


Ivy liquid detergent

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https://wiki.lowtechlab.org/wiki/Lessive_au_lierre/en

Dernière modification le 02/07/2024

 Difficulty **Very easy**

 Duration **30 minute(s)**

 Cost **0,00 EUR (€)**

Description

This tutorial aims to help you produce your own liquid detergent at home easy to make (20 minutes for the preparation and 10 to 24 hours of rest before storage). It is home-made, zero waste, biodegradable (100% of natural product) and uses resources easily accessible in rural areas as in urban areas. The detergent can be kept for 3 weeks in a cool space sheltered from the light

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Introduction

Ivy liquid detergent is based on the extraction of saponin - foaming agent - retained in leaves (and not the stem) of climbing ivy (and not creeping ivy to avoid leaves contaminated with animal urine). By boiling and infusing the leaves in water, we obtain a concentrated liquid which can substitute mainstream detergents.

 Saponin (or saponoside) is a surfactant molecule (foaming properties useful for detergents) naturally produced by plants and animals. We meet saponin in other plants (soy, quinoa, tomatoes, potatoes, peas, spinach, chickpeas) or animals (plankton and other marine invertebrates).

 **Caution** : avoid the using of utensils dedicated for cooking, the whole plant is toxic if eaten (ingestion of two or three berries already gives signs of poisoning: irritated throat, headache, tachycardia, cramps, vomiting/diarrhea).

This detergent can be described as unpleasant because of its quite strong plant smell (using vinegar as a softener reduces the smell) and its slightly yellowing effect on white clothes.

 Saponin is also used in shampoo recipes and for DIY washing-up liquid. We meet saponin in other plants as soapwort and chestnut of horse chestnut (the fruit, not the bug).

Materials

- 100g of ivy leaves freshly picked (around 50 leaves)
- 1L of water

Tools

- (scissors or pruning shears)
- (gloves, especially for people with sensitive skin as ivy can be stinging)
- saucepan or stew-pot (**if possible dedicated to non-food uses to avoid any poisoning linked to poor cleaning of the utensils**)
- strainer or clean cloth to filter the infusion
- a container for storing the washing powder produced (be sure to label the contents if you use a food container, and not to reuse it to store foodstuffs).

Step 1 - Ivy picking

Collect around 50 leaves for 1L of water

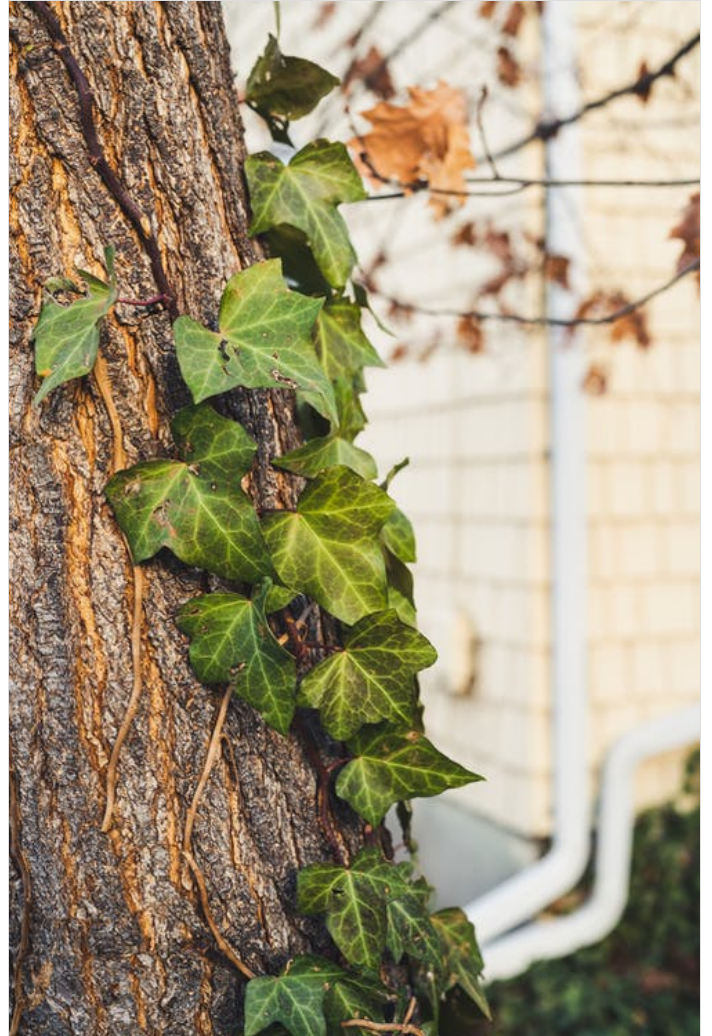
- Where to find ivy

Ivy is a shade plant that generally grows on tree trunks but also on the north faces of buildings and low walls.

- Recognise ivy

Ivy leaves are alternate, with a fairly sturdy limb, dark green or slightly whitish around the edges. Young leaves are star-shaped, while adult leaves have two different shapes depending on their function:

- stem leaves are palmatinervate with 5 more or less deep lobes (sometimes 3)
- those of floriferous stems (with access to light) are oval, with a sharp apex



Step 2 - Leaves cleaning

Simply clear leaves with water to eliminate dust and any unwanted things.

It is not necessary to remove the stems, up to your preference.

After washing, you can rub or chop the leaves so that they release their saponin more easily.

Step 3 - Leaves boiling

Bring to the boil and leave to boil for around 15 minutes, covered. Then remove from the heat.

Step 4 - Maceration/infusion of the mixture

Leave to cool gently and macerate overnight, without removing the lid.

Step 5 - Mixture filtration

The next day, strain the mixture (the ivy leaves should have turned a dark green) using a skimmer, a fine sieve or a cloth. You can compost the ivy leaves if you have a compost bin or composter.

Step 6 - Detergent storage

The recipe can be kept **for up to 3 weeks** in a bottle, away from light and heat (or in the fridge in summer). In a warm place, this detergent will quickly ferment: you can easily identify a change in smell and the appearance of bubbles in the bottle.

To preserve your ivy detergent for longer, you can **pour it into silicone cake moulds** and **place it in the freezer**. Two moulds are equivalent to two caps.

Step 7 - Use in washing machine

The quantities are the same as for your conventional commercial detergent. If you want to make your washing a little more effective without using more detergent, you can add a little baking soda (1 handful per litre) to the mixture.

Notes and references

1. https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lierre_grimpant#Description
2. The recipe as well as 2 other alternatives: <https://magazine.laruchequiditoui.fr/lessive-maison-au-lierre-et-bien-plus-encore/>
3. Another recipe with useful explanations for general culture: <https://planetezerodechet.fr/lessive-au-lierre-recette-zero-dechet-naturelle/>
4. Link to a recipe for a DIY shampoo: <https://www.greenweez.com/magazine/les-alternatives-au-shampoing-12055/>