

Green Cleaning
FOR
DUMMIES®

**by Elizabeth B. Goldsmith, PhD
with Betsy Sheldon**



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Published by
Wiley Publishing, Inc.
111 River St.
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
www.wiley.com

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Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: Number is available from the publisher

ISBN: 978-0-470-39106-8

Manufactured in the United States of America. This book is printed on recycled paper.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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About the Author

Elizabeth B. Goldsmith, PhD, is a Family Resource Management professor at Florida State University who green cleans her own home. A wife of 37 years and mother of two grown sons, Liz is a nationally known expert in how households are run, including the most documented home in America — the White House.

Curators at the Smithsonian once told Liz they wanted to “put her in a case” as an exhibit of a vanishing breed of home economists. Liz enjoys teaching families at all stages of life how to demystify home management. Her words of wisdom often include a heavy helping of personal finance. She is sought after as an expert by government agencies and women’s organizations and is a frequent guest on radio and TV programs.

Before it was hip to be green, people were learning from Liz how to make their homes ecofriendly with style. For more than a decade she wrote “House Calls,” a regular column in her hometown newspaper.

Liz is the author of several college textbooks, including *Consumer Economics: Issues and Behavior* (Prentice Hall; 2nd Edition Pearson) and *Resource Management for Individuals and Families* (Wadsworth Publishing), now in its 4th edition (Pearson). She was a Fulbright Scholar in Trinidad and Tobago, studying family and home-management practices. Liz presents papers on households and consumers at conferences worldwide and has been quoted in *USA WEEKEND*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Time.com*, *Denver Post*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Orlando Sentinel*, *Google News*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, *Washington Post* online, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

About the Contributor

Betsy Sheldon divides her writing and editing energies between the topics of travel and the environment. She has served as editor in chief for three travel publications, and is the author or coauthor of six books on topics from job-hunting for women to Jewish travel. She cherishes the memory of once having followed author Barbara Kingsolver at an author's book signing event — and actually attracting a decent crowd of her own.

Betsy became a “born again” environmental activist because of Al Gore, seriously, and is proud of her sustainably remodeled bathroom, which uses reclaimed and recycled materials, sports low-flow fixtures, and features a dual-flush toilet. Her home contains “recycle cans” instead of trash cans, and her produce comes from the farmers' market, her CSA subscription, or her own garden.

Betsy writes “Green Watch,” a regular column for *Indianapolis Monthly Home* magazine, and contributes articles about environmental issues and sustainability to publications including *Indiana Living Green* and *Vacation Industry Review*. She is involved in a number of environmental initiatives, including the greening task force for the American Resort Development Association and the Indiana Sustainability Coalition, and also serves on the board of Earth Charter Indiana. She facilitates “Low Carbon Diet” workshops, which help participants discover the steps to lowering their own carbon footprint and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Dedication

From Liz: To my daughter-in-law Jessica and to the rest of my family, friends, and students whose life stories show me how orderly homes can make happier lives.

From Betsy: To Tatiana, Simone, and my grandson-to-be. May the Earth I leave behind for you be one that you'll be proud to pass on to your grandchildren.

Acknowledgments

From Liz: My work takes me into contact with so many inspiring people it's hard to know where to begin. Most of all, I'd like to thank my family who gave me so much encouragement while writing this book. When the word went out, my sons and extended family members (including many I haven't met and look forward to meeting) sent green cleaning recipes and how-to's. I also want to thank my friends Joan Bradley, Sharon Lynn, Leisa Flynn, Sue McGregor, and Gale Workman, who explained how they clean and what they find most effective.

I give huge thanks to the Wiley editors and staff: Acquisitions Editor Mike Baker and Editor Kelly Ewing. They have been absolutely wonderful to work with and have thrown in their cleaning tips, too. Betsy kept me focused on the greater ecological consequences.

From Betsy: Deepest gratitude goes to the *For Dummies* team: To Mike Baker and Joyce Pepple, for giving me the opportunity to write about a topic I love — the greening part, not the *cleaning* part. And to Kelly Ewing for her gentle and diplomatic editorial guidance. Also, to Lynn Jenkins, whose knowledge and attention to detail kept us honest. And to Liz Goldsmith, from whom I've learned much about keeping a home to be proud of, and who inspired me to finally organize my utility closet.

Special recognition goes to the many inspiring people in my community, devoted to furthering environmental awareness and action, and who've given me guidance, not only regarding the content of this book but on my own personal progress toward sustainability: Ed Cohen, Bill Scott, JiaYi Chan, John Gibson, Todd Jameson, Bill Brown, Doris Jane Conway, Mary Loe, Paul Chase, Vena Burriss, Bob Proctor, Anne Laker, Leslie Webb, Sam Carpenter, Sam Miller, and all the organizations and causes they champion.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

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Introduction

Getting your arms around the global warming crisis can be more than overwhelming. After all, what can *you* do to keep the ice caps from melting? A significant change surely requires the commitment of greater powers — governments and big businesses, for example.

Most people buy into the belief that one person can't possibly have an impact on the environment. You are not one of those people. By picking up this book, you've expressed a conviction that the power to bring about change is yours, through actions as simple as replacing light bulbs, adjusting the thermostat, carrying your own shopping bag — and cleaning your home.

Even small changes in your housekeeping practices can add up to a big impact, not to mention personal pluses, such as saving money, creating a healthier home, and discovering some really cool cleaning tips.

About This Book

I wrote this book to help you achieve your goals, by showing you how to make your home a greener space. For the most part, good housekeeping is synonymous with *green* housekeeping. The fundamentals — to make a safe, clean, healthy, livable space — are the same.

My approach to green cleaning is downright practical. I talk about toilets, trash, dust mites, dirty diapers, bird droppings, litter boxes, festering bacteria, and insidious mold. Although I have a PhD in human ecology (the updated version of home economics) and researched housekeeping in the White House from the inside, I draw more on my experience of raising a family and managing my own home, where relying on common sense has always been my best strategy.

Sometimes, however, conventional cleaning wisdom and sustainable cleaning principles don't completely mesh. In these situations, I do my best to offer both sides of the argument. And I offer the best green solution I know — or at least the solution that does the least environmental harm.

This book presents green cleaning in its deservedly positive light — an activity that costs nothing or next to nothing, reduces energy consumption, makes your home a healthier place, requires no fancy gadgets, and reaffirms that going green is not about sacrifice or doing without, but rather a celebration of values that bring about a meaningful, fulfilling, and joyful quality of life.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help you find information quickly, here are a few style conventions:

- ✔ *Italic* is used for emphasis.
- ✔ Web site addresses appear in a typeface, called monofont, which makes them easy to recognize.
- ✔ Key words and phrases are in **bold** print to stand out.

What You're Not to Read

The sidebars (those shaded gray boxes) provide background that helps you understand the “why” behind a suggestion. Sometimes, they present a green activity — composting, for example — that takes green living to a new level. Skip them, if you like. You can also breeze past text identified by the Technical Stuff icon.

Foolish Assumptions

I feel like I already know you. Because you've picked up this book, I imagine you're an individual who

- ✔ Cares about the environment and is concerned about issues such as climate change, pollution, and the depletion of natural resources.
- ✔ Wants to be part of the solution and is willing to make personal changes to bring about a better world.
- ✔ Recognizes the effect that even small, everyday routines have on the environment.
- ✔ Takes pride in the condition of your home and sees it as a reflection of your values.
- ✔ Welcomes new information and ideas that help you do a better job of cleaning and living in a sustainably responsible way.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into four parts, with 14 chapters and an appendix. Like all *For Dummies* books, each chapter is self-contained so that you can jump in wherever you like without having to read from beginning to end. For example, if you want to start mixing up cleaning solutions, dive right in at Chapter 6.

That said, the book does have a logical sequence, and the following sections give you a good idea of what you find in each of the four parts. (Or check the Table of Contents and index to chase down topics of interest.)

Part I: A Greener, Healthier Way to Clean

This part sets the stage for cleaning green. It defines what it means to be green and why embracing a more sustainable lifestyle is critical. You get a big-picture view of the reasons green cleaning is important and discover how *green* is connected to *clean*. You also find out how greening your housekeeping style can bring you benefits, from better health to bigger savings.

Part II: Getting to Work

The most important steps in cleaning your home come before you even pick up your dust mop. In this part, I help you lay the groundwork for easy green cleaning, by starting with hints on *avoiding* housework. I also tell you how to assemble your cleaning hardware and stock the utility closet. Finally, you discover some great homemade cleaners that you can mix up in the comfort of your kitchen.

Part III: Cleaning Green, Room by Room

Each room contains its own unique cleaning challenges, and Part III addresses green cleaning solutions room by room. You discover what you need to know to tackle the kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms, and living room. I even take on the laundry, the never-ending task, giving you a kinder, gentler way to get your clothes clean, while saving water and energy.

Your living space doesn't stop at the front door. People are spending more time outdoors, and to get there, they pass through foyers, mudrooms, sunrooms, and the garage. Just because these areas are outside — or on their way — doesn't mean that you can skip cleaning them.

Part IV: The Part of Tens

Every *For Dummies* book contains a Part of Tens. And in this book, the part is packed with quick bits of practical, applicable, and easy-to-implement hints for making your home — and your life — greener. Pick and choose to darken your shade of green as it works best for you.

Icons Used in This Book

The icons you see in the margins denote information of particular interest:



This icon targets extremely useful advice that can save you time, energy, or money.



This icon indicates take-away information, key concepts you're likely to confront time and again.



Information that may prevent an accident, dodge damage, and avoid harm to you, your home, or the environment is flagged by this icon.



If you don't care about the big words, scientific details, or technical explanations about a piece of advice, feel free to breeze right over text identified by this icon.



Of course, the entire book is about going greener, but when you see this icon, expect to find a suggestion or action that ratchets up your green effort to a more advanced level.

Where to Go from Here

You have lots of options: Start at the beginning and get a good grounding on the principles of greening your cleaning. Or launch into a topic that's timely for you *right now*. Is doing the laundry on

today's to-do list? Turn to Chapter 9 for the dirt on the cleanest, greenest wash. Just getting ready to do the dishes? Chapter 7 addresses your "dishwasher-or-by-hand?" quandary.

Although I share recommendations and advice from some of the top green and clean resources available, what you take away from this book is entirely up to you. Everyone is at a different rest stop on the journey toward green. And everyone's circumstances — home size, the time available to clean, cooperation of family members — are different.

That you've taken the step to read this book is something to celebrate. What you choose to do first, how quickly you choose to make changes, and how much you're willing to take on is all up to you. No judgment. You may embrace the energy savings that come from turning down the thermostat, reducing washer temperatures, and using the dishwasher less frequently. But you may not be ready to hang your wash outside on the clothesline or cut your shower time to five minutes. That's okay. Navigate the possibilities, and not only improve your home environment, but contribute toward a sustainable future for the world.

Part I

A Greener, Healthier Way to Clean

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



In this part . . .

Sometimes, the connection between housekeeping and keeping the ice caps from melting isn't easy to see. But even your choice of laundry detergent has an impact on the environment, and it's bigger than you may imagine. In fact, you can lighten your "footprint" on the planet in a fairly significant way simply by changing the way you clean.

In Part I, I explore the links between climate change and changing the sheets. I share what reducing your carbon footprint is all about, and how your journey toward a healthier planet starts at home. I show you how converting to greener cleaning practices affects air pollution (indoors and out), water safety, and waste reduction.

You also discover how approaching your housecleaning with an ecosensibility leads to tangible benefits for *you*: better health, lower energy bills, and the feeling of satisfaction that you're contributing to a better world.

Chapter 1

Cleaning House in a Brave Green World

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In This Chapter

- ▶ Recognizing the connection between clean and green
 - ▶ Embracing a new way of cleaning
 - ▶ Cleaning green throughout the house
 - ▶ Adapting green cleaning to your unique world
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Paper or plastic? Dishwasher or sink? Dry-clean or hand wash? Tap water or bottled water? Carpeting or linoleum? As citizens of the world attempt to navigate the complexities of environmental responsibility, more questions than answers surface, especially regarding sustainable practices in the home. The choices can be tricky. Sometimes the solution that seems the most green isn't.

Take grapes, for example: Organic grapes seem the greener choice, at first blush. True, organic growing methods don't rely on chemicals or processes that require fossil fuels, which cause the greenhouse gas emissions that add to climate change. But when your grapes are shipped from Chile, the petroleum savings are gobbled up by the energy cost to get them to your store. The grapes grown locally are, while not certified organic, the more sustainable choice.

Contemplating the green angle definitely adds layers of complexity to the simplest of tasks: shopping, eating, cleaning the house. I intend to peel away some of those layers, to help simplify your already complicated life, at least in terms of housecleaning. By exploring the world of cleaning in an *ecological* manner, I show you that you *can* have a clean house, and green it, too.

Waking Up to a New Awareness

No doubt about it: What happens in Peoria affects Patagonia. And Paris. And Punxsutawney. The water wasted in Scranton hurts villages in the Sahara. The traffic congestion in Atlanta warms the ice caps in the Arctic. If only it were true that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. But people there and throughout the world are waking up to the fact that their actions can affect the climate, damage the planet, and use up stuff you may really want to keep.

How you clean has an impact on the environment, too. Greening the way you mop your floors may seem like a drop in the bucket, but each small change accumulates into a larger stream. Maybe you can't save the Antarctic penguins this morning, but you can hold off running the dishwasher until you have a full load. Action by action, you can make positive changes.

Your housekeeping practices intersect with big-picture ecological issues at many junctures. Look for these connections:

✔ **Plugging petroleum consumption:** Plug in, turn on, flip the switch, press the button. Your home's appliances, temperature control, operating systems, and even water delivery all run on energy generated by fossil fuel. Petroleum is also a critical component of most plastic containers, which hold everything from ketchup to tile cleaner.

Modifying your cleaning routine — decreasing the number of laundry loads, updating old, inefficient appliances, and even turning down the temperature on your water heater — can play a big role in reducing your household energy consumption. In Chapter 2, I cover all the places you may find “oil” in your cleaning closet. And throughout the book, I offer alternatives to energy-intense cleaning methods, whenever possible.

✔ **Clearing the air:** Not only do many home furnishings and materials include petroleum, some forms can cause harm to the environment and to you and the inhabitants of your home, contaminating water systems and emitting unhealthy chemicals. Blame it on paint, particleboard in cabinets, vinyl flooring, and carpeting and upholstery, but air quality in the typical American home can be worse than the outdoor air. Commercial household cleaning products are also culpable. Chapter 3 spells out the worst offenders.

✔ **Blocking the drain on water:** You thought oil was in short supply. Water is being depleted at an alarming rate, through drought, pollution, and commoditization by big business interests. Changing your cleaning habits helps reduce your contribution to water shortage: Using energy-efficient washing

machines, taking shorter showers, and using your disposal less all help. This book is packed with tips for conserving water: Chapter 2 addresses the energy cost that water carries.

- ✔ **Taking out the trash:** Landfills climb ever higher, as the world population continues to consume. Cleaning practices can contribute to the problem. Choosing reusable dust cloths over paper towels or throwaways; being mindful of the packaging that accompanies new cleaning products; and even purchasing cleaning appliances designed to last help reduce your contribution to the waste stream.

Cleaning green is good for the planet, but it's also good for you. As you begin making changes to your housekeeping practices, you're certain to discover the following benefits:

- ✔ **Better health:** Removing harmful chemicals (found in many conventional cleaners) is bound to improve air quality in your home, thereby having a positive effect on the health of its inhabitants.
- ✔ **More savings:** Energy-efficient appliances, although sometimes more costly upfront, mean you spend less on energy and reduce water usage. You gain even more savings when you simplify your cleaning arsenal with homemade recipes concocted from common ingredients that cost pennies compared to commercial cleaners.
- ✔ **Deeper commitment:** Cleaning green can be one of those "gateway" experiences that lead to a heightened awareness of other ecoconscious practices. Every green step you take elevates you to the next level, where you discover yet other ways to make sustainable changes to your life and to the world.

Gearing Up for a New Clean

Making changes, even small ones, takes some preparatory work. And figuring out your plan of attack is an important step when launching your new clean-green assault. Here's what you need to do:

- ✔ **Employ better tactics.** One of the cornerstones of sustainability is to avoid the *need* to consume resources and expend energy: If you can take a bus to work, for example, why buy a car? With cleaning green, a great place to start is to consider the stuff you have to clean. A white carpet takes more effort to maintain than a tile floor. Dry cleaning is more costly (from environmental damage to personal budget) than washing at home. You get the idea.