
House Cleaning the Natural Way for the Pelchat Family

The most popular essential oils used for household cleaning, laundry and air freshening include:

- the refreshing citrus aromas of
 - grapefruit,
 - lemon
 - and sweet orange,
- the head-clearing camphorous aromas of
 - eucalyptus,
 - peppermint
 - and tea tree,
- the spicy notes of
 - cinnamon
 - and clove,
- and the green herbaceous essential oils of
 - lemongrass,
 - oregano,
 - rosemary
 - and thyme.
- The fresh walk-in-the woods aromas of
 - cedarwood,
 - cypress
 - and scotch pine are popular
- as are the familiar soft floral aromas of
 - lavender
 - and rose.

Each of these essential oils offer specific deodorizing, antimicrobial, antibacterial, antifungal and/or antiviral properties.

‘Eucalyptus oil, for example, has been shown to kill 70% of staphylococcus bacteria by simply being diffused into the air of an affected room.’

‘Lemon oil has exhibited antimicrobial properties.’

'Tea tree oil combines powerful antibacterial and antifungal action with an unsurpassed degree of tolerability'

'Essential oils are about cleansing the air, rather than merely masking bad smells'

Choose essential oils based on the cleaning task at hand, your mood, the time of year and perhaps the occasion –

- flu season?
- celebration?
- study mode?
- couple time

Favorites for surface cleaning or deodorizing are

- lemon,
- orange,
- pine,
- rosemary,
- tea tree
- and thyme

For cleansing or scenting the air:

- cypress,
- eucalyptus,
- lemongrass,
- peppermint,
- rose
- and sandalwood

Clothes closet and linens:

- lemon,
- lavender
- and rose

The **most common, accessible and inexpensive natural cleaners** include:

- baking soda,

- borax,
- castile soap,
- lemon juice,
- washing soda
- and white vinegar

Coupled with quality essential oils you can easily and effectively boost the quality of your indoor air and have a naturally fresh, sparkling environment too!

***Avoid** using the same utensils you use for food preparation. Use metal utensils for measuring and metal or glass bowls for mixing to prevent cross-contamination of ingredients. **Refrain** from using pots that have a coated non-stick surface.*

***Always check** an inconspicuous spot of the surface to be scrubbed, sprayed or treated to learn how the product will affect it.*

***Store** your cleansers in an appropriate, clearly labelled container in a secure, dark and cool location. It's a good idea to wear non-latex gloves to prevent any chance of skin irritation.*

Versatile baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) absorbs odors in fridges, sports lockers, closets and carpets and is used as a scrub for sinks, tubs, tile grout, pots and pans.

1/2 cup (120 ml) of baking soda in the washer with laundry detergent to address perspiration odors.

To scent: thoroughly mix 15 drops of lavender or lemon essential oil into the soap or baking soda before adding to the washer using care to not drop essential oil directly onto fabric.

Borax (sodium borate decahydrate, boric acid) is a naturally occurring mineral that has been used for hundreds of years, is widely used in the cosmetic industry and is an inexpensive, all-purpose household cleaner.

One-half cup (120 ml) of borax powder dissolved in 1 gallon (4 liters) of hot water with 10 drops of thyme, rosemary or scotch pine essential oil makes a simple disinfectant spray.

One-half cup (120 ml) of borax with two or three drops of lemon, peppermint or scotch pine essential oil deodorizes the toilet bowl. Leave mixture in toilet bowl overnight for best results.

Reach for the borax instead of other abrasive powder cleansers for your sink or tub. It and a couple drops of your favorite essential oil on a damp sponge will do an amazing job!

[Castile soap](#) is a vegetable-oil based cleaner for hair and skin, laundry, dishes, floors, pet grooming and diaper cleaning. Its natural properties are effective and harmless to people, pets and the environment.

Recipe for the automatic dishwasher; 1/2 cup (120 ml) liquid castile soap, 1/2 cup (120 ml) water, 1/2 cup (120 ml) white vinegar, 1 teaspoon (5ml) fresh lemon juice and 3 drops tea tree oil. Stir all ingredients together until well blended. Store in a labelled squirt top bottle. Shake well before use. Use 2 tablespoons per load of dishes

Lemon Juice

The acid in **lemon juice** neutralizes hard water deposits, dissolves buildup and dirt on wood and tarnish on silver.

Use fresh lemon juice and a bit of baking soda to deep clean the insides of stainless steel pots and pans.

Add two or three drops of lemon essential oil on a dish washing cloth – a treat for the cloth, your dishes and the surrounding air.

Disinfecting non-porous kitchen countertops and the tops of bathroom vanities. Do not use lemon, vinegar or other acid-based cleaners on porous surfaces such as marble and granite as they will etch and dull the surface!

For the recipe you will need

- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) baking soda,
- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) castile soap,
- 1 cup (240 ml) water,
- 3 drops oregano essential oil (rosemary and lavender essential oils work well too),
- 8 drops sweet orange essential oil and 8 drops lemon essential oil.

Heat the water and baking soda in a pan over medium heat just until the soda dissolves. Remove from heat and gently add the castile soap and essential oils. Pour into a spray bottle and label. Spray surfaces and wipe with a clean cloth or damp sponge.

Washing Soda (sal soda, sodium carbonate, soda ash)

The most common domestic use for **washing soda** (sal soda, sodium carbonate, soda ash) is as a water softener but it is also a natural caustic cleaner that effectively removes oil, grease and alcohol stains.

Use washing soda without essential oils for an aroma-free clean.

Similar to baking soda it neutralizes odor and I understand that soaking heavily soiled items in warm water with 1/2 cup washing soda for 30 minutes works like a charm.

White Vinegar

White vinegar has amazing natural cleaning and deodorizing properties. The smell does dissipate as the vinegar dries; however, if you would rather forego the fish and chip shop aroma, a small amount of lemon juice added to vinegar-based cleaning solutions will help neutralize the smell.

Following the use of a vinegar-based cleanser fill the air with an aromatic hydrosol spray or to finish the job with a few drops of one of a favorite essential oils.

To keep drains running clear – each week pour 1/2 cup (120 ml) of baking soda down each drain and pour about 1 cup (240 ml) of white vinegar (a bit at a time) down after it. You can stop adding vinegar when you don't hear any 'fizzing' going on in the pipes. Follow this treatment with your hottest tap water and allow it to flow down the drain for a couple of minutes. Regular treatment will keep your drains and pipes running free.'

Lemon-Mint Window Wash:

Mix the juice from

- one fresh lemon,
 - 2 cups (480 ml) water or club soda,
 - 1/2 teaspoon (2.5 ml) peppermint essential oil
 - and 1 teaspoon (5 ml) cornstarch
- and pour into a labelled plastic spray bottle. Spray windows and polish with sheets of black and white newsprint or a microfiber cleaning cloth.

Lovely Lavender Wood Rub:

Mix together and rub into wood with a soft clean rag;

- 1/8 cup (30 ml) plain olive or other heavy vegetable oil,
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) cider vinegar,
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) vodka or grain-based alcohol
- and 10 drops lavender essential oil.

If you don't want to get onto your hands and knees to scrub the floors, use a newer style broom. Fill the tub half full with dish soap and water and then scrub, it does a wonderful job and it's so easy.

How to repair water stains on their stipple ceiling. The easiest remedy is to spray the stain with 50/50 bleach and water and leave.

Dirty Dishwasher?

Just like every other large appliance in the home, dishwashers require regular cleaning. Sounds strange but it's true because food, toothpicks, shells, glass and other scum bake onto parts of a dishwasher and require careful attention.

Use a toothbrush dipped in dish soap and baking soda to scrub the basin. Brush around the seal, as well as the sides and bottom of the unit. Remove the bottom rack and clean the filter. Pour half cup vinegar onto the floor of the dishwasher then sprinkle quarter cup baking soda. Scrub well and return rack. Fill the dishwasher with dishes and run as usual.

The Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia [Guide to a Less Toxic Environment](#) is truly one of the most interesting, up-to-date, comprehensive resources I have come across in my research on this subject. I encourage you to [check it out](#).

Clean Kids' Rooms:

Pumping a few sprays of quality essential oil hydrosol into the air of a room is one of the simplest ways to aromatize and cleanse your children's bedrooms and playroom. Lavender, neroli and rose hydrosols are particularly nice.

Buyer beware! Hydrosols are typically produced at high temperatures and are somewhat acidic, which inhibits bacterial growth but they are not sterile. They are a fresh product like milk, and should therefore be refrigerated. Purchase hydrosols that indicate the date they were bottled,

include an expiry date and if possible determine that both the producer and bottler used every precaution to prevent bacterial contamination.

Making your own aromatic spray is not quite the same as using a quality hydrosol but it is a nice alternative. In a small clean spray bottle add

- 1 cup (240 ml) of fresh distilled water,
- 1 oz (30ml) of grain-based vodka which acts as an emulsifier for the essential oil and water (also aids spray evaporation)
- and 10 drops of a quality essential oil.
- Use only 5 drops if choose lemongrass or roman chamomile as their aromas are especially powerful and longlasting.

Shake well and pump a couple of sprays upward into the air with due care to avoid droplets falling onto objects that may be marked by water and, of course, not on your children! Clearly label the bottle and store in a safe place.

For a wonderful bedtime room spray use the recipe above substituting the choice of one essential oil for a blend of 1 drop roman chamomile, 5 drops lavender and 4 drops mandarin. For a real treat try 3 drops of rose with 7 drops of mandarin. Ahhh ... good for mom and dad too! These recipes double as linen and mattress sprays. Check fabric in an inconspicuous spot first and allow the area to dry before letting little bodies snuggle into their beds.

Icky Grubby Kid Stuff:

On the subject of sprays, a handy cleaner for school bags, back packs, plastic toys and even highchairs can be made with:

- 2 cups (480 ml) water,
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) vinegar
- and 10 drops of lemon or lavender, or 5 drops tea tree essential oil mixed in a clean spray bottle.

Shake well, spray and wipe dry.

Grubby Bins

Simple aromatic solutions include adding two drops of lemongrass onto a dampened cleaning cloth for use to wipe the inside of waste baskets.

Smelly Footwear

Place one drop of *Eucalyptus radiata* or *Eucalyptus smithii* on a cotton ball and place into smelly footwear – sneakers, rubber boots, winter boots.

Go to Sleep

Place 2 drops of your child's favorite essential oil on a cotton ball and place into their pajama drawer or closet. Alternatively place 5 drops of their favorite essential oil or 4 drops mandarin and 1 drop roman chamomile on a tissue or paper towel and place between their sheets, removing it when they go to bed.

Walls and Floors

Apply 5 drops of any of the child-friendly essential oils to a clean microfiber floor duster but use it to dust walls and ceilings!

Be Gone Pet Smells:

Allow your vacuum cleaner to suck up half a tissue with 3 to 5 drops of an essential oil on it. It will aromatize the air while you clean.

Dryer Sheets:

A dampened facecloth with 10 drops of lavender, lemon, or mandarin added to clothes in the dryer will not prevent the build-up of static but it will give your children's clothes a wonderful natural fragrance as long as the dryer is not too hot.

Stinky Books:

Have you ever considered aromatizing your children's favorite books? In a large ziploc bag place books to be treated along with a paper towel scented with five drops of your child's favourite essential oil. Seal the bag and leave for 12 to 24 hours. This is a wonderful way to treat much loved books that are soiled and musty. Lemon essential oil imparts an aroma like liquid sunshine each time your child turns a page!

Death to Dust Mites:

To help keep dust mites at bay, a common allergen, vacuum and dust your children's rooms regularly and wash your children's sheets in as hot water as the fabric will allow.

Every other wash, add up to 25 drops of *Eucalyptus radiata* essential oil to your laundry soap or to this fabulous recipe:

- 1 ounce (30 ml) liquid castile soap,
- 1 cup (240 ml) washing soda,
- 1 cup (240 ml) baking soda and 1 cup white vinegar (240 ml).

Studies show that eucalyptus essential oil helps to kill dust mites and the acid of the vinegar neutralizes the allergens they produce.

Free Cleaning: Fresh Air

Why not take advantage of the natural cleaning gifts Mother Nature has given us? Regularly open the windows in your children's rooms for ten to fifteen minutes to allow for an exchange of room air, even in cold weather. Open their clothes closets and storage cabinets too. There is no aromatic substitute for fresh air!

Free Cleaning: Sunshine

Access the healthy benefits of the sun. Ultraviolet light is the primary reason bacteria do not survive well in sunlight and molds grow in dark and moist environments. Use a clothesline or folding clothes drying rack to dry or refresh children's clothes. And dust mites do not like the sun so hang your children's bedding, scatter mats, curtains and treasured stuffed animals out of doors to give those beasties a blast!

Unwanted Murals:

Crayon creations on the table, floor or wall? Rub markings with a damp cloth and a dot of toothpaste. Okay, so toothpaste has little to do with aromatherapy but it's a neat way to remove unwanted Picassos! (Don't use toothpaste on wallpaper or porous surfaces.)

It goes without saying that no matter the products used to clean your children's environment, safeguards should always be in place: do not use spray cleaners while your child is in the room; use only the amount of cleaner needed for the job at hand; ensure freshly cleaned surfaces are thoroughly dry before use; do not leave buckets containing fluid unattended; clearly label cleaners and store them along with cleaning cloths and other cleaning supplies in a secure, childproof place. If you would like to learn more about the use of aromatherapy with children you may find Valerie Ann Worwood's Aromatherapy for the Healthy Child (2000) of interest. Ms. Worwood offers an array of aromatherapy remedies to promote health, prevent illness and treat minor ailments for children of all ages, temperaments and states of health.
