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# INTRODUCTION

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I guess I'm just an old-fashioned kind of guy. I don't see the appeal of all the stuff lining store shelves these days. I mean, how many different kinds of cough medicine do we need, when a simple onion syrup works as well as any of 'em? The same goes for pricey stain removers; none of 'em does the job better than good old-fashioned denture cleaning tablets. And what about these fancy spa treatments? With a little buttermilk or some garden-fresh fruit, you can whip up the most fabulous facial in town—at a fraction of the cost!

One of the things I love to do most is discover amazing ways to put common household items to use—like using alcohol to clean the chrome on my appliances or turning a pillowcase into a laundry bag for my grandson in college. In fact, I've already written a couple of books

about my discoveries—and boy, did people love 'em! Now, wherever I go, folks come up to me and say, “Hey, Jer, I know you're a garden guy from way back, but you've become a regular reuse artist! Where'd you ever learn this stuff?”

Well, I'll tell you where: from a remarkable lady named Ethel Grace Puttnam, a.k.a. my Grandma Putt. When I was growing up at her house, money was in pretty short supply—and, with World War II raging overseas, so was just about everything else. But did that stop Grandma from letting the good times roll? No, siree! Using good old Yankee ingenuity, she found ways to do whatever needed to be done by tapping the hidden powers of whatever products she had on hand. And you can, too!

In these pages, I'll take you on a room-by-room tour of Grandma's

laboratory—which also happened to be her house and garden.

Along the way, you'll learn scads of super-simple, money-saving secrets, such as:

- ➡ Old-time remedies, routines, tonics, and toddies that'll cure whatever ails you and yours—with no unpleasant side effects.
- ➡ Grandma's grooming aids and beauty treatments that will keep every member of your family looking great—at a fraction of the cost of newfangled commercial versions.
- ➡ Tips, tricks, treats, and toys that are guaranteed to delight the day-lights out of your children, grandchildren, pets—and you, too!
- ➡ Simple, nontoxic cleaners and easy-as-pie organizing aids that make it a breeze to keep your whole house as clean as a whistle and neat as a pin.
- ➡ Potent potions, fabulous formulas, and just plain great ideas that'll help make your outdoor green scene as much of a showstopper as Grandma's was.



But that's not all! Because Grandma's spirit of adventure lives on, we'll take a look at dozens of products that arrived on the scene after she'd departed her earthly home—but that probably fill your house to burstin'! You'll discover a gazillion great, Grandma-worthy uses for everything from the hair dryer in your bath-

room to the coffee filters in your kitchen to the fabric-softener sheets in your laundry room.

Our tour ends, appropriately, in the attic—that three-dimensional scrapbook that holds so many of Grandma's (and our own) tucked-away treasures. But they don't have to stay there, just gathering dust. In Chapter 8, I'll tell you about a passel of well-used and well-loved things I've found in Grandma Putt's attic, and the ways my family and I use them today. With luck, those tips will inspire you to unearth objects from your own past, and put them where you can enjoy them every day—just as Grandma did!

So what are we waiting for? Step inside for our old-time house tour!