

Lafayette Garden Club

# **Recipes** for



# **Organic Solutions**

February 2012

## Greener Cleaners



### What You Need

#### Ingredients

*Baking soda* – cleans, deodorizes, scours

*Borax* – cleans, deodorizes, disinfects

*Castile soap* or vegetable oil-based liquid soap – cleans

*Distilled white vinegar* – cuts grease and soap scum, dissolves mineral deposits, inhibits mold, freshens; reportedly kills 99% of bacteria, 82% of mold, and 80% of viruses

*Essential oils* – freshen, disinfect

*Kosher salt* – scours, disinfects

*Water*

#### Equipment or Tools

*Measuring cups and spoons*

*Pumice Stone*

#### Containers with Labels

*Spray bottles*

#### Instructions

### Homemade Organic Household Cleaners

**TUB AND TILE CLEANER:** In a jar or spray bottle, combine **1 2/3 cup baking soda** with **1/2 cup vegetable oil-based liquid soap**. Add **1/2 cup water** and **2 tablespoons vinegar**. Shake before using. Apply with a cloth or sponge and rinse well.

**SCOURING POWDER:** Combine **1 cup baking soda**, **1 cup borax**, and **1 cup kosher salt** in a jar. Sprinkle on area to be cleaned, wipe with a sponge, and rinse.

**TOILET BOWL CLEANER:** Mix **1/4 cup borax or baking soda** and **1 cup vinegar** in the toilet. Let it sit for 15 minutes (or longer, if necessary), scrub, and flush.

**GLASS CLEANER:** Combine **1/4 cup vinegar** and **4 cups warm water** in a spray bottle. Use to clean glass or mirrors with a dry cloth or piece of newspaper.

**DRAIN CLEANER:** Pour **1/2 cup baking soda** into drain followed by **1 cup vinegar**. Let it sit and fizz for 15 minutes, then rinse with hot or boiling water. May need to repeat or leave baking soda and vinegar in overnight.

**FLOOR SANITIZER:** In a bucket, mix **1/2 cup borax** with **2 gallons hot water**. Apply with a mop or sponge. Rinsing is not necessary.

**SOAP SCUM REMOVER:** Sprinkle on **baking soda**, scrub with a cloth or sponge, and rinse. **Vinegar** or **kosher salt** also work.

**CALCIUM OR LIME REMOVER:** For calcium or lime deposits on a chrome faucet, soak a towel in **vinegar** and wrap it around the faucet. Let it sit for a couple of hours or overnight.

**MOLD OR MILDEW REMOVER:** Mix **1/2 cup borax** and **1/2 cup vinegar** to make a paste. Scrub with a brush or sponge and rinse with water. For tough mold, let it sit for an hour before rinsing with water.

# Homemade Organic Gardening Sprays and Concoctions

From Colleen Vanderlinden's Planet Green

## PEST CONTROL

**TOMATO LEAF SPRAY** is effective in killing aphids and mites. It works because the alkaloids in the tomato leaves (and the leaves of all nightshades, actually) are fatal to many insects.

**GARLIC OIL SPRAY** is a great, safe insect repellent. Simply put three to four cloves of minced garlic into two teaspoons of mineral oil. Let the mixture sit overnight, and then strain the garlic out of the oil. Add the oil to one pint of water, and add a teaspoon of biodegradable dish soap. Store in a bottle or jar, and dilute the mixture when you use it by adding two tablespoons of your garlic oil mixture to one pint of water.

This mixture works because the compounds in garlic (namely, diallyl disulfide and diallyl trisulfide) are irritating or deadly to many insects. The oil and soap help the mixture stick to plant leaves. What insects does garlic oil repel? Whiteflies, aphids, and most beetles will avoid plants sprayed with garlic oil. A word of caution: don't apply this spray on a sunny day, because the oils can cause foliage to burn.

**HOT PEPPER SPRAY** is a great solution if you have problems with mites. Simply mix two tablespoons of hot pepper sauce, a few drops of biodegradable dish soap, and one quart of water and let it sit overnight. Use a spray bottle to apply the spray to infested plants.

Hot pepper spray works because the compound capsaicin, which causes the "heat" in hot peppers, is just as irritating to insects as it is to us (have you ever sliced a hot pepper and gotten any of it in an open cut? Ouch!) This mixture also helps repel whiteflies, but it may have to be reapplied if you start to see the mites or whiteflies returning.

**SIMPLE SOAP SPRAY** is useful in taking out a wide variety of garden pests, including aphids, scale, mites, and thrips. Just add one tablespoon of dishwashing soap to a gallon of water and spray the mixture on the pests. Why does this work? The soap dissolves the outer coating or shell of the insects, eventually killing them.

**BEER FOR THE SLUGS:** sink a tuna can or pie plate into the ground, and add a couple of inches of beer, to about an inch below the top of the container. The slugs will go in for a drink and drown. Beer works because the slugs are attracted to the yeast. It's really important to sink the container into the soil and keep the beer about an inch lower than the soil. This way, the slugs have to go down after the beer, and they drown. If the beer is near the soil, the slugs can just have a drink and then go and munch some hostas when they're done with happy hour.

**CITRUS RINDS AS SLUG TRAPS.** This works. If you don't have beer in the house, but you do have oranges, grapefruits, or lemons, give this a try.

**NEWSPAPER EARWIG TRAPS** work well for reducing the population of these sometimes-pesky insects.

**SODA BOTTLE YELLOWJACKET TRAPS** work by attracting the yellowjackets away from seating or picnic areas, and then ensuring that they can't escape the trap.

**RED PEPPER SPRAY** works well for making your plants less tasty to mammal and bird pests. If bunnies, deer, mice, squirrels, and birds are regularly messing with your garden, make the following mixture and spray target plants weekly. Mix four tablespoons of Tabasco sauce, one quart of water, and one teaspoon of dish soap. The capsaicin in the pepper spray will irritate the animal pests, and they'll look for less spicy fare elsewhere.

## FUNGAL DISEASE SOLUTIONS

**MILK FOR POWDERY MILDEW** The milk works just as well as toxic fungicides at preventing the growth of powdery mildew. This mixture will need to be reapplied regularly, but it works wonderfully.

**BAKING SODA SPRAY FOR POWDERY MILDEW** is a tried-and-true method for preventing powdery mildew. It needs to be applied weekly, but if you have a problem with mildew in your garden, it will be well worth the time. Simply combine one tablespoon of baking soda, one tablespoon of vegetable oil, one tablespoon of dish soap and one gallon of water and spray it on the foliage of susceptible plants. Baking soda spray works because the baking soda disrupts fungal spores, preventing them from germinating. The oil and soap help the mixture stick to plant leaves.

## Weeds

**VINEGAR** works very well for weeds in your lawn and garden. The main issue with vinegar is that it can harm other plants. I recommend using a foam paintbrush to brush the vinegar directly onto the leaves of weeds you're trying to kill. This prevents the vinegar from getting onto other plants and ensures that the entire leaf surface is coated with the vinegar.

**BOILING WATER FOR SIDEWALK WEEDS:** Boil some water, and pour it over weeds in the cracks of your sidewalks or driveways. Most weeds can't stand up to this treatment, and your problem is solved. Just be careful when pouring!

**VINEGAR AND SALT FOR SIDEWALK WEEDS:** I personally prefer pouring boiling water on sidewalk weeds, or pulling them. But if you have some really stubborn weeds, you can try diluting a few teaspoons of water into some white vinegar and pouring that onto your sidewalk weeds. Please note that this concoction will kill just about any plant it comes in contact with, so keep it away from your other plants, as well as your lawn.

## And the Best Homemade Garden Concoction of All

**COMPOST!** Seriously, whether you're an apartment dweller with a fire escape farm or a rural farmer, you need to be making and using the stuff. It adds nutrients, improves soil structure, increases moisture retention, and increases the number of beneficial microbes in your soil. And that's all besides preventing organic matter from making its way to the landfill. I hope these ideas for safe, homemade organic garden concoctions are helpful. By having just a handful of inexpensive items on hand, you can take care of most common gardening dilemmas in your own, green way.

## My Own Favorites