



Your Fabulous  
Party Hosting Kit

A PROJECT OF WOMEN'S VOICES FOR THE EARTH

# Table of Contents

Welcome .....	1
Let's Get this Party Started .....	2
The Dirt on Toxics in Your Cleaners . . .	3
What About "Natural" Cleaners from the Store? .....	3
The Homemade Solution .....	4
Stay Informed, Stay Involved ..	6
FAQs .....	8

ALI SOLOMON  
Communications/  
Development Director

I recycle my newspaper by using it to clean the mirrors and glass surfaces in my house. It doesn't streak or leave behind pesky fibers like paper towels do.

**WVE would like to acknowledge the generous support of individual donors and private foundations who helped make this project possible:**

Alida Messinger Charitable Lead Trust  
Cedar Tree Foundation  
Charles Engelhard Foundation  
Educational Foundation of America  
Reproductive Justice Fund  
of Tides Foundation

Ms. Foundation for Women  
Thanksgiving Fund  
Maria Gonzalez-Mabbutt and  
Delia Gonzalez for Spanish translation  
Margaret Lowry at inkworks design, llc.

# Welcome

Congratulations on hosting a Green Cleaning house party! You'll find everything you need in this booklet to make non-toxic cleaning products and host a fabulously festive and informative party.

First, we'd like to introduce ourselves. Women's Voices for the Earth, or WVE for short (pronounced WEAVE), is a national, women-centered environmental health and justice organization that works to eliminate or substantially reduce environmental toxics impacting human health and to increase women's participation in environmental decision-making.

We believe that getting toxics out of products is the best way to ensure they don't get into your home and your body. And when it comes to household cleaners, the safest ones are those you mix yourself from simple ingredients you can trust!

# Let's Get This Party Started

## Suggested Party Agenda

### WELCOME GUESTS

It's a party! Build in some time for people to eat, drink and socialize.

### PLAY GREEN CLEANING VIDEO

Go online to [www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org) or pop in the DVD to learn more about chemicals in your cleaners.

### CREATE YOUR OWN CLEANERS

Choose one or two recipes and then get ready to mix!

### ENCOURAGE YOUR GUESTS TO TAKE ACTION

Call cleaning companies or your legislators and tell them what's on your mind.

### USE YOUR NEW CLEANERS TO TIDY UP AFTER YOUR GUESTS!

## Supply Checklist

### HERE'S A CHECKLIST OF ITEMS YOU'LL NEED TO GATHER

- Recipe ingredients\*
- Mixing utensils (spoons, bowls, funnel and measuring cups)
- Storage containers for the cleaners (Spray bottles/glass jars/plastic containers)\*\*
- Small cleaning towels
- TV and DVD player or computer to play video
- Fact sheets to hand out to guests
- Food and beverages – make it a potluck for fun!

\* You can ask each guest to bring enough of a certain ingredient for the whole party or buy in bulk and have partygoers chip in a few dollars each.

\*\*You can reuse a plastic bottle from something else – just make sure it's very clean! We recommend purchasing industrial cleaning spray bottles from a local custodial supply store because vinegar can corrode some bottle components. Or, save glass jars from your kitchen, wash them well, and reuse.



## THE DIRT ON TOXICS IN YOUR CLEANERS

Many of us use cleaners to create a clean and healthy environment. But did you know that some of the products you use may be harmful to your health? Some household cleaners contain toxic chemicals linked to birth defects, fertility problems and asthma. You can learn more about the effects of toxic chemicals by reading the report *Household Hazards* at [www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org). But no need to feel like an expert on this – we'll bring the expert to your party!

Your party guests can learn more about toxic chemicals from the short Green Cleaning video included in this kit. In it, WVE staff explain what chemicals you should look out for and why, as well as information on how you and your friends can help change policy around toxics in products. You can also download fact sheets and tips from [www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org) and hand them out to your guests.

## WHAT ABOUT USING "NATURAL" CLEANERS FROM THE STORE?

You've likely seen some recent additions on the cleaning-product shelves of your local store. These cleaners advertise themselves as natural, green, organic and pure alternatives to the harsh formulations of traditional cleaners. So, why not just use those instead?

Currently, companies are not required to list ingredients on product labels, nor are ingredients evaluated by a regulatory body for safety before going to market. In addition, very few standards exist regarding how companies market their products. It sure sounds great to call a product natural, but unless we can see exactly what's in it, we can't know for sure whether the ingredients are safe or toxic.

## The Stink on Air Fresheners

Air fresheners may cover up smelly odors, but some chemicals used in fresheners have been linked to birth defects and reproductive problems.

Go to [www.nrdc.org/health/home/airfresheners/contents.asp](http://www.nrdc.org/health/home/airfresheners/contents.asp) to find out what all the stink is about.

DORI GILELS,  
Executive Director  
"To mask the smell of vinegar in my All-Purpose Cleaner, I add a few drops of lemon or lavender essential oil. It creates a fresh scent that lingers in the best way."



# Common Sense Information

## THE HOMEMADE SOLUTION

Use common sense with your homemade cleaners, as you would with other household products.

1) Keep homemade cleaners in a secure location where kids can't access them.

2) Use the labels that come in your Green Cleaning Party Kit to list exactly what's in your homemade cleaners, especially if you are re-using old jars or other containers.

3) If you or your child accidentally swallows your homemade cleaner, especially if it contains borax, drink a glass of milk or water and then contact your local poison control center or physician for advice. Unlike commercial cleaners, you'll be able to provide information about what is in the cleaner that was swallowed.

4) If a product gets in your eye, flush with water and contact your physician if irritation persists.

The good news is that you can avoid toxics in cleaners altogether by making your own cleaning products. Who needs potentially hazardous chemicals when you can use safe ingredients like baking soda and vinegar?

### DO THEY REALLY WORK?

Yes! Let's look at some of the properties of two ingredients found in most of our recipes: vinegar and baking soda. **Vinegar** deodorizes; dissolves mineral deposits and grease; removes soap traces, mildew and wax build up; polishes brass, chrome, copper, pewter and stainless steel; cleans brick and stone; removes decals and stickers; and removes water spots on leather. **Baking soda** neutralizes acid; scrubs shiny materials without scratching; deodorizes refrigerators, carpets, upholstery, vinyl and drains; extinguishes grease fires; and cleans and polishes aluminum, chrome, jewelry, plastic, porcelain, silver, stainless steel and tin.

### WHAT THE SCIENCE SHOWS

Several studies have shown regular household vinegar to be as effective or nearly as effective as commercial cleaners in eliminating microbes like E.coli from surfaces and sponges, effectively eliminating between 90-98% of bacteria. For removing dirt and soil from surfaces, studies have shown that borax or plain old soap and water with a little elbow grease do the job just as well as commercial cleaners. Lastly, in one study looking at mold, borax received top marks for removing mold from walls, right along with commercial cleaners.

### HOW CLEAN IS CLEAN?

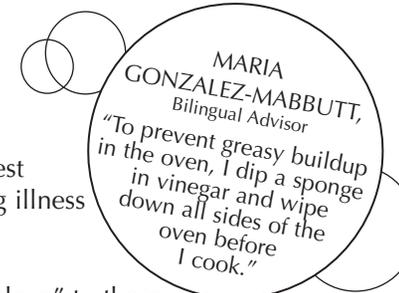
Disinfection is important in certain situations—like reducing the spread of infection in hospital settings or food-borne illness in food service establishments, and it is recommended for individuals with weak immune systems. But for most folks it is unnecessary to sterilize every surface in your home

to stay healthy. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that one of the best methods for effectively reducing and preventing illness is regular hand washing!

Everyone has their own version of what feels "clean" to them. When you make your own cleaners (just like when you try out a new commercial brand) there's always a bit of trial and error at first. Does it smell nice? Does it work on that deep greasy stain? Play around with the recipes in this party kit and make any changes that fit *your* needs!

### GOOD FOR YOUR WALLET

Not only will you have the peace of mind knowing your homemade cleaners are safe, making your own cleaners is also good for your wallet.



MARIA GONZALEZ-MABBUTT, Bilingual Advisor  
 "To prevent greasy buildup in the oven, I dip a sponge in vinegar and wipe down all sides of the oven before I cook."

<b>LAUNDRY DETERGENT</b> (including fabric softener)	
Homemade	\$0.13 per load
Storebrand	\$0.48 per load
<b>ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER</b> 32 oz	
Homemade	\$0.38
Storebrand	\$4.00-\$8.00
<b>CREAMY SOFT SCRUB</b> 16 oz	
Homemade	\$0.78
Storebrand	\$3.69
<b>FURNITURE POLISH</b> 16 oz	
Homemade	\$3.89
Storebrand	\$4.39
<b>TOILET BOWL CLEANER</b>	
Homemade	\$1.05
Storebrand	\$2.99
<b>DRAIN OPENER</b> 32 OZ	
Homemade	\$1.40
Storebrand	\$2.99

(approximate prices)

Don't Just  
Get Mad...  
Get  
Organized!

In 2007, WVE released *Glossed Over*, a report which revealed that chemicals commonly found in nail care and cosmetic products are linked to cancer, birth defects and other health problems. WVE and partner agencies organized women across the country to contact OPI, the world's leading nail polish manufacturer, and demand that they remove toxic ingredients from their formulas. In response, OPI committed to remove the three most toxic chemicals from their products. This public health victory happened because thousands of women raised their voices and demanded change. When it comes to our health, we can't afford to be silent!

## STAY INFORMED, STAY INVOLVED

At Women's Voices for the Earth, we believe that women have the power to change the practices of companies and the policies of government. We do this by using scientific research to educate companies and legislators about the potential harm toxic chemicals can have on their constituents. This data, compounded with public outcry from consumers like you, can and does create substantive change. Let's get started!

ERIN THOMPSON,  
Senior Campaigns Organizer  
"When I clean my bathtub,  
I shake some baking soda  
in it, then splash in some  
vinegar. It makes a nice  
paste to scrub with  
and gets my tub  
perfectly clean!"

### SUPPORT WOMEN'S VOICES FOR THE EARTH!

By reading this kit, you've already shown a commitment to a safe, healthy environment. Your support will strengthen our voice in the national dialogue on regulating toxic chemicals. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to our organization. You can donate securely online at:

[www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org)

or send a check to: Women's Voices for the Earth,  
PO Box 8743, Missoula, MT 59807-8743

**GET ADVOCACY UPDATES, TIPS, AND IDEAS DELIVERED TO YOUR INBOX!** Sign up for WVE's Action Network at [www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org).

**SPREAD THE WORD!** Please encourage your guests to host their own Green Cleaning party and expand the circle of women who understand the problem and are taking action to fix it.

**TELL ELECTED OFFICIALS TO DO THE RIGHT THING!** In order to create lasting change, we need strong policies that play it safe when it comes to toxic chemicals. Give your U.S. legislators a call and let them know that you think our government should require companies to disclose product ingredients and replace toxic chemicals with safer alternatives.



**TELL COMPANIES YOU DON'T WANT TOXIC PRODUCTS!** Companies want to hear from you – that's why they put a toll-free number on every label. Grab your favorite cleaning product, call the company and ask them to remove toxic ingredients from their products.

**WVE is asking these five leading manufacturers to come clean with the public about their products. Using the sample script below as a guide, give them a call and tell them how you feel.**

#### PROCTOR & GAMBLE

(Mr. Clean, Spic & Span, Tide and more)  
Each P & G brand has a different toll-free  
number. Check your product label  
for information.

[www.pg.com](http://www.pg.com)

#### THE CLOROX COMPANY

(Formula 409, SOS, Pine-Sol and more)

1.800.227.1860

[www.clorox.com](http://www.clorox.com)

#### SUNSHINE MAKERS, INC.

(Simple Green)

1.800.228.0709

[www.simplegreen.com](http://www.simplegreen.com)

#### RECKITT-BENCKISER

(Easy Off, Glass Plus, Lysol and more)

1.800.228.4722

#### SC JOHNSON & SON

(Windex, Glade, Drano and more)

1.800.494.4855

[www.scjbrands.com](http://www.scjbrands.com)

*Hi, I just read a report about toxic chemicals in cleaning products that are linked to asthma and reproductive harm. As a consumer, I want [Name of company or brand] to remove toxic chemicals that might cause health problems and to list all ingredients on the package labels.*

Next, contact your U.S. legislators and ask them to take action. Use the sample script below as a guide.

*Hi, my name is (YOUR NAME) and I'm a constituent of (NAME OF LEGISLATOR). I'd like the Representative/Senator to support legislation that requires companies to disclose ingredients on product labels. Also, I want the government to prove that chemicals are safe BEFORE they are allowed on the market instead of testing them on consumers. I would appreciate a response from the Senator/Representative on these issues.*

Find out who your legislators are by visiting <http://votesmart.org> or call your local elections office.

## THANK YOU!

Thank you for sharing the important information in this kit with your friends. By doing so, you are helping to build a movement of women and men who believe that we deserve to live in a safe, healthy environment free from exposure to toxic chemicals.

*And you thought you were just throwing a party!*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is Borax? Where can I buy it?

Borax is a powder or crystalline salt used as a water softener and disinfectant. It also makes an excellent freshener when added to laundry and is an all-around deodorizer. You can find borax in most grocery or discount stores.

### Where can I find soap flakes?

You can buy a box of soap flakes at a natural food store or online, but if you're feeling particularly motivated, you can make your own! Use any non-liquid castile soap that does not contain sodium lauryl (laureth) sulfate (SLS) or Diethanolamine (DEA), and simply grate it with a cheese grater.

### What is washing soda? Where can I buy it?

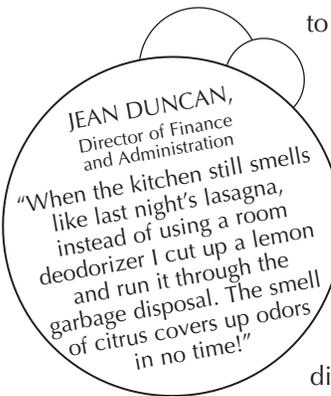
Washing soda (sodium carbonate) is in the same family as baking soda but it is much more caustic (it has a pH of 11), so you should wear gloves when mixing it to avoid irritating your skin. Washing soda cuts grease, removes wax or lipstick and neutralizes odors in the same way that baking soda does. Don't use washing soda on delicate items like silks, wools or vinyls. It is found in the laundry section of most supermarkets.

### Is vegetable glycerin necessary?

Vegetable glycerin is used as a preservative and is a by-product of palm and coconut oil production. You can buy vegetable glycerin online or find it in soap-making supply stores, health food and/or herbal supplement stores. Essential oils may be substituted as an alternative preservative, but if you plan to make a large batch of cleaner and save some for later use, vegetable glycerin will significantly increase the shelf life of your product.

### How do I dispose of my leftover conventional cleaners?

The best thing to do is to use up what you have left of your conventional cleaners. If you suspect you have sensitivities to these products, you may want



### What are essential oils?

#### Do I have to use them in these recipes?

Essential oils are liquids formed from the distillation of the leaves, stems or flowers of a plant. They are very concentrated liquids, so a little (even just a few drops) goes a long way. Essential oils are purely optional in our recipes. Some people use them to add an attractive scent to the product; in addition they have anti-bacterial properties and can be used as a preservative. They are commonly available in health food stores, and are sold online. You may want to look for ecologically harvested essential oils.

**WARNING:** *It should be noted that some people can be highly sensitive to essential oils, leading to symptoms such as headaches, asthma exacerbation or other health effects. If you, your family members, or other guests to your home may be affected by essential oils, simply leave them out of the recipes. This will not impact your cleaner's effectiveness.*

## ONLINE EXTRAS

You can find more cleaning recipes, food and drink recipes (window-cleaner martini, anyone?), FAQs and other fun ideas at

[www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org).

to stop using them. But, don't flush them down the drain or put them in the trash. If you'd prefer to remove them from your house, contact your local health department or waste disposal service and ask how you can safely dispose of them in your area. Some cleaners are considered "household hazardous waste" and must be disposed of properly.

## COMMON HOUSEHOLD CLEANING CHEMICALS LINKED TO ASTHMA AND REPRODUCTIVE HARM

Monoethanolamine (MEA) is a surfactant found in some laundry detergents, all-purpose cleaners and floor cleaners and is a known inducer of occupational asthma.

Ammonium quaternary compounds are disinfectants found in some disinfectant sprays and toilet cleaners that have been identified as inducers of occupational asthma.

Glycol ethers, such as 2-butoxyethanol, are solvents commonly found in glass cleaners and all-purpose spray cleaners that have been linked to reduced fertility and low birth weight in exposed mice.

Alkyl phenol ethoxylates (APEs) are surfactants found in laundry detergents, stain removers and all-purpose cleaners, which have been found to reduce embryo survival in fish, and alter tadpole development. APEs are commonly detected as contaminants in rivers and streams, and have also been found in household dust.

Phthalates are carriers for fragrance in glass cleaners, deodorizers, laundry detergents and fabric softeners, which have been linked to adverse reproductive effects on baby boys, reduced sperm count in adult men, and increased allergic symptoms and asthma in children.



**SUPPORT WOMEN'S VOICES FOR THE EARTH**

Please donate online today! [www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org)

**JAMIE SILBERBERGER**  
Campaigns Organizer

"Instead of using store-bought fabric softeners, I add 1/2 cup of vinegar to my laundry load. It's just as effective and saves me money!  
Or, if the weather is nice, I'll hang my clothes on a line and skip the dryer!"

Share stories and personal tips  
from your party with us at  
[www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org)

**WOMEN'S VOICES FOR THE EARTH**

Post Office Box 8743 Missoula, Montana 59807-8743

[www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org)