

Spring clean, green clean

Finally, a way to sparkle, shine minus chemicals and poison

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With spring comes cleaning. It's time to throw open the windows, roll up your sleeves and attend to the often dreaded, sometimes eagerly anticipated spring-cleaning ritual.

But if deep cleaning scares you, it might surprise you to know that some of the trusted household products you're using to clean are scarier than hours of hard work.

Many name-brand cleaners readily available in traditional grocery, hardware and discount stores contain ingredients such as petroleum distillates, chlorine bleach, ammonia and formaldehyde. Besides being hard on the natural environment, these products can be poisonous if ingested, could cause burns and even blindness in case of accidents, and there's always a long-term risk from breathing fumes.

Who would have thought the brands we know could be so dirty? That's the story from www.thegreenguide.com, a Web site published by *National Geographic* and dedicated to information on environmental issues, sustainability and green products. According to the site, "In 2000, cleaning products were responsible for nearly 10 percent of all toxic exposures reported to U.S. Poison Control Centers, accounting for 206,636 calls. Of these, 120,434 exposures involved children under 6, who can swallow or spill cleaners stored or left open inside the home."

It doesn't have to be a choice between chemicals or a dirty house.

More and more consumers are aware of the availability of alternative, green and ecologically sound household products. For more than two decades, most health-food groceries and specialty shops have carried products that are easier on the environment and bodies — but not necessarily our wallets. Consumers say if they can't find — or afford — green products, they'll stick to the familiar.

But that is changing. Even the king of clean, Clorox, has added a new "over 99 percent natural ingredient, all-purpose household cleaner" to its line: Green Works Natural Cleaner. This formula doesn't contain bleach.

Santa Fe resident Carolyn Lee, owner of three Santa Fe inns — Alexander's Inn, Hacienda Nicholas, The Madeleine

— and Absolute Nirvana Spa (on the premises of The Madeleine), is one consumer and business owner who hasn't let price or convenience deter her from making sound ecological choices in cleaning.

"For many years, there's been discussion in our country about the need to be more conscientious about what we use and consume — and the ramifications. We started using green cleaning products at home, so it seemed natural to start implementing the same changes at the inns," Lee said.

Such choices might include replacing Pledge with natural lemon furniture oil or using baking soda or Bon Ami instead of Comet with bleach to scrub away soap scum.

There's no need to throw away your existing products. Instead, take the opportunity to make more conscious decision when it's time to restock. You may even find that you end up saving on cleaning supplies, as many of the readily available "alternative" products are highly concentrated formulas.



Do it yourself

Want to know exactly what you're scrubbing your sink or washing your clothes with? Try these inexpensive, tried-and-true recipes for a sparkly clean and fresh home. These make-it-yourself cleaners are compliments of www.thedailygreen.com.

Natural disinfectant: a great alternative to Lysol or bleach

2 cups water
3 tablespoons liquid soap
20-30 drops tea tree oil
Mix all contents in a bucket or spray bottle. Use on kitchen counters, bathroom surfaces, or anywhere a deep, disinfecting clean is required.

Natural fabric softener: Gently softens and deodorizes

1 cup baking soda
Add to washer before you add detergent and clothing.

Natural oven cleaner: no more harsh chemicals

2 boxes baking soda
Coat the inside of your oven with a thick paste made with water and baking soda. Let stand overnight. Scrub off grease and grime. Wipe and rinse to a shine.

Want to learn more? Visit www.thedailygreen.com for information on green living, including green cuisine, green products, tips and advice.