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About the Author

Molly Parfitt always tried to keep her home clean and neat.

Molly said, "I always try to find ways to save time and get better results with cleaning, cooking or any other routine task."

"I enjoy doing them well but there are other things I want to have more time for!"

"As the family grew, cleaning took longer and results from some of the heavily-advertised cleansers weren't always good enough."

"Then, we started to hear about safety concerns with some ingredients."

"So, I did some research and asked friends for their experiences, good and bad."

This [book](#) will help my readers save time and money because I've put the best of the information I got here."

This isn't just about saving time and getting better results to their cleaning efforts. I'll help them reduce stress by improving their cleaning [methods](#) and cutting the risks by knowing more about the [products](#) they're using."

"Some products are 100% safe, some are always risky, and there are some which are okay until they come in contact with certain other products!"

Molly said, "I've covered a wide area so that every reader can save time, [stress](#) and [money](#) by using what's in this book.

Introduction

This book will help you make and keep your home cleaner and lessen any dependence you've had on risky chemical cleaners.

I learned these [tips](#) because I wasn't happy with the results I got from the time and effort I put into cleaning my own home.

[Keeping](#) it clean was expensive, stressful and time-consuming.

I did not know until I started researching this book that it was also fairly risky because of many of the mixtures and [methods](#) I used.

Some of the cleaners removed dirt and germs but left other problem materials in their place.

When I started my new [system](#) of cleaning, I found some other problems had been developing without me even knowing!

You will learn what I found which helped me turn things around.

I suggest that you read the [book](#) right through and note any points which are important to you at this time.

Give those some attention and then take a second run through the book for the other suggestions which you want to try.

It took a while to turn everything around but cleaning my home has become much easier and faster now. That's given us more space and reduced how much time we need for routine cleaning.

From the labels of cleaning products, it seems you need a degree in chemistry to understand them. Fortunately, there are reliable [sources](#) of information listed in the resources section where you can find just the facts you need in an easy to understand format.

I also include safety tips for your family and pets. Many [pets](#) are seriously hurt by exposure to cleaners every year.

I've tried to make everything easy to understand and do.

When you start using the suggestions, you will make your home a safer and healthier place and your [life](#) much less stressful!

Molly Parfitt

Go Slowly for Best Results



This [book](#) will help you review the cleaning processes and products you currently use and decide which you may change for cost or [health](#) reasons.

I have seen people that get very excited about the problems of dangerous chemicals and their effects on us and the rest of [life](#) on our [world](#).

They want to change everything immediately.

But, that is expensive and can cause problems as big as those they try to fix.

You probably have a lot of cleaning products and equipment in your [home](#).

There is no need to change it all right away.

There may be some items which are worth disposing of, but review everything in a calm manner so that you don't cause too much disruption of your current routines or have to spend a lot of money.

One thing you can do is [check](#) with the authorities about proper disposal of anything which may harm the environment.

There are great masses of insoluble trash as large as a small city floating around our oceans, interfering with fish and causing long-term problems.

That is a simple change which can have long-term benefits.

And, if we also think about the long-term effects when we are looking to buy new [products](#), we can reduce the build-up of trash and save [money](#) too!

Think about buying products which don't contain hazardous materials.

Many items are convenient but the planet pays the biggest price.

Aerosols are an example. They are convenient to use but contain much less active ingredients than other packages along with gases and other substances our environment does not need.

Your Green Shopping List



The great thing about buying green [cleaning](#) items is that they will cost you and the world a lot less than you've been paying for the high-tech stuff.

And, you will still be able to get similar results although you may have to add a bit

more elbow grease.

Soap

You probably have plenty of soap in your home. But, if you want to use it to make cleaning products, you need only to get simple, unscented and unadulterated formulations.

Baking Soda

There's a whole section in the [book](#) about the value you can get from this low-cost item.

You'll find other basic ingredients in other sections. I won't list them multiple times.

Don't Tolerate Mold



Mold is a [health](#) hazard, even in small amounts.

It's very easy to see a spot of mold, become distracted and then forget to deal with it.

The delay can let the mold become more advanced and put your family at greater risk from the various problems mold brings with it.

Some people apply a [spray](#) of undiluted white vinegar to areas like shower stalls every week just to discourage mold formation.

Molds are spread as small spores which start to multiply when they land on surface with some moisture.

Bathrooms are one well-known location but there are many other surfaces where we may allow some moisture to lay which can become problem areas when mold takes hold.

If you keep this in [mind](#), and consciously remove any sitting moisture by fixing the conditions which cause it, you will have less instances where mold become a problem for you and your [home](#).

People who are more sensitive to environmental conditions can suffer a negative reaction just from touching mold or inhaling the spores.

So, it is a wise precaution when cleaning off mold to wear [eye](#) and [skin](#) protection such as gloves and a close-fitting mask.

People with asthma can react badly when they encounter mold.

Black mold is one of the most common.

Eliminating mold completely is very hard.

The best approach is to remove all mold you can find and clean the areas thoroughly.

Then, fix whatever is causing the moisture which lets the mold grow completely.

You will still get mold occurring and spreading until you have eliminated

the moisture.

Tackling mold is an urgent problem because of the significant [health](#) risk and also because the mold will often cause damage to the area where it grows.

Remember that clearing the visible mold is just the start.

There will be spores spread through the structure which you cannot see. Some of those will start new infestations in they land where there is moisture.

Until you have the moisture all under [control](#), you need to keep watch for more mold appearing.

The [U.S.A.](#) Environmental Protection Agency suggests that most householders can probably deal with mold over areas up to about 10 square feet (0.9 square meters) but should consider getting professional assistance for larger areas. They have more relevant information on their site, www.epa.gov/

How Safe is Borax?

Many people use borax as part of their cleaning routines and also treat their [hair](#) with it.

But, there are also a [number](#) of people warning that using borax on your [skin](#) (or hair) may be dangerous.

Although the evidence is limited, I would not use it myself where there are other materials which give equal results.

Avoid problems.

Baking Soda

Baking soda is still one of the most versatile products in the [stores](#) and incredible value.

Most people have a box in their cupboard with the other [cooking](#) supplies. If that lot goes stale, you can use it for any of the following uses instead:

Great odor remover for your refrigerator. Just open the box and put it in the fridge. The effect should last for about a month. Then, use it in a drain.

Reduce odor in a drain and also remove simple blockages. Gently drop a tablespoon of baking soda into your drain and then pour a bucket of warm water in slowly. The result will be a less smelly drain which will also probably run a little better as well.

Remove odor from carpets. Leave for about an hour or more and then vacuum off. Test whether the carpet's [color](#) will be affected by contact with baking soda on a small hidden area first.

Add a little baking soda to some warm water and leave your combs and brushes in it for about twenty minutes. Don't use for brushes which have cloth on them.

Scrub your outdoor grill with some baking soda on a stiff brush.

Gently remove some [spray](#) residues from fruit and [vegetables](#).

Put baking soda on a damp sponge to clean counters, shower stalls and other fairly tough surfaces. All should be tested with a small area first.

This can also improve cleaning and reduce odors with some of your laundry. ***Be careful – don't use on delicate or expensive fabrics.***

Wonderful White Vinegar

White vinegar is another versatile cleaner. These are just some of the uses I use or was told by friends.

When you are sorting out the contents of your refrigerator, wipe down the shelves with a 50% [solution](#) of white vinegar and water before putting everything back.

Some aerosol stains may respond to a gentle wipe with white vinegar on a cloth.

Put a cup (240 ml) of white vinegar in a gallon (3.6 Lt) [water](#). Brush on carpet in high traffic areas. Test first and don't use for high value items.

Clean the [blades](#) of your scissors with a swab containing white vinegar. Dry thoroughly with a separate clean swab.

Some **venetian blinds** can be cleaned more quickly and better with a cotton cloth dipped in 50% hot water and 50% white vinegar.

Chopping boards will be refreshed and sanitized if you wipe them with straight white vinegar. If the boards are scored or chipped they should be replaced for safety reasons.

Dentures: My [dentist](#) recommended that I sit my new denture in pure white vinegar for no more than 20 [minutes](#) just once a week and brush it with a very soft toothbrush every night before putting it in a [glass](#) of clean water until [morning](#).

It is working for me and saving the cost of denture cleaners.

But, I must emphasize that this may not be suitable for all dentures because of the varied materials used in them and the way they are made.

So, please check with your dentist before trying it.

Some people use a 50% White Vinegar and 50% water mixture to clean their [windows](#). A friend told me that the first time she did this, she was disappointed. But, she did give it a [second](#) try and the result was very good.

She was told that the first result might have been affected by residues left from her previous cleaner.

Vinegar can also be used to clean many other things.

As always, materials vary, so always [try](#) vinegar on an inconspicuous area and don't try it on something irreplaceable or of great sentimental value.

More quick cleaning tips

Add a little natural soap to some baking soda and mix to a paste.

This will remove soap scum in your bathroom if you apply with a firm brush.

Baking soda is also good for mopping some types of wooden [floors](#). Just mix it into some warm water and add a little lemon [juice](#) or an essential oil of your choice.

Some people use white vinegar in a [spray](#) bottle to deter mold.

A friend said that tea-tree oil is much better for dealing with mold. You need a fairly high concentration and have to leave it in contact with the mold for a few hours before scrubbing the residue away.

Some white vinegar in your dishwasher can help a lot when you have some very greasy dishes.

Essential Oils

Essential Oils don't fit the common definition of "oils".

But, they are concentrated plant components and well worth buying for use in your green cleaning and elsewhere in your home.

are great value when you consider the amount you use compared to the amount of the synthetics which would be needed.

And, every time you use you oils, you are avoiding adding to the amount of synthetics added to our atmosphere every day.

A lot of plant material is needed for production of the related essential [oil](#). But, it is not currently considered a threat to the continued availability of the plants. And the value obtained by using the oils is also significant.

Never let any essential Oils near anyone's [eyes](#).

Never [digest](#) or inhale any essential Oils.

You will react negatively to a particular essential oil if you react badly to the plant it is derived from.

Pregnancy and Essential Oils

If you are [pregnant](#), consult your [doctor](#) about oils to avoid, especially in the first trimester.

This list is helpful but your doctor will have the latest information:

www.essentialoils.co.za/pregnancy.htm

Problems from Misusing Essential Oils

I am a great fan of essential oils but have to point out some people misuse them which costs them [money](#) and can also produce unexpected [health](#) problems!

You want your oil to be as pure as possible because you use less that way and aren't paying for a lot of filler.

The quality of the fragrance is more important if you're [making](#) high-cost cosmetics rather than green cleaning products.

Carefully measure just the amount specified for the mixture you are preparing. Extra oil is just wasted money.

These oils tend to irritate our [skin](#). Even if you are not particularly sensitive, it is wise to use gloves when handling any of the oils, just to avoid possible problems.

Keep your pure oils and the products you make locked away from young [children](#) and your [pets](#), especially when you use the oils that come from fruits, etc. Some children could be hurt, [thinking](#) that they are actually [foods](#)!

No undiluted essential oil should be used on children or adults with sensitive skin.

Tea Tree

Tea Tree is a very powerful oil with many benefits claimed or it use.

There are studies which support its effectiveness as an antiseptic and antiviral powerhouse,

Some people swear it is good for dandruff.

But, check with your local authorities or [doctor](#) before sing it on yourself or members of your [family](#). With [power](#) comes potential risks.

Lavender

Lavender Is another popular oil with a wide range of uses.

Used in relaxation products, hair treatments and cleaning products.

Avoid Greenwashed Products

Green cleaning has become very popular.



Marketers of non-green [products](#) want some of the dollars spent by conservation minded consumers.

Some producer genuine green products and some give their products a green tinge which is mostly hype and packaging.

So, you will see lots of repackaged goods with fluffy creatures and [trees](#) etc with meaningless (unregulated) terms that suggest these products are suddenly a lot

more environment friendly.

It can be har to tell, especially in those countries where cleaning products don't have to have [clear](#), detailed lists of ingredients.

It can be hard to tell what [claims](#) are truthful or helpful. Start by refusing to be influenced by nice pictures or celebrity endorsements (a friend [calls](#) them "Sellebrity hype").

[Check](#) the lists in the [Resource](#) section and your National or State Regulators sites for names of ingredients to be careful of or avoid.

Fix a Problem and Add More!

A few years ago, there was a burst of interest in anti-bacterial hand washes.

These [products](#) were promoted as suitable for disinfecting your hands when you used public facilities etc.

They have been very successfully promoted and were effective.

But, recently, researchers have discovered a problem.

Some of the products have been shown to be no more effective than properly washing our hands.

The fact is that many people don't do a great [job](#) of that. You need to get the soap and water over the whole of both hands to do it right.

The other problem which the washes are presenting is that some of the active ingredients are believed to be causing some [bacteria](#) to [develop](#) immunities which put patients in hospitals at greater risk.

Green Gardening



There is much more known about the benefits of eco-friendly [gardening](#) than other areas but I hope that readers of this [book](#) will help spread the word about the benefits of using responsible [methods](#) in the wider cleaning area.

Here are a few [tips](#) which gardeners can quickly benefit from.

Garlic

Garlic is a very popular plant with cooks. But it also is a powerful [weapon](#) for dealing with a number of pests in our gardens.

Garlic is a useful companion plant for crucifers like cauliflowers, brussels sprouts and cabbages. It will help repel some pests which eat them.

You can also mix some crushed garlic into [water](#) and spray it with a little cayenne pepper and pure soap to kill a variety of hungry pests.

Lemon Balm will repel some insects because it contains citronella.

Cleaning Last Year's Pots: Re-using your garden pots will save you a lot of cash which you can spend on more plants.

But, you must make sure that the pots are checked for contaminants and defects before re-using them.

If you see a build-up of salt on the post, mix some rubbing alcohol, white vinegar and water in equal amounts. Spray on your pots, then brush off.

Don't use the pot until it has dried completely or the plants might be hurt.

Recycle [tea](#) leaves and [coffee](#) grounds by putting them around your azaleas and other acid-tolerant plants.

The water from your steamed [vegetables](#) can be allowed to cool and then poured into the pots of your houseplants. They will get some nutrient value which would have been wasted.

If you dry herbs and have a spare sunny window, lay your herbs on blank paper inside the window. You might get some dried quicker that way.

Behind the Labels

The labels of many commercial [products](#) contain lots of information which would be valuable if it was easier for the general public to understand.

But, this short section gives you a few details about some of the ingredients that you will find in many popular products on the supermarket shelves.

Bleach

There are different kinds of bleach. Chlorine bleach is widely used. You need to wear gloves and might consider [eye](#) protection as well if your using something with this in it because it can irritate your eyes and your lungs.

Ammonia

Another common ingredient which has to be used with care at any time. Using any products which contain ammonia and chlorine bleach can produce a toxic gas.

That is why many cleaning products carry the warning that you should never mix any cleaners together or use the same bucket or other receptacle for different cleaners.

Formaldehyde

Formaldehyde is a colorless, flammable chemical with a strong smell. It is listed as a human carcinogen. Used in preparation of [furniture](#) and produced when [cigarettes](#), petrol and gas are burned.

Protect Yourself

Whenever you use cleaning products, you should take [care](#) that you don't cause yourself some injury or risk.

Even though the materials you use are eco-friendly, they may have properties which could cause problems for you.

This is particularly important when you are working with cleaners or in the [garden](#).

Wear clothing which covers all areas which may come in contact with chemicals and the gear you use to apply them.

Gloves are very important. Some materials can cause irritation or other effects which may make it difficult for you to do your regular work for some time.

If you are handling soil, fertilizer (especially horse manure etc.), you need protection from viruses which are commonly found in these materials.

When you finish handling them, change your gloves and other gear so you don't risk cross-contaminating the other plants and materials you handle later that day.

If you are in the sun, remember that you need a strong sun-screen which is not more than 12 months old. Make sure that you apply more of it after 2 hours or if you have put your hands or [arms](#) in water.

You should wear sunglasses with side-panels if you are on or near water to avoid being burnt by glare reflected off the [water](#).

Storage of cleaning products, even relatively safe ones, should be done carefully.

Some products can cause problems if they come in contact with skin or are swallowed.

Don't take chances. Lock them away from the sight and access of children and [pets](#).

Never re-use containers which have had risky materials in them.

Always clean up any spills of these chemicals before leaving the area to ensure that they don't pose a risk to people that come there later on.

If you [store](#) something in a new container, make sure that container has details of the contents clearly and indelibly marked.

Always clean the equipment you've used before you leave your [garden](#).

If you don't, the risk is that you will leave bugs in soil or plant scraps which are on the tools.

These will then be transferred to other areas of your garden when you use them next time.

Alternatives to Dangerous Ingredients

Chlorine bleach is cheap, popular, effective and deadly when misused. It is one of the most common causes of injury to [children](#) who don't realize what it is.

Hydrogen peroxide bleach is an effective and easy to obtain alternative.

The 3% [solution](#) is all that is required for any domestic use.

There are some safer alternatives which are generally labeled as being petroleum-free, biodegradable or solvent-free.

Basic Kitchen Cleaning

Before we start to clean the kitchen, we should look over the whole area and draw a plan of the room.

If we see any possible changes which could make using and enjoying the room easier and more efficient, we can mark those changes on the [plan](#) we made.

Before you decide to make those changes, discuss them with your [partner](#) who also spends a lot of time in that room.

You don't have to rush [changes](#). If anyone is not comfortable about them, it's a good [idea](#) to delay them so everyone can work through any concerns they have.

Give yourself at least an hour to go through the kitchen. The first step is to find any parts which are awkward or even risky to use.

After those critical problems are identified, look for any items which don't belong in the room or which are poorly positioned.

Then, you can look at what changes would fix any problems which have been identified.

Are there any things which need [repair](#) or replacement?

When can that be done and how can you get around not having the item available for use?

Then, look for any problems with the way any part of the room has been cleaned.

Then, start the first cleaning run.

Clear any trash out of the kitchen.

Gather the cleaning materials. Make sure you have a suitable ladder which will let you comfortably reach the highest points without any obvious risk.

Then, start from the highest points in the room. Check the [lights](#), fans and other fittings for damage, dirt or other problems.

Don't lean to reach any part of the ceiling. Always get off the [ladder](#), move it to a closer point and then climb back up.

Not being careful will put you at more risk than the few [minutes](#) you might

save is really worth!

Before checking any electrical gear, make sure the [power](#) is switched off to it.

Always have insulated screwdrivers and rubber gloves ready.

As you complete each check, move down closer to the [floor](#).

Empty and clean each appliance.

There has recently been some publicity about grime and worse accumulating inside the vents on microwaves. This sort of buildup is not obvious but can allow germs to breed inside the [machines](#).

Cleaning these areas is fairly simple but often overlooked.

As you work your [way](#) through the room, consider whether the equipment is located at convenient points for the people to use it without getting in each other's way.

When you get to the refrigerator and freezer, [check](#) the Use-By dates and also the condition of each of the packages.

Any that are damaged should be discarded unless it's convenient to make them part of a [meal](#) that day.

When you remove the racks and fittings from the refrigerator, carry them gently and place them in an area where they will not be disturbed. If the racks are not metal, you may want to wait for them to warm up to room temperature before you try to clean or adjust them.

When you have put everything back in place, you should write any notes about what you found and any changes which need be made so that those points are not forgotten when you move to the next area.

Apart from the particular tasks for each room you work through, you also need to consider if you have enough items such as fire extinguishers and if they are stored in the best locations.

This chapter could be used as a [guide](#) for the checking and updating each of the other main rooms in your [home](#) or office.

Cosmetics that are not Pretty!

Cosmetics have a use-by date just like your daily loaf of [bread](#). But, many women don't know about it.

In the United Kingdom, a survey found some [women](#) were using mascara up to ten years after they should have discarded it!

The rule is that mascara should only be used for about 4 months from when you opened it.

The experts say the problem is a big one because wet products like mascara are a potential breeding ground for bacteria – an extreme risk because it is applied so close to the [eyes](#).

They may have ingredients intended to stop or slow development of bacteria, but that can still occur if the make-up becomes warm..

Some other products also have use-by limits.

Liquid foundation should be thrown out after six months.

Eyeliner, lip liner and powder blusher can be used by the owner for up to two years but never shared.

Some old products show their age by starting to smell different.

Clearing the Clutter

Every home has some [clutter](#).

We feel more comfortable having some personal items around various areas within easy reach.

But, this can be taken too far.

We start to collect material which "might be useful one day" and spend money and time looking after stuff we never actually will use or enjoy.

It will become a source of [stress](#) and start to interfere with our enjoyment of the time we have with other family members.

It [starts](#) to cramp our living space and cause stress because of the time and effort to look after it.

It can also become a fire hazard.

The best thing to do is to get each person to be responsible for the storage and maintenance of their own "[treasures](#)".

Otherwise it becomes a mutual problem.

My parents used to have an annual [garage sale](#).

Sometimes, we put the [money](#) into some local charity or appeal for someone who was having a hard time. Other times we bought something for our home or each of us got the money just for the stuff we each sold.

It meant the kids had a few extra dollars for things they actually would use and we all contributed and helped each other.

Having a sale was a lot more [fun](#) for us. And, we got to get to know many neighborhood people that came to our sale. Some could become good friends.

Resources

Cleaning made simpler, faster and safer.

Removing Mold from your Home

<http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldguide.html>

Information about dealing with mold (mould) from The U.S.A. Environmental Protection Agency.

Basic Chemical Safety Information from the U.S.A. Cleveland Clinic

http://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/healthy_living/hic_Household_Chemicals_The_Basics/hic_Household_Chemicals_Chart_Whats_in_my_House

Information about potentially dangerous chemicals in the average home.

http://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/healthy_living/hic_Household_Chemicals_The_Basics

Basic Household Safety information and suggestions.

Formaldehyde and Cancer Risk

www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Risk/formaldehyde

Risk from formaldehyde itself, as product of combustion and its use in the preparation of pressed-[wood furniture](#).

Teach [Kids](#) about Household Chemicals

www.epa.gov/kidshome_tour/

Asks kids to find household products which may have risks with their use.

This is fairly dull. Suggest parents review it and perhaps go through it with their kids if they think it might be beneficial.

Toxtown Interactive guide for Children.

www.toxtown.nlm.nih.gov

This site is an interactive guide to environmental [health](#) concerns around towns for children. It has been operating for 14 years.

You may need to download a player from Microsoft, Adobe or Apple to use particular files on the site.

On to a Cleaner, Safer World!

I [hope](#) that you have learned some useful tips which make cleaning your home and protecting your [family](#) quicker and less stressful.

Molly Parfitt

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)