

# Maintaining That Herb-Fresh Feeling

Rooms that have just been cleaned with homemade herbal products are fresh and delightful. You can use herbs to help maintain that atmosphere between cleanings, too. Here are a few methods:



- **Simmer scents** Simply place a mixture of your favorite aromatic herbs in a small pan of water over low heat on the stove. Use the same herbs you clean with, or vary the scent, depending on the mood you'd like to evoke. A spicy mixture like cinnamon sticks, cloves, and vanilla will make your house smell like cozy home-sweet-home, especially in cold winter months, while a refreshing mixture of mints, rosemary, lemon peel, lemon thyme, and/or orange peel can lighten the air on a summer day.
- **Make a potpourri** Heavily scented, Victorian, floral potpourris aren't the rage they once were, but why not use your creativity to come up with a fresh, new potpourri combination to set in open glass jars or attractive bowls around your home? Try any combination of dried leaves, seeds, barks, roots, peels, as well as petals or blossoms that you find appealing. Add a fixative (like orris or vetiver root), to hold the scent. Standard potpourri directions dictate that you combine the ingredients, seal them in a jar, and set them in a dark place for a month or so to meld the scent for several weeks before setting out. Nobody will mind if you mix one up this afternoon and set it out tonight, though; the only real drawback is that the scent won't last as long—which is a good excuse for mixing up a batch of something new next time you clean. You might even make potpourri the same day you mix up your cleaners, using some of the same herbs.
- **Spritz with herbs** Make a decoction (strong tea) of your favorite herbs, strain and cool. Then pour into a spray bottle and keep handy for daily room revitalization! You might have one blend—with lavender and chamomile, perhaps—for the bedroom and another—like peppermint and orange peel—for the kitchen.

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## Spring Cleaning with Herbs

- > Rose-scented elbow grease
- > Lavender carpet cleaner
- > Sparkling glass spritzer

... and more!

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# Q&A

## Can I put all of my homemade cleaning products in spray bottles?

Anything that you can spray onto a surface will be handy in a spray bottle. Keep in mind that if your recipe contains baking soda, borax, washing soda, or other minerals, they can clog the sprayer. The trick is to mix these with hot water until they're dissolved before adding them to the bottle. Also be sure to strain well any herbs before adding your herbal ingredient to the recipe.

## Which herbs are best for making cleaning products?

That depends on what your purpose is, but you can use almost any favorite herb in your spring cleaning. Just adding scent to a plain cleaner, for example, can make the job more fun and the results more pleasing. If you're looking for antiseptic properties as well, you can choose herbs like myrrh, peppermint, thyme, rosemary, lavender, mint, cloves, and eucalyptus. By the way, it's best to store herbal cleaning products in a cool place (or the refrigerator) between cleaning stints, unless you're going to use them up in a few days.

## What other natural products are good for cleaning?

Essential oils make excellent additions to homemade cleansers (you can choose them for their cleansing as well as their aromatherapeutic properties). Good options include citrus oils, cinnamon, rosemary, tea tree, balsam, cedar, nettle, citronella, chamomile, eucalyptus, and any with a fragrance you enjoy. You may also want to experiment with arrowroot powder (finer than cornstarch, with excellent drying ability), baking soda powder (which deodorizes, absorbs odors and is slightly abrasive), borax (a mineral that helps lift dirt), clay powder (which draws out stains), cornstarch (a fine, absorbent powder), cream of tartar (for cleaning drains, metal, porcelain and glass), salt (an abrasive), vegetable glycerin (an emollient that helps oil and water mix and removes stains), vitamin E (a few drops will help preserve your products), washing soda (or soda ash, a cleanser), and white vinegar (dissolves grease and mineral buildup, inhibits mold, freshens).



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# Spring Cleaning with Herbs

Whether you're digging into seasonal sprucing-up projects or giving a room its weekly once-over, herbs can make cleaning tasks pleasant and rewarding. Making your own cleaning products is inexpensive, effective, and safer for you and your family, your home and the environment.

Here are a few recipes; you'll soon find it fun and easy to concoct your own products with whatever you have on hand!

## Rose-Scented Elbow Grease

Scrubbing the kitchen sink will be downright enticing with this lovely blend! Because baking soda raises the pH of the cleanser, it can help stop corrosion (of faucets, for example).

- 1 cup baking soda
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- ¼ cup rose petals

Pulverize the ingredients together in a blender. Sprinkle on area to be scoured, wet slightly, and scrub.



## Tiptoe Through the Lavender Carpet Freshener



Imagine yourself in a field of lavender flowers as you spread this blend on your carpet. It will absorb odors and dirt and impart a lovely scent as you vacuum it up.

- ¾ cup baking soda
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- ¼ cup lavender flowers

Mix all ingredients in a bowl. Sprinkle over carpet. Let sit overnight; vacuum up in the morning.

**Important Note:** Whenever you create a homemade cleaning product, you should test it in an inconspicuous spot before using it, just to make sure it won't stain, fade, or otherwise effect your carpet, upholstery, woodwork, wallpaper, etc.

## Wood Floor Spiffier-Upper

This blend will clean and scent your wood floors. You can use other favorite fragrant teas in place of the peppermint, though the mint has the added benefit of discouraging insects (and mice!).

- ½ cup white vinegar
- ½ cup peppermint tea, strained

Simply add all ingredients to about 2 gallons of warm water in a bucket. Wash (but don't soak) floors—no need to rinse!



## Cinderella Cleaner

Use this all-purpose cleaner on washable walls, countertops—you name it! The herbs contribute both scent and antiseptic properties.

- 1 cup liquid castile soap
- 6 cups water
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ¼ cup eucalyptus leaf or thyme leaf tea, strained

Swish all ingredients together in a cleaning bucket, and use with soft, colorful cotton rags!

## Sparkling Glass Spritzer

For squeaky clean mirrors and windows, spritz this on and wipe dry. To clean a stained flower vase, pour a bit of the mixture into the bottom of the vase and let soak for a few hours, then rinse.

- 2 cups lemongrass tea, strained
- ½ cup vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. cream of tartar (optional)

Combine ingredients in a spray bottle and shake. Spray on glass, then wipe completely dry with a soft cloth. For a very grimy window, add the cream of tartar; it will go on a bit cloudy but wipe sparkling clean.

