

SPRING CLEANING TIPS & NATURAL REMEDIES



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The holidays are over and the chilly, soggy weather of a Florida winter is gone. Spring has sprung and it's time to get your home ready for the warmer weather. We all love that feeling of a clean, fresh house, but spring cleaning is an opportunity to go beyond just making your rooms look and smell cleaner.

Our *Spring Cleaning Tips & Natural Remedies* eBook will give you some tips on often overlooked Spring cleaning areas, with all-natural solutions that you probably already have at home. We'll go room-by-room for a more in-depth guide on how you should clean each of these rooms:

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BEDROOM

Your bedroom is probably one of the most comfortable areas in your home. It should give you a sense of complete serenity and comfort. However, trying to relax in a bedroom that is full of dust, allergens or clutter is almost impossible. Try these tips to get your bedroom back to your haven of peace and relaxation.

CUT THE CLUTTER (CLOSETS AND UNDER BEDS)

Our closets are full of things that we don't wear, don't need, or have no idea where it even came from! Take a look in your closet and honestly ask yourself when the "last time" you wore each of the items was. According to the [National Association of Professional Organizers](#) (NAPO) we wear 20% of the clothes we own 80% of the time. If you've worn something within the past 6 months, and you love it, keep it! Everything else should be set in 3 piles: Need, Want, and Ditch.

If you're in a giving mood, you can take everything that is still in good condition in the ditch pile and donate it to charity for some tax savings next year. Goodwill has a [basic guide](#) that shows what the fair market value of items in good condition is. It's also a good idea to start tracking your donations now

as you're spring cleaning with the free [TurboTax ItsDeductible](#) tool.

If your "Need" and "Want" piles are still HUGE, then you may want a new strategy. Summer vacation season is right around the corner - maybe it's time to upgrade this vacation a bit more? Take a look at that "Want" pile again and see how much you're willing to part with now. This is also a great way to get the whole family to take a look at things they have in their closets that can be cleaned out. Tell your kids that they can keep the money from their items sold at a garage sale and watch them transform into minimalists right before your eyes.

RID YOUR ROOM OF ALLERGENS

Living in the Southeast is already tough for people with allergies, but taking a proactive approach to reducing allergens can help relieve some of the

effects. You spend 8 hours per day just breathing in everything in your bedroom, so you should be taking in the cleanest air possible. It starts with working to create a dust-free environment. You won't ever get rid of all dust and pollen, but you can wipe down surfaces like dressers, TV's and ceiling fans regularly to start knocking the dust down.

build up high numbers of allergens such as mold, bacteria, viruses and dust mites. Don't panic and toss it out though; this is treatable. Start by stripping and washing all the bedding. Then thoroughly vacuum your mattress on both sides by using the upholstery attachment on your vacuum. Let your mattress air out for a while before making the bed again.

Your mattress is a huge source of dust as well. Over time your mattress can

QUICK TIP

To repel dust and keep it from building up on your fan blades, mix a small amount of fabric softener or distilled vinegar with water in a spray bottle. After dusting the blades, spray them with the mixture and wipe both sides clean to help keep dust low.



QUICK TIP

Still concerned about dust mites and bacteria? Mix one cup of baking soda with a couple drops of an [essential oil](#) of your choice. Lightly sprinkle the baking soda mixture on the mattress surface. Let sit for 15 minutes and then vacuum it all off with the upholstery attachment. Dust mites and other allergens come up with the baking soda.

QUICK TIP

As you're decluttering your closet area, it's a good idea to take a look at those areas of your home you can't normally see. Make sure there are no hidden pest problems or signs of water leaks, dampness, cracks, or other red flags that can be buried out of sight.





LIVING ROOM

Your living room is the great communal gathering place for your family and guests. It should be comfortable and inviting, but it's also one of the easiest areas to become cluttered with everyone's miscellaneous stuff. With people tracking muck in from outside, your pets shedding or scratching, magazines stacking up and more, this is one of the toughest areas for you to keep clean. Use this time to take control and start spring off right.

FURNITURE

It's hard to keep your furniture clean, but giving your sofas and chairs an occasional heavy clean isn't the oppressive chore you might think it has to be. Just as with your mattress, you can use baking soda to help freshen up that upholstery and knock down dust and allergens that build up. Just sprinkle baking soda on the couch and let it sit for at least twenty minutes. Vacuum up the baking soda with the brush attachment. Once you've put the work into deep cleaning the sofa, you may want to use a fabric protector like Scotch Guard to prevent stains. It's a good idea to check and see what works well with your fabric beforehand.

Your living room is a gathering place, not a doctor's office, so it's time to toss out all of the magazines, coupons, and anything else that has been

accumulating on your coffee tables for months. This starts to make the room feel a little less messy and reduces the chances for slips, spills, and other little accidents. Just like with the bedroom, you should wipe down surfaces, ceiling fans and electronics to reduce dust.

Even though we may not all use fireplaces very much in Florida, they do still get some occasional use in the winter. Now that the weather is warmer and you're in cleaning mode, go ahead and take the opportunity to scoop any leftover ashes into a trash bag for disposal and wipe down any build up from the doors or screen. This will help keep all that dirt from inadvertently blowing back into your living room and ensure your fireplace will be all ready for you to use next winter.

QUICK TIP

While you're cleaning your furniture, you should start checking for excessive wear and potential hazards. Over time, stress to the springs or mechanisms of furniture may cause them to bend, warp or stick out of the upholstery. Be aware of any potential structural issues to prevent injury or damage.



KITCHEN

A clean and safe kitchen lowers the risk of illness and especially accidents. This year's spring clean needs to go way beyond simply organizing the pantry and cleaning out the fridge. Your kitchen has the potential to be one of the most dangerous areas of your home as well. Accidents in the kitchen can cause the most excessive damage to your home. According to the [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#), cooking equipment causes 46% of home fires. Don't rush through this part of your cleaning project, and be sure to enlist some extra help to make sure it gets done right.

THE OVEN

For most people, the oven is the piece of equipment that gets the most use in the kitchen. Food residue and grease created during cooking can build up quickly with heavy use. As this build-up increases, it can clog the filters and other mechanisms inside your oven. Oven fires are typically the result of malfunctioning components. A heavy build-up of grease on the surfaces inside the oven is prime fuel for disaster. If you don't know the last time you cleaned your oven, then grab your gloves and keep reading, because today is the day!

There are a few ways to get this deep oven clean done. Many modern ovens are "self-cleaning" which simply means they have a mode that will set the oven on an extremely high temperature and lock the door during the clean process. The temperature helps burn off residue without chemicals and just a little water at the bottom. Before launching a cleaning war against your oven, see

if you can find the information about your self-cleaning oven. For older ovens that require heavy duty cleaning, there are chemicals and cleaners on store shelves. But you should practice caution and read directions very carefully before using harsh chemicals like oven cleaners.

You can find many natural methods to clean your oven without chemicals online. Some of the top rated solutions include using baking soda, water and a vinegar paste-like solution such as the one we included [here](#). For most of these methods you'll still need rubber gloves, a dish cloth, plastic spatula/scrapper and a spray bottle. Coating the inside of the oven with a mixture of baking soda and water then leaving it overnight lets the solvent properties of the baking soda go to work on the grease. Spraying vinegar on the baking soda paste causes a foaming reaction that makes it easier to wipe the oven clean. Try it for yourself, but be sure to follow the directions of any method you choose very carefully.



KITCHEN APPLIANCES

Just like your oven, food residue that builds up on other appliances can cause components to malfunction, potentially resulting in fires or injury. Start by taking out any small kitchen appliances that aren't already on the countertops. This includes blenders, electric griddles, waffle irons and more. Make sure the appliance is unplugged and then do a quick inspection to make sure the main parts aren't cracked, melted or otherwise damaged in a way that might cause it not to work properly. Next, lay the power cord on a flat surface and check along it for any exposed wires or damage to the cord that may cause malfunction. For minor cord damage, you can use high quality electrical tape from your local hardware store to keep it intact. It's a good idea to ask a professional for the safest way to properly protect the cord. Once you are sure that the mechanical and electrical components look safe, get started cleaning your appliance so that it's ready for the next use.

THE KITCHEN SINK

Once you're satisfied that your sink "looks" clean, it's time to start the real work. Take everything out from underneath the kitchen sink. Take a flashlight and look for any standing water or dampness that may suggest you have a leak. Even the smallest

leak overtime can start causing wood-rot that will spread and lead to some expensive repairs. Not to mention, small leaks usually become big leaks, and big leaks cause floods. Run the water for a few minutes and run the garbage disposal to see if any leaks appear. After you're sure that it's all clear, get rid of any old or expired cleaning supplies or items under the sink and make sure the rest is safe and secure.

Florida is notorious for hard water (containing hard minerals like calcium and magnesium). This hard water will build up on your fixtures and inside your plumbing. Excess buildup reduces the flow of water through your faucet, which will give you annoyingly low water pressure. This will also start to cause that calcium deposit to build up inside the pipe, which can cause further plumbing damage. You can help prevent buildup by unscrewing the small piece at the end of your faucet, which is the filter. Be sure to hold your hand underneath to catch any rubber gaskets that may come off. Set the rubber gaskets aside and use a toothbrush to remove any loose material in the sink. Take about ½ cup of distilled vinegar and microwave it for 30 seconds. Then drop the faucet filter in and watch it bubble, which means the vinegar is working to remove the calcium. Leave it in the cup for about an hour and then rinse and brush with a toothbrush before installing again.





BATHROOM

Your bathroom is a mini oasis. It's the place in your home where you are almost guaranteed at least a few moments of peace. This is the place to pamper yourself with a relaxing bath or just let the hot water wash away all the stress from your day. You can't enjoy your little home spa escape unless it's clean and inviting, so take some time to polish up this important room.

SCRUB A TUB-TUB...AND SHOWER

Mildew and soap scum...they are just simply gross. It's tough to relax surrounded by green and black stains or walls coated with soap scum. This is going to be a big focus of your bathroom cleaning project. There are hundreds of cleaning product options that will eradicate mold and mildew. If you're going to go with this option, be very sure that you have proper ventilation in the bathroom to avoid excessive fumes from cleaning products and read all directions and warnings very carefully before you begin.

If you want to avoid the chemical options, there are some natural alternatives to fighting mildew. If you have been reading this book, you may start to see a trend developing here. One of the most recommended natural cleaning methods is...vinegar! A [Good Housekeeping](#) study found that vinegar is 90% effective against mold and 99.9% effective against bacteria. Just as with your kitchen, you can use baking soda, vinegar and a scrub brush to get rid of mold and mildew. Simply make a



little paste from adding water to some baking soda. Spread the paste on the affected area and allow it to sit for a while. Take a spray bottle of vinegar and cover the baking soda paste areas and allow it to sit and react for at least 30 min. Then you can use your scrub brush and water to clean it all up and rinse with water again.

You can help prevent future mildew buildups by simply letting nature do its job as well. Fresh air and sunlight reduce the occurrence of mildew. Make sure that after your shower or bath, you allow plenty of air to circulate in your bathroom and if the weather permits, you can even crack a window in the area.

SINK...OR SWIM?

Cleaning your bathroom sink should follow a similar routine as you used with the kitchen sink. Take everything out from under your sink and throw away any unused or unneeded items that have accumulated. Using a flashlight, allow the water to run full stream and inspect the cabinet and pipes under your sink for any signs of current or past leaks. Besides potential damage from wood-rot, the build-up of any mold as a result of moisture in this dark area may pose significant health risks.

Unscrew the filter from the end of your faucet. Set the rubber gasket aside and scrub it lightly with a toothbrush

to remove loose particles. Soak it in a warm vinegar solution for about an hour, rinse it off and reinstall. If you are comfortable removing the stopper/drain plug from your sink, it's a good way to prevent or fix clogged areas. Remove the stopper and clean any dirt, hair, etc. from the stopper. Carefully pour about 4 cups of very hot water directly into the drain. Pour in ½ cup of baking soda and then pour in a mixture of 1 cup vinegar and 1 cup hot water into the drain, on top of the baking soda. Cover with a washcloth to keep the bubbling reaction below the surface in the pipes. Let it sit for about 10 minutes and turn the faucet on hot to flush out the sink again. Reinstall your stopper and enjoy a clog free sink!



QUICK TIP

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests that over 235,000 people visit the emergency room every year because of bathroom related injuries. While you're scrubbing the tub, you should evaluate the safety concerns. Use grip pads or mats on shower and tub floors to prevent slips and falls. If you have some that are worn or lost grip, consider replacing them.





GARAGE & ATTIC

If you're like most people, your garage and attic are the areas that accumulate forgotten projects, decades worth of clothes, holiday decorations and more. These areas will typically only get cleaned and organized once or twice a year, so you should focus on some of the most important factors to make sure these spaces are safe.



DISPOSE OF PAINT AND CLEANERS

After most home improvement projects, there is usually always leftover materials. We spend a good amount of money on paint, brushes, and other items so we're not quick to throw them out. These things accumulate quickly and begin to pose hazards if they aren't stored properly or left out where children and pets can accidentally get into them. Latex paint has a shelf life of about 10 years, but that doesn't mean you should keep it that long. If you aren't sure whether you're ready to get rid of that paint, take a quick look to see if it's even good anymore. If you have

been storing paint in the garage that gets very warm in the summer, chances are it's not going to be good. First, pop open the lid and see if it smells rotten. If it does, then it's time to go. Check to see if the paint is watery or separated. Get under the thin skin that will likely be on top and stir it. If it blends easily and the color looks good, then you can hold on to it for a while, but go ahead and store it in a cool, dry place, out of the reach of little hands or paws.

If it is time to get rid of paint, don't just toss it in the trash. You will need to take it to your local recycling or hazardous waste disposal area. You can also follow some handy tips from [Lowes to dispose of Latex paints](#). They suggest adding

equal parts cat litter to latex paint in the can. If you have more than half a can, you can also pour the paint into a lined box or trash can and then pour the cat litter into that. Stir the cat litter into the paint until it thickens and will not spill, then allow it to sit for 1 hour. Simply throw the dried pain in the garbage and make sure to remove the lid.

READY, SET, MOW?

The weather is warm and you are revved up to attack the yard and earn that coveted "Yard of the Month" award for your neighborhood. Before you start, you need to make sure your equipment is safe for use to reduce the chance of injury or damage. First, inspect your mower to make sure that nothing is cracked or damaged. Disconnect the spark plug wire that enables the mower to start and turn it on its side. Wearing safety gloves, carefully turn the blade and inspect the mounting nut to make sure everything is secure and balanced. Turn the mower right side up and take it outside. After sitting for the winter, it may be sluggish to start. You will need to check the oil, prime the engine to get the fuel flowing and possibly siphon out any gas that was left in the tank over the winter (if it has gotten too much moisture in it from humidity). You can follow some simple steps [here](#) or talk to your local hardware store about the proper steps.

Almost everyone has the good old red plastic gas can in their garage for their lawn equipment. These have been tucked away for the winter as well, so make sure they are safe to return to regular use. If you have had old gasoline sitting in cans for the winter, it's wise to dispose of them and start over. Don't simply dump it out in the neighbor's yard though. Gasoline needs to be properly disposed of at hazardous waste facilities. If you don't

want to make that drive yourself, call a couple of local auto repair shops. They may be willing to help you out and dispose of your old gas for a small fee. Inspect your cans for any signs of leaks. Caps on gas cans need to be tight fitting to ensure that the excess vapors don't escape and come in contact with ignition sources. If you no longer have a cap or if it's broken, then it's time to get a new can this year. Practicing some simple safety steps will prevent serious injury.

CLEAN UP THE MUSEUM

Your attic is probably full of "remember when" items. You don't want to throw out your old memories, but it's probably ok to part with the plastic reindeer you bought in the 90's that's been collecting dust in the far corner. Florida attics get HOT. On top of that, most of the plumbing and electrical wiring runs through the attic areas of Florida homes. Excess clutter or potential hazards in this area leaves you wide open for trouble. Besides the chance that you accidentally damage a pipe or wire by placing heavy items on top of them, these items are also dust magnets. As dust builds up in your attic space, it can find its way into your A/C ducts and spread throughout your house. Just as with cleaning your closets, take some time to consider what you really want, need, or can part with as a donation or garage sale. Anything that you decide to keep in your attic should be stored at a safe distance from plumbing and electrical wires. If you don't have a flooring in your attic, do not place items directly on the insulation or in between rafters. Use flat boards across the rafters to support boxes and protect your ceiling inside.





BONUS

Don't forget about these other factors that are often forgotten about when the weather turns warmer.

IS YOUR PET READY TO PLAY?

School is out, people are on vacation and there's 10x the stimulation outside for your furry friend. You may have a happy and social pet already, but if they haven't spent very much time around a lot of other people or animals the past few months, it's time to make sure they are ready for play. The American Kennel Club (AKC) offers a [Canine Good Citizen Training](#) program that comes with a certificate at the end after your dog passes a test. Many times, earning this certificate can help lower home insurance rates, so you should check with your carrier. Even if you don't want to go through the program, you can check out the criteria that they evaluate dogs on. See if your pet already does the things they look for and, if so, chances are your buddy is ready for summer break. If you have any doubts about their behavior around a lot of people or excess stimuli, then talk to your vet about local trainers who can teach you a few things.

CHECK THE SPRINKLERS

Watering your lawn is a necessity in Florida. A sprinkler system that isn't working properly will not only cost you more money to run, but it can cause damage to your home. You should regularly check your system to ensure that you're not losing water and that your sprinklers are hitting all the spots they should, and none of the areas they shouldn't. Run your system as normal and start inspecting. Look for any obstructions of the spray pattern that could direct water to the wrong areas. Make sure that there are no swampy areas or signs of erosion around your home from too much water, which could be a sign of a broken line or sprinkler head. If your sprinklers seem to have low pressure, that could possibly be a sign of water being lost in the lines or a leak.



[Southern Oak Insurance Company](#) is a Florida based insurance company specializing in personal residential property coverage. The core strength of Southern Oak is our knowledge and understanding of the Florida Property Insurance Market, our financial stability and commitment to developing the strongest agency partnerships possible.

While going through every room and doing a deep clean, we suggest making a record of the items you own. It is important to make sure valuable items are covered under your homeowners insurance policy. This [Home Inventory Checklist](#) will help you build a comprehensive list of the valuable items in your home.

CLICK ON THE EBOOK TO DOWNLOAD IT FOR FREE.

