

A Budget-Friendly Guide to Greener Living

“Going Green” isn’t just good for the planet’s ecosystem; it’s healthier for you and your family, and may even benefit your finances too.

What it Means to Go Green

Many people are now pursuing livable communities and an environmentally responsible lifestyle that is mindful of the following goals:

- Maximizing energy efficiency and minimizing the use of polluting fossil fuels
- Conserving the limited water supply
- Preserving the earth’s valuable natural resources and limiting waste production
- Improving air and water quality by avoiding harmful chemicals and pesticides

Here are some easy and inexpensive ways you can make a positive impact:

Improvement Project	Saves You* (per year)	Saves the Planet (per year)
Switch to an ultra-low-flow showerhead. (1.5 gallons per minute)	\$100-135	12,000 gallons H ₂ O
Replace light bulbs with efficient compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) or light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs.	\$110	1,000 kilowatt-hours (electricity)
Install a programmable thermostat to lower the temperature automatically for 8 hours.	up to \$250	Reduces energy use by 15-25% (and fossil fuel consumption)
Seal gaps or cracks around windows and doors with caulk or weather stripping.	\$120	Trims home energy use by 10%
Change out the dirty air filters for HVAC units every 3 months so the system runs efficiently.	\$80	725 kilowatt-hours
Use solar landscaping lights and entry or porch lights with motion detectors.	\$185	710 kilowatt-hours
Plant fast-growing trees for shade (on east and west sides of home) and use air conditioning less.	\$110	1,055 kilowatt-hours
Replace 2,500 sq. ft. of grass with native plants or low-water landscaping.	\$80	40,000 gallons H ₂ O
Program sprinkler timers to water before sunrise and for shorter time periods.	\$20	13,000 gallons H ₂ O
Estimated savings for a typical American family		

Grow Savings in Your Own Organic Garden

If you have a little bit of land and a green thumb, you could slash your grocery bill by as much as \$800 a year. Using natural fertilizers made from composted plant and animal materials avoids the environmental and health concerns associated with synthetic products full of chemicals and pesticides.

Source: *Shift Your Habit*, by Elizabeth Rogers (2010)



Could You Do More to Conserve?

If you are willing to give them a try, these thrifty habits will reduce day-to-day water and energy consumption and lower your utility bills:



Turn off the water in the sink or shower while you brush your teeth, scrub or shave, then turn it on again to rinse.



Make a sweep through each room before bed and turn off all electrical devices, including computers and printers. Unplugging appliances or using power strips will avoid “phantom” energy drain, as most electronics draw a small amount of power even when they are turned off.



Lower the temperature setting on your water heater to 120° and wash only full loads of dishes or clothes.



Set your thermostat at 70° or below in the winter months; your heating costs could rise 4 to 6% for every degree above 70.



Forego the fresh towel—a family that hangs up and reuses their own bath towels several times will save 3,400 gallons of water, 50 therms of natural gas, 410 kilowatt-hours of electricity and \$105 each year.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy
Kiplinger Personal Finance Magazine, September 30, 2010



Chemical-Free Cleaning

Natural cleaning solutions and detergents rely on plant-based ingredients instead of petroleum-based chemicals. If you don't want to expose yourself or your family to potentially toxic substances like chlorine, ammonia or phosphates, look for alternative products with essential oils such as thyme, eucalyptus and lavender. They work as well as ordinary household products and won't pollute the air in your home or the water supply in your community.

It's also fairly easy and inexpensive to mix your own cleaning solutions from ordinary ingredients like baking soda, vinegar and essential oils.



Recipes for Homemade Cleaners

Glass Cleaner = Mix 2 cups water + 1/2 cup vinegar + 1/4 cup rubbing alcohol + several drops of orange, lavender, cinnamon or clove essential oil in spray bottle.

Bathroom Tile Cleaner = Mix 1/2 cup water and 1/4 cup hydrogen peroxide in a spray bottle. Spray on tile and grout and leave for one hour before rinsing.

Drain Cleaner = Pour 1 cup of baking soda in the drain and follow with 1 cup of vinegar. Wait 10 minutes before flushing with boiling water.