

WORKBOOK

CONSCIOUS CLEANING 101

MODULE 12



LAUNDRY ROOM



Let's move on to the laundry room! Using products that are eco-friendly protects local water supplies and protects us from being exposed to toxic chemicals on our clothing. But if we aren't using harsh chemicals, then how do we wash our clothes effectively, keep them soft, remove stains from them, make sure their colors don't fade, get rid of persistent stinky smells, take care of delicate linens and maintain your washing machine? It doesn't have to be all that difficult. Let's review some basic recipes and items that you can make in bulk to have them on-hand when you need them. Then I'll share cleaning tricks for the laundry room.

Cleaning Cabinet Essentials:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Hamper ball* | 5. Fabric Softener* |
| 2. Pre-treat stain remover* | 6. Laundry Perfume* |
| 3. Laundry powder (or soap nuts) | 7. Dryer Sheets* or |
| 4. Whitener* | 8. Wool Dryer Balls* |

* these can be skipped if you want the bare minimum

1. Hamper Ball



Before sending your clothes to the washing machine, it's likely your hamper is getting stinky. Especially if you have sweaty exercise clothes thrown in the mix! You can reduce smelly odors in your hamper by crafting a hamper ball. (Tip: If you wish to make wool dryer balls too (see below), make those balls first and reuse the stockings for this hamper ball craft!)

Materials:

- Old pair of stockings
- Scissors
- Baking soda
- Essential oils (i.e. lavender)

Steps:

- Cut 9" off the stockings, starting from the foot of the stockings.
- Fill it up with baking soda, about 1/3rd of the way up.
- Add 10 drops of essential oils of your liking.
- Tie a knot to secure it.
- Place this hamper ball at the bottom of your hamper to make sure it smells fresh.

2. Pre-treat stain remover



If you stain on your shirt while you're out and about, don't wait before acting on it. Make this simple roll-on soap to apply directly to the stain to pre-treat it. Once you get home, wash your shirt in the washer with your regular laundry powder.

Ingredients & Materials:

Small roll-on container (old deodorant roll-on may be hard to open, but give it a try!)

1 tbsp. Marseille soap

½ cup water

1 tsp. vegetable glycerin

Funnel

Steps:

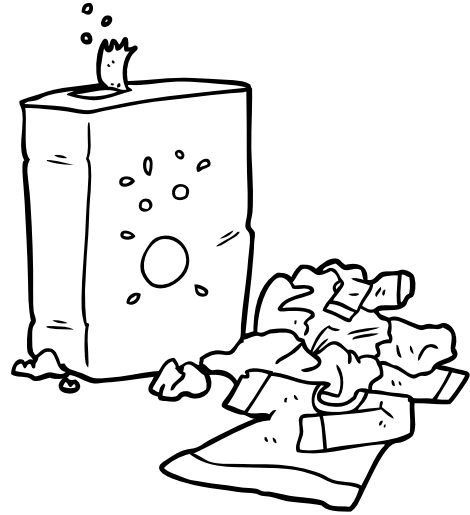
- Put the Marseille soap and water in a pan
- Heat until soap is fully melted
- Take off the heat, add the vegetable glycerin
- Transfer the soap (with a funnel, if needed) to the roll-on container
- Let the mixture thicken for 12 hours
- Label your container

3. Laundry Powder

This laundry powder is my go-to laundry soap. It's easy to make, effective, and simple to put in the machine. Keep a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup measuring device beside the powder container to easily put one dose in the washing machine.

Ingredients & Materials:*

- 1 or more large sealable container(s)
- Gloves
- 5 cups baking soda
- 5 cups washing soda
- 2.5 parts finely grated Castile bar soap
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup measuring device



* for 1 year's worth (for a family of 2)



Steps:

- Put your gloves on
- Mix the baking soda, washing soda, and Castile soap together in the container(s)
- Close tightly
- Label your containers
- Store safely & keep the measuring device beside it
- Use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (or more) per load

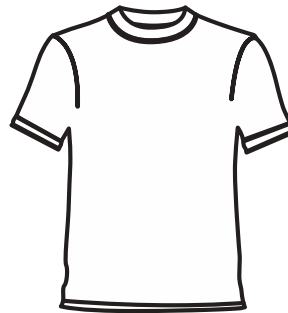
For more laundry cleaner recipes, scroll down.

4. Whitening clothes

To whiten white clothes, turn to sodium percarbonate instead of bleach! If you whiten clothes frequently, keep your sodium percarbonate bottle in your laundry room, label it for your personal reference, and place alongside a tbsp. measurer to easily scoop out one dose.

Materials:

Sodium percarbonate
Tbsp. measurer



Steps:

- Label the sodium percarbonate container "Whitening: 1 tbsp./load"
- For every load of white clothes, add 1 tbsp. of sodium percarbonate

5. Fabric Softener

This fabric softener will not only soften your clothes, it will also remove odors and residual detergent, and protect the clothes' colors.

Materials:

White vinegar
Cup measurer

Steps:

- Keep a bottle of white vinegar in your laundry room
- Label it "Fabric softener: 1 cup/rinse cycle"
- Add 1 cup of vinegar in your fabric softener dispenser so that it gets released during the rinse cycle



Do not use this softener with reusable cloth diaper covers, as the plastic can be damaged.



Soap nuts can also be used as fabric softener. Add 5 nuts to a cotton bag, and place in the washing machine.

6. Laundry Perfume

If you wish to add a pleasant scent to your laundry, make a spray with the essential oils of your choice mixed in water. Whenever your laundry is done and set out to dry, or prior to wearing your clothes, lightly spray the mixture onto them. Avoid delicates and white clothes, as they may more easily get stained. The scent will be discreet, not overwhelming. Since the oils are volatile, the scent will only be temporary – make sure to seal the perfume bottle properly.

Materials:

Spray bottle (15 oz)
Lavender essential oils



Steps:

- Fill bottle with water
- Add 40 drops of essential oils
- Seal properly and label
- Spray clothes prior to wearing

7. Dryer Sheets

Fabric softeners and dryer sheets contain so many harmful chemicals that the Environmental Working Group's official recommendation is to refrain from using them altogether. When you dry your clothes with them, they leave a layer of quaternary ammonium compounds (1) or "quats". Quats



can result in skin and respiratory irritation, have been linked to occupational asthma (2), and were found to significantly reduce fertility in mice (3). The sheets and softeners are also made with fragrance, a term under which hides a trademark secret with ingredients such as phthalates and synthetic musks (suspected hormone disrupters), 1,4-dioxane (carcinogen), linalool (allergen), chloromethane (developmental toxicant), and many more toxic chemicals (read the 2008 University of Washington study [here](#)).

(1)Environmental Working Group, "What about fabric softeners?", accessed July 2018, URL: <https://www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners/content/faq#q32>

(2)"Quaternary ammonium compounds--new occupational hazards", Lipińska-Ojrzanowska A et al., 2014m URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25812396>

(3)"Exposure to common quaternary ammonium disinfectants decreases fertility in mice", Melin et al., 2014, URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4260154/>

Thankfully, it's quite easy to make your own dryer sheets or dryer balls that are toxic-free and effective. If you air-dry your clothes (kudos to you!), this next craft won't apply to you. If you do use a dryer, you might want to make reusable dryer sheets to soften your clothes, add a pleasant smell to them, and reduce static cling.

Materials:

Large jar

2 cups of vinegar

60 drops of essential oils

3 to 6 sheets of old (clean) cotton rags or washcloths

Steps:

- Mix the vinegar and essential oils in the jar
- Put the sheets down into the vinegar (as many as will comfortably fit)
- Label the container and store safely
- Place them in the dryer with your wet clothes (use all the sheets for larger loads, fewer sheets for smaller loads)
- Remove sheets from laundry and put them back in the jar to use next time



Place soap nuts in your dryer to make your clothes soft and fluffy.

8. Wool dryer balls



There is one function that our dryer sheets lack, and that's reducing drying time. To shorten drying time, you can felt your own wool dryer balls (or just buy them, but we're crafty!). We recommend steering clear of plastic dryer balls, as they often contain polyvinyl chloride (PVC), which is made from vinyl chloride (a known carcinogen). Other than PVC's link to cancer, its production and disposal also has many environmental concerns.

Wool dryer balls are excellent alternatives to both plastic dryer balls and dryer sheets in that they are nontoxic, reusable, made from a renewable resource, and have no negative environmental impact. These wool dryer balls:

- 1) reduce static cling,
- 2) soften clothes and avoid crinkles through their pummeling action,
- 3) naturally scent your laundry if you add drops of essential oils to them, and best of all,
- 4) they reduce the drying time!

How so? They increase airflow by creating air pockets as they tumble, and they pull moisture from clothes. They contain naturally secreted grease called lanolin that has a waterproofing property, which ensures that the wool balls don't retain water or become moldy.

Here's what you'll need to make your wool dryer balls. To reduce drying time, we recommend making anywhere from 4 to 6 balls.

Materials:

- 100% wool yarn (about 50 yards for 1 wool dryer ball).
 - The yarn **MUST** be 100% wool without any acrylic or else it will not felt.
 - White or grey color to ensure it doesn't stain your clothes (I used red because I mainly use these for drying cloth diapers or towels).
 - Must **NOT** say "machine washable". Look instead for "felting wool for washing machine felting".
- Pantyhose or stockings (that you won't be wearing again)
- Blunt-tip needle
- Scissors
- String

Steps:

1. Wrap the yarn around your index and middle finger 10 times, leaving a small space between your fingers.
2. Slide the yarn off your fingers, squeezing the yarn in the middle so it doesn't come loose. Wrap more yarn around the middle of your bundle 10 times to hold it together.

3. Continue tightly wrapping the yarn around and around to begin forming a ball. Keep going until you've used up about 50 yards of wool, or until it reaches the size of a tennis ball.
4. To secure the final strand of yarn, thread the strand through your blunt-tip needle and wedge it tightly under other strands. Cut the excess yarn end.
5. Slide the wool dryer balls in your pantyhose or stockings. Use your string to tie tightly between each dryer ball. (Cut stockings if necessary.)
6. Wash your dryer balls on high heat with your load of laundry. (Make sure to not wash clothes on high heat that will shrink – or that you're concerned about staining if you used colorful yarn! Best to use cloth diapers, rags or towels.)
7. Dry the wool dryer balls on high heat.

Release your wool dryer balls from the stockings and make sure the balls have felted. The wool strands should all be stuck together smoothly and securely. If not, repeat the washing and drying. You can use the leftover stockings to make your deodorizing hamper ball with baking soda and essential oils!

To use: put 4-6 balls in your dryer.

If the balls begin falling apart, repeat the felting process. For scented laundry, add several drops of essential oils (such as lavender) to each ball right before using them.

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1. Plant-based Laundry Cleaners

To wash your clothes, you can use plants that are rich in saponin. Saponin is a surfactant and foaming substance that's effective at lifting grease, dirt and grime from clothing.

1.1. Soap Nuts



Soap nuts from the *Sapindus Mukorossi* tree are rich in saponin (refer to Module 5 for details). Using them will leave your laundry smelling clean and fresh. These dried fruits can also act as fabric softener or be used in your dryer to soften clothes. They aren't ideal for filthy or very stained laundry, but they work well for clothes that need to be freshened up. If you have very dirty laundry, you can throw in some baking soda, and if you are washing whites, you can add sodium percarbonate.

To use: Place about 5 nuts in a cotton bag, and put it in with your clothes in the washing machine.

1.2. English Ivy Laundry Detergent



English ivy (*Hedera helix*) is rich in saponin (see module 5 for details) and makes a perfect zero waste & local laundry detergent. Its leaves are available year-round. It's not the most practical recipe, but probably the most fun! Since it doesn't keep for that long, you would need to remake the recipe every 6 weeks or so.

Materials:

- Gloves
- 60 large English ivy (*Hedera helix*) leaves. **WARNING:** Always be 100% of your plant identification prior to harvesting!
- Clippers
- Foraging basket
- Reusable tea filter or very fine strainer (or single-use coffee filter, if that's all you have)
- Large jar

Steps:

- Find a *Hedera helix* plant
- Put your protective gloves on (dermal sensitivities are rare, but best to be cautious.)

- Once 100% sure of your identification, collect 60 leaves while avoiding the berries and sap.
- Rinse the leaves.
- Scrunch them up in your hands – with gloves on – to break them down.
- Transfer to pan, add 4.5 cups of water
- Bring water to a boil; boil for 15 min.
- Let cool and sit for about 12 hours.
- Squeeze the leaves by hand (with gloves) to get their last juices out
- Compost the leaves
- Filter the English ivy liquid into a large jar
- Label very clearly and refrigerate.
- Add vinegar to extend its shelf-life. Keeps for about one month in the fridge.

To use: Add $\frac{3}{4}$ cups of the English ivy tea to each load of laundry. Makes enough for 6 loads of laundry.



Want a quicker solution? Put 12-15 leaves in a mesh bag and place directly in the washing machine with your laundry. While we can't attest to the efficiency of this particular method, it has reportedly worked for our friends! Note that the English ivy tea can also be used as dishwasher liquid.

1.3. Wood Ash Laundry Cleaner



Hardwood ash is high in potash, or potassium carbonate, which is sometimes used in soap production. The potash is effective at cleaning clothes and most stains. (Read more in module 5.) This ash detergent cleans most clothes well, but it's not ideal over the long term for white clothes, because their colors will fade.

Materials:

- Gloves
- Hardwood ash (a lot)
- Tub to collect ash
- Sieve
- Large bowl
- Water
- Reusable tea filter or very fine strainer (or single-use coffee filter, if that's all you have)
- Large plastic container (NOT glass)

Steps:

- Put protective gloves on (to avoid potential skin irritation)
- Collect ash in large tub. **WARNING:** Don't burn yourself. Ash can look deceptively cool. It can actually remain hot for over 12 hours after a fire goes out.

- Sift ash into a large bowl until you've collected 4 cups of sifted ash.
- Add 9 cups of water. Mix.
- Let it steep for 24 hours, mixing occasionally if possible.
- Filter the ash water into a large plastic container (not glass).
- Label the jar before placing in the fridge.
- The liquid will keep for several months in the fridge

To use:

Use $\frac{3}{4}$ cup to 1 cup per load of laundry

Safety reminder: Do NOT store in glass container as the potash will erode it, eventually causing it to burst.

We've gone over your laundry room cleaning cabinet essentials, as well as some unique off-grid style laundry cleaners. Here are more recipes and tricks to complete your laundry room needs!

2. Liquid Laundry Soap

This laundry soap works well but doesn't store very nicely. Over time, the mixture gels together. If this happens, add hot water and mix the container vigorously.

Materials:

2 cups of grated Marseille soap

1 tbsp of baking soda

1 tbsp of sodium percarbonate (for white laundry only)

20 drops of your choice of essential oils

1 quart (1 L) of water

Steps:

- Boil water with shaved Marseille soap until it melts.
- Let it cool
- Add baking soda, sodium percarbonate (optional, for whites) and essential oils.
- Transfer to large container

To use: Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup per load.

3. Cloth Diaper Laundry Cleaner



This cloth diaper cleaner recipe prevents build-up and is an extra-strong sanitizer. Do not use it on your regular clothes. Cloth diapers must be washed on high heat.

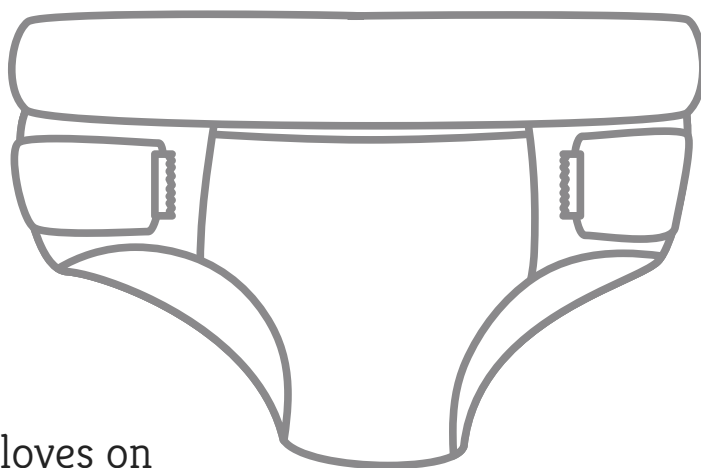
Ingredients & Materials:

Gloves

Baking soda, 3 parts


Washing soda, 3 parts

Sodium percarbonate, 2 parts



Steps:

- Mix all 3 ingredients, with gloves on
- Use 2 tbsp. for one large load

 Note that cloth diapers should not be washed with soap, or the oils in the soap will lead to build-up on the fabric. This coating will in turn make the diapers less absorptive. Cloth diapers should not be washed with vinegar either, or the plastic covers will begin breaking down, making them less water-resistant. Finally, essential oils should never be used with cloth diapers, as the oils will coat the fabric and make them less absorptive over time.

Never put your all-in-one cloth diapers or cloth diaper covers in the dryer, as this will weaken the plastic, leading to diapers that are more likely to leak. Hang dry them instead, indoors or in the sun.

4. Homemade "Bleach"

This homemade "bleach" is meant for cotton fabric that has discolored to yellow. For regular whitening instead, just use 1 tbsp. of sodium percarbonate in your laundry machine.

Ingredients:

2 tbsp. sodium percarbonate
1 tbsp. grated Marseille soap
Small tub or sink



Steps:

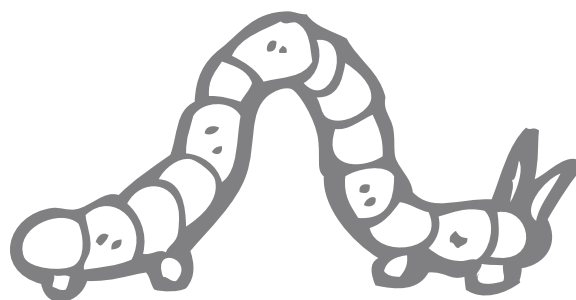
- Pour 105°F water in the tub or sink
- Add the sodium percarbonate and Marseille soap
- Add yellowish clothing and mix
- Let sit a couple hours

5. Silk Clothes Cleaner

Silk clothing should be washed carefully by hand, not the washing machine.

Ingredients & materials:

2 parts honey
1 part black soap
8 parts water
soft brush



Steps:

- Melt honey and black soap in water in a pan
- Mix and let cool
- Apply soap to the silk and clean silk with a soft brush
- Air dry

6. Whitening

To whiten faded clothes, you can soak them in water overnight with 1 cup of fresh lemon juice.

7. Faded black clothing

These methods don't yield fantastic results, but they do help.

- Method 1: To revive the colors of your black clothes and darken them, make English ivy tea and let your black clothes bathe in the tea for 12 hours. Rinse with vinegar.
- Method 2: Mix coffee grounds and water. Bathe your black clothes in the liquid for 12 hours. Rinse with vinegar.

8. Ever-stinky clothing

- Method 1: Soak the clothing in water/vinegar (1:1) or water/baking soda (1:4) overnight.
- Method 2: Place the piece of clothing in the freezer or in the bright hot sunshine.
- Method 3: Soak in vinegar 24h, then 1 day in the bright hot sun.

9. Cleaning wool and cashmere

Wool clothing should be washed by hand in cold water with grated Marseille soap and vinegar. Rinse the wool with water, then do one final rinse with vinegar. Squeeze out by using ringing it in a towel. Stretch it to restore it to its original shape and size. Hang to dry.

10. Pilling on sweater

Use a razor to remove unwanted fabric from sweaters or scarfs.

11. Prevent pilling

To prevent pilling on sweaters or sports clothes, wash them inside out.

12. Kitchen rags

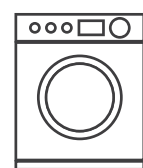
Soak kitchen rags with Castile soap & baking soda overnight. Wash next day.

13. Washing socks or small children's toys

Place socks & toys in mesh bag. Transfer to washing machine. It's an efficient way to clean without losing items or wasting time.

14. Washing Machine Maintenance

- Method 1: Put 4 tsp. of baking soda in with your regular laundry load before starting the cycle
- Method 2: Put 1 L of vinegar in your washing machine and run it on a short cycle 3 times a year



15. Limescale on Ironing Board

Scrub ironing board plate with half a lemon. If your ironing board doesn't have holes in it, add salt. Rinse with a sponge.

16. TREATING STAINS

All stains should be treated as soon as possible to prevent the stain from setting in. Stains that are not water-soluble may not be able to be treated with a safe cleaning product. For instance, ink from a ball-point pen may only be able to be removed with acetone or rubbing alcohol. Other stains on leather, suede or silk may require professional treatment. We recommend getting creative to cover these stains (like Phoebe from Friends, stylishly covering her hummus stain with a Christmas ribbon).

Stain tips:

- Act immediately!
- Blot, don't rub.
- Use cold water
- Treat stains before washing in machine



TREATING STAINS

a. General stain remover for resistant stains on clothing

- Method 1: Gently rub humidified Marseille soap on dry clothes before washing them
- Method 2: Soak stained shirt in warm water overnight with grated Marseille soap

b. Deodorant stains

Deodorant stains will come off easily by wiping them with pantyhose.

c. Sweat marks

Apply a baking soda & water paste (3:1 ratio) to the sweat marks. Wash the piece of clothing as usual in the washing machine. This works for stains on the neck or wrists of shirts.

d. Blood stain

Never wash blood stains with hot water. Use cool water with Marseille soap and/or lemon juice. Tougher blood stains can also be treated with washing soda – wear gloves!

e. Grease stain

- Method 1: Sprinkle cornstarch on the grease stain to absorb grease. Let it act for about 5 minutes. Rinse. No more grease. Rub the piece of clothing with humidified Marseille soap bar to remove the remainder of the stain.
- Method 2: Sprinkle talc-free baby powder on the grease stain. Put a napkin on top. Iron it. Rinse.

f. Wine stain

Immediately sprinkle salt on top of the stain to absorb the wine. Then spray with warm water. Scrub with toothbrush.

g. Grass stain

Pre-treat with vinegar or lemon juice. You can also cut half a potato and rub with the potato. Then, wash with cool water and Marseille soap.

h. Coffee or tea stain

Pour some vinegar & sprinkle some salt on the stain. Take a piece of cloth to scrub the stain.

i. Red berries stain

Blot the stain with half a lemon. Let it take action, then rinse.

j. Chewing gum stain

Harden the piece of gum by applying an ice cube to it, or putting the clothing in your freezer. Scrape it off with a spoon or dull knife. Then clean the remaining marks with vinegar.

k. Countertop stain

Rub stain with lemon juice. Leave juice on for a few min. Scrub with baking soda. Tada!

l. Wax stain

Harden the piece of wax by applying an ice cube to it, or putting the clothing in your freezer. Scrape it off with a spoon or dull knife. If there is any remaining wax, place a paper napkin or bag on top of the stain. Place an iron on the stain so that the wax melts into the paper. Treat the rest of the stain with Marseille soap and water.

m. Rust stain

Rust stains can be tough to get rid of. But with the right ingredients and some elbow grease, it's possible. Mix lemon juice and salt. Scrub the stain. Let act for 30 mins. Scrub with Marseille soap. Rinse.

n. Paint stain

For paint stains on tiles or pavement, scrub the stain with a hard brush and wood ash.

Laundry Cleaning Tips:

- Is your laundry actually dirty? Your jeans can be worn many times before being washed, and shirts can be worn more than once before being cleaned (*gasp!*). A smell test and stain check will help you make a decision.
- Keep separate hampers for:
 - Cloth diapers and/or cloth pads
 - Delicates that must be hand-washed
 - Clothes that leak colors
 - Whites



- To make sure your clothes last: Wash clothes on cold (except whites + diapers). Cold rinse cycles for all clothing.
- Cold washing prevents clothes from shrinking excessively.
- Turn sports clothes and sweaters inside out to prevent pilling.
- Select short cleaning cycle unless you have particularly filthy clothing.
- Air dry whenever possible indoors or outdoors in the sun.
- Use the dryer on low heat and clean the lint trap filter after every use to ensure energy efficiency.
- Soiled cloth diapers should never go more than 5 days without being cleaned. (In our household, I've sometimes gone 7 days, and no one has died.)
- Some of your clothes may require dry cleaning. Dry cleaners often use perchlorethylene (PCE), which can damage the nervous system, irritate your skin, eyes and lungs, and is a suspected carcinogen. The best solution? Skip dry-cleaning altogether. If you must, look for dry cleaners that are PCE-free. This won't mean that they are free of toxic chemicals, however. Make sure to let your clothes air out thoroughly outdoors before wearing them. Never let dry-cleaned clothes sit around in your car or home before airing them out.

Laundry Room Gear Checklist

Supplies:

- Hampers
- Drying rack
- Iron
- Toothbrush (for stains)

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Homemade Products:

Hamper ball

Pre-treat stain remover

Choose 1 laundry cleaner:

- Laundry powder + $\frac{1}{4}$ cup measuring device
- Soap nuts + cotton baggie
- English ivy detergent
- Wood ash cleaner
- Liquid cleaner

Cloth diaper laundry cleaner

Whitening (Sodium percarbonate, labeled) + tbsp.
measurer

Fabric softener + cup measurer

Laundry perfume

Dryer sheets OR dryer balls

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LAUNDRY ROOM CLEANING CALENDAR



1. DAILY:

- Act on stains immediately
- Sort dirty laundry in separate hampers

2. WEEKLY:

- Clean cloth diapers (don't let soiled diapers sit out more than 5 days)
- Wash laundry with any kitchen rags + cloth pads
- Clean out dryer lint trap

3. BIWEEKLY:

- Wash towels and sheets
- Hand-wash delicates

4. MONTHLY:

- Wash or shake out bedding
- Wash kitchen and bathroom rugs
- Check cleaning supplies

5. BI-ANNUALLY:

- Washing machine maintenance
1-3 times per year

HOMEPLAY

You are well on your way to having clean toxic-free clothes to wear and safe sheets to sleep in! Here is a list to help you put into practice what you've learned in this module:



- Determine which laundry cleaner you would rather use (DIY, soap nuts, or foraged) ☐
- Make your 7 cleaning cabinet essentials (consider inviting a friend along!) ☐
- Go over your laundry supplies checklist ☐
- Consider printing or writing down your laundry cleaning calendar ☐
- Keep this workbook handy in case you ever need to use the tricks or more recipes ☐