

Five Easy, Smart Ways to Use Vinegar in the Home –How-To

By Annie B. Bond, author of *Better Basics for the Home* (Three Rivers Press, 1999).

Simple Solution

A straight 5 percent solution of vinegar -- the white distilled type that you can buy at the supermarket --kills bacteria, mold, and germs.

Studies referenced by Heinz show that it kills 99 percent of bacteria, 82 percent of mold, and 80 percent of germs (viruses).

Vinegar is very useful in the home for cleaning mold and areas where bacteria can grow (like Australian tea tree oil (see below). It is very cheap – the cheapest natural antiseptic material we know about!

Here are my five favorite formulas for vinegar:

Note: All references to vinegar refer to 5 percent white distilled household vinegar.

1. Toilet Bowl Cleaner

Spray straight white distilled vinegar on the toilet bowl rim.

2. Poison Ivy Killer

Spray straight white distilled vinegar on poison ivy.

3. Cutting Board Deodorizer

Spray straight white distilled vinegar on the cutting board. Let set for at least ½ an hour. Rinse.

4. Window Cleaner

Add ¼ cup of white distilled vinegar to 2 cups of water, and a dab of liquid soap or detergent to a spray bottle.

5. Wood Cleaning Rinse

After washing wooden floors, add 1 cup of vinegar to a gallon of water to the rinse water. The detergent or soap, and many odors, are neutralized by the vinegar, and the floors are left very clean.

Five Easy, Smart Ways to Use Borax in the Home– How-To

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Simple Solution:

It has a pH of around 9, which is higher than baking soda (which is 8.1; 7 is neutral). It is a good deodorizer and mold inhibitor, as well as a successful way to kill cockroaches, fleas, and other insects. One of my favorite uses for it is as a toilet bowl cleaner and it is always my first choice for such a job.

Learn here how I use borax for many jobs including deterring mice!

1. Toilet Bowl Cleaner

Pour 1 cup of borax into the toilet bowl at night before you go to sleep. The next morning clean out the toilet bowl with a brush. You will find the job effortless because the borax has loosened all the grime buildup. Note that this method of toilet cleaning works very well for rust rings.

2. Flea Killer

Sprinkle borax on dog beds, carpets, and other areas where you suspect that fleas are hatching. Borax releases boric acid, which is a poison (note that very high doses would need to be ingested to harm a pet or human).

3. Mold Inhibitor

This method of inhibiting mold is very good to use on areas where mold and mildew is growing but that you don't need to worry about paint being damaged. Make a thick borax and water paste. Smear it on the moldy area. Let set until dry (overnight or longer). Sweep up the powder, and rinse off the rest.

4. Mice Deterrent

Sprinkle borax on the floor along the walls (mice like to run along the side of walls). They don't like getting the borax on their feet, so they are less likely to return to that area of the house.

5. All Purpose Cleaner

Put 2 teaspoons of borax in a spray bottle with 2 cups of very hot water. Shake to blend.

Five Smart, Easy Ways to Use Washing Soda in the Home – How-To

By Annie B. Bond, author of *Better Basics for the Home* (Three Rivers Press, 1999).

Simple Solution

Washing soda has become my standby for hard cleaning jobs. I stumbled across it because I needed to peel old wax off a floor.

Washing soda worked for this, as it did for cleaning up engine oil, and other tough materials that people generally use solvents.

Washing soda--sodium carbonate--is in the same family as baking soda but it is much more caustic/alkaline, with a pH of 11. It is available in the laundry section of the supermarket. Here are five of my ways to make use of this very helpful mineral:

1. Soot Cleaner

Mix 2 tablespoons of washing soda to 2 cups of hot water. Wash sooty areas with a sponge and the mixture. Let dry and then rinse.

2. Stove Burner Grime Cleaner

Fill a sink or pail with 1 cup of washing soda and enough hot water to cover the pans. Soak the pans overnight.

3. Heavy Duty Cleaner

Make a thick paste of washing soda and water. Smear it on the problem area; let dry and then rinse. Note that washing soda can peel wax off a floor, and is often used as a paint stripper, so make sure the place being cleaned is inert.

4. Paint Stripper

Follow directions for #3.

5. All-Purpose Cleaner

Combine 1 teaspoon of washing soda with 2 cups of hot water in a spray bottle. Spray and wipe as you go, using as you would any commercial all-purpose cleaner.

Five Smart Housekeeping Ways to Use Tea Tree Oil –How-To

By Annie B. Bond, author of *Better Basics for the Home* (Three Rivers Press, 1999).

Simple Solution

Australian tea tree oil is a broad spectrum germicide, fungicide, and bacteriacide.

The essential oil known as “tea tree oil” comes from the melaleuca tree, a shrub/tree that has needle-like leaves. There are 100 varieties of melaleuca, but for the purposes of this discussion we are speaking of Australian tea tree oil, or melaleuca alternifolia.

Tea tree oil has many uses for housekeeping. You can prove to yourself how well it works to kill mold and mildew with this simple test: Put 2 teaspoons of Australian tea tree oil in a spray bottle with two cups of water. Don't rinse. Spray the mixture on something musty. Let the smell dissipate (it will take a few days). The smell of mold and must will be gone, too, never to return as long as the source of moisture has been removed.

Here are five smart ways to use Australian tea tree oil at home:

1. General Tea Tree Oil Spray

As mentioned above, combine 2 teaspoons of Australian tea tree oil in 2 cups of water in a spray bottle. Shake to blend. Spray on mold and don't rinse. The smell will dissipate in a few days.

2. Tea Tree Oil Grout Spray

Using the same formula as in #1, spray grout to repel mold and mildew. While this formula won't take away the mold discoloration, it will kill the mold.

3. Musty Mold Remover

The must will be removed from anything using the above formula. Just don't rinse.

4. Household Antiseptic Spray

Use the above formula to spray areas that need antiseptic attention, such as after someone has vomited.

5. Add 1/2 teaspoon tea tree oil to your laundry for towels and other fabric prone to getting moldy.

Five Smart, Easy Ways to Use Essential Oils in the Home – How-To

By Annie B. Bond, author of *Better Basics for the Home* (Three Rivers Press, 1999).

Simple Solution

During the time of the Black Plague a family of perfumers robbed the dead.

As perfumers they knew well the antiseptic essential oils, and they infused them in vinegar and rubbed them on their bodies; by doing so they protected themselves from certain death. The famous Vinegar of The Four Thieves recipe, sometimes called Grave Robber's Blend, is a result of this practice.

That aromatic plants possess antiseptic properties has been known for some time from scientific tests. These plants include (from the most potent to least): thyme, rosemary, eucalyptus, peppermint, orange blossom, maize, poplar, pine, Indian hemp, tobacco, belladonna, hop, and poppy.

Try some of these essential oil formulas in the home when you need their antiseptic qualities:

1. Antiseptic Bathroom Spray

Combine 10 drops of essential oils to 1 cup of water in a spray bottle. Spray on area of concern, but don't rinse.

2. Peppermint Spray for Mice

Mice hate peppermint. Add 2 teaspoons of peppermint to 1 cup of water and spray in areas where you think that mice might frequent.

3. Air Freshening Spritz

Sometimes an area of the home can smell stuffy, and spraying a little essential oil blend in the area can brighten the feeling of the space. Combine 1 teaspoon of essential oils to 1 cup of water in a spray bottle, and spray into the air.

4. Sick Room Spray

If someone in the family has an infectious illness such as strep throat, you can spritz some antiseptic essential oils in the room where they are staying.

5. Essential Oil Deodorizer

Place a drop or two of antiseptic essential oils in odor areas of your home.

Caution: Note that you should check with your doctor before using essential oils if you are pregnant or if your immune system is compromised.