

Living at home with your Beardies



The other afternoon I was doing a least favorite task: on my hands and knees, with stiff brush, scrubbing the ceramic tile floors that our 2 Beardies manage to adorn with grit, grime and goo. Our big brown boy, Parker, came wandering through, inspecting my task, carefully walking on the clean, wet tiles, and then returned to a more comfy spot on the sofa to observe my labors. I realized that it was OK that he walked on the floor, wet with my cleaning material, as it was non-toxic. One can drink Murphy's Oil Soap, if one does not mind burping bubbles! That is basically the policy we have in our household regarding cleaning materials: if you can lick it safely, then you can use it.

We all know that lessening the amounts of toxins in our environment will not only benefit us but especially our Beardies. They have more exposure to the chemicals and toxins we humans are spreading everywhere. Keeping your home "green" makes it easier on them and their immune systems. Yes, all those "green" products on the grocery store shelf are indeed expensive, but there are do-it-yourself green options for cleaning and disinfecting that are cheaper and really even more effective alternatives.



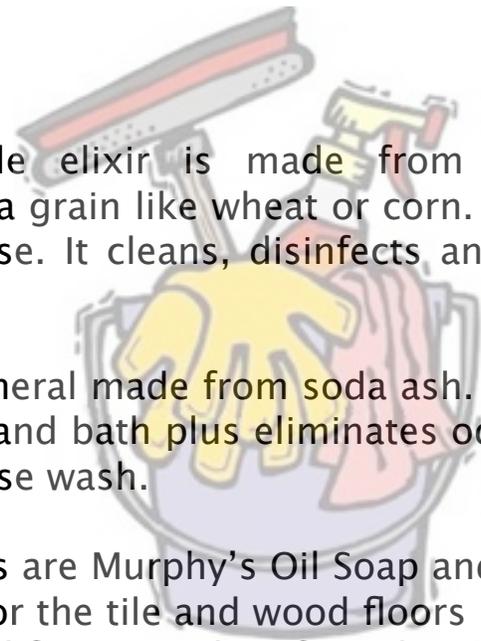
Here are my favorite products:

White distilled Vinegar: This most valuable elixir is made from the fermentation of dilute alcoholic liquids, usually a grain like wheat or corn. The generic brands work just fine for household use. It cleans, disinfects and is anti-fungal. Purchase by the gallon!

Baking Soda: A standard in baking, this is a mineral made from soda ash. It is a gentle, non-abrasive cleanser for the kitchen and bath plus eliminates odors from dog wash towels when used in the final rinse wash.

Saponified oil and castile soaps: My 2 favorites are Murphy's Oil Soap and Dr Bronner's. In our household, Murphy's is used for the tile and wood floors plus woodwork while Dr Bronner's is gentler and used for general surface cleaning.

Hydrogen peroxide: This is becoming a popular substitute for bleach. It removes stains, mold and mildew. It does have an expiration date and once the bottle is open loses its power in a few months. It is the 3% variety found in brown bottles.



Book: There is a whole slew of books and web sites devoted to environmentally cleaner approaches to housework and cleaning. My “bible” on green home cleaning is a book written by Annie Berthold-Bond called “Better Basics for the Home”. I have used this book since 1999, but because all these non-toxic cleaning and disinfecting products have been around for generations, it’s completely up-to-date!

Recipes: here are my top three favorites!

Disinfectant: Regardless of how you feed your Beardies: raw, cooked or kibble, all those foods have pathogens and bacteria aplenty, so keep your kitchen disinfected using this simple, non-toxic and better-than-bleach approach. Have one spray bottle of distilled white vinegar and one with 3% hydrogen peroxide. Apply one after the other, in either order. This protocol kills virtually all Salmonella, Shigella and E. coli bacteria on heavily contaminated food and surfaces. Do not combine the 2 liquids in one bottle, but either order of application will get the job done ... simple, cheap and non-toxic!

Window washing: We all have glass doors and windows with Beardie nose and lip slime. Best way to clean these surfaces is to combine in a spray bottle $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white distilled vinegar, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dishwashing detergent and 2 cups water. Find a snotty window and go for it! I prefer to use newsprint to wipe, so I wear rubber gloves to keep hands clean.

Scrub: Even most counter surfing Beardies do not make a mess on porcelain or stainless steel surfaces, but we humans do. I use this in the kitchen and baths: Place $\frac{1}{2}$ cup baking soda in a small container with a lid, adding enough liquid soap or detergent to make a frosting-like consistency. Scoop the mixture onto a sponge or cloth and scrub away. If you like a little aromatherapy, include a few drops of essential oil. I use peppermint as it enlivens me while I am cleaning. And the Beardies like me twirling while I work!



So get ready for **SPRING** with a clean but non-toxic house....then your Beardie/s can mess it up again! Next issue: a “greener” lawn and garden for you and your Beardies to enjoy.

Noel Thurner