

dl 6/14/2020

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2 cups powdered oxygen bleach  
1/4 cup liquid dishwashing soap  
1 cup borax



How To's & Quick Tips

# How To: DIY and Apply Your Own Deck Cleaner

Keep your platform for outdoor fun looking great for pennies—without harming nearby plants.

By [Glenda Taylor](#)



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Your deck gets a lot of traffic. Muddy shoes, spilled food, and wet dogs can leave it dirty, stained, and smelly. Even a deck that's not a party platform is up against the elements—pollen, leaves, and algae all take their toll. But you needn't use a harsh, expensive deck detergent to restore it. In under half an hour, you can mix up a batch of homemade deck cleaner, apply it with a deck brush, and then rinse away all manner of dirt and grime.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

1. Clear off the deck and spray it down with a garden hose.
2. Prepare the deck-cleaning solution.
3. Generously apply the cleaning solution, then scrub to a light lather.
4. Rinse the deck off with a garden hose.

For full instruction, reading below!

### MATERIALS AND

- [Garden hose](#)
- [Large plastic bucket](#)



- Warm water
- Powdered oxygen bleach
- Deck brush with attached pole
- Liquid dishwashing detergent
- Borax (optional)

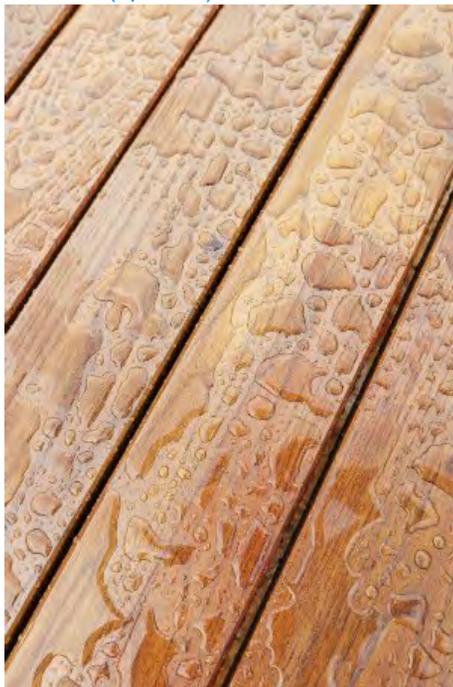


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### STEP 1: Clear off the deck and spray it down with a garden hose.

Clear the deck of whatever furniture, grill, gardening containers, and other miscellaneous outdoor equipment you can easily stash elsewhere. Spray the deck amply with plain water from your garden hose to loosen and soften mud and debris, making it easier to remove.

### STEP 2: Prepare the deck-cleaning solution.

1. Pour 2 gallons of very warm water into a plastic bucket large enough to accommodate the head of a deck brush. (You can get away with using a regular broom, but a specialized deck brush—a broom-like tool designed to reach right into the grooves between boards—works best.)
2. Into the bucket, add 2 cups of powdered oxygen bleach (e.g., OxiClean, found in the laundry detergent aisle), which is milder than liquid chlorine bleach.
3. Stir gently until the powdered bleach completely dissolves.
4. Add 1/4 cup of liquid dishwashing soap and stir just enough to disperse it through the solution.

2 gallons water  
2 cups powdered oxygen bleach  
1/4 cup liquid dishwashing soap  
1 cup borax

While the ingredients suggested here are relatively safe and won't damage garden greenery, it's a good idea to wear goggles and rubber gloves to protect sensitive eyes and skin, should the homemade deck cleaner accidentally splash.

### STEP 3: Generously apply the cleaning solution, then scrub to a light lather.

Liberal saturate the deck by dipping the brush into the homemade cleaning solution and sloshing it over the planks. Starting at one end and working your way to the other, scrub with the brush to work up a light lather, rewetting the brush's bristles as needed. Give the solution 15 minutes of dwell time to allow the oxygen bleach to work.

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## STEP 4: Rinse the deck off with a garden hose.

Spray off the DIY deck cleaner with the garden hose. Let your deck dry naturally and completely in the sun's rays before [redecorating it](#).

### DECK MAINTENANCE TIPS

**Banish mildew with borax.** If your deck has visible mildew stains, add 1 cup of powdered borax to the solution at the same time you add the oxygen bleach. Borax is a natural mineral compound that won't damage nearby landscaping plants. Apply the solution as instructed above.

**Treat stains with oxygen bleach paste.** To treat a stubborn stain, mix just enough warm water with a small amount of powdered oxygen bleach to make a paste. Apply directly on the stain with a stiff-bristle brush and leave it on for 30 minutes, then rinse.

**Sweep away dirt promptly.** A light sweeping—daily, ideally—will free your deck of loose dirt, leaves, and other debris before it can be ground into the wood surface. If you don't like to sweep (who can blame you?), consider using a cordless blower. Essentially, this is a lightweight, easy-to-use leaf blower that makes quick work of clearing twigs, dirt, and the natural debris. We recommend those made by Black & Decker, such as the 20V Max Lithium Cordless Sweeper.

**Apply a penetrating sealer once a year.** Wood is a product of nature, and even pressure-treated decks will eventually succumb to harsh UV rays, wet/dry cycles, and temperature fluctuations. To add years of useful life to your deck, treat it annually with a good penetrating sealer. The best time to apply a sealer is after a thorough deck cleaning!

Now that your deck is clean as new, take a look around you. If wood handrails, balusters, even outdoor wooden furniture seem less than fresh, mix up some more deck cleaning solution to safely restore them and you're fully prepared for any outdoor gathering large or small.

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