

Green Cleaning Workshop Summary Report

A Community based Leadership in
Sustainability event

Hosted March 2018

This event is part of Hamilton Sustainability Professionals Network (SPN)'s Community-based Leadership in Sustainability (CLS) educational series, which is supported through collaboration with McMaster University through the Academic Sustainability Programs Office.

The CLS initiative was created in the fall of 2014 as a joint initiative between a number of groups and organizations with the goal to develop a culture of sustainability through education, community engagement, and collaboration that inspires practical implementation. One of the main objectives of the CLS initiative is to offer these educational and networking at events without barrier. The events are open to all and free of charge.

Event Summary

Overview

The goal of the Green Cleaning Workshop is to engage community members to learn about sustainable cleaning products in a fun and educative way.

The Green Cleaning Workshop was held on Tuesday, March 20, 2018 from 7:30-9:00 p.m. at Evergreen's [Collaboration Station](#), located at 294 James St. North.

Workshop attendees learned how to make sustainable cleaning products using recipes that are environmentally conscious, safe enough to use around children, and less expensive than the store-bought alternatives. More specifically, the workshop participants learned:

- The harmful effects of traditional cleaning products
- How to read labels and identify which ingredients to avoid
- Natural alternatives that achieve the same if not better results
- The process of making and using homemade cleaning products

As a group, participants learned about and made the following products:

- All-purpose cleaner
- Tub, sink, and tile scrub
- Goo remover
- Glass cleaner
- Fabric Softener

See Appendix A for ingredient lists and recipes.

Workshop Host

The Green Cleaning Workshop hosts were Kate Whalen and Abbie Little. Kate is the Education Coordinator for the Hamilton SPN. Kate has an Honors B.A. and M.A. from McMaster and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Geography & Earth Sciences. Kate is a formal youth mentor and takes great joy in connecting with those who share her passion for sustainability, community, and life-long learning. Abbie is the Coordinator of the Academic Sustainability Programs Office and is completing her Honors B.A at McMaster in Geography and Environmental Studies. Abbie completed her minor in sustainability and is passionate about working towards implementing sustainable change in her community.

Savings

As a group, if every participant substituted their traditional store-bought cleaning product with their new homemade green cleaning product, the economic and environmental savings would be as follows:

- All-purpose cleaner – a group savings of \$65 and 15 L of traditional glass cleaner
- Tub, sink, and tile scrub – a group savings of \$0.4 and 2.3 kg of traditional scrub
- Goo remover – a group savings of \$48 and 2.0 L of traditional goo remover
- Glass Cleaner – a group savings of \$76 and 18.6 L of traditional glass cleaner
- Fabric Softener - a group savings of \$31 and 9.6 L of liquid fabric softener

Group savings were based on 23 workshop attendees and using the actual quantities of each green product made. Comparisons were made and costs calculated using Walmart.ca for consistency. However, ingredient costs and traditional cleaning alternative costs may vary if sourced elsewhere.

Attendance

As with many free events, we anticipate that between 50-70% of registered attendees will show up on the day of the event. A total of 30 individuals registered on Eventbrite and 23 (77%) showed up to the workshop, which exceeded our expectations.

In total, there were 23 individuals who participated in this workshop, of which, 12 responded to a post-event survey. Majority of the attendees self-identified as students (6), a few as community members (4), alumni (1) and other (1). In addition, we had 5 volunteers register to help with and participate in the workshop, of which 3 volunteers were students and 2 were community members. All volunteers showed up early and stayed until everything was cleaned up.

Attendance Workshop Feedback

Through an online survey, attendees were asked about which of the four aspects they found most appealing when hearing about the event. The weighted average response is as follows: Speaker/Content highest (2.8), followed closely by Community Engagement (2.75), then by Networking/Professional Development (2.27), and lastly because it was a Course Requirement (1.0).

The participants were asked to identify why they attended the event. Majority of the participants said it was for personal development (6), others said it was for content of material (4), and a few said community engagement (1) and the other said it was out of interest/curiosity (1).

Participants were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the event. Of those who responded, 75% were Very Satisfied and 25% were Satisfied, with no one being Neutral, Dissatisfied, or Very Dissatisfied.

When asked to rate the following elements of the event on a five point scale of Poor to Excellent, the weighted average response is as follows: Fun and Enjoyment (4.7), Value of Activity (4.7), Relevance of Discussion (4.3), Quality of Speaker (4.5), Promotion/Communication of Event (4.2), and Accessibility of Location (4.2).

Participants were provided with the opportunity to tell us what they liked most about the event, from the 10 comments provided, most comments (5) mentioned learning and/or sharing knowledge, followed by the ability to take their products home (4) and lastly hearing about the successes/failures from other participants and the facilitators (1).

When asked how we could improve, of the 11 comments provided, most of the constructive feedback was in response to the recipes and suggestions to have printouts for participants to take home. In addition, two respondents mentioned that they would like to make more advanced/complex recipes. Another suggestion was to have a short networking opportunity afterwards. Lastly, a participant recommended laying the room out differently so that they could see the presenter and screen better.

When asked if they used any of the products, most said that they had used a few of them (25%), some said they had used all of the products (17%), and a few had used none (8%). It is important to note that the survey was sent out less than 24 hours after the event and some commented that they had not had time to use the products (17%).

When asked if they were interested in attending another related event in the future, 100% of respondents answered "Yes".

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

If we run this event in future, we will make the following revisions:

- Ensure that everyone can see the screen and hear the presenter properly. Enlarge the font on the presentation so everyone can see. Perhaps arrange tables in a circle so everyone can see and collaborate together.
- Send out the recipes and online resources right after the event so that participants have it on file. Also remind participants the day before the event that they should bring a pen and paper if they want to write down notes.
- Focus our promotion and communication efforts to more communities throughout the city to engage a greater diversity of participation.

Resources

Environmental Working Group's Guide to Healthy Cleaning

- <http://www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners>
- Find safety rating for products and ingredients

Mommypotamus

- <https://www.mommypotamus.com/>
- One of my favourite bloggers with some of the best recipes

Queen of Green

- <http://www.daidsuzuki.org/blogs/queen-of-green/>
- Another fantastic blogger

Appendix A

Caution: ingredients, recipes, instructions, and directions should be used at your own discretion.

All-purpose cleaner – About 3c water, 2T Castile Soap, 5-10 drops of essential oil. Add, in order, to spray bottle.

Tub, sink, and tile scrub – Just baking soda. Make paste with a bit of vinegar and scrub with scouring cloth to clean immediately.

Goo remover – 4T coconut oil, 2T baking soda, and 10 drops of orange essential oil (optional). Melt oil in microwave until just melted and mix ingredients in shallow jar. To use, leave on surface for at least 30 minutes, scrub off, and buff with hot water and cloth.

Glass cleaner – Just white vinegar. Add to spray bottle and use to polish glass (well before company arrives).

Fabric Softener – Just white vinegar. Add about 1/4 cups to your load of laundry to help keep clothes soft.

Workshop Images



Photo Credits:

Thank you to Katheleen Eva and Peter Topolovic for taking photos during the event