

FLOWER POWER:

The Next Step In Green Technology



New, all-natural ingredients pack a powerful punch.



A dash of parsley could spice up your cleaning regimen.

By: Virginia Petru

During the late 1960s, young people referred to their "peace and love" ideology as "flower power."

Today, it would be easy for cleaning professionals to use "flower power" to identify the next generation in environmentally preferred cleaners.

These products are made with 100 percent sustainable plant-based ingredients that are naturally safe to use and kind to the environment, but do not compromise on the power needed by cleaning professionals.

Parsley, Sage, Rosemary And Thyme

Who would think that a fresh sprig of parsley would translate into a powerful all-purpose cleaner with natural deodorizing benefits?

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Or, that sage and bergamot could leave carpet fibers fresh with virtually no residue.

Would anyone believe that olive oil produces a furniture polish that leaves wood clean and conditioned?

When formulated correctly, these ingredients deliver surprising cleaning performances.

"Although plant-based cleaning products may be relatively new to the industrial market, we're actually 'old hands' at this technology," points out John Vlahakis, president

of Winneka, Illinois-based Earth Friendly Products, which has been manufacturing plant-based cleaning products for over 20 years.

According to Vlahakis, it can be tricky at times, especially because his company adheres to a strict manufacturing code that forbids the use of over 50 different ingredients that can be considered toxic.

What it does rely upon is a wide variety of plants, flowers, herbs and minerals to create powerful cleaning results.



Plant-based Ingredients And Their Benefits

Plant-based Ingredient

Parsley

Characteristics

100 percent sustainable, natural oil, fresh, clean scent, fast-acting solvent

Used In

All-purpose cleaners, degreasers, deodorizers

Toxin Replacement

Synthetic perfumes, petroleum-based surfactant

Plant-based Ingredient

Coconut-based Surfactant

Characteristics

100 percent sustainable, effective break-down of soil/grease

Used In

Cleaners, degreasers, stain/odor removers, fabric refreshers, deodorizers, laundry detergent, dishwashing liquid, hand soaps

Toxin Replacement

Petroleum-based surfactant

Plant-based Ingredient

Ethanol (corn-based)

Characteristics

100 percent sustainable; emulsifies dirt and quickly evaporates

Used In

Cleaners, degreasers, stain/odor removers, fabric refreshers, deodorizers

Toxin Replacement

Petroleum-derived isopropyl

Plant-based Ingredient

Olive Oil

Characteristics

100 percent sustainable, emulsifies dirt, penetrates and conditions wood

Used In

Furniture polishes

Toxin Replacement

Petroleum-based surfactants and conditioners

Plant-based Ingredient

Various Oils: Lavender, Tea Tree, Cedar, Lemon, Grapefruit Seed, Lemongrass, Cinnamon

Characteristics

100 percent sustainable; fresh, natural scent; emulsifies dirt and soil

Used In

Cleaners, degreasers, stain/odor removers, fabric refreshers, deodorizers

Toxin Replacement

Synthetic perfumes, petroleum-based surfactants

Plant-based Ingredient

Xanthan Gum (fermented corn syrup)

Characteristics

100 percent sustainable; thickening agent

Used In

Cleaners, dishwashing liquid



What The MSDS Misses

The maintenance industry relies upon Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) to provide information about products, but does it tell the whole story? Not exactly.

For example, the MSDS will list hazardous ingredients, but it does not require the disclosure of any synthetic dyes or perfumes.

Does your current product have a fragrance?

Some manufacturers use synthetic fragrances because it is more economical than using a natural ingredient.

If your cleaner has a color, chances are the manufacturer is using some type of dye, such as Acid Blue 127, Acid Violet 48 or Liquitint Blue Dye.

If you are serious about using the most natural



products, then you will need to ask some additional questions of your supplier about the sources for fragrance or color.

You might also want to ask about where the company obtains its plant ingredients, such as "Are these ingredients readily renewable or are they depleting a rainforest?" or "Are any of these products needed to sustain existing wildlife in the area?"

Companies that practice responsible sourcing will be able to easily answer these questions in a way that shows respect for the environment.

Additionally, ask about the preservatives that are used in the manufacturing process.

You might be surprised at how many rely upon formaldehyde in their manufacturing of green cleaners.

Formaldehyde is an example of a toxin that does not have to be listed on the MSDS, but is frequently used as a preservative.

Orange Oil Versus d-Limonene

Some manufacturers use pressed orange oil as an ingredient, while others

use d-Limonene.

But what exactly is the difference?

According to the Florida Chemical Company Inc., there are two different processes to create these two distinct ingredients.

Simply stated, cold pressed orange oil or oil essence is a more direct byproduct of the juice extraction process.

Technical grade d-Limonene is created after some additional processing.

National Organic Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) operates a program called the National Organic Program (NOP) that oversees the standards for organic agricultural products.

If an ingredient has NOP certification, you can be assured it has been organically grown.

These organic ingredients are primarily used in the production of pharmaceuticals, foods and beverages, but there are a few cleaning product manufacturers who will also use them.

NOP-certified ingredients emphasize the manufacturer's commitment to providing the most environmentally preferred product they can offer.

Want to know if your cleaning product contains NOP-certified ingredients?

Don't rely on the MSDS as it won't be listed there.

You'll need to either refer to the product's label or ask your supplier for ingredient details.

Plant-powered Performance

In the professional cleaning industry, the bottom line is about price and performance.

Over the last 10 years, the industry has experienced many exciting environmental breakthroughs, but how does this latest breakthrough meet the cleaning reality challenge?

Vince Marchetti, founder and president of Cherokee Equipment Inc. in Washington Township, New Jersey, could easily be known as "Mr. Green" as he quickly embraces new environmental technology once it shows undisputed performance.

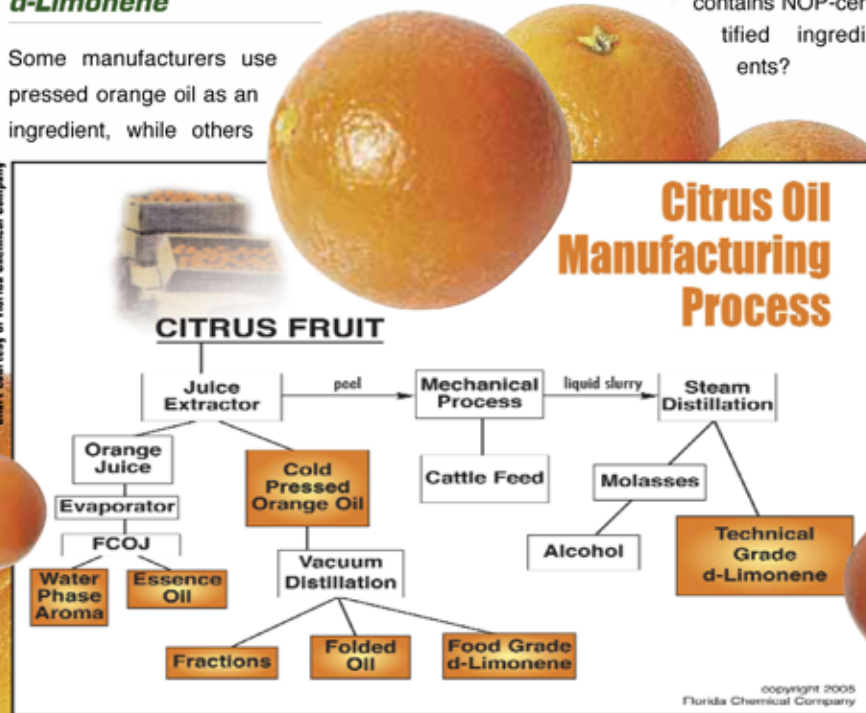
Marchetti was one of the initial manufacturer representative firms to accept soy-based and hydrogen peroxide-based product lines when they were first introduced to the industry.

Today, he sees a new excitement in his customers when he demonstrates his plant-based line of products.

"They can't believe how effectively these products clean with ingredients that sound like they should be found on a dinner table. The ingredients are simple, plant-based and can easily be pronounced, yet they do the job and in many cases are priced below name brands," Marchetti says. "But the really exciting thing is what my customers can save when using these ready-to-use (RTU) cleaners.



Chart courtesy of Florida Chemical Company



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First, they can complement an existing green cleaning program that relies on dilution control products. Basically, they can now 'fill in the green gaps' with products such as furniture polish, fabric refresher, stainless steel cleaner and bowl cleaner. Second, they save in terms of operational costs that can be hard to quantify. How do you put a price tag on assuring your employees' safety, while decreasing the possibility of damage to surfaces, paying for workers' compensation and other liability costs that can be incurred from misusing chemicals?"

Product Packaging

Have you considered a product's packaging in your evaluation of a green cleaner?

"There's a myth that ready-to-use products are less friendly to the environment because of the quantity of plastic required," points out Vlahakis. "Actually, these containers can be healthier for the environment than concentrated products with wall dispensers. First, we make our own #1 polyethylene terephthalate (PETE) and #2 high-density polyethylene (HDPE) bottles so we are able to use the least amount of plastic possible. Our formulations do not need shielding from light, so we can use translucent #2 HDPE bottles, which melt and reform better so they are less likely to end up in a landfill. The heavy plastic required for wall dispensers are not recycled as easily, and in some cases are not eligible for recycling at all."

From formulations to recycling, the maintenance industry has proven its resourcefulness and ability to create products that are

healthier and more effective.

Plant-based formulations are just the latest example of how our industry continues to lead a national effort to live a more sustainable and healthier lifestyle. *CM*

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relations services. She has been involved in the JanSan industry for over 15 years and has witnessed many advances in environmental cleaning technology.

