Spring HOME SWEET HOME 2012

It's a SPRING 'thing' ~ Time to DETOX your home ~ 7 Essentials for 'Scentsational' seasonal Success!

At this time of year, it's a ritual for many of us to spend time cleaning, tossing, re-organizing and freshening up our homes after wintertime.

After months of keeping windows and doors closed, allowing very little air circulation, it's time to throw open our windows ~ time for 'Spring Cleaning'

As usual it comes back to our "CHOICES". We can make small, informed choices every day or every week, which are life-enhancing & nourishing or not. We can continue to make choices based on what we've always done, or what our families have always done, or stop and consider new possibilities.

Whether it's the type of clothing we buy, the sort of food we choose to eat, the kind of TV we enjoy watching or the basic choices we make regarding our home's health – our cleaning 'habits'.

We are bombarded with advertisements proclaiming the merits of everything from this laundry detergent to that window cleaner ~ it's a very long list. We have more choices now than ever before. There's even an expression for this issue; it's called "consumer confusion".

The bottom line?

If we want to increase the chance, in the long term of our own good health, we can make choices that enhance or detract from LIFE. Even a small change every week will add up and increase our chances to live the best life we can. We are busy people.
It's a busy life…

Consider making your home into an oasis from the big world outside. Whether you decide to switch to 'green commercial cleaners', one product at a time or elect to make your own with the EASY recipes below – ONE healthy choice becomes TWO with any luck!

Do you know?

- *that indoor air quality is generally more than 2-5 times worse than outdoors? (and often as much as 100 times worse?)*
- *that 50% of illnesses are caused or aggravated by poor indoor air quality***

**American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology

Here's a question for you:

If we are removing all those germs, that dirt and those beloved "dust bunnies" from our homes with harsh chemicals, what is removing the harsh chemicals?

Many homes, offer the appearance of "clean" but, in reality, they offer inhabitants constant exposure to a wide variety of chemicals. Toxic commercial cleaners contain a cocktail of chemicals, which leave residues in the air and on all surfaces. Ironically, these cleaners normally contain ingredients that can be harmful to our health, including the fragrances!

It's a known fact that we all associate "clean" with a particular scent. For some, it's the scent of lemons (Pledge?) and for others it's the aroma of a pine forest (Pine sol?) *What scent do you associate with "clean"?*

Fragrance may be the most common type of chemical in our houses. Used in laundry detergents, fabric softeners, dryer sheets, cleaning supplies and disinfectants, air fresheners, deodorizers, shampoos, hair sprays, gels, lotions, sunscreens, soaps, perfumes, powders, and scented candles – everywhere you look!

These days, at least **one in five people** experience health problems when they are exposed to fragrances. Personally, I've noticed that there are an increasing number of people who feel a recognizable 'sensitivity'. Many more notice a vague change in their level of 'wellness'. *How many of these 'perfumed' products are you living with, every day?*

Fragrances in these products can and do trigger sinus problems, allergy attacks, asthma or worse. Most fragrance chemicals are respiratory irritants that linger long after the actual aroma has dissipated.

There is increasing evidence that many commercial cleaners contain chemicals that are suspected OR known carcinogens, neurotoxins, reproductive toxins, or irritants to eyes, the skin, kidneys, lungs or other organs. A recent study published in the Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine links an occupational group containing maids and janitorial staff with above average diagnoses of bladder cancer.

Researchers at The University of Toronto believe 11.6% of work-related asthma comes from cleaning products used 'at the office'

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are the name for the chemicals in these products. Synthetic VOCs are to be avoided. They can be found in everything from paints, solvents, adhesives, floor varnishes, printers to, (and most commonly) **cleaning products.**

People will react differently, but symptoms might manifest as a loss of concentration, occasional or frequent headaches, dry eyes, dizziness or nausea.

Pthalates, pronounced 'thalates', (a type of VOC) are known to be endocrine disrupters. Studies conducted by the Silent Spring Institute have confirmed the relationship between toxic cleaners and incidence of thyroid imbalances as well as breast cancer.

One school in Vermont found a 60% decrease in asthma attacks after moving to a green cleaning programme which supports the growing evidence regarding the link between commonly used cleaning products and indoor air pollution on asthma sufferers.

A large US study showed housewives getting 55% more incidence of cancer than the average – the researchers suspect that exposure to cleaning products are a key cause of this.

NOTE:
Read the labels of household chemicals. Look for symbols like: "Warning," "Warnings" and "Danger" (the latter being most important). Avoid use of these products and ***do not*** *store with food and water intended for human or animal consumption.*

ALSO:

- Ensure your home has good ventilation
- Grow life-giving, oxygen generating plants indoors
- Strive to have a 'dark' bedroom for optimal rest
- Limit your exposure to EMF radiation or invest in safety devices**

A *truly* healthy home should smell like nothing at all.
There are alternative commercially prepared "green" cleaning products. They increasingly compete with the 'regular' brands. But be careful: Many products make vague promises, since there are no strict regulations on advertising claims; be sure to read the label to see what ingredients are used. Don't laugh. This is also a bit hit n' miss, as many companies don't publish ALL of their ingredients. You can look for the Green Seal of Approval, endorsement by Green Seal, an independent nonprofit organization that rigorously tests products to make sure they work and are good for the environment.

I will include some of my personal favourites at the bottom of this e-report as many of you have asked for this information.

I'm a great believer in "kitchen medicine" and have written about it a lot over this past year. Well, there are "kitchen cleaning solutions" as well. Why not take advantage of some items that you possibly have in your own kitchen? If not, they are easy to access and very inexpensive.

We don't need 101 different cleaners. This has been and continues to be a marketing gimmick. As promised, here are a few natural cleaning solutions PLUS a couple of bonus ideas which you can make quickly and easily from common ingredients. They WORK.

Here's a quick look at some of my favourite natural cleaning ingredients and what they can do:

Baking soda: A very effective deodorizer and mild abrasive ~ use it where you want to get rid of odours; garbage cans, trash receptacles, fridge. Polish silverware, scour sinks and remove scuff-marks with this multitasking ingredient.

Borax: Borax is a natural mineral. Borax is a naturally occurring substance that has properties of both a mineral and a salt. It works well in cleaners because it converts water molecules to hydrogen peroxide. It also has properties that enable it to disinfect and kill unwanted pests. It can be used to create a natural laundry booster, multipurpose cleaner, fungicide, insecticide, herbicide, and general disinfectant. I buy it in bulk or purchase the "20 Mule Team Borax" brand (which is pure borax)

Essential Oils: PURE and natural scents for those who MUST have it! Use in very small amounts in natural ingredient recipes. These power-packed oils are true healers and are 'multi-taskers'.

Anti-bacterials – eucalyptus, juniper, rosemary, sage, tea tree, thyme
Grease-cutting – cinnamon, lemon, orange, wintergreen
For shiny surfaces – peppermint, spearmint, lavender
Deodorizing – Vanilla, pineapple

Lemons/Limes : The citric acid in lemons and limes can cut grease, dispel odours, dissolve soap scum and naturally bleach.

Liquid soap: (Castile, glycerin or vegetable oil based)
This natural soap works great for floors and all-purpose cleaning solutions. I have used Dr Bronner's Castile soap for many years.

Salt: Pour salt on fresh carpet stains like red wine or coffee, let dry, then vacuum it up. Naturally abrasive, it can clean food-encrusted pots and pans or get rid of mildew in the bathtub.

White Vinegar: Works wonders around the house.

EASY RECIPES:

"All Purpose" spray Cleaner
Mix ingredients in a spray bottle and it's ready to use.

4 cups hot water
¼ cup vinegar
½ teaspoon borax

All Purpose Cleaner

2 cups of water
½ tsp Liquid soap

"All Purpose" Disinfectant
This solution can disinfect any surface: kitchen counters, floors, bathroom tiles, toilets.

1 part white vinegar
4 parts water

Floor Cleaner #1

You'll find white vinegar in lots of all-natural cleaners—and for good reason. It's very acidic, so it not only cuts through grease but also inhibits bacteria and mold. Add your favourite essential oil to make it your own! I use lavender essential oil (or lemon, orange, tea tree, white pine or rose geranium!)

2 tablespoons plain white vinegar
4 cups hot water
A few drops of essential oil- optional

Floor Cleaner #2

Here's another effective floor cleaner, minus the vinegar.

3 gallons hot water
2 tsp liquid soap
A few drops of essential oil – optional

Combine the ingredients in a bucket and use with a good quality mop on basically any washable surface.

Sink Scrub

This easy combination works as a gentle abrasive that will rid your sink of grime, grease, or mildew.

1-cup baking soda
¼ cup salt
Squeeze of lemon
1-2 tbsp dish soap

Mix the ingredients in a bowl until you have a paste. Use a sponge to spread on the area for a moment and then wipe off.

Let the paste sit for about 10 minutes for stubborn grime.

Dishwasher Detergent

A dishwasher definitely makes life easier, but there's no reason to only buy commercial powders for each cycle. Washing soda—a.k.a. sodium carbonate—mixed together with borax is an inexpensive alternative and works just as well as chemical-laden, heavily scented store brands.

2 cups washing soda
2 cups borax

Mix equal amounts of both ingredients. Add more washing soda if your water is hard. Use vinegar in the rinse cycle.

Liquid Detergents:

Your ordinary dish soap is a detergent. Most are fairly non-toxic although I always buy the 'green' dish soap.

Glass Cleaner # 1

Use 'club soda' in a spray bottle. This is an easy way to clean mirrors, windows, chrome etc.

Glass Cleaner #2

1 quart of water
1 tbsp of white vinegar or lemon juice

Spray it on the glass and then use a microfiber cloth or newspaper to wipe the glass dry.

Furniture Polish

Combine in a glass jar with a secure lid. Shake before using. Use sparingly.

1 pint of vegetable oil
1 tsp lemon juice.

General Dusting Spray

Mix in a spray bottle. Shake well before use. You only need a very little amount.

2 tsp almond or olive oil
¼ cup white vinegar
1.5 cups distilled water
10-15 drops of essential oil (lemon or lavender or your choice)

AIR Freshener SPRAY ~ Two easy ways to bring natural 'scents' to your abode:

#1
8 oz vinegar
20 drops of essential oil

#2
6 oz distilled water
1 oz vodka
10-20 drops of essential oil

Combine in a spray bottle. Shake before using. Do not spray directly onto wood furnishings. The sky's the limit if you'd like to create real 'scents'. There are unlimited combinations. Stay tuned to SB's blog in April; "benefits of Aromatherapy".

COMMERCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

And LAST but not least, here are my pick for some good choices for you – if you're not UP for making your own cleaning products. I would start with the general "all purpose" cleaner". I have tried most of them and I don't have a favourite.

I DO find them to be as good as the toxic commercial brands I WAS accustomed to using 'once upon a time'.

Here you go: (By the way, I don't work with or for any of these companies)

http://naturecleanliving.com
http://simplyclean.ca
http://ecover.com
http://seventhgeneration.com

I'd love to hear your comments or answer any questions, when possible. This is an overview only. Those with a health challenge will benefit from a more in-depth report.

At the Studio Botanica blog, we'll be talking about healthy choices for YOU this season; better looking skin, more rewarding sleeps, Lightening up in every way; discussing LOTS of Spring herbal ideas + recipes. Come and visit us often!

Greenest Spring Blessings,

Carol

http://studiobotanica.com

Wishing you a Happy, Healthy Spring ~ and a "HOME-SWEET-HOME"

**Increasing concerns re EMF radiation from cell phones, cordless phones + computers, microwaves, etc. has been one of my personal projects for many years. To learn more about living a protected life in this wireless age: Check out http://www.giawellness.com/34559/products/terra-gia/cell-guard/