

# The Green Team



## Get to know these useful ingredients & their properties

- **Vinegar:** This humble liquid serves as the mightiest tool in your green-cleaning pantry. Use it as an effective disinfectant to kill germs and bacteria, as a deodorizer to fight unpleasant odors, and to shine mirrors and glass, streak-free. You'll find jobs for vinegar in every room of the house. Its acidity helps break through dirt and dissolve grease, making it a perfect mild cleaning agent and polisher. Buy it in the largest recyclable jugs you can find, since it has so many uses. Choose distilled white vinegar, as cider or red vinegars may stain (and are more expensive).
- **Baking soda:** Another ingredient already stocked in your kitchen, baking soda's grit and fizzing action make it a powerhouse for scrubbing and loosening grime, without scratching delicate surfaces. It absorbs odors everywhere from the refrigerator to the carpets, and even polishes metals like chrome, silver, and stainless steel. It's also great in the laundry as a fabric softener. Again, buy the largest box—you'll be amazed at all the uses you discover.
- **Borax:** Homemakers have relied on the cleaning and freshening power of borax for more than a century, and this naturally occurring mineral composed of sodium, boron, and oxygen remains a useful multipurpose cleaner around the house. Use it as a laundry booster to deodorize, fight stains as an alternative to colorsafe bleach, and soften hard water. In the bathroom, borax scrubs porcelain and fiberglass without scratching (or chemical fumes), and even tackles the toilet bowl. In the kitchen too, borax freshens drains and garbage disposals, and boosts the power of your dishwashing detergent. 20 Mule Team brand, in the green box, is the most commonly available.
- **Lemons & lemon juice:** You can't get much more natural than lemons, which cut grease, provide a naturally fresh fragrance, and act as a mild brightener. Buy juice in recyclable glass or plastic bottles, or forgo the packaging entirely by choosing whole fruit to squeeze as needed.
- **Soapnuts or soapnut liquid:** The dried fruit of the Chinese Soapberry tree, soapnuts contain saponin, a natural low-sudsing cleanser. Especially popular for laundry applications thanks to its hypoallergenic status, soapnuts leave even the most delicate clothing clean and soft without petroleum derivatives or chemical fabric softeners, and can combine safely with green bleach alternatives. In liquid form, a concentrated tea of soapnuts, water, and essential oil fragrance can be used as the basis for other cleaning formulas, all over the house.
- **Castile soap:** A plant-based alternative to petroleum-based soaps (and suitable for vegetarians), castile soap is traditionally made from olive oil, though other natural



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oils may also be used. In bar form, it can be grated and dissolved in hot water for great suds. Liquid forms are also popular, in recyclable bottles. It's great on wood floors and furniture, dishes, and more.

- **Hydrogen peroxide/oxygen bleach powder:** Two nontoxic alternatives to chlorine bleach. In addition to its familiar medicinal uses, hydrogen peroxide disinfects around the house and bleaches stains and laundry. Oxygen-active powders brighten colors and surfaces with a gentler action than chlorine bleach.
- **Isopropyl (Rubbing) Alcohol:** You're already familiar with this disinfectant, too. Add a few capfuls to hot soapy water to add disinfecting power. Try it on laundry stains as well. (Always use alcohol diluted with water; it can irritate skin at full strength.)
- **Tools:** Replace the wasteful packaging you're no longer buying with Olivine's reusable spray bottle, preprinted with

three recipes. Recycle old toothbrushes for scrubbing. Repurpose worn tees to replace paper towels. Opt for reusable dusters over disposable products. And don't be surprised if your newly greened utility cabinet suddenly seems a lot less cluttered!

- **DIY Know-how:** With knowledge comes confidence. According to Women's Voices for the Earth ([www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org)), scientific studies have proven these green cleaning ingredients are as effective or nearly as effective as commercial products—eliminating 90-98% of harmful bacteria, such as *E. coli*.



Once you're familiar with the ingredients and their properties, you may find yourself tempted to experiment, perhaps adding essential oils for a personalized scent, trading recipes with friends, or customizing formulas for certain jobs. Let your home inspire you.

**DIY Caution:** Do not mix commercial cleaners, and never mix anything with chlorine bleach or ammonia, because of the risk of dangerous fumes. Better still, avoid these altogether, now that you know how!



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