

Free to Be Green and Clean



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By Anne Underwood

Not so long ago, ecofriendly cleaning products were expensive, didn't work as well as regular cleaners and were available only in health-food stores. No longer. That's good news for the environment and for anyone who's ever gotten a headache from scrubbing the bathroom with traditional cleaners. "People who clean houses for a living have twice the rate of asthma," says Alexandra Scranton, director of science and research at Women's Voices for the Earth.

Even Clorox has gotten the message. In January, it launched an ecofriendly line called Green Works, which includes toilet-bowl, glass and all-purpose surface cleaners. Made with lemon oil, citric acid and coconut-derived surfactants, Green Works carries the EPA's Design for the Environment logo. Last month the Sierra Club put its logo on the products, too, having vetted the ingredients, production process and even the source of the ingredients (\$2.99 to \$3.39 wherever Clorox is sold).

Among our other favorites: Citra Solv's Citra Dish Natural Dish Soap cuts through grease, and the new lavender-bergamot scent is like aroma-therapy in the kitchen (\$4.39; see citrastolv.com for a store locator and \$10 in coupons). Ecover ("Does the dishes, not the fishes") offers a comprehensive line, including an Ecological Limescale Remover as good as any tub-and-tile cleaner we've tried (\$3.99 at Whole Foods). From Earth Friendly Products, Ecos laundry detergent is made from ingredients like coconut kernel oil and soap bark (an evergreen whose inner bark contains soaplike compounds). It even contains soy-based fabric softeners (\$7.99 at Whole Foods). And we love the company's Parsley Plus All-Surface Cleaner (\$5.09 at ecos.com).

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For ovens, you're on your own. But Scranton, who advocates homemade cleaners (womenandenvironment.org), says you can clean an oven bottom and door with a quarter inch of baking soda, spritzed well with water and wiped down in the morning. Better yet, prevent greasy buildup by lining the bottom of the oven with foil.