



Information About Sparkle Glass Cleaner

History

During World War II in the 1940's, B-29 Navigators in the Army Air Force had trouble with dirty buildup on their gunner sights. A heavy-duty formulation was developed to clean the plastic without streaking, smearing, or leaving any built-up residue.

After the war, A.J. Funk acquired the formula for this special cleaner and hired a local retiree to make it in the back room of his paper company on North State St. in downtown Elgin, Illinois. At first, the mixing was done by hand, and the bottles were filled one gallon at a time. The purple formula called "Sparkle" caught on fast as word spread in the Fox Valley area of Illinois where its distribution began, mainly through a network of paper salesmen.

A.W. Funk, son of the founder, managed the company's growth over the years and now A.J. Funk & Co. manufactures millions of gallons per year of its famous Sparkle Glass Cleaner in addition to its Auto Glass Cleaner and PC Screen Glass Cleaner. Celebrating its 50th year of business in 1996, Sparkle is keeping up with the times with the release of this E-commerce web site which allows customers all over the world to buy Sparkle products, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Ingredients

Sparkle is a unique glass cleaner, formulated with glycols and other inert ingredients which give the product its non-streaking quality. Sparkle does not contain ammonia, vinegar nor soaps as do most other glass cleaners. Due to market demand for specialty products, the Sparkle product line now includes an Automotive Glass and Chrome Cleaner and a PC Monitor Cleaner in addition to the always-successful and ever-powerful purple Sparkle Glass Cleaner.

Primary ingredients include a blend of glycols, a solution of de-ionized water and a purple tint for the purpose of setting Sparkle apart from other products in the marketplace.

Uses

Sparkle products are used in many ways today, and as you use the product you will discover new uses. A few are:

Sparkle Glass Cleaner

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| 1.) Windows | 5.) Tile |
| 2.) Mirrors | 6.) Stainless Steel |
| 3.) Plexi-glass | 7.) Chrome |
| 4.) Bathroom fixtures | 8.) Microwave ovens |

Sparkle Glass Cleaner is available in 22 oz. and 32 oz spray bottles, 20 oz. aerosols, 1 gallon refills and 4.5 gallon car wash sizes.

Sparkle Auto Glass & Chrome Cleaner

- 1.) Windshields and car windows
- 2.) Headlights and turn signals
- 3.) Chrome and Stainless Steel

Sparkle Auto Glass & Chrome Cleaner is available in 8 oz. spray bottles.

Sparkle PC Monitor Cleaner

- 1.) Computer monitor screens
- 2.) Television screens

Sparkle PC Monitor Cleaner is available in 8 oz. spray bottles.

Competition

Sparkle Competitors include: Windex, Glass Plus and Clorox 409

Animal Rights

The A.J. Funk Company has been manufacturing Sparkle Glass Cleaner since 1946. Prior to the company marketing the product to the consumer, it was produced for the United States Air Force for use on their Plexiglass gun sights during World War II. We do not test on animals nor use animal derived ingredients.

-- A. Richard Lane, President

Helpful Articles

"Glass Cleaner" Consumer Reports, January 1975, Pages 39 - 41

Glass is easy to clean: a mild cleaner readily removes most kinds of soil; and if you have to use a strong cleaner, glass resists many corrosive and abrasive substances that would damage such surfaces as wood, plastic, and fabric. However, glass does show streaks and other cleaning imperfections. And although the glass itself may not be harmed by various cleaning substances, it is usually placed in, or set near, more vulnerable surfaces (panes in a painted window frame, for example).

So in this project, our primary concern was to identify products that would get glass uniformly clean without harming nearby surfaces, either through contact or as a result of accidental spills. We also looked for those that were convenient and not unpleasant to use. Since some cleaners claim to prevent subsequent fogging, we tested for that. Finally, we considered packaging and labeling and did appropriate safety testing.

Among the 26 cleaners chosen for testing were 10 liquids with finger-pump sprays, one pour-out cream and 15 aerosols. We have rated the types separately. As we pointed out in our May 1974 issue, aerosol packaging incorporates a number of known or suspected health hazards. So we advise readers to choose a nonaerosol product whenever a reasonable alternative is available, as is the case here.

Window cleaners are basically simple formulations. Typically, they consist of water, alcohol, a detergent, and ammonia. Many also contain a dye, usually blue, as a sales eye-catcher. (With those packaged in an aerosol container, of course there's the addition of a propellant).

Clean and Sparkling

We used four kinds of soil to test the cleaning ability of our 26 products.

- **Normal Outdoor Soil.** In the first test, we exposed glass panels to whatever soil would come their way during a seven-month period on Consumer Union's roof (in Mount Vernon, N.Y.), and then tried the cleaners. All passed this test so easily that we were unable to establish differences among them.
- **Synthetic Soil.** In the second test, we simulated on glass panels the kind of soil that accumulates on the inside of windows in rooms where people smoke and where some cooking might be done. The synthetic soil proved a good deal tougher than the normal outdoor soil and showed up differences in cleaning ability among the tested products. Among the nonaerosols, Sparkle was a clear winner.
- **Heavy Outdoor Soil.** We check-tested our results with heavily soiled windows--outdoor panes of glass that hadn't been cleaned for a couple of years. By and large, the cleaners performed as they had on the synthetic-soil panels.
- **Metal-oxide soil.** Finally, we subjected the cleaners to a rather special test. We had some windows that hadn't been cleaned for a couple of years and had, in addition, accumulated metal-oxide deposits from screens covering them. Those deposits were difficult to remove but with one important exception, the cleaners ranked relatively the same as they had in other tests. The exception was Glass Wax. Unlike the other cleaners, Glass Wax is a pour-out cream containing a mild abrasive. And it was the abrasive action that apparently did the job on those deposits. Thus, if you have glass so caked with dirt that abrasion is needed, Glass Wax would be the cleaner of choice.

Convenience In Use

Once the cleaners were applied, we found that most were equally easy to wipe off without streaking. Sparkle did tend to leave a slight haze, which was easy enough to remove, leaving the surface streak-free. Glass Wax normally takes longer to use than any of the other cleaners. You put on the opaque cream with a dampened pad, let the cream dry, then rub it off. This is obviously more time consuming than simply wiping with a clear liquid. In addition, the dried cream comes off as a powder that can fall onto surfaces below, often making an extra cleanup necessary.

Aside from Glass Wax, all the nonaerosols are applied by a finger-pump spray. Most come in plastic bottles; we prefer those to glass bottles, which could easily slip and break. The Ratings note the type of container in which each nonaerosol product is packaged.

Protecting Other Finishes

All of these cleaners may damage some surfaces other than glass, especially painted surfaces. We tested three painted surfaces and found latex flat paint the most vulnerable; if allowed to stand, all the cleaners caused appreciable softening in just one hour. Semigloss alkyd enamel was somewhat more resistant to damage, automobile lacquer the most resistant. But all three finishes showed some effects, so the user should keep a sharp eye out for spills, being especially careful when the adjacent finish is latex flat.

Watch out with furniture finishes, too. Most of the cleaners, after being exposed for five hours on lacquered wood panels, left a whitening that couldn't be removed by polishing. Hagerty Glass Bright and K Mart left such whitening after only two hours. Some cleaners left slight stains on aluminum after one hour, but soapy steel wool took them off. Sparkle, the nonaerosol cleaner that rated highest in cleaning effectiveness, also showed greater marring potential than any other product tested. Sparkle does have a label caution against use on painted or porous surfaces, and we did find that if left on for a long period of time, it raised that grain of lacquered wood.

Antifogging

A glass cleaner with antifog action should keep a bathroom mirror clear right after you take a shower or prevent a car's windshield from fogging up. To test for antifog, we used each of the products to clean part of a bathroom mirror, ran a hot shower, and took a look. Three cleaners--nonaerosol Ajax and Bon Ami and aerosol Ajax--claim to resist fogging, and they did. But nonaerosol White Magic did about as well. With none of the four was the image as clear as it was before the mirror had been subjected to steam.

Both Windex cleaners claim they prevent fogging if you apply a second coat and leave some of it on. That's a bit tricky--wiping enough to see clearly but still leaving some Windex on the glass. We tried it, and it worked, but not as well as the four products mentioned above. Using the same method, we got similar results with A&P aerosol, although it makes no antifog claim. Actually, we found, you can get about as good antifogging results with an old household method: Put on a little soap solution and wipe dry.

Odors and Hazards

Most of the cleaners contain ammonia, as their labels state, and most do have some ammonia odor. If ammonia bothers you seriously, choose a cleaner without it.

Our chemical tests indicate that none of the cleaners are sufficiently alkaline to cause permanent eye damage, but any of them would probably irritate the eyes. If you get the spray in your eye, flush your eye well with water. A couple of the labels include these precautions. All should.

Recommendations

Although our Ratings are based primarily on cleaning effectiveness, any of the glass cleaners we tested would probably do an adequate job if your windows, mirrors, and other glass surfaces present no special cleaning problems. In fact you might make out quite well with a homemade solution of water, a little dishwashing detergent, and perhaps some ammonia or vinegar. You could add convenience by pouring the homemade solution into an old spray bottle.

If, on the other hand, you have a fairly demanding situation--heavy soil buildup, smokers in the house, windows with greasy cooking deposits, choose Sparkle, which was the most effective cleaner of the nonaerosols, and as good as any of the aerosols. But note that we found it least kind of all to nonglass surfaces. With stubbornly adhering types of soil that require some abrasive action, we suggest Glass Wax.

Glass cleaner is hardly a major item in the budget. It's a relatively inexpensive product to begin with. Consumer Union's calculated costs per fluid ounce or per ounce ranged from 12 cents to 15 cents in the size nearest 16 fluid ounces or 16 ounces. Those unit costs can generally be taken to reflect use-costs, since it takes about the same amount of one cleaner as of another to do the same job. And since glass-cleaning is only an occasional activity in most households, the overall cleaner cost isn't going to amount to much.

Prices, we found, are likely to vary widely from store to store. However, aerosol packaging doesn't command a premium in glass cleaners as it does in some other products. The aerosol price range was much the same as that for nonaerosols. With most of the nonaerosols, however, you can buy a refill to use with the original spray container, a move that usually yields a saving.

"The Sparkle Difference" Clear Panes -- *Taken from a Union Carbide promotional piece*

Back in the early 1940s, navigators of our planes found that a film of dirt on the transparent plastic bubble interfered seriously with their sextant readings. A formulation was developed, sold to the armed forces, and it worked--removed deposits with no streak, smear, oily film, or powdery residue. After the war ended, A.J.

Funk and Company, Elgin, Illinois, purchased the formula, modified it slightly for peacetime use, and put it on the market as "Sparkle" glass cleaner--a product designed specifically to clean glass.

Glass gets dirty because the mixture of smoke from ovens and broilers, pipes and cigarettes settles as a gummy film on windows, mirrors, glass table tops, windshields. Dust blowing against the film sticks to it. Youngster's hands rub over the glass leaving their share of dirt--even the dog helps out with his wet nose. A glass cleaner has to dissolve the oily and greasy film and suspend the insoluble dirt so the cleaning cloth can pick up both. If solvent and suspending powers are inadequate, streaks, smears and films are left behind requiring cleaning--loss of time and energy.

Funk states that tests by independent laboratories show "Sparkle" glass cleaner has the necessary solvent and suspending power to do a better job faster and with less effort than any glass cleaner on sale today. The product is marketed in gallon bottles to service stations, industrial plants, and office buildings, and to hospitals, hotels, and other large users. It goes on the shelves of cooperatives, grocery stores, supermarkets, and hardware stores in quart and twenty two-ounce bottles for use in the home.

The firm adds that a conservative marketing policy has contributed largely to the success of "Sparkle" glass cleaner. Distribution--expanded in the past three years out of Chicago to include all adjacent states--has expanded only in answer to consumer demand. And consumer demand has steadily increased because, as Funk puts it, "We underplay our advertising. The product does a better job than we claim."

"They Make Sparkle Purple To Make Glass Clear"

Most glass cleaners are true blue to the color of the market leader Windex. But Sparkle Glass Cleaner, the only one made in Illinois is the color purple. "The purple color distinguishes it," said Richard Lane, President and plant manager of Sparkle's manufacturing facility in west suburban Elgin. But it's not the only thing that sets Sparkle apart from the competition. Before becoming involved in business wars, Sparkle played a role in the big one--World War II. B-29 bombardiers used Sparkle to clean the plane's bomb sights, he said.

Sparkle's transition into civilian life was eased by A.J. Funk, founder of A.J. Funk Co., manufacturer of nationally distributed Sparkle. He purchased other ingredients, instead of ammonia or soap that are used in the formulation of other glass cleaners.

"Our formula prevents streaking," Lane said. Funk also added purple to the formula when he first began manufacturing Sparkle out of his Elgin home. His son, A.W. Funk, is now CEO of the 50 employee company that celebrated its 50th anniversary last month.

We thank you for your interest in Sparkle Glass Cleaner, and we hope you find this information useful.