

SPRING CLEANING



It's time to throw off the winter blues, open your windows and doors and welcome in the Spring weather. However, have you thought about the cleaning products you use in your home? Are they expensive? Do they smell strongly of chemicals? Do you cough or feel breathless after using them? Natural cleaning products can be as powerful as chemical cleaners and are better for our health and our environment, helping to restore the balance of our ecosystem, reduce waste disposal and limit land contamination.

Cleaning vinegar, citric acid, washing up liquid and bicarbonate of soda can all be obtained at the REco Store, Tower Business Park, Kelvedon Rd, Tiptree, CO5 0LX, tel. 07508505270 info@recostore.co.uk – take your own containers for filling and save wasteful packaging. Elise and her staff are super-helpful and always greet you with a smile! Onions and lemons can be bought at Paul and Emma's amazing veg van - always in the Square on Tuesday and Friday. Tollesbury Pharmacy stock a wide selection of essential oils at very reasonable prices.

Lemon juice and vinegar (used distilled vinegar rather than malt vinegar) are acidic, and therefore break down the calcium carbonate in limescale. Bicarb is a gentle abrasive for cleaning tough stains and washing up liquid loosens greasy scum. These household items can be effectively used for most kitchen and bathroom cleaning at a fraction of the cost of chemical cleaners. Black tea is an effective cleaner for wooden flooring

Limescale can be an unsightly nuisance on surfaces, but is easy to clean off. Mix equal parts of white cleaning vinegar and water and a squirt of washing up liquid in a spray bottle and



use this to spray on **taps, tiles, mirrors and shower glass screens**, as well as **sinks, baths and work surfaces**. Wipe off with a clean cloth. More stubborn stains can be treated with a paste of bicarb and warm water – rub onto affected areas, leave for a few minutes and wash off with a clean cloth. An old toothbrush is useful for scrubbing into corners or around taps.

The same mix can be used to clean **windows** – spray on or wash with warm water and a mix of vinegar and washing up liquid, then use a window cleaning blade to scrape off and then shine with a clean cloth. A **shower head** can be soaked overnight in a solution of half vinegar, half water, then rinsed before replacing on the shower hose (which can be cleaned in the same way).



Windows and shower glass screens can also be cleaned with half a lemon dipped in bicarb. Rub over the surface with a circular motion, leave on for a couple of minutes and then wipe off to leave a lovely fresh scent and clean glass.

Limescale in **toilets** can be treated with vinegar, or by tipping a bucket of warm water and a cup of citric acid into the bowl and leaving overnight. In the morning, flush to rinse.



To clean your **kettle**, mix equal parts of vinegar and water in the kettle, bring to the boil and let the solution sit in the kettle for an hour to clear the limescale. If it is badly affected, you may need to repeat the process, or leave the solution soaking overnight. Then rinse it thoroughly with clean water to remove any vinegar residue.

To clean your **washing machine**, set your machine to the hottest water setting and the longest cycle. Add two cups of vinegar to the drum along with one cup of bicarb for a deeper clean. Run the cycle for five minutes, then pause the machine for an hour to allow the mixture to dissolve soap scum, deposits and bacteria. Then resume the cycle and finish the wash.

Tannins found in black tea provide a gentle yet effective cleaner and disinfectant for **wooden floors**, helping bring out the natural richness and adding a subtle shine without damaging the surface. The longer the tea is stewed, then the more tannins will come out in the water - 10 – 15 tea bags in a large saucepan full of water, depending on how big the wood area is to clean. Leave them boiling for about 15 minutes to make sure all the tannins have been extracted. Using this solution on a clean, eco-friendly cloth rub on in a circular motion, but don't soak the wood as this may damage it. Do a small patch test first to check that the solution works on your floor and don't use as a cleaner for painted or laminate flooring.



It's nearly BBQ season, and your **BBQ grill** can be cleaned with raw onion, which is antibacterial and filled with natural acids which react with oxygen and gently remove grease and residue. Cut an onion in half, put it on a skewer and scrub the grill plates, applying downward pressure. Use a grill brush to remove any remaining residue and rinse.

You need your garden to look good for these outdoor meals, and **garden weeds** on your patio can be treated with boiling water or vinegar. Obviously you should not spray or pour these near any plants you want to keep or near tree roots.

Essential oils can be used in candle diffusers to **deter insects** – try citronella or lemongrass. Essential oils are also better indoors than chemical room scents, which can generate harmful nanoparticles that linger in the air and affect your health. Orange peel can also be used to deter flies, and also **cats** if they use your garden and flowerbeds as a loo.



Do you have any hints and tips for cleaning around the house and garden? We'd love to hear from you and will include your tips in a follow-up post. Get in touch via the website: <http://tollesburyclimate.org>