



Extension News Column

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Re: Pinching Pennies column

Spring is just around the corner, along with the cleaning that normally comes with the season. If things are looking just a little grimy in your home, now is the time to get a jump on it.

We are always looking for that new miracle cleaner that will make this annual chore just a little easier. And if you are like me, you have a cabinet full of products that promise to be the best at whatever chore you are working on. However, there are some products that can do a good job and you might not even know it. So, let's take a look at some of these cleaners in disguise.

Toothpaste has a mild abrasive, a detergent, and an antibacterial agent that make for great stain removal. Stick with standard paste, not gel, and steer clear of formulas designed for tartar control and whitening. These often contain chemicals and additional abrasives that can damage items such as fine silver. At a cost of \$3 a tube, it is a bargain.

Use toothpaste to clean acrylic items, chrome and scuffed linoleum. It will dislodge dirt and polish the surface. Squeeze out a dab about the size of a quarter, rub it in and wipe off the excess with a dry cloth. I use it to polish my silver, both jewelry and serving ware.

Cooking oil can make quick work of some around-the-house challenges. At \$4 a quart, it is another cleaner's bargain. Make a scrubber's paste with oil and salt to remove baked-on debris on cast iron and other cookware.

To clean your leather shoes, wash the dirt off with water, then restore the shine by rubbing in a small amount of oil and buffing shoes with a cloth until they shine. Stainless steel can benefit from the same treatment. Put a small amount of oil on a cloth, rub it in and polish. In fact, that little bit of oil in your sink will help repel some of those stains.

Make your own polish by mixing 2 cups olive or vegetable oil with the juice of 1 lemon; work it in with a soft cloth. To smooth out scratches in light-colored wood, rub them with a solution of equal parts olive or vegetable oil and lemon juice. If you are painting, remove paint from your skin by rubbing them with a small amount of oil. In all these cases, oil removes the dirt, adds shine, then stops new dirt from sticking to your newly clean surfaces.

Borax is an old-fashioned cleaner that can still do the job. If you add it to your laundry, it makes detergents even more effective. It is very alkaline, so it does a great job in killing molds and fungus.

Dissolve ½ cup of borax in a gallon of hot water and transfer it into a spray bottle. Spray on the cabinet, stove or other surface, allow it to set for a few minutes and wipe with a damp cloth.

If your dishwasher is retaining the smells from last night's supper, sprinkle borax in the bottom and let it set a few hours. You don't even have to remove it, just put in the dirty dishes and run it through the cycle.

A final hint for borax is particularly important to those of us who have rust in our water. If your toilet bowl is looking rusty, sprinkle borax in the bowl and let it set overnight. It will reduce those rust stains.

Cleaning up after a long winter is a sure rite of spring, but it doesn't have to break the bank or be an onerous project.

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