

New powder is a green, clean, flexible alternative

Eco-friendly household products are becoming more prevalent, effective

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It seems everyone is jumping on the "green" bandwagon these days, including the cleaning business.

I've tried several lately that are worth talking about. The first is an interesting one because it takes the idea of "green" one step farther than the product's ingredients. It also addresses the problem of transporting weighty goods and reducing unnecessary packaging.

It's called Morris Powder, and it comes in sachets about the size of a tea bag. There are only six grams in each sachet, but that's enough to make about four litres of window and glass cleaner, or 1.5 litres of all-purpose cleaner.

For a stronger all-round cleaner, mix one package with 750 millilitres of water. The small packets make good environmental sense on two fronts: they're cheaper to transport than jugs of other liquid cleaners, and they create less waste going into recycling facilities and landfills.

Morris Powder was developed by an executive chef whose job was to feed the cast and crew of the popular British soap opera, Emmerdale. Tired of the harsh chemicals often used in commercial kitchens, he decided to create something better.

The powder's main ingredients are sodium carbonate, sodium silicate and a minuscule amount of orange terpenes. The company says the remaining ingredients are a secret, but they're all food-based.

To make the cleaning solution, all you do is add water. According to the instructions, Morris Powder can be used to clean almost anything, including -- apart from general household cleaning -- upholstery, concrete stains, lime scale and mildew, hydraulic fuel spills, tile grout and alloy wheels and tires.

Not having any hydraulic fuel spills or concrete stains handy, I tried the product throughout the house for general cleaning and on a heavily stained upholstered chair.

On mixing up the product, I found it strange initially because I'm accustomed to store-bought, all-purpose cleaners that have colour, scent and at least the appearance of a liquid heavier than water.

This powder has none of those. The company says that the powder has a citrus scent, derived from the peels of citrus fruit, but I couldn't detect it.

Once mixed, the solution easily wiped away dirt on kitchen and bathroom surfaces.

While cleaning the outside of the fridge, I realized that it was also taking off some tape or glue residue left behind by the previous owners.

The company recommends spraying the product on, letting it sit for several minutes and then agitating it with a nylon brush or sponge. I found that dirt came off easily with just a cloth, though perhaps a tougher stain might take more elbow grease.

Where the product really shone, though, was on mirrors and glass. I've lately been fighting with streaks on the underside of our glass coffee table, but the solution had no trouble leaving the glass on both the top and the underside clean and streak-free.

It also cleaned mirrors beautifully, and left them shiny in a way I'd never seen before, except maybe in television commercials for window cleaners. Even the old and slightly cloudy mirror on my dresser looked better after a cleaning with the solution.

As for the creamy beige upholstered chair, the Morris Powder made a noticeable difference on its ugly old stains.

The product costs \$20 US for eight sachets and can be ordered online at www.morrispowder.com.

And a brief note on a new line of Life brand environmentally friendly cleaning products from Shoppers Drug Mart.

The company touts them as being "freshly fragrant, biodegradable, non-toxic and phosphate-free," but while the all-purpose cleaner and the bathroom cleaner worked just fine, their pear-violet scent was overpowering.

Better was the mango-tangerine dishwashing liquid. A little bit went a long way, and the suds were thick and long-lasting. The smell was also milder and more pleasant than that of the other products.

It also did a better job on the tea stains on the bottom of my mugs.

Shoppers says it plans to add more products to the line, and, at \$4 each, they make an economical alternative to some of the more pricey environmentally friendly products on the market.

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