot and let it dry thoroughly for 2 to 3 days. Brush off the dry powder. It may be necessary to repeat the treatment several times. CAUTION: Test first on an inconspicuous place.

Washable Paper Surfaces

For heavily soiled, washable paper, try this recipe:

4 teaspoons baking soda	1 1/4 cups water
2 cups flour	2 1/2 tablespoons household ammonia

Stir soda into flour, add ammonia and water. Beat until smooth, steam in a double boiler for 1 1/2 hours. Leave the dough covered and, when cool enough to handle, knead until smooth and soft. Start at the top and rub the wall-dough cleaner gently downward. Knead the cleaner as you work. Overlap the strokes to prevent streaking. Dust with a soft cloth to remove crumbs left from the dough.

This cleaning dough also can be used to clean window shades.

Varnished Surfaces

Varnished surfaces may be cleaned and polished with the following recipe:

3 tablespoons boiled linseed oil	1 quart of hot water
1 tablespoon mineral spirits	

Wring out a cloth of this mixture. Wash surface and wipe dry. Polish dry with a soft cloth. Protect neighboring surfaces from the solution.

CAUTION: (Do not heat this mixture because it is flammable.)

Marble or Tile

Remove acid stains with household ammonia, baking soda or borax. If acid has roughened surface, rub with pumice stone and water. Polish with soft cloth. For grease spots, make a thin paste of Fuller's Earth, spread on the spot, and let stand for 24 hours. Wash with soap and water. Repeat the process if necessary. Scrub very soiled spots with pumice stone.

Aluminum

Scour badly abused aluminum vessels with whiting and soap jelly. Use very fine steel wool on aluminum. Brighten discolored aluminum pans by boiling one of the following solutions in them until the discoloration disappears:

- 1 tablespoon vinegar to 1 quart of water.
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar to 1 quart of water

Brass and Copper

Clean brass and copper with a paste of:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 pint of soap jelly | 1 cup of whiting |
| 1 teaspoon household ammonia | |

Add whiting and ammonia to soap jelly before it congeals and beat together. After using the paste, always wash articles in hot suds, rinse and dry thoroughly. Tarnished copper also can be cleaned with salt dissolved in hot vinegar or with lemon rind.

Antique-finished brass can be polished with boiled linseed oil or lemon oil.

Polishing Silver

Try these silver polishes:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. 1 cup boiling water | 1 sheet of aluminum foil |
| 1 teaspoon salt | 1 teaspoon baking soda |

Add salt, soda and aluminum foil to boiling water. Place silver in boiling water so that each piece touches the foil or comes in contact with a piece of silver that touches it. Boil 2 to 4 minutes. Wash in hot sudsy water, rinse and dry. (Make enough solution to completely cover the silver.)

- b. Make paste of 1 part ammonia or castor oil and 3 parts whiting. Apply with cloth to silver in hot soapy water, rinse and dry.
- c. Add 1 teaspoon ammonia (or denatured alcohol) to 1/4 cup of soap jelly-whiting mixture. Rub paste over silver. When tarnish is removed, wash in suds, rinse and dry.
- d. 1 cup boiling water, 1 1/2 cups whiting, 1/4 cup soap flakes
Heat soap flakes in water until dissolved. Remove from heat and add whiting. Stir to a smooth paste. Use as any other silver polish.

Iron and Tin

Iron and tin utensils rust when not dried thoroughly. Boil them in hot soda water for a few minutes to clean. (Use soda water only when necessary. It removes fat from the pores, and utensils must then be reseasoned.) Remove rust from iron with steel wool or scouring powder. Before storing iron pots or pans, coat with saltless fat or oil, wrap in paper and store in a dry place.

Chromium

Mild suds usually clean well. Rinse chromium well and dry with soft cloth. For stubborn spots, rub with a paste of whiting and household ammonia. Rinse and polish with a soft cloth.

The information in this leaflet is adapted from a bulletin developed by Extension Home Management Specialists at Texas A&M University.