



Your own "Green" House Tips on how you and Somerset County can go "Green" together

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Looking at the world through Green-colored glasses

Going "green" is fast becoming a global fact and scientific evidence shows that this generation will have the greatest impact on the environment within the next 50-100 years.

Recently Somerset County took the first step in becoming a leader in helping with the growing energy crisis with the formation of the Somerset County Energy Council.

The Energy Council will advocate for energy efficiency and conservation and promote public understanding of opportunities and choices regarding energy issues.

While the internet is full of energy saving information, Leadership Somerset, Class of 2008, thought that residents could use a source of information with tips on

how to save energy, money and the planet that was all in one place and geared to the everyday consumer.

There are many ways to begin a green lifestyle, and not all of them have to be complicated or costly. Pick out the ones that suits your everyday life and begin saving money and the earth.

What you can do right now at no cost



The Freecycle Network™ is made up of people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns. Each local group is moderated by a local volunteer and membership is free.

When you want to find a new home for something -- whether it's a chair, a fax machine, piano, or an old door -- you simply send an e-mail offering it to members of the local

Freecycle group.

Or, maybe you're looking to acquire something. Simply respond to an offer, and you just might get it. After that, it's up to the giver to decide who receives the gift and to set up a pickup time for passing on the treasure.

One main rule: Everything posted must be free, legal, and appropriate for all ages. The mission of Freecycle is to build a

network that reduces waste, saves resources and eases the burden on landfills while enabling the members to benefit.

To join the Freecycle community to go www.freecycle.org put in your town and hit enter.

A list will be generated of local Freecycle networks. Choose one to join.

GREEN at work

Michael G. Sovak, Contributor



We can compost and conserve all we want at home. But as soon as we hit the office, we turn into triplicate-printing, paper-cup-squashing, run-our-computers-all-night-so-the-boss-thinks-we're-working earth-killers

But a few changes of habit can save energy and resources at work. Following are 10 easy tips:

1. Be bright about light

Artificial lighting accounts for 44% of the electricity use in office buildings. Turn off the lights when you're leaving any room for 15 minutes or more and utilize natural light when you can.

2. Maximize computer efficiency

Computers in the business sector unnecessarily waste \$1 billion worth of electricity a year.

Turn off your computer, monitor, and the power strip it's plugged into—when you leave for the day.

Otherwise, you're still burning energy even if you're not burning the midnight oil. This is the current corporate policy. Also,

setting your computer stand-by automatically, while inactive (for 10 minutes), can cut energy use by 70 percent. Remember, screen savers *don't* save energy.

3. Print smarter

The average U.S. office worker uses 10,000 sheets of copy paper a year. Print on both sides of copy paper, or use the back side of old documents for faxes, scrap paper, or drafts.

Avoid color printing and print in draft or economy mode (selected from the printer properties menu), which use less ink, whenever feasible.

Recycle toner and ink cartridges and buy remanufactured ones. According to Office Depot, each remanufactured toner cartridge "keeps approximately 2.5 pounds of metal and plastic out of landfills...and conserves about a half gallon of oil."

4. Go paperless when possible

Think before you print: could this be read or stored online instead? When you receive unwanted catalogs, newsletters, magazines, or junk mail, request to be removed from the mailing list before you recycle the

item. Post employee manuals and similar materials online, rather than distribute print copies. They're easier to update that way too. American companies use 210 billion pieces of paper for faxing or 17 million trees annually. Send or receive faxes on line.

5. Ramp up your recycling

Make it a habit to recycle everything your company collects. Just about any kind of paper you would encounter in an office, including fax paper, envelopes, and junk mail, can be recycled. So can your old cell phone, PDA, or pager (see the Recycling Guide on the Site Portal). It is a company policy to use the recycling bins near the copiers and in your office. Call site services if these are not available to you.

6. Close the loop

Purchase office supplies and furniture made from recycled materials.

7. Watch what (and how) you eat

Bring your own mug and dishware for those meals you eat at the office. Use a refillable water bottle and the company provided filtered drinking water to reduce bottled-water waste.

8. Rethink your travel

Take the train, bus, or subway when feasible instead of a rental car when traveling on business. If you have to rent a car, some rental agencies now offer hybrids and other high mileage vehicles.

Videoconferencing and other technological solutions can reduce the amount of employee travel.

9. Reconsider your commute

Make it a habit to carpool, bike, or take transit to work, and/or telecommute when possible. If you need to drive occasionally, consider joining a car-sharing service like Zipcar and Flexcar instead of owning your own wheels.

10. Create a healthy office environment

Use nontoxic cleaning products. Brighten up your cubicle with plants, which absorb indoor pollution.



Sources listed on page 34

Green Volunteering - Michael G. Sovak, Contributor



More than half of American adults -- and an even bigger percentage of teenagers -- volunteer for various causes. In general, there is currently a trend toward "[downshifting](#), and taking time out of their busy lives to provide unpaid service to others. Many of these people are taking their cue from the [National Downshifting Manifesto](#), which proclaims that individuals are setting time aside for the things that are important to them "for the benefit of my health, my well being, my environment, and for those around me whom I dearly love.

But finding the right match between volunteer and charity is not always an easy task. High-profile organizations may be overwhelmed with offers; meanwhile, smaller groups could be struggling along with too few hands. Plus, special skills may be necessary, or time commitments could be too rigid. The best advice is to commit to something that interests you, and then apply the same principals to you volunteer and advocacy work you use to achieve success in your life and career. You may not realize it, but you could be [volunteering to become a green activist](#).

TOP GREEN VOLUNTEERING TIPS

Find the Time to Volunteer Your first reaction to the thought of volunteering your time may well be: what time? But you can't help others until you help yourself. Do you need more time for fitness? Then volunteer to do something active. Would you invest some time in continuing education, building skills or strengthening your resume? Volunteering can expand your horizons and help you build good contacts. Not enough time with your family? Nothing brings people closer together than working side-by-side for a good cause. Just remember: Don't overcommit, but ask yourself how volunteering could be the value-added time you will anyways dedicate to goals of your own. Worried this approach seems selfish? Don't! The most effective volunteers are those who do things that match their pace.

Do Your Research Use the Internet as a platform for social networking in order to find interesting and worthwhile causes. For example, follow leads from sites you trust, like [Planet Green's NGO Partners](#) or join in the [TreeHugger Forums](#). Networking in per-

son more your thing? Connect with a [GreenDrinks](#) -- a global organization with hundreds of local factions where people get together over cocktails. (No GreenDrinks near you? Volunteer project found: Launch a group

Bring Your Best Skills to the Table Look for opportunities that match your interests and skills, and be a little [selfish](#) (see tip 1 above) so that you can become selfless. You may be surprised to learn how global and local environmental concerns dovetail with your day-to-day activities, in your quest to understand the whats and [whys](#) of choosing the right cause. But rest assured that as a person with environmental interests, you're likely to be in demand. Here's why: 58 percent of Meals on Wheels programs, for example, have lost volunteers due to spikes in gas prices; meanwhile, groups such as [Pedal People](#) -- an organization that carts recycling and delivers groceries -- are filling the gap.

Or Volunteer Away From Home

Volunteering may make you think outside of your day-to-day green routine. If you are traveling to do your duty, check out [disaster blogs](#) or [travel blogs](#)

by people who have been there before you; it will help you pack light and be culturally current. You can also search the TreeHugger archives for special topics like [environmental issues in disaster recovery](#), or [relief housing options](#). And don't forget to plan ahead to [green your travel](#).

Volunteer to See the World "Voluntouring" is a growing trend. But take special care in selecting opportunities to offer your time and energy abroad. You could potentially be taking a job away from a local person. Plus, exhausting your money and resources on international travel can get pricey, and those jet emissions could perhaps be counterproductive to your work. Also, the rapid growth of [Philanthropic Travel](#) has spurred some questionable practices. Watch out for travel agencies masquerading as volunteer organizations. It's not unusual to ask volunteers to help fund their upkeep, but the contribution should be reasonable. A reputable volunteer organization will have longer-term people on location who serve as a link to help newbies focus on a project.

Green Volunteering—continued

As always, ask for references, which is the best way to weed out the bad actors and find a good experience, which will benefit you and the cause you seek to bolster.

Take Action in a Day or in an Hour! Keep an eye out for short-term volunteer opportunities. It only takes a moment to [donate your old eyeglasses](#) or [start a guerilla garden](#). If you live in a major metropolitan area, you can check the calendar at [One Brick commitment-free volunteering](#) and r.s.v.p. to spend a day for a good cause. Or look for events that need hoards of volunteers to make them happen, such as the [West Coast Green Conference](#). You can often get access to great events as a benefit of volunteering your time.

Champion Your Cause
Have you got what it takes to embrace a leadership

role in changing the world? Don't underestimate your personal power to advocate for green causes

True environmental heroes come from all walks of life. Take inspiration from heroes such as [Rosa Hilda Ramos](#), the 63-year old grandmother who took on the power companies to protect the wetlands; or from [Brower Youth Award](#) winner [Q'Orianka Kilcher](#), who, at the tender age of 15, shed light upon the fact that 800,000 barrels of toxic wastewater were being dumped into a Peruvian Amazonian river basin. Apply the wisdom of tradition, like [Jesus Leon Santos](#), who uses ancient agriculture systems to turn drought lands into fertile grounds, or take a modern approach like TreeHugger founder [Graham Hill](#). Wherever you find inspiration, know that you can

advocate for a greener world, even in the small things that you do.

Put Your Money to Work

So you really, really don't have the time? Or maybe you are volunteering already and see clearly that there is no point in dying rich? Then consider offering some funds toward good green causes. To select where your money goes, we suggest using the same techniques mentioned above for choosing an organization with which to spend your time.

Spread the Word You did it! You love the feeling of giving back! It would be a terrible shame not to share everything you learned in your quest to find the perfect volunteering match for yourself. But you don't necessarily want to go all evangelical on your friends. What to do? Spread the word where



VOLUNTEERING FACTS

61 million: Number of people who volunteered in the United States last year. That's about 26% of the country's total population!

20 million: Number of people who celebrated the first Earth Day in 1978

1 billion: Number of people who celebrated Earth Day in 2007.

2.4 billion: Number of hours teenagers in the U.S. volunteer per year.

100,000: Miles of waterways restored by volunteers for National River Cleanup events since 1991.

2,000,000: Pounds of trash removed from those waterways.

1: Number of Texas Department of Transportation engineers required to inspire local businesses to adopt a stretch of highway to keep clean.

90,000: Number of volunteers now involved in the Adopt-A-Highway program across the country.



"It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference." ~Tom Brokaw

"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

WAYS TO GREEN YOUR PET - Tim Pino, Contributor

If you're going green around the house, don't forget the dog. There are plenty of ways to help "Green" your pet along with your life. Here are some tips to help:

Choose pet food without the chemical preservatives BHA, BHT and ethoxyquin, vary cats' diets to limit their exposure to mercury in seafood, and choose organic or free-range ingredients rather than "by-products."

Use a reverse osmosis, faucet-mounted, or pitcher filter to remove contaminants before filling your pet's water bowl.

Replace older foam pet bedding, and either replace or reupholster furniture that has exposed or crumbling foam where flame retardants are found.

Vacuum often with a HEPA-filter vacuum, and take off your shoes at the door to minimize your pets' exposure to toxic chemicals in house dust.

If you suspect your deck was made with arsenic-treated wood, treat it with a sealant every six months and don't let pets play or sleep underneath it. Wash

with mild soap and water, but never power wash! It can loosen pollutants that can harm your pet.

Don't get optional stain-proof treatments on couches, carpets and car upholstery--they're loaded with perfluorochemicals.

Avoid nonstick pans. An overheated nonstick pan can kill pet birds, and it gives off chemicals that may be bad for other pets and people too. Try cast iron instead.

Care for your lawn without using insecticides, which may cause nervous system damage in pets that walk on the treated lawn, eat the grass, or breathe in the chemicals

Use kitty litter made of plant sources like wheat or recycled newspaper. Clay-based kitty litter is strip mined, causing extreme environmental damage during extraction.

Get biodegradable, compostable doo-bags for when you go on walks with your pooch--or just reuse bags like plastic newspaper wrappers.

Not only are flea collars generally ineffective, they're also a source of constant toxic exposure for your pet and family. A safe, easy homemade flea repellent: cut 6 lemons in half, boil in a quart of water, steep a few hours, then strain the solution into a spray bottle. Spritz your pet's fur, taking care not to spray near the eyes. Don't spray anything in your pet's face; apply spray to the hand and then rub it on the fur.

Try a mild baby shampoo intended for human use instead of a pet product. Just like human products, pet grooming product manufacturers aren't required to test their grooming products for safety--but unlike human products, they're not even required to list ingredients on labels.



“Try a mild baby shampoo intended for human use instead of a pet product.”

These days, you can buy everything from hemp dog Frisbees to organic catnip to biodegradable pooper scoopers, and the eco-friendly pet product industry is expected to hit nearly [\\$1 billion in sales](#) by next year.

You can make your pet green without using a paintbrush. Throw the planet a bone by thinking before buying and using natural products

“There are over 66 million pet cats in the United States; approximately 35 percent are kept exclusively indoors.”

New to "Going Green"?

Here Are Some Small Steps You Can Take to Start - Kathleen Harris, Contributor



Responding as an individual to environmental issues can seem overwhelming. What can I as one person do? But if we each take small steps to save energy, the combined savings can make a difference – without making a big difference in our lifestyles!

Small steps to consider:

Shorten the time you spend in the shower – try for five minutes instead of the usual ten or fifteen.

Shut the water off while you brush your teeth.

Insert faucet aerators and high efficiency showerheads that use less water and reduce the amount of energy used

to heat hot water.

Use a water-filter pitcher or an in-sink faucet filter and drink tap water instead of buying water in plastic bottles.

Use biodegradable and plant-based dishwashing powder.

Use a programmable thermostat to lower the temperature in your house if nobody is at home during the day. (A change of just 2 degrees can make a difference in terms of carbon dioxide emissions!)

Consider wearing your clothes more than once before you put them in

the laundry.

When you do laundry, wash full loads and use cold water.

Regularly clean the lint filter on your clothes dryer – a dirty lint filter means the dryer has to use more energy to dry your clothes.

Eat less red meat and help reduce the amount of grain and water that goes into meat production. (7+ pounds of grain and 3,360 gallons of water are needed to produce one pound of beef!)

If you are purchasing a new computer consider

a laptop which will use about half the energy of a desktop PC. Look for models with the federal government's "Energy Star" rating.

When shopping, look for paper products made from recycled paper, fruits and vegetables that were grown locally, and clothes made from organic cotton or bamboo fibers.

Bring your own reusable bags to the store when you shop.

Sources

Cronstrom, Kendall. "Going Green." *Real Simple*, March 2008, pp. 255 – 261.

Save Trees – Cut Down on Junk Mail!

Kathleen Harris, Contributor

How much of the junk mail that you get at home goes right into the recycling bin? How many trees could we save if we all cut down on junk mail? If you would like to make a start toward saving trees by reducing the amount of junk mail that shows up in your mailbox, visit the Federal Trade Commission's website at www.ftc.gov and follow these links:

Click on the "Consumer Protection" bar Put your cursor over the words in

the side bar "Telemarketing and Telephone Services."

Click on "National Do Not Call Registry."

Scroll down to the "Consumer Alerts" section at the bottom of the page and click on "Unsolicited Mail, Telemarketing and Email: Where to Go to Just Say No" Using this website you will be able to

"opt-out" of having pre approved credit offers sent to you, notify the three major credit bureaus that you don't want your personal information shared for promotional purposes and take yourself off direct mail marketing lists for five years.

"You can make a difference. By cutting back on the amount of junk mail you receive you reduce the need

for new landfills, help save the environment and reduce your garbage collection bills and taxes." --Mother Earth News



Sources

ftc.gov. 09 Oct. 2008. Federal Trade Commission. 10 Oct. 2008. <<http://www.ftc.gov/>>.

dmachoice.org. 2008. Direct Marketing Association Consumer Website. 10 Oct. 2008.

<<https://www.dmachoice.org/dma/member/home.action>>.

Are you a "Star"? - Kathleen Harris and Kathy Quick, Contributors

If every American household serviced their heating and cooling systems, changed their air filters, inspected their ducts for leaks, and programmed their thermostat for energy savings while they're away or asleep, we would save more than \$14 billion in annual energy costs while preventing 160 billion pounds of greenhouse gases, equivalent to the emissions of 14 million cars.

If every American household added insulation to their attic, we would save nearly \$1.5 billion in annual energy costs and prevent nearly 25 billion pounds of greenhouse gases, equivalent to the emissions of 2 million cars.

If every home office product purchased in America this year were ENERGY STAR qualified, we would save \$200 million in annual energy costs while preventing almost 3 billion pounds of greenhouse gases, equivalent to the emissions of 250,000 cars.

If each desktop and monitor in American homes was set to sleep when not in use, we would save \$1 billion in annual energy costs while preventing more than 15 billion pounds of greenhouse gases, equivalent to the emissions of 1 million cars.

If every refrigerator, dish-

washer and clothes washer purchased in America this year were ENERGY STAR qualified, we would save \$650 million in annual energy costs while preventing 4.5 billion pounds of greenhouse gases, equivalent to the emissions of 350,000 cars.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Department of Energy have been working together since 1992 to help consumers identify energy efficient products. Products that have earned the Energy Star have met the strict energy rating efficient guidelines developed by these two agencies. Product guidelines are in place for major appliances, office equipment, lighting, home electronics, and more. The EPA also gives stars to new homes and commercial/industrial buildings. If you use these energy efficient products you can do your part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – and also save money on your utility bills!

The Energy Star website provides:

Information about Products in more than 50 categories that have earned the Energy Star rating.

Home Improvement recommendations for reducing energy bills and making your home more energy efficient and comfortable.

Information about new homes that are, according to the guidelines, at least 15% more energy efficient than homes built to the 2004 International Residential Code and include other energy-saving features that typically make them 20–30% more efficient than standard homes.

A search tool allows you to find builders in your community that construct Energy Star homes and tips for applying the Energy Star approach to Buildings and Plants where we live, work, worship and go to school. This part of the website provides strategies, tools, and links to expert help, training programs and networks of business people who are successfully using energy efficiency best practices.

Ecosmart 23W (90W) **Dimmable Compact Fluorescent Bulbs** that provide as much light as a 90watt bulb and can save \$10.00. This new dimmable CFL is the only one compatible with current dimmer switches.



Sources

ftc.gov. 09 Oct. 2008. Federal Trade Commission. 10 Oct. 2008. <<http://www.ftc.gov/>>.

Take the ENERGY STAR Pledge

To do my part to save energy and combat global warming I will:

✦ Replace at least one light in my home with an ENERGY STAR qualified one



✦ Set or program my thermostat to save energy while asleep or away from home

✦ Have heating and cooling equipment tuned-up by a professional

✦ Change air filters

✦ Seal leaks and repair any holes in the duct system

✦ Seal the home's outer walls, ceilings, doors and floors with caulk, spray foam or weather stripping

✦ Add insulation to the attic

✦ Choose ENERGY STAR qualified equipment for the home office

Choose Energy Star qualified equipment for kitchen and laundry

Recycle your compact fluorescent light bulbs - Kathy Quick, Contributor

While compact fluorescent light bulbs are a proven way to save energy, improper disposal of the bulbs creates a hazard, because they contain small amounts of mercury.

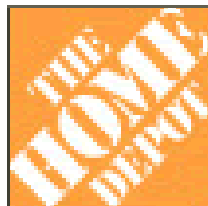
Recycling them just got easier.

Home Depot, the nation's second-largest retailer announced that will take back old compact fluorescents in all 1,973 of its stores in the United States, creating the nation's most widespread recycling program for the bulbs.

Until now, consumers had to seek out local hazardous waste programs or smaller retail chains willing to collect the bulbs for recycling. The Environmental Protection Agency has been looking into putting bulb drop-off boxes at post offices,

but those plans are not final, and across most of the country, recycling the bulbs has been inconvenient at best. Industry professionals estimate that the recycling rate is around 2 percent.

Home Depot's program, which will accept any maker's bulbs, will bring relatively convenient recycling within reach of most households. It is estimated that 75 percent of the nation's homes are within 10 miles of a Home Depot.



Recycle your CFLs at these Home Depots in and around Somerset County.

Bridgewater Rt. 202

736 Rt. 202 South
908-252-0101

Bridgewater Rt. 28

400 Promenade Blvd.
732-469-5883

Watchung

1515 Rt. 22
908-222-7700

Raritan

244 Highway 202
Flemington
908-782-2577

South Plainfield

3100 Hamilton Blvd.
732-752-5900

"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something,"

—Helen Keller



"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."

— Leo Tolstoy

Source - Home Depot Website

Help Save Our Planet While Saving Money
ENERGY STAR® qualified products can help conserve energy and water and lower your utility bills

Energy tax credits - Kathy Quick, Contributor

The recently passed Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-343) included, extended and/or amended many consumer tax incentives originally introduced in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPACT). The bill also included [tax incentives for businesses, utilities, and government](#). For a complete summary of the tax incentives included in the bill, read the [summary of Energy Tax Incentives in The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008](#).

About Tax Credits
A tax credit is generally more valuable than an equivalent tax deduction because a tax credit reduces tax dollar-for-dollar, while a deduction only removes a percentage of the tax that is owed. Consumers can itemize purchases on their federal income tax form, which will lower the total amount of tax they owe the government.

Fuel-efficient vehicles and energy-efficient appliances and products provide many benefits such as better gas mileage – meaning lower gasoline costs, fewer emissions, lower energy bills, increased indoor comfort, and reduced air pollution.

In addition to federal tax incentives, some consumers will also be eligible for utility or state rebates, as well as state tax incentives for energy-efficient homes, vehicles and equipment. Each state's energy office web site may have more information on state tax information.

Below is a summary of many of the tax credits available to consumers. Please see the ENERGY STAR®'s [Federal Tax Credits for Energy Efficiency](#) for complete details.

Home Energy Efficiency Improvement Tax Credits

Consumers who purchase and install specific products, such as energy-efficient windows, insulation, doors, roofs, and heating and cooling equipment in the home can receive a tax credit of up to \$500 for improvements "placed in service" starting January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009. The [ENERGY STAR® website](#) has a complete summary of energy efficiency tax credits available to consumers.

Residential Renewable Energy Tax Credits

Consumers who install solar electric systems can receive a 30% tax credit for systems placed in service from January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2016; the previous tax credit cap of \$2,000 no longer applies. In addition, consumers who install small wind systems can receive a tax credit up to \$4,000. Geothermal heat pumps also qualify for tax credits up to \$2,000.

Automobile Tax Credits

Individuals and businesses who buy or lease a new hybrid gas-electric car or truck are eligible for an income tax credit for vehicles "placed in service" after January 1, 2006 and purchased on or before Decem-

ber 31, 2010. The amount of the credit depends on the fuel economy, the weight of the vehicle, and whether the tax credit has been or is being phased out. Hybrid vehicles that use less gasoline than the average vehicle of similar weight and that meet an emissions standard qualify for the credit. There is a similar credit for alternative fuel, diesel, and fuel-cell vehicles.

This tax credit will be phased out for each manufacturer once that company has sold 60,000 eligible vehicles. At that point, the tax credit for each company's vehicles will be gradually reduced over the course of another year. Read the IRS's [Summary of the Credit for Qualified Hybrid Vehicles](#) for information on the status of specific vehicle eligibility.

If individuals and businesses buy more than one vehicle, they are eligible to receive a tax credit for each. If a tax-exempt organization buys such a vehicle, the retailer is also eligible to receive another credit. Companies that buy heavy-duty hybrid trucks are also eligible for a larger tax credit.

Consumers who purchase plug-in electric drive vehicles can also receive a tax credit. The credit for passenger vehicles and light trucks ranges from \$2,500 to \$7,500 based on the tax code formula.

Taxpayers may claim the full amount of the allowable credit up to the end of the

first calendar quarter after the quarter in which the total number of qualified plug-in electric drive vehicles sold in the U.S. exceeds 250,000.



Source: ENERGYSTAR.gov
** The IRS will determine final tax credit amounts.

Special Offers and Rebates from ENERGY STAR Partners

To encourage customers to buy energy efficient products, ENERGY STAR partners occasionally sponsor special offers, such as sales tax exemptions or credits, or rebates on qualified products.

The New Jersey Office of Clean Energy is offering rebates on Central Air Conditioning and Electric Air Source Heat Pumps based on Energy Efficient Ratios (SEER and EER)– see website for specifics.

Several manufactures – Jenn-Air, KitchenAid - GE – Asko Appliances and Amana – offer rebates on specific appliance models.

Source—Energy Star website

The Pros and Cons of Hybrid Cars - Yumiko Mishima, Contributor

When gasoline was inexpensive, gas mileage wasn't much of a factor in deciding which vehicle to buy, but now fuel efficiency is a major consideration for most people. Hybrid vehicles get higher mileage than equivalent conventional vehicles but in real world conditions, how much higher? Are hybrids worth the extra cost over gas engine cars? What about diesels – don't they get great mileage? Aren't hybrids better for the environment regardless? Let's look at some basic facts about hybrid vehicles.

What makes a vehicle a hybrid? Hybrids have a combination of power plants – a conventional gasoline engine AND an electric motor running off a series of rechargeable batteries. Hybrids are not all-electric vehicles such as GM's infamous EV1, golf carts and your kids' Power Wheels. Hybrids are gasoline-powered cars which get an occasional assist from electric motors to boost mileage and lower emissions. The batteries that power the electric motor are recharged by the gas engine, so there is no need to plug into an outlet.

There are basically two types of hybrid vehicles available now. There are purpose-built cars, such as

the Toyota Prius and Honda Insight (not currently in production, but a replacement is coming in 2009), where every aspect of the car is designed for high mileage and is available only in hybrid form. These cars will give you the highest gas mileage of any passenger vehicle. Exceptional mileage (60+ mpg) can be achieved by modifying your driving habits to suit the strengths of the hybrid powertrain by driving at moderate speeds, coasting, accelerating gently, minimal braking, etc.

The other kind of hybrid vehicle is a regular car or SUV that is modified to have some hybrid capability, either to increase fuel efficiency or to add power or both. The hybrid version of any vehicle will cost more than the gasoline version because of the additional hybrid components, which also add weight and complexity. Some are "light or mild hybrids" which means that their gas mileage is only slightly better than their gas-only versions. There are even large SUVs, such as the GMC Yukon that come in a hybrid version that gets about 20 mpg which is good for its size, but still below average.

Hybrid vehicles feature some neat technology such as "regenerative braking"

which means that when you brake, coast or slow down, some of the kinetic energy from forward motion is captured and converted into electricity to recharge the batteries, instead of being lost as heat as in normal brakes. Of course, you still have regular disc and/or drum friction brakes to bring your hybrid safely to a complete stop, although you may find that you replace your brake pads less often.

Another high-tech feature on hybrids is the CVT – continuously variable transmission. This is a type of automatic transmission with a wide variety of ratios available, instead of a limited number of predefined stepped gears such as in a typical 5-speed transmission, which has five forward and one reverse ratio to match engine speed with wheel speed, engaged either manually or automatically.

The large number of possible ratios increases efficiency (thereby improving gas mileage and lowering emissions) by allowing the engine to run at an optimal constant RPM over a range of vehicle speeds. It is also quieter, smoother and, with fewer moving parts, less expensive to maintain. More and more conventional cars are now offer a CVT option.



The most surprising aspect of actually driving a hybrid might be a relatively low-tech feature: the engine shuts-off instead of idling so when you come to a red light, it sounds as if your car has stalled. At low speeds, the Toyota Prius' engine can remain off as you glide silently forward (or backwards) on battery power alone. Pedestrians beware of this stealth mode! Because no gas is consumed in electric-only mode (therefore zero emissions), the next step for hybrids may be "plug in" hybrids that are capable of running on its electric motor with only an occasional assist from the gas engine. Such a powerful electric motor would be charged by plugging into a standard wall outlet. It would be ideal for short trips under 20 miles, either as a local commuter or errand vehicle. No "plug-in" hybrid vehicles are commercially offered yet, but there are vendors who offer conversion kits for the Prius.

Experts predict that in ten years all cars will be hybrids as this technology becomes refined, improved and costs drop with widespread application. Other experts say that this is a transitional technology and the future will be in hydro-

The Pros and Cons of Hybrid Cars

- continued

A side-by-side comparison

PROS

Better gas mileage, sometimes spectacularly so with changes in driving

Lower/cleaner emissions by up to 90%

High-torque electric motors give great pickup at low speeds/from standstill

Possible tax credits from federal and state government (depends on many factors)

Possible discounts on EZ-Pass tolls

Allowed to use certain HOV lanes

"Cool" factor

Promotion of newer technology

Extra long warranties

(Toyota Prius drive train and battery warranty is 10 years/100,00 miles)

Increasing number of choices including luxury, sport, SUVs and pickups

CONS

Higher purchase cost

Batteries expensive to replace

Must go to dealer to maintain/repair

Added weight and complexity

Is gas mileage high enough to offset the increased price for the hybrid version?

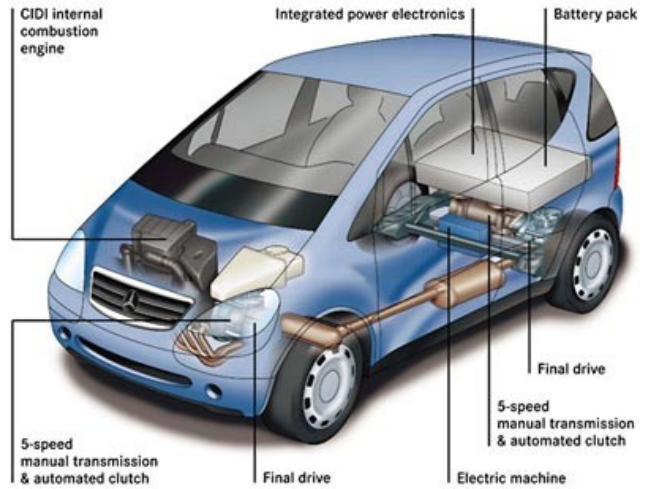
Actual mileage is driver dependent

Possible waiting list or premiums for desirable models

May just be a passing fad

Non-hybrid high mileage choices exist such as small economy cars and diesels

Other alternatives available such as carpooling, public transportation, working from home, walking, bicycling and motor scooters



Gasoline-electric hybrid cars contain the following parts:

Gasoline engine - The hybrid car has a [gasoline engine](#) much like the one you will find on most cars. However, the engine on a hybrid is smaller and uses advanced technologies to reduce emissions and increase efficiency.

Fuel tank - The [fuel tank](#) in a hybrid is the energy storage device for the gasoline engine. Gasoline has a much higher energy density than batteries do. For example, it takes about 1,000 pounds of batteries to store as much energy as 1 gallon (7 pounds) of gasoline.

Electric motor - The [electric motor](#) on a hybrid car is very sophisticated. Advanced electronics allow it to act as a motor as well as a generator. For example, when it needs to, it can draw energy from the batteries to accelerate the car. But acting as a generator, it can slow the car down and return energy to the batteries.

Generator - The [generator](#) is similar to an electric motor, but it acts only to produce electrical power. It is used mostly on series hybrids (see below).

Batteries - The [batteries](#) in a hybrid car are the energy storage device for the electric motor. Unlike the gasoline in the fuel tank, which can only power the gasoline engine, the electric motor on a hybrid car can put energy into the batteries as well as draw energy from them.

Transmission - The [transmission](#) on a hybrid car performs the same basic function as the transmission on a conventional car. Some hybrids, like the Honda Insight, have conventional transmissions. Others, like the Toyota Prius, have radically different ones.

Can't Get A Hybrid Just yet? - Dale Artfitch, Contributor

Some Automotive Tips to save gas

Proper tire inflation is important for driving safety and will extend the life of your tires and there will be some fuel savings.



Avoid excess weight in your vehicle. Every 100 pounds could reduce mileage by 1-2% take the unnecessary items from your trunk.

Check and replace clogged air filters. Clogged filters can reduce fuel mileage by up to 10%.

Make sure gas caps are tightened and in place after fueling. (About 147 million gallons of gas evaporates each year from cars without gas caps)

Avoid quick or fast starts and hard stopping; these can reduce mileage by up to 33%. Following and using the manufacturers recommended grade oil for your vehicle and changing the oil at recommended intervals will help extend engine life and improve fuel mileage.

Avoid excess idling. Idling can burn up to a gallon of fuel per hour,

Avoid using rooftop carriers when possible. About a quarter of each gallon of gas is used to overcome the wind resistance. If a rooftop carrier is necessary, try to use an aerodynamic carrier to reduce wind resistance.

Go the speed limit and use cruise control. Speed limits are calculated for maximum safety – They will also give you maximum fuel mileage. You can get up to 20% better mileage doing 55mph than 70mph and using your cruise control.

Keep it tuned. Keeping your vehicle properly tuned and maintained will increase fuel mileage and help increase the life of the vehicle.



Open windows at slow speeds. Use A/C on highways. Around town, turn your air conditioning off and roll down the windows. On the highway, open windows create drag at speeds of 40 mph or

more, so roll them up and use the air.

Remove junk from the trunk. Added weight in your vehicle affects fuel economy, so take unnecessary items out of your trunk.



Fill up when it's cool and before holidays. Cooler temperatures in the early morning or late evening create less vapor. Also, getting a fill up three days before a holiday will help you save on the per-gallon price at the pump.

Use the correct fuel grade. Use the fuel grade recommended by your vehicle manufacturer. In addition, TOP TIER Detergent Gasoline is even better for your vehicle. It is a class of gasoline with enhanced detergency, that exceed detergent requirements imposed by the EPA. It meets voluntary

deposit control standards developed by four automotive companies, including General Motors. TOP TIER gasoline retailers include: Chevron, Shell and Texaco.

Don't accelerate up hill.

Build up speed before an incline, and then maintain it on the way up. Coast on the way down for additional fuel economy.

Don't top off gas

When buying gas, stop when the pump shuts off automatically

Sources:

<http://www.goodyear.com/kyt/tireTips/>

<http://www.goodwrench.com/Tips/FuelEfficiency.jsp>



The Walking School Bus - Claudia Shaughnessy, Contributor

A walking bus is a group of schoolchildren who, chaperoned by two adults (a "Driver" leads and a "Conductor" follows) walk to school, in much the same way a [school bus](#) would drive them to school. Like a traditional bus, walking buses have a fixed route with designated "bus stops" and "pick up times" in which they pick up children.

The concept of the walking bus was invented in 1998 by [Hertfordshire](#) County Council and was first used at [Wheatfields Junior School](#) in [St Albans, United Kingdom](#) in [1998](#)¹

Walking Buses have remained popular in the [United Kingdom](#) and have recently gained a level of popularity elsewhere in Europe, North America and [New Zealand](#). Proponents of walking buses say that its aims are to:

- Encourage physical activity by teaching children the skills to walk safely, how to identify safe routes to school, and the benefits of walking
- Raise concern for the environment
- Raise awareness of how walkable a community is and where improvements can be made
- Reduce crime and take back neighborhoods for people on foot

- Reduce traffic congestion, pollution and speed near schools.
- Share valuable time with local community leaders, parents and children

WALKING SCHOOL BUS GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZERS

Map the route the walking bus will take. Choose the safest route with the fewest and safest streets to cross and pick places where there are sidewalks or paths separated from traffic if possible. Pay close attention to traffic signs and signals related to pedestrians.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend 1 adult for every 6 children. One adult can walk with more kids who are over 10 years of age. For 4-6 year olds, 1 adult for every 3 children is advised.

Have parents walk with their children and/or sign consent forms.

Go over basic safety rules with the children.

Make sure the students know you are in charge.

Have a plan for dealing with disruptive students.

Plan how to cross streets depending on the number of children and the type of street. Avoid busy, high speed or multi-lane roads. Think about how to cross, such as two by two or four across. Give children exiting the street room to enter the sidewalk area.

Wear bright colors and use retroreflective materials. Walk leaders and children can wear fluorescent vests. In bad weather, visibility is even more important.

Children are not miniature adults. They often act before thinking. They have one-third narrower side vision and can't judge speed. Since they are shorter than adults, they can't see over cars and bushes.

Remember that adults are role models for children's behaviors.

The rewards can be great. Walking school buses help create lifelong safety skills.

A Walking School Bus can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school or as structured as a planned

route with meeting points, a timetable and a schedule of trained volunteers.

For more information visit: www.walkingschoolbus.org



“A variation on the walking school bus is a bicycle train where a group of children and adult leaders ride their bikes together to school.”



For more information visit:

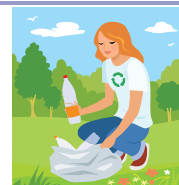


Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

Source—Walkingschoolbus.org

What is "Green Cleaning"? How do I go Green?

- Linda Levitt Contributor



Green cleaning involves the use of products that are the least toxic to people, animals and our planet. It is possible to find or make these products that are healthier, often cheaper and yet will still do a good job of cleaning and disinfecting. If you wish to buy green products, you should be looking for ones that are non-toxic, biodegradable, phosphate-free, contain no dye, chlorine or hypochlorite, use recycled packaging, bulk packaging, natural fragrances and which have full disclosure or labeling of both "active" and "inert" ingredients. For additional information, please visit:

NJ Environmental Federation, Peggi Sturmfels, 732-280-8898, psturmfels@cleanwater.org

Dierdre Imus Environmental Center for Pediatric Oncology, 201-336-8071, www.dienviro.com

Center for the New American Dream, www.newdream.org/cleanschools/safelist.php

Environmental Choice Program, www.environmentalchoice.com

NJ Green Schools Program, 732-528-0016, www.globallearning.org

Before we get into the cleaning products themselves, there are several suggestions for developing environmentally friendly kitchens:

- use less water and don't let the water run while you do dishes, brush your teeth or walk away to get a cup from another room
- use cloth napkins and towels instead of paper
- buy your items in bulk – this uses much less packaging
- choose organic products, if possible
- buy local products and produce; this reduces transportation costs and uses less fuel and supports your local farms and businesses
- use reusable storage containers, plates, cups, etc.
- don't leave your refrigerator door open for long
- thaw food before you cook to reduce your cooking time

Most detergents [dish & laundry] are made from petroleum, a nonrenewable resource. Other ingredients are not easily biodegradable and are harmful to wildlife after they go down your drain. Fragrances in our cleaning supplies and fabric softeners often contain chemicals that have been linked to cancer and may impair women's reproductive systems.

Fragrances may also trigger asthma, allergies, headaches and eye irritation. Many ingredients become dangerous when combined, and you often won't find any warning labels to alert you to this phenomenon.

According to a 2000 World Health Organization report, antibacterial soap is helping to promote the growth of resistant bacteria. Chlorine bleach, common in cleaning and laundry supplies, is highly caustic, can be fatal if swallowed, and can wreck havoc in the world of nature after it runs down your drain. It also must never be mixed with any ammonia product as this will result in a highly toxic gas.

The first step to greening your home is, weather permitting, open your windows and let the fresh air in! Replace artificial air fresheners with fresh flowers. If you'd like to choose greener alternative to your traditional cleaners, air fresheners and the like, be a savvy consumer: "Just because a product says it's natural doesn't mean it's nontoxic," according to the CEO of Seventh Generation, a producer of environmental friendly household products. "Because no standards exist, claims such as 'nontoxic,'

'eco-safe,' and 'environmentally friendly' are also meaningless, according to Consumers Reports' Eco-labels website." If you would prefer to buy alternatives to the traditional cleaning & laundry products, look for environmentally friendly ingredients that also perform. Substitute

~ grain alcohol for butyl cellosolve as a solvent

~ coconut or other plant oils rather than petroleum in detergents

~ plant oils, eucalyptus, rosemary or sage rather than triclosan as disinfectants.



Going GREEN is easier than you think – and the Leadership Somerset 2008 Go-Green E-zine is here to help you make choices that are right for you and fit into your lifestyle.

Green Cleaning in your Kitchen and Bath

- Linda Levitt, Contributor



Replace antibacterial soap with thorough **hand-washing** with plain soap & warm water. Wash about 2 minutes.

White vinegar will kill bacteria, mold and viruses and can be used on kitchen surfaces and even toilet seats!

To kill the dreaded food-borne pathogens [E coli, salmonella], use very hot, soapy water to thoroughly **wash all utensils, cutting boards, and any surfaces** on which you placed raw meat or eggs. While you can use wooden cutting boards for fruit, vegetables and cooked products, only use non-porous cutting boards for raw meat and poultry.

To **scrub sinks, tubs, countertops** use a paste of baking soda & water. This should remove dirt rings and many stains. If this doesn't work on a particular stain, try a paste of washing soda and water; but use gloves.

To **clean windows**, fill a spray bottle with water & either ¼ C white vinegar or 1 tablespoon lemon juice.

Most drain, oven & toilet bowl cleaners are extremely corrosive and can irritate eyes and skin and cause or worsen breathing problems. To green-clean

drains, try using a "snake," a plumbing tool that can bring much [or all] of the clog to the surface. If you still need to clear your drains, try eco-friendly solutions that use enzymes rather than caustic chemicals to dissolve your obstructions. Check out *Earth Friendly* and *Naturally Yours* products. And, for the future, consider metal or plastic drain screens that will prevent hair and other obstacles from getting in your drain.

Oven surfaces can be cleaned with a paste of water & baking or washing soda; let stand overnight and scrub while using gloves. *EnviroSafety* has a plant-based multi-purpose cleaner. To make it easier on you to keep your oven clean, line the oven floor with aluminum foil and wipe oven walls after each use.

Toilets can be cleaned using non-chlorine scouring powders or you may try AFM SafeChoice or Ecover products for the toilet.

Furniture polish: can use 3 parts light mineral oil to one part olive oil and a drop of lemon juice. Or try a small amount of olive or lemon oil and beeswax. Or: dip a cloth in cool tea and rub onto furniture.

You can hide wood scratches by rubbing it with the meat of a walnut. To remove water stains on wood furniture, dab white toothpaste onto the stain. Allow it to dry and gently buff with a soft cloth.

Fabric softener: instead of a commercial fabric softener, add ¼ cup baking soda to your wash cycle. A ¼ cup white vinegar will also soften and eliminate fabric cling.

According to *Grist*, an environmental news website, less toxic store products are manufactured by Ecover [laundry & dish soaps], Seventh Generation [laundry & dish soaps], Aubrey Organics [all purpose household cleaners],

Vermont Soapworks [all purpose household cleaners] and Naturally Yours [dishwasher detergent].

Air fresheners: can trigger allergies and asthma. An easy solution – when the weather co-operates is to open the window and ventilate! Use an open box of baking soda to remove odors – place these boxes in closets, in your refrigerator, or any enclosed spaces where the air is stale. Other common ingredients that can help get rid of room odors are: ~a mixture of baking soda, hot water and lemon juice mixed and poured into a spray bottle and sprayed into the air; ~a bowl of vinegar; ~a bowl of charcoal or kitty litter; ~lighting a match for a few seconds; ~burning a candle; ~a small dish of vanilla extract. If you want to be fancy – put the baking soda into a decorative bowl. Or you can use cloves, sticks of cinnamon, whole allspice or similar spices, simmered in a pot of water for 1-2 hours.

If you want to use commercial products, try cedar blocks, sachets of dried flowers or herbs and products which are scented with essential plant oils, such as lemon, verbena or lavender. Avoid products that lists an unspecified "fragrance" – these could easily be synthetic chemicals, which you are trying to avoid.



Sources listed on page 34

Green Laundry Tips - Linda Levitt Contributor



~ **Pre-soak** soiled items in warm water w/ ½ C washing soda for 30 min. Rub soiled areas w/ liquid soap

~ **To remove stains**, soak spot in cool water immediately; sponge away as much as possible. Repeat if necessary. *air-dry since heat can set a stain

~ **Blood**: pour hydrogen peroxide directly on stain and rinse in cold water

~ **Chocolate & coffee**: soak in cold water, rub w/ soap & mild borax solution & rinse. Wash in water as hot as the fabric can stand

~ **Fruit & wine**: soak in cold water for 30 minutes. Rub soap into remaining stain & wash in water as hot as the fabric can stand. Bleach with lemon juice and sunlight, if needed

~ **Grass**: rub with glycerin [available in drug-

stores]; let stand for 1 hour, then wash

~ **Ink**: for ballpoint pen, sponge with rubbing alcohol, rub with soap, rinse & wash. For felt-tip, rub with soap, rinse & wash

~ **Lipstick**: rub with cold cream or shortening to dissolve color, rinse with solution of washing soda in warm water to remove grease

Wash in soapy water as hot as fabric will stand

~ **Mildew**: wash with soap & water. Rinse well, dry in sun. If spot remains, apply lemon juice, rub with salt and dry in sun. Wash

~ **Perspiration**: rub with solution of vinegar and lemon juice in water

In a Nutshell: The Best Homemade Cleaning Product Ingredients to Keep on Hand (you probably already have them in your house)



Baking soda: mildly abrasive, naturally deodorizing. On a damp sponge it will clean your tub and sinks, remove marks on painted walls. If you have stubborn stains on sinks or countertops, make a paste and let it sit on the stain for 15 minutes before scrubbing. On a dirty [cold] oven, spray with water and spread a mix of ¾ cup baking soda, ¼ cup salt and ¼ cup water over the interior;

do be careful not to let the mixture clog any openings. Let sit for a few hours to



overnight and clean off. To remove odors on carpets, sprinkle with baking soda, let it sit for a few minutes and vacuum.

To clear your drains, make a mixture of equal parts baking soda and cider vinegar, pour over the clogged drain, and follow with hot water. Do not use this immediately after using a commercial drain cleaner as it could cause a dangerous chemical interaction.

Vinegar: again, with baking soda, will keep drains from clogging. It also is a wonderful spray cleaner, dissolving soap scum and grease

Make a mixture of equal parts vinegar and water in a spray bottle and you can

use it on counters and cabinets – and there is no need to rinse! With difficult stains, use very warm water and let it sit for a while before scrubbing. Unfortunately, this may not work on the most stubborn of stains – they may call for commercial products. To clean toilets, use vinegar full strength; add one cup to your laundry rinse cycle to soften; full strength vinegar will clean and polish your kitchen stainless steel appliances; and ½ cup vinegar mixed with one gallon hot water will clean your washable floors.

Lemons: use them to deodorize your garbage disposals. Rust stains in your bathroom can be cleaned by sprinkling the stain with

salt, squeezing lemon juice over the salt, letting the mixture sit for several hours and then wiping clean. You can make a good furniture polish with 1 cup of oil [olive or mineral] and ½ cup of lemon juice. Clean your grout by sprinkling it liberally with lemon juice, letting it sit for 30 minutes and scrubbing. Lemon juice removes perspiration and other stains from clothing.



Sources listed on page 34

Cleaning Products—continued

Borax [sodium borate]: kills mold and bacteria. Used as an alternative to bleach, it deodorizes, removes stains, and boosts the cleaning power of soap.

Ammonia: a wonderful cleaner for windows, chrome, tile and mirrors when you combine ammonia [one tablespoon] with rubbing alcohol [1 cup] and water [1 cup]. To avoid streaking, don't clean in direct sunlight. If you set a bowl of ammonia in an oven overnight, most of the dirt can be wiped away. Steel wool and elbow grease can finish the project, if needed.

Salt: an abrasive

Bleach: combine ¾ cup bleach with one gallon of water. This can be used for mold and mildew on grout and tile. Be careful with fabrics and never, ever combine bleach & ammonia – this can release highly toxic gases.

Washing soda [acetic acid]: cleans clothing, softens water, cuts grease and disinfects. When combined with soap, can greatly increase its cleaning power.

Liquid castile soap: gentle soap with a natural vegetable base.



White, non-gel tooth-paste: mild abrasive that cleans silver



Scouring pad / soft rags and/or sponges / spray bottles

Club soda: great stain remover

Hints: buy your ingredients in bulk, pre-mix, and label and store your cleaners properly.

Sources listed on page 34

You can use spray bottles for many of your cleaning supplies. Add essential oils or herbs to many of your cleansers – this will add a pleasant fragrance to your products.

Homemade cleaning products tend to be cheaper, usually work as well as commercial products and are vastly superior for our health, the health of our pets and to our ecosystem. Be sure you clearly label and carefully store all your products so they cannot be mistaken for something suitable for eating or drinking!

Did you Know? Consider these eco-facts.

- If every household in the U.S. replaced just one box of 48 ounce petroleum-based powder laundry detergent with a vegetable based product we could save 96,000 barrels of oil.

- Research shows that about 40% of Americans have jobs that could be performed at home. If they tele-commuted, they could annually save 587 million barrels of oil (roughly

(equivalent to 74% of our annual Gulf Oil imports), reduce greenhouse gases by 101 million metric tons of CO₂, and save almost \$52 billion at the pump.

- It's estimated that if US drivers slowed down a little, kept their tires inflated to the proper pressure and reduced their driving by 5%, US oil consumption would drop by 1.3 millions barrels a day.

-If everyone lowered their heating temperature 6 degrees, we'd save the energy equivalent of 570,000 barrels of oil every day.

- The average American uses 25 barrels of oil each year.

- Banning plastic bags could save 37 million barrels of oil each year.



-By extending Daylight Saving Time by four weeks from the second Sunday of March to the first Sunday of November, it is expected that 10,000 barrels of oil will be saved each day through reduced use of power by businesses during daylight hours.

Eco-friendly cleaning products are:



Provided by

ECOVER
THE POWER OF NATURE



Solar Energy for the Home Owner? - Lynn Slifer, Contributor

As energy prices reach levels that cause us all to look for ways to cut back on utility bills, solar power deserves another chance with the average homeowner. Solar technologies have advanced quite a bit over the past decade, and now receive even more interest from homeowners and organizations looking to capitalize on alternative energy. And prices have become more reasonable, making it possible for more homeowners than ever to harness the power of the sun.

Solar Energy is the creation of energy from the sun's light. It involves a photovoltaic process whereby light causes an electrical charge to flow into material. Solar panels store that charge, releasing it when needed. Solar heating has been used for centuries to heat dwellings, but the use of solar electricity is relatively new.

Passive solar heating involves simple things like siting a new home to take advantage of sunlight to heat in the winter, and using deciduous trees to shade the house from the sun's heat in summer. These simple measures can actually reduce utility bills. A few well placed deciduous trees near the sunny

side of your house will help provide added shade in the summer, but won't block the desired heat from the sun in the winter. Insulating curtains and blinds are another passive tool to "manage" the heat from the sun. Most home improvement stores now carry window films, which can be easily applied (and removed) to windows on the sunny side of your home, further reducing the heat effect in the summer and helping to cut air conditioning costs.

Solar electricity is available to the homeowner in many forms. While solar technologies are generally more cost effective when installed during new construction, homeowners who plan to stay in their homes for 5 years or more may still benefit from installing solar electric. While the upfront cost for installing solar is 3 to 5 times the cost of a standard HV/AC system, rebates are offered through state and federal governments to help offset those expenses.

Experts recommend maintaining a connection with the local utility for those times when solar panels do not provide the levels of electricity required in the home. When the electricity supplied by a homeowner's

solar system exceeds the amount used in the home, the excess electricity is actually sold back to the electric company. This practice helps to offset electric bills accrued during months when the solar supply can't keep up with the demands of the home.

There are many options for using solar in the home, including;

Solar roofing panels, which can be used for solar water heating or generating electricity used in the home.

Solar shingles, which many homeowners find more attractive than solar panels, can be installed when re-roofing the home. As with roofing panels, they are used to generate electricity for use in the home.

Solar outdoor lighting, which requires no wiring and has absolutely no cost to run. While light from outdoor solar lights is generally not as bright as the standard low voltage wired type, the cost and effort to install is actually less and the benefits can be seen immediately.

Solar swimming pool and spa heaters, which absorb sunlight to warm the water.



Interested in hearing more?

There are several great web sites that provide detailed information on the use of solar power by homeowners.

These include www.eere.energy.gov/solar, www.njcleanenergy.com/residential, and www.otherpower.com. You can also contact your local utility to ask about solar power. As the technology improves and storage capabilities increase, solar energy will become an ever more viable alternative to the average homeowner.



Sources listed on page 34



Say 'I Do' to a Greener Wedding Michelle Luff, Contributor

A wedding can be one of the most expensive and nerve-racking events of a person's lifetime, however, there are alternatives! One way to help ease the tension on both ones wallet and nerves is to host a green wedding, or at least to make an attempt to incorporate some environmentally-friendly options into the many details of that very special day.

Starting with wedding invitations, there are many ways to integrate greener options without sacrificing style or color. Consider using recycled paper or alternative fibers such as hemp or bamboo; there are also options featuring eco-friendly vegetable- or soy-based inks for printing invitations. Should alternative printing options not be of specific interest, there are ways to green up the invitation process simply by sending out fewer paper mailings for each wedding even celebration; choose to email invites to the bachelor/bachelorette party or create a wedding website to announce all events for your guests. (theknot.com, *Green Weddings: Invitation Ideas and Tips*, 2008).

When it comes to wedding flowers, purchase in



season flowers, support local nurseries and flower shops,

choose pesticide-free organic blooms, or flowerless bouquets. Have bridesmaids carry a battery powered tea light candle in a lantern for a winter wedding or possibly Spanish or Chinese-style fans or design your own for a summer wedding. Make your tables at the reception a bit greener by using potted flowers, plants, herbs, or possibly even small trees which your guests can take home and replant. Bamboo is a wonderful natural element to add to wedding décor and is one of the most sustainable natural materials on the planet. Use bamboo as a centerpiece or pass out mini lucky bamboo to your guests as wedding favors. Another favor idea is to make a donation in your guests names to an organization that plants trees, such as AmericanForests.org. (theknot.com, *Green Weddings, Organic and Earth-Friendly Reception Ideas*, 2008).

Your wedding day would not be complete without that beautiful gown, however, there are green alternatives for your wardrobe. Purchase a second-hand gown, you'll get a great discounted price for a dress worn just once. This will reduce the energy needed to create a new gown in labor, materials, and shipping. Making Memories is a charity that sells donated gowns and in turn donates

proceeds to fulfill wishes for terminal breast cancer patients. If you're not going to reuse that bridesmaid dress, The Glass Slipper Project is another charity that accepts donated dresses and provides them to teenagers who cannot afford to purchase a prom dress.

A current hot topic in the wedding community is centered on diamonds and diamond trading, often called, conflict diamonds. Many of the diamonds currently for sale in the United States have been mined in war zones in Angola and Sierra Leone, and the sales from these diamonds have funded rebel groups in these countries (*Conflict Diamonds, UN Sanctions and War*, www.un.org, March 2001). How does one avoid purchasing a conflict diamond? The first step to take in purchasing a conflict-free diamond is to ask your jeweler for a 'Certificate of Origin' which ensures that the diamond is truly conflict-free (*Conflict Diamonds*, 2001)

Other options to ensure your wedding jewelry does not void human rights is to simply to avoid diamonds altogether or seek out diamond substitutes. A popular stone which is made from a rare and naturally occurring substance is moissanite.

Moissanite can also be manufactured in a lab, a completely conflict-free and green process! You may want to avoid diamonds entirely, if so, looking into vintage gemstones or recycle a favorite gemstone you already have. Many jeweler's will recycle and refine gold to make a new custom rings (*Green Weddings: Are Your Rings Earth-Friendly and Conflict-Free?* theknot.com, 2008).

For your honeymoon, consider a volunteer trip, rather than a luxurious resort retreat. Celebrate your special occasion by "paying it forward" and giving to a cause in need of assistance. Consider how meaningful it could be to spend time with your new spouse volunteering and making the world a better place. Check out the website www.i-to-i.com for more information or to plan your trip. (theknot.com, *Green Weddings: Volunteer Honeymoons*, 2008).



Sources listed on page 34

Discovering & Locating Green Toys - Connie Richardson, contributor



With the continuous news informing us all of the recalls of millions of toys for safety issues ranging from lead paint to crafts that turned toxic when swallowed, most consumers have begun to research and question the how, what and where when choosing a toy for their children. The research has shown that 80% of the toys are manufactured in China. Parents are searching for toys that are made from natural, non-toxic materials that are safe for their children.

At this time twenty states have passed legislation to ban four substances from toys: lead, phthalates, Bisphenol A, and cadmium. Congress is also in the process of strengthening the Consumer Product Safety Act to ban lead and phthalates, and to mandate that the presence of toxins be disclosed.

With the increasing number of consumers who are choosing to pay more for toys that are made with organic cotton, sustainable wood & natural, nontoxic materials they are demonstrating influential with retailers.

The consumers are demanding changes on how toy products are produced and most toy companies are listening. Wal-Mart, Target, and Sears have pledged to eliminate polyvinyl chloride (PVC) from their store-brand children's and baby

products, Toys 'R' Us and Wal-Mart have announced that they will not sell baby products that contain phthalates.

Here are some tips & recommendations in choosing safe toys for children from: "A Bunch of Green's" website [How to Choose Safe Toys](http://abunchofgreens.blogspot.com/2008/03/it-can-be-quite-hard-to-get-safe-toys.html) "<http://abunchofgreens.blogspot.com/2008/03/it-can-be-quite-hard-to-get-safe-toys.html>

It can be quite hard to get safe toys for your children these days.

There are the concerns of - lead in the toy's paint, - phthalates in the plastic rubber toys (banned in European toys), - PVC from the hard plastic toys and so on. The scare with the toys made in China awakened many parents who started to look for safer alternatives. One should be pretty concerned when buying toys for his/her kids whether made of wood or plastic. Some think that if the toys are made from wood they are safe and this is probably because they are free of phthalates. But they may not be free of lead and other chemicals used to glue the pieces; so not all wooden toys are safe.

Recommendations:

Avoid toys made of plastic that uses PVC (identified as number 3 or vinyl).

Avoid any plastic rubber toys like those fishes or

ducks for bath.

Look for fleece dolls and stuffed animals made from post-consumer recycled materials.

Look for toys made from unfinished wood but pay attention at the glue that may contain formaldehyde. Any solid wood toy is preferable to one made with pressed woods such as plywood and particleboard, which are formed with glues that give off toxic fumes.

You can often see the layers of pressed wood when looking at the edges of toys and puzzle pieces. However, to ensure that solid wood came from responsibly managed forests, look for the [Forest Stewardship Council \(FSC\)](#) certification, which prohibits clear-cutting and the use of old-growth and endangered tree species.

Look for wooden toys finished with natural oils such as linseed, walnut, and beeswax which are safest.

Look for solar-powered electronic toys or those that run off of rechargeable batteries, juiced up with a solar charger. Because rechargeable contain heavy metals--such as nickel, cadmium, lithium and lead--be sure to treat them as hazardous waste at the end of their lifespan.

Choose very carefully the toys that are for mouthing/sucking period of your child. Better get some 3-4 more expensive safe toys than 10 unsafe toys. They do not need that many.

Choose European toys - they ban phthalates in toys, formaldehyde, polybrominated flame retardants and many other chemicals.

Look for information on toy recalls. The website for the [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\)](#) has information on infant toy recall.

Avoid toxic items and materials that could cause poisoning. Look for paint sets, crayons and markers that are labeled nontoxic.

Use the [Healthytoys.org](#) database. The Consumer Action Guide to Toxic Chemicals in Toys is a database with results of 1,200 toys and children products and data from over 3,000 individual samples of different product components. The toys are rated for 5 elements that represent the chemicals of concern: lead, mercury, cadmium, chlorine (PVC), and arsenic. There are lists with worse and best toys and children products. The database does not have all the toys tested but if you do not find what you are looking for you can request new toys and products to be tested.

Opt for organic cotton (grown without pesticides or synthetic fertilizers), unbleached cotton (free of dioxin-producing chlorine), hemp and wool colored with low-impact, colorfast dyes. Wool is naturally fire-resistant--yet another reason to choose it.

If you're ever in doubt about a toy's safety, discard it.

Green Toys—continued



General guidelines to keep in mind when toy-shopping:

Toys made of fabric should be labeled as flame resistant or flame retardant.

Stuffed toys should be washable.

Painted toys should be covered with lead-free paint.

Art materials should say nontoxic.

Crayons and paints should say ASTM D-4236 on the package, which means that they've been evaluated by the American Society for Testing and Materials.

One highly recommended online environmental toy supplier is:

Green Toys, Inc. (<http://www.greentoys.com/green.html>) an online store that is based in California states which all their products are 100% made in the USA.



Per their advertisement: "Our toys are truly local creations. Every step in the process, from milk container recycling to toy production to final assembly, occurs in California. Our raw materials and toys aren't shipped from overseas, which saves a lot of energy and reduces greenhouse gasses."

Toy Safety and Testing

Green Toys products are tested by nationally recognized, independent, third-party labs (located, yes, in the USA.) They contain no traceable amounts of Phthalates or BPA. They are also designed without any external coatings, eliminating the fear of lead paint.

Our products pass a plethora of tests, including:

- Consumer Products Safety Standard Specification, ASTM F963
- California Prop. 65 restrictions on lead & cadmium
- FDA regulations for food contact

California regulations prohibiting phthalates in toys

Voluntary testing for no BPA (Bisphenol-A).

Here are more websites who sell safe environmental toys:

Plan toys - mostly wooden; they comply with E.U. standards.

Haba - comply with E.U. standards.

Nuno Organics - has stacking boxes from birch wood, treated with non-toxic water based stains.

Nova Natural Toys and Craft - sells playthings made from local white pine, finished with polymerized linseed oil.

Melissa and Doug - mostly wooden; uses water-based paint.

Sassy - majority are made from plastic but they claim

that their products are free of phthalates, PVC and Bisphenol A

Lego - PVC & phthalate-free ABS plastic.

Chicco - the majority is made from plastic, PVC free.

TinyLove - PVC free.

Lamaze baby toys - PVC free.

Nuno Organic offers a variety of wooden toys, organic cotton dolls and teddy bears for young children. Toddlers can practice motor skills and size relationships with stacking boxes made of birch wood in colorful water-based stains - (www.nunoorganic.com , 914-762-6159).

Plasmacar - Counteract the rage for battery power with ride-on cars that use bodily momentum to propel themselves, such as The Plasma Car (\$69.96; www.plasmacar.com, 877-289-0730). Another alternative is the Flying Turtle (\$68.95; www.sensoryedge.com, 800-734-8019).

Nova Natural Toys & Crafts - sells a variety of natural playthings. Your child can build elaborate tracks for marbles with the Castle Labyrinth Marble Run, made of SmartWood-certified birch wood blocks (\$38.90; www.novanatural.com - 877-668-2111).

Peace Toys - Educational Children's Toys from Hugg-A-Planet and Peacetoy -

<http://www.peacetoy.com/> an online store, offers a wide selection of nontoxic, environmentally responsible games, toys, puzzles and art supplies.

Thinkbutton was founded, in 2000, on a philosophy that inspires children to strive for more than just being smart. Our vision is to challenge young minds to embrace the extraordinary.

http://www.thinkbutton.com/environment_toys.asp

1888 Toys - We care greatly about young generation, therefore educational toys and learning toys for babies, toddlers and preschool children, presented on our site are of the highest quality, have proven developmental value, safe and fun to play with! <http://www.1888toys.com/>



Sources listed on page 34

Green Toys—continued



Converting to green toys has its definite advantages:

- Educational development
- Durable
- Added safety for your child
- Stimulates the imagination
- Enhances independent thinking
- Environmental safe for our planet
- Most of the toys listed with their websites are geared to the ages of less than one year to about 10

years old.

In closing, getting back to basics is the key. All those toys we and our grandparents use to play with will be the answer for the question "What is safe for my children?" The answer lies in just the basics. The building blocks, wooden rocking horse, spinning tops, Lego sets, building & flying kites, rag dolls, hand puppets, puzzles, story books, old fashion teddy bears, I could go on and on, but the reality is all of these toys have one common bond, which is they gave us hours of fun with challenging our minds and letting our imagination and creativity develop as well

as to cultivate and express our thoughts, ideas as we shared our toys and play together with friends in which form our ability to work in a team setting.

I can guarantee it will do the same for your children!



Sources

- Green Toys, Inc.
- Plantoys.com
- Habatoys.com
- Nunoorganic.com
- Novanatural.com
- Melissaanddoug.com
- Sassybaby.com
- Lego.com
- Chiccousa.com
- Tinylove.com
- Learningcurve.com/lamaz

- Nunoorganic.com
- Plasmacar.com
- Sensoryedge.com
- Novanatural.com
- Peacetoy.com
- Thinkbutton.com
- 1888toys.com
- Abunchof-greens.blogspot.com/2008/03/it-can-be-quite-hard-to-get-safe-toys.html (A Bunch of Green - <http://abunchof-greens.blogspot.com/>)
- Forest Stewardship Council
- Healthytoys.org
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission



Special Thanks to the following companies:



Marla Howard, Xerox Senior Solution Executive - for donating the business cards



Green Toys - for their donation of four Cookware & Dining sets



Red Apple School Supply - for donating 100 recycled pencils

ECO-FRIENDLY SCHOOL SUPPLIES — Connie Richardson, Contributor

You would be surprised how easy it is to green your children's school supplies. Numerous retailers have or are in the process of producing recycled pens, rulers, pencils, notebooks, crayons, copy paper, binders, and even lunch boxes. Some examples of local stores that offer eco-friendly products are Wal-Mart, Staples, Office Max, and Target just to mention a few. Then there are online stores, you benefit from buying in bulk which is savings to your wallet. If you don't have the need for buying in bulk consider partnering with neighbors, school groups or school districts with combining orders for even larger savings.

One online vendor who has a variety of earth friendly products is Red Apple School Supply, Inc.

Jeff Haines, President of Red Apple School Supply, Inc. writes:

"Red Apple School Supply, Inc. which is located in Murray, Utah, introduced a unique brand of school supply products in 2006 under the Green Apple Earth-friendly School Supply brand name. Since then, we have grown our product line to include pencils, pens, highlighters, rulers, pencil boxes, 3-ring binders and lunch boxes all made from recycled, reclaimed and recyclable materials. In addition to our branded line, we

offer a variety of other school and office products, such as binder filler paper, copy paper, notebooks, stationery, index cards, scissors, crayons, water base, dry erase- and permanent markers, all of which are made from Earth-friendly materials. In just two years, Green Apple has become a national leader in offering a comprehensive range of "green" school and office products.

We sell their products through retail stores throughout the U.S. and Canada and also offer a School Supply Pack program in which schools and parent organizations order prepackaged supplies custom-made based on their respective supply lists.



Red Apple School Supply is the exclusive US distributor for tree-free banana paper notebooks and stationery products from TNF Ecopapers of Costa Rica. Red Apple School Supply is a member of the Utah Chapter of the Better Business Bureau and the National Association of College Stores."

To access Red Apple School Supply products log onto <http://www.redapplesupply.com>



Other Online Green Office and School Supply Suppliers:

GreenLine Paper Company sells only recycled and tree-free papers, 100% recycled, 30% PCW, colorful twin-pocket portfolios <http://greenlinepaper.com/index.php>

Treecycle.com - 100% recycled 30-100% PCW filler paper, post-its, and file folders; 10-30% PCW pocket organizers; and up to 50% PCW plastic binders, from Treecycle.com.

The Recycled Products Cooperative - <http://www.recycledproducts.org/>



Then there are the old fashion ways that still do the trick, such as covering school books with paper bags or newspapers, reusable lunchboxes instead of brown paper bags, switch from vinyl backpacks to 100 percent post consumer recycled rubber knapsacks. There are so many ways to green your child's school supplies as well as a cost savings and your help in saving our planet for our children's future. Come aboard for together we can make a difference!



Sources

GreenLine Paper Company
Treecycle.com
The Recycled Products Cooperative
Red Apple School Supply

Green and Gorgeous - Vilma Ramirez, Contributor



Do you ever stop to think about the routine you go through every morning to get ready, feel pretty or just to be presentable? The majority of women's daily assortment of products include some combination of: shampoo, conditioner, hair product, face wash, shower gel, shaving cream, moisturizer, deodorant, and many different kinds of makeup depending on personal taste.

The fact is, that most beauty products contain chemicals that can be damaging to our bodies and the environment. When you put chemicals on your skin, it can be far worse than ingesting them, because they are actually being absorbed directly into your blood stream and there is no protection against the toxin.

If you try to figure out what is in your favorite lotion, moisturizer or face wash, it can leave you with an unpleasant feeling because you don't understand what the ingredient list really refers to. If you were to go online and research some of the ingredients on the back of your favorite products, you may probably stop yourself from purchasing them again. You can find many articles that caution about how chemicals are thought to cause allergies, hormone imbalance, even cancer.

What to Avoid:

There are many harmful chemical ingredients that are used in everyday hair and skin care products that people are not aware of. Here is a list of just a few:

Mineral oil/petrolatum/petroleum: Many products have petroleum based ingredients that clog the skin's pores and enlarge them. It can cause acne, saggy skin and also long term dry skin.

Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS): Most lathering products contain this very harmful ingredient.

Parabens: There are four different types- Methylparaben, Propylparaben, Butylparaben, and Ethylparaben. These equally harmful ingredients are used to increase the shelf life of products even though they are known to be extremely toxic. There are studies that show that parabens and certain preservatives have been linked to metabolic, developmental, hormonal and neurological disorders as well as various cancers.

Fragrance: The word "fragrance" means a synthetic fragrance was made in test tubes from any of 200 synthetic chemicals. These fragrances have been linked to breathing difficulties and allergies.

Take Action:

1. Become familiar with the "green language:" Natural vs. Organic. You

should know that natural and organic are not interchangeable words. "Organic" refers to a method of farming in which plants and botanicals are grown on land that is free of chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides. "Natural" means the final product was made from botanical sources without additives or preservatives.

2. Choose natural, organic products: When shopping for environmentally friendly beauty products, choose natural, organic products that have not been tested on animals, and come from companies committed to the environment.

3. Read the labels: Never assume that a "natural" or "organic" label means it is true. Be smart, read the labels, and know what are the best ingredients for you. Most of the time the ingredients in shampoos, moisturizers and products sound anything but natural! Learn what you are actually putting on your skin.

4. Know What To Avoid: The common ingredients that everyone should steer clear of are parabens, sodium lauryl sulphate, petroleum and fragrance. These chemicals are the most common cause of skin irritation and sensitivity. When you read the list of ingredients remember that the top third make up 90-95 percent of the formula and the bottom three only make up 1-3 %.

5. Time To Explore: In your local beauty store, it is a good idea to look around and find an eco-friendly or "green" section. Many stores that focus on healthy living have sections filled with products that are good for your skin and the environment. Their products are mainly made with natural ingredients and recycled or recyclable packaging. These stores also focus on products that are animal friendly, meaning their products were never tested on animals.

6. Make your own products: You would be amazed at all the products you could make by just stepping into your kitchen. Finding recipes for your own homemade beauty products is a breeze if you have access to the Internet. By just going to your favorite search engine, you can type in "homemade cosmetics" for hundreds of pages of recipes and instructions.

As you can see, there are many options and a decision between going green and saving green. By going green you are not only helping the environment, but you are also helping yourself. Most organic products are eco-friendly and will help Mother Nature. So next time you go shopping for beauty products, think of what you are actually putting on your skin.





Healthy hair—naturally—Sandra Seeley, and Kathy Quick, contributors

Hair Care Tips

The following are some basic hair care tips that you can use to improve the health and look of your hair.

General

A healthy lifestyle will mean healthier hair for you. Excessive stress, smoking, not exercising and not eating nutritiously are not healthy for your hair.

Get enough sleep.

Hair Products (Gel, mouse, hair spray...) Avoid using hair styling products with alcohol which dries out hair.

Avoid putting hair styling products directly on your scalp, if you put it on your scalp you'll clog the pores on your head.

Swimming

Before entering a pool, wet your hair so your hair will soak up the initial water instead of the chlorinated water.

When swimming where a cap to protect your hair from chlorinated water, if you choose not to wear a cap, make sure you shampoo and condition your hair right after you are done swimming.

Drying

Hot air can be damaging to your hair so when using a hair dryer use the cool



setting.

Don't leave the blow dryer in one spot for more than a few seconds, keep it moving and at a good distance away from your hair.

To speed up the drying process, pat your hair dry with a towel and let the remaining moisture in your hair dry naturally.

Gently use your fingers or a pick to untangle any knots while your hair is drying.

Combing/Brushing Use a brush whose bristles are made from natural animal hairs, it is softer and more flexible which means less damage will be done to your hair.

Hair is most fragile when it is wet so avoid brushing or combing when it's wet, or else it will cause breakage, wait until your hair is almost completely dry before brushing it.

Use brushes/combs with widely spaced bristles/teeth and smooth tips. Sharp tooth combs can damage your hair, cause split ends, and scratch your scalp.

To keep your brushes and combs clean, wash them weekly using soap or shampoo.

Comb your hair to remove any tangles before brushing it.

Begin by combing your hair gently at the ends to get any tangles out and work your way up to the

base of your hair.

Always brush/comb with a downwards stroke.

Avoid using plastic brushes/combs which create static electricity

Shampooing and Conditioning

Buy shampoos & conditioners that match your hair type, trial and error is the best way to find out what specific hair product is best for your hair.

Shower with warm water, hot water can dry and/or irritate the scalp

It is important to wash your hair, shampooing removes dirt, dead skin cells, hair oils, any hair products you may put into your hair.

When shampooing, rinse your hair out before applying any shampoo to remove any dust, dirt, and any other foreign items, then apply the shampoo onto your scalp and massage it gently with your finger tips and work your way outwards. After you are done make sure that you thoroughly rinse out your hair to remove any shampoo residue that may be left. Shampoo residue may dry your scalp/hair and or attract dirt. It is recommended that you only lather once to avoid drying your hair out, if you have oily hair, lathering again may stimulate your oil glands to create even more oil than normal.

. You should wash your hair as often as you feel necessary to keep it clean, but a general rule is for oily hair you should wash it every day or every other day and for dry hair only wash it 2-3 times a week.

Try rotating the shampoo and conditioner periodically, your hair responds differently to different products.

Use a conditioner after shampooing, it'll moisturize your hair, give it extra protection, add shine, reduce static, and makes it easier to untangle.

Use a leave in conditioner, it'll hydrate and protect your hair. A leave in conditioner on your hair is the equivalent of moisturizer on your face.

When conditioning your hair, try to spread conditioner evenly through out your hair and leave it in for a couple of minutes before rinsing out your hair.

Put the conditioner in at about an inch away from the scalp, the roots of your hair contain the most oils and usually don't need the extra conditioning.

Be gentle when shampooing and conditioning, don't use excessive force rubbing your hair, remember hair is most vulnerable when wet.



Source—natural hair guide

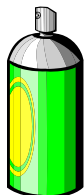
Go Natural— natural hair care recipes—Sandra Seeley and Kathy Quick, contributors

Natural Hair Spray

Ingredients

1/2 orange

1/2 lemon



Directions

Chop fruit into small pieces and place in a pot with 2 cups water. Boil until reduced by half. Cool, strain, and place in a spray bottle. Store in the refrigerator or add one ounce rubbing alcohol to store at room temperature for up to two weeks. Add more water to reduce stickiness, if desired

Natural Hair Gel

Ingredients

1/2 to 1 teaspoon unflavored gelatin

Directions

Thoroughly dissolve gelatin in 1 cup warm water. Keep refrigerated in sealed container.

Shampoo

Chamomile Shampoo

Ingredients

6 chamomile tea bags

4 tablespoons pure soap flakes

1 1/2 tablespoons glycerin

Directions

Steep the teabags in 1 1/2 cups of boiled water for 20 minutes. Remove the tea bags and discard. Add the soap flakes to the tea and let stand until the soap softens. Stir in glycerin until well blended. Keep in a

dark, cool place in a sealed bottle.

For Dry Hair

Ingredients

6 chamomile tea bags

4 tablespoons pure soap flakes

1 1/2 tablespoons glycerin

Directions

Steep the teabags in 1 1/2 cups of boiled water for 20 minutes. Remove the tea bags and discard. Add the soap flakes to the tea and let stand until the soap softens. Stir in glycerin until well blended. Keep in a dark, cool place in a sealed bottle.

For Normal Hair

Ingredients

6 chamomile tea bags

4 tablespoons pure soap flakes

1 1/2 tablespoons glycerin

Directions

Steep the teabags in 1 1/2 cups of boiled water for 20 minutes. Remove the tea bags and discard. Add the soap flakes to the tea and let stand until the soap softens. Stir in glycerin until well blended. Keep in a dark, cool place in a sealed bottle.

Rinses

For Oily Hair

Ingredients

6 chamomile tea bags

4 tablespoons pure soap flakes

1 1/2 tablespoons glycerin

Directions

Steep the teabags in 1 1/2

cups of boiled water for 20 minutes. Remove the tea bags and discard. Add the soap flakes to the tea and let stand until the soap softens. Stir in glycerin until well blended. Keep in a dark, cool place in a sealed bottle.

For More Body

Ingredients

2 1/2 teaspoons dried horsetail

Directions

Steep horsetail in boiled water for 20 minutes. Shampoo hair and rinse thoroughly. Pour horsetail rinse through hair and leave in for ten minutes. Rinse with clear water

Conditioners

Avocado Conditioner

Ingredients

1 small jar of mayonnaise

1/2 avocado

Directions

Peel avocado and remove pit. Mix all ingredients in a medium-sized bowl with your hands until it's a consistent green color. Smooth into hair being careful to work it to the ends. Use shower cap or plastic wrap to seal body heat in. Leave on hair for 20 minutes. For deeper conditioning wrap a hot, damp towel around your head over the plastic, or use a hair dryer set to a low to medium heat setting.

Tropical Isle Conditioner

Ingredients

1 avocado

Coconut milk

Directions

Peel and pit avocado. Mash avocado and slowly add coconut milk until smooth and the consistency of hair conditioner. Work through hair to ends. Rinse after 15 minutes and shampoo.

Lavendar Rosemary Hot Oil Treatment

Ingredients

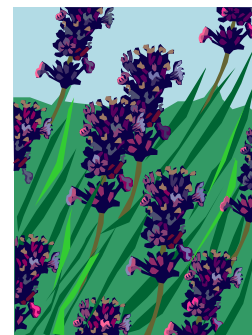
1/2 cup soybean oil

5 drops oil of rosemary

10 drops oil of lavender

Directions

Mix all ingredients well. Warm slightly and apply the mixture to damp hair. Wrap hair in plastic wrap and apply a hot towel for 20 minutes. Shampoo.



Source — <http://www.longlocks.com/hair-care-recipes-cookbook.htm>

What Every Homeowner Should Know About Green Building— Javier Vasquez, contributor



Green Building means making homes that improve the health and economic vitality of people and protect the environment. It's about making our homes and workplaces healthier, more comfortable, more durable, safer and more affordable

Energy

Reducing your energy use keeps more money in the local economy. It also reduces pollution which contributes to asthma and many other health problems. Finally, energy improvements can help lessen the effects of climate change.

Reduce your energy bills
The House Shell - how much insulation, & places where heat and cooled air can leave the house

House Systems - heating system, lighting, appliances, etc.

Occupant Behavior - leaving the TV on when not watching it.

Low-cost

Improve the house shell - Eliminating air leaks in the home is crucial for lowering energy bills.

Use compact fluorescent light bulbs - These bulbs are more expensive to buy at \$5 each, but will save between \$35 - \$70 each. You can't beat that kind of investment!

Turn off lights and appliances when not in use

Turn your furnace thermostat down or turn your air conditioning thermostat up when they won't be needed for 5 hours or more. A programmable thermostat can do this for you automatically. Every 1 degree that you turn down your thermostat for 8 hours saves approximately 1% off your heating bills.

Use free heat & light from the sun - Make use of the natural daylight that your home has available. Open curtains & blinds throughout the house for free light and the health benefits of natural light. Open curtains & blinds in south and west facing windows for free heat, or close them to keep cooler.



Good investments

Get a Home Energy Rating -If you're planning a major renovation to the home or buying new, consider getting a Home Energy Rating. This

rating will give you important information about the costs and savings associated with different renovation options. It's the smart way to save money and spend your renovation dollars wisely. Visit: <http://www.energystar.gov>

Buy Energy Efficient Equipment - When you buy equipment or appliances for your house, seek energy efficient options by looking for the Energy Star label.

Renewable Energy - Consider using renewable energy where appropriate. Remote locations, such as lawn lights or some outbuildings, are good candidates for solar or wind power. Also, solar domestic hot water systems are an excellent investment in Michigan. The savings can pay for the system in approximately 8 years, which is a 12% simple return on investment. Solar pool heaters pay for themselves in 4 years when compared.

Energy Resources:

DOE Efficiency and Renewable Energy Website:
www.eere.energy.gov

New Jersey: <http://www.epa.gov/cleanrgy/energy-programs/state-and-local/states/nj.html>

<http://www.business.gov/guides/environment/energy-efficiency/get-started>

Alliance to Save Energy:
www.ase.org

Air and A Healthy House



We expect our homes to be a place of safety & security. Increases in asthma, cancer, allergies & other health problems are sometimes linked to toxins at our home. What can you do to make sure the house is healthy for your family? Maintain your home w/ air quality in mind. Your maintenance choices will have a large impact on the health of your house. This is especially important w/ children or seniors in the home

Nontoxic cleaners and bath products – Here are some of the biggest sources of toxins we are exposed to in our homes. Many cleaners & beauty & bath products contain carcinogens & other health threats. Fortunately, it's also one that's easy to fix. Many alternatives are available that perform great and are often less expensive too.

Proper ventilation - Make sure you understand your home's ventilation system and use it appropriately. It's especially important to ventilate whenever you're creating a lot of moisture (bathing, cooking, etc.) or using toxic materials (like most commercial glues, paints, solvents).

Green Building—continued



Carbon monoxide detectors
Carbon monoxide is produced by gas burning appliances or can enter a house through an attached garage. At least one detector should be placed on every floor that has a finished bedroom.

Healthy paints and finishes - Most paints and finishes contain VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) which are toxic and off-gas that .fresh paint smell. Low-VOC or No-VOC paints and finishes are available from a variety of manufacturers, including some of the major paint brands. These paints are comparably priced and healthier for your home.

Purify the air with household plants - Most common household plants help purify the air for you, in addition to adding beauty to your home. These leafy, green plants remove common household toxins like formaldehyde, trichloroethylene, benzene and others.

Less carpeting - Carpeting can be comfortable, but it's a haven for toxins, allergens and biological contaminants. Also, when you smell that New carpet smell it's actually toxins being off-gassed into your air and lungs. Area rugs provide the same comfort, but are easier to clean. Smooth floor alternatives like cork provide comfort & cushioning while staying durable & easy to clean.

Healthy Air Resources:

American Lung Association's Healthy House program

www.healthhouse.org

EPA's Indoor Air Quality pages: www.epa.gov/iaq

Non-toxic Home Cleaning: www.eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_solutions.htm

Water For Living



Clean water is essential for life, and it's increasingly rare in many parts of

the world. The Great Lakes are one of the largest reserves of fresh water in the world. It is our responsibility & a wise investment to take care of this precious resource. Here are a few ideas to make sure your home doesn't waste our water supply.

Low-flow faucets and showerheads - A simple 1.5 gallon per minute

(gpm) faucet aerator only costs \$2, but can save a lot of water. Get a

showerhead that uses 1.5 gpm to save water in the shower. These are easy to install, provide a pleasant shower and typically cost \$15.

Watch for leaks - A leaky pipe, faucet or toilet can

costs hundreds of dollars in wasted water. To test a toilet, pour food coloring in the toilet tank, then watch to see if the colored water moves into the toilet bowl.

Water catchment - While some homes set up cistern's to store rainwater for all their needs, you can tackle a simpler version with a rain barrel. Rain barrels are connected to a gutter downspout. They conserve water and help preserve the Great Lakes for future generations, help your plants thrive by giving them chlorine-free rainwater, provide water for carwashing, and help manage stormwater by putting more water back into the ground instead of into the sewers. When the sewers get too full during heavy rains, a mix of stormwater and wastewater is released into local waterways before it is treated. Another variation on this is to plant a rain garden, a garden that can absorb and filter large amounts of water, so that you can purify rain water as part of your landscape instead of sending it into the sewage system.

Dual-flush toilets - Consider a dual-flush toilet that has an improved design that flushes most waste with only a half-flush, but still has a full flush available when you want it. These models only cost a little more than a standard toilet, but can save around \$50 a year.

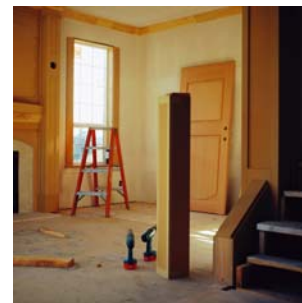
Water Resources

Water Saver House:
www.h2ouse.org

Rain Harvesting:
www.harvesth2o.com

Rain Gardens of West Michigan:
www.raingardens.org

Materials



The materials that we use in our home, from furniture to flooring, from consumables to construction supplies, all have a life that extends far past our use. They start as raw materials, are manufactured into goods, packaged, used by us, and then discarded. If we look at where those materials come from, and where they go to later, we can make wiser choices that will improve our world.

Recycle - Call your local county or city to find out about household recycling options. Your community may have pickups, drop-off sites or other options. Re-use centers are another option to put clothes, furniture, appliances and more into homes that need them instead of into the waste stream



Green Building—continued

Finally, be sure to create easy-to-use sorting bins to make recycling simple for your family. It's easiest to sort when you toss it, not later.

Compost - Composting is a great to keep kitchen, lawn or garden scraps from being trash and instead turn it into nutrient rich fertilizer!

Reduce trash - Even better than recycling is just reducing the amount of trash your home produces. For example, buying food or products with less packaging can greatly reduce the amount of trash a home produces.

Buy green when renovating When you buy new products for your home, watch for items that are local, recycled, toxin-free, or come from sustainability harvested sites. Whether remodeling or just buying new sheets, shop for healthier options.

Materials Resources

How to Compost:
www.howtocompost.org

Green Guide - for household products:
www.thegreenguide.com/reports

Green Home Guide - for remodeling & construction products:
www.greenhomeguide.com

Site Integration



A home isn't a self contained bubble, floating in space. While our homes give us shelter from the world outside, they can also connect us to the wider world around in wonderful ways. Site integration recognizes that our homes are part of a wider context. What can we do to build upon that context, now that the home is there?

Transportation Options - Where your home is located, and how it is designed affect how you get places. How many choices do we have for our transportation that can meet different needs? Driving a car can be

convenient, but it can also be expensive and detrimental to your health.

Automobile use is also a large contributor to global climate change. Using other travel options is one of the best ways to reduce pollution and build community. Some of the options to explore include biking, walking, using public transportation or carpooling and ride-sharing.

Native landscaping - Lawn watering can account for as much as 10,000 gallons of a

home's annual water usage. Native plants, which are naturally part of New Jersey, require little to no watering, fertilizing or pest prevention. They can also attract birds and butterflies to your yard.

Plant trees - In general, plant deciduous trees toward the south side of the house to provide shading in the summer and evergreens to the north to block cold northern winds in the winter. In addition, trees provide fresh air, beautiful views, shade for sidewalks or driveways that otherwise overheat, and in some cases food.

Avoid adding more pavement - When rain falls on standard concrete or asphalt surfaces, it isn't absorbed into the ground, which is part of nature's water filtering process. If you need a hard surface, try permeable (or porous) paving that still allow water to pass through. They also help avoid some of the erosion problems that can occur downstream of solid surfaces.

Site Resources

Public Transportation Systems:
www.publictransportation.org/systems

Commute by Bike:
www.commutebybike.com

Travel Matters:
www.travelmatters.org

Permeable Paving :
www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permeable_paving

Where do I start

Start with the proper maintenance of your home and equipment as specified in the manuals and instructions provided by your builder. Then tackle the items that are easiest to incorporate into your life. For some people, this will mean adopting small measures, such as switching more lights to compact fluorescents. For others, it might be a bigger step that fits with other personal goals, such as biking to work once a week when already planning a fitness regime. Remember why you want a green home, and decide which steps make the most sense to you. Finally, if you're planning a remodel, be sure to work with contractors who have experience with green building.



"Building green has many interpretations, but the goals include efficient use of land and energy, water conservation, improved indoor air quality, and resource conservation, primarily by using recycled materials."

www.utahenergy.org

GO GREEN IN YOUR GARDEN FOR THE NEW YEAR—Sandra Seeley, Contributor

With the New Year approaching, most gardeners already have spring on their minds. What new plants to try, what veggies will do well again, and all things that involve warm days, a sun hat, and a trowel. The New Year is a time for fresh starts, so it's a great time to think about changing things up a bit to make your garden even better for the environment. If you haven't tried composting, give it a whirl. If you haven't tried home-made concoctions for pest and disease control – whip some up in your kitchen and see how rewarding it can be. Organic gardening usually refers to gardening practices that do not use chemical pesticides. Healthy soil is the foundation for any organic garden.

Feed the soil, not the plants



Healthy soil is the essence of creating a growing environment that promotes chemically free plants. Soil has a life of its own, with billions of microorganisms, all working together to support and promote its own ecosystem. By adding soil food, such as compost and organic matter, we enrich the soil, which, in turn, help plants thrive. Composting is a way to turn organic waste into a free garden amendment. Compost will help improve the quality of the soil, add nutrients, and improves the soil's water

holding capacity. Every plant loves it!

Make compost and use compost

Compost is the single-best thing we can add for creating healthy, living soil.

Even better, we can make it for free with waste from our homes and yards, keeping a significant amount of waste out of landfills. Yard waste and green food scraps make up a significant percentage of curbside waste collected. This waste is then taken to landfills that are quickly reaching capacity. Other yard debris is often moved by leaf-blowers into the street where it clogs storm drains and causes flooding.

Composting is a simple, clean and efficient way to convert this waste into a beautiful top-mulch or soil additive to stimulate the health of plants. When compost is used in this way it saves money and reduces the need for applications of dangerous synthetic fertilizers and pest controls.

Composting is the natural process of decomposition of organic materials into a rich and condensed growing medium. It takes place naturally in places where leaves and twigs accumulate but can occur much more quickly by using a home-made or purchased compost bin. An effective compost bin or pile need not be more than one square yard. With a very small amount of at-



tention compost bins remain free of unpleasant odors and rodents and can produce a finished product in 10 weeks.

What can be composted

The first thing to know about composting is what can and can't be composted. The simple answer is-any plant material that was once alive can be composted:

- Fallen leaves
- Grass and lawn clippings
- Hay
- All fruits and vegetables
- Annual weeds before they seed
- Remains of garden plants
- Woodchips and sawdust
- Fruit and vegetable peels and scraps
- Tea bags
- Coffee grounds

Eggshells

Do not compost the following materials:

- Painted or chemically treated wood
- Diseased plants
- Annual weeds that have gone to seed
- Roots of perennial weeds
- Bones
- Fatty foods
- Milk products

- Fatty foods
- Milk products
- Human and pet waste, including litter

Meat scraps

Creating a compost pile

Key ingredients to good and speedy compost are: air, moisture, brown (carbonaceous) material like dry leaves, green (nitrogenous) material like grass clippings or vegetable scraps and a little soil or manure to stimulate microbial decay.

While home composting is becoming more popular, a growing number of cities and municipalities are also realizing the benefits of composting. Many now operate large-scale composting facilities to help cut down on the growing amount of material going into landfills. The process is similar to a home composting system, but on a larger scale.

It takes about three to four months, a controlled combination of moisture, air, microorganisms and temperatures reaching up to 160 degrees F to turn yard waste into compost. Some of the finished compost is sold to landscaping companies, some is used in sanitary landfills and the rest is given away to gardeners.



GO GREEN IN YOUR GARDEN FOR THE NEW YEAR—continued



On a smaller scale, starting your own home composting system is pretty easy. You can either buy a commercial composting bin or build one yourself. The choice really depends on how much material you have to recycle and how fast you want to make finished compost.

Freestanding compost piles are the simplest system. If you don't have a lot of material and you're not in a hurry, this is the one for you. Just start piling on the yard debris and food scraps and let nature do the rest. Be patient: this form of passive composting can take up to two years to make finished compost.

A hoop-type composter is just a piece of plastic with lots of holes in it. Fill it with waste materials and mix, or turn, the contents every week or two with a pitch fork or shovel. You can have finished compost in 3 to 4 months.

If you don't want to purchase a compost bin, you can make one out of wire, wood, concrete blocks or even a plastic garbage can with holes drilled into it.

While building a compost pile, moisten each layer with a hose, but don't saturate it. When all the layers are completed cover the pile with a thin layer of soil to provide microbes and keep the pile moist.

How does the pile turn into compost?

There are natural bacteria and fungi that will help re-

duce your pile if they have the proper mix of moisture and air. That's why layering is important. It is also important that you turn your compost once a week to help mix the ingredients, and balance out the moisture and oxygen in the pile.

Do not turn your pile more than every four days, or the bacteria and fungi will not have time to do their jobs. You will notice that the center of your pile will heat up—that's the result of those bacteria and fungi working!

How do I turn the compost?

The point of turning is to get what's on the outside on the inside, and back again. The easiest way to do this if you have a compost bin is to dump it out then put it back in again. If you have a pile, start at the top with your shovel and place your ingredients in a new pile right next to where your old one was. You will notice that your layers will blend together and the texture of your pile will become finer as your ingredients break down, when you turn your pile every week.

How do I know when it's done?

Finished compost looks like rich soil. Properly finished compost will never burn your plants. The large ingredients have broken down, and it is ready to be placed in your garden, your container plants, or your lawn!

Conserve, retain and use water properly

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, we waste about half of all the water we use, and a lot of that applies to irrigating our lawns and gardens. We tend to over-water and irrigate at the wrong times, wasting much of it to evaporation and runoff. As water washes across our properties, it carries sediments and contaminants, which can make their way into watersheds. This leads to more problems, such as habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity.

Non-Chemical Pest Control

Gardeners used to control pest problems with a can of insecticide. Now that we're more aware of the dangers that chemicals can pose to people and the environment, the focus is on non-chemical pest control. By following a few good gardening practices, pest problems can often be prevented. The first mode of prevention is to keep your garden healthy.

Make Your Own Natural Insecticide

Insects are extremely difficult to deal with, since they are small and tenacious, and many love to eat your plants. It is extremely difficult to get rid of insects without using insecticides, but many insecticides can be hazardous to your plants' health or your own.

Depending on the types of insects you are dealing with, there are various ways to get rid of them. One more way is a natural, homemade insecticide that can kill insects but is not as harmful as using most manufactured insecticides.

If you want to make your own natural insecticide for both house and garden, all you need is two tablespoons of liquid soap and one quart of water. Just mix the little bit of soap with the water. You can try to sprinkle the mixture in a spray bottle. If you use the spray bottle, you should be sure to spray the plants evenly. If you see any bugs, aim directly at the pests to get the best results.

Liquid soap with water should work well, but if you want to use something a little stronger, look to these great solutions. For this natural-based alternative, all you will need is a couple of ingredients you can get at any grocery store.

The list of ingredients is as follows:

- 1 bulb of garlic
- 1 small onion
- 1 tablespoon cayenne (red) pepper
- 2 tablespoons liquid soap
- 1 quart water





GO GREEN IN YOUR GARDEN FOR THE NEW YEAR—continued

All you need to do to make this environmentally friendly insecticide is first, finely chop the onion and the garlic, and then mix them with the tap water. Add the cayenne pepper and, after letting the mixture sit for one hour, mix in the soap. Finally, mix well. When the foam subsides, strain the mixture into your spray bottle. You can store the mixture for one to two weeks if you keep it refrigerated.

Insecticidal soaps kill insects by washing away their protective coating. If you can't make your own, you can find these at most home and garden supply stores. To be effective, the soap must come in contact with the insects.

The best pest control is prevention. Every gardener knows, however, that you can't stop everything. When you find, take care of it immediately. Removing small infestations keeps them from turning into big problems. Remove affected foliage and crops. Be sure to properly dispose of anything you remove. If you leave it on the ground, the pest may overwinter in the debris and infest your plants again next year.

Stop and Smell the Roses...

...and every other lovely thing in your garden.

It doesn't take a green thumb to create a garden that blooms delightful flowers or yields great vegeta-

bles. You can have trees, shrubs, lawn, and plants that enhance your little corner of your world—and you can have it without a lot of fuss and bother.

Now you can achieve the garden you've always wanted by investing a little time and applying these great tips and techniques. Regardless of what you are raising—flowers, vegetables, trees, shrubs, or lawns—you're bound to find something that will help make your garden better. You don't need to have a huge plot of ground to do your growing.

Choosing native flowering plants is a great way to get started on an organic garden because they require little care, and they have evolved over time with the ability to grow naturally without the use of pesticides.

Carve out new garden spaces. Eliminate some of that water-consuming lawn by planting a mixed border or an island bed. A mixed border can be planted along a fence to add color, character and depth, while an island bed can be any shape and centrally situated to break up the monotony of a vast stretch of lawn.

Eco-friendly garden

Looking at a beautiful yard makes us feel good. We are even more delighted when we know it's eco-friendly. It may sound like you have to start from the beginning, but it's easy to make steps toward an eco-friendly yard

without having to redo everything.

You have better things to do in the yard than mow the lawn. Reduce the time you spend mowing by planting a wild flower meadow. You'll reduce your consumption of fuel and pollution and you'll have envious neighbors. Wild flower meadow attracts butterflies, birds and other wildlife. Decide which flowers you want to plant. Try to avoid exotic plants that need to be transported long distances. Your local nursery can help you choose plants and flowers that can survive without artificial pesticides or extra watering.

I'm sure that after you take your first steps toward an eco-friendly garden you'll realize it's easier than you imagined!

Edible landscaping—more than a hobby

If you belong to the people who desire to have in their garden vegetables and fruits you'll be interested in creating an edible garden. This kind of garden where edible plants are planted together with flowers is now being referred to as edible landscaping. The idea of edible landscaping originally comes from ancient Egypt where flowers were combined with grape arbors and vines. Scenery to sit outside and to enjoy!

No matter how small your garden is and no matter if you live in warm or cool regions, you can create an

edible landscaping with fruit-bearing shrubs, herbs and vegetables quite easily. By doing it you create an organic harvest for your kitchen and a beautiful view in your yard.

Be proactive, not reactive

Stay ahead of any developing problems. Pay attention to your plants, keeping the garden free of weeds and leaf debris. And if you do see a developing problem, be it pest or disease, know the most eco-friendly way to deal with it.

Organic gardening is not defined by what you don't do as a gardener. The simple answer is that being a green gardener means you don't use synthetic fertilizers or pesticides on your plants. When you garden organically, you think of your plants as part of a whole system within nature that starts in the soil and includes the water supply, people, wildlife and even insects. An organic gardener strives to work in harmony with natural systems and to minimize and continually replenish any resources the garden consumes.

And while your apartment window box doesn't have the scale or impact of a country garden, you can still follow the principles of organic gardening to help sustain the earth and maintain that small cycle of nature right outside your window.

SOURCES: New Orleans Food & Farm Network, Home & Garden Television, Lawn and Garden, Gardening.Tips.Net

Beyond the Green: Making Sustainable Change - Michelle Luff, Contributor

There are many ways for people and communities alike to actively get involved with the "green" movement that is transitioning our country. Upgrading our homes to include energy-efficient appliances; building "green" and even LEED certified buildings; and using cleaner, greener, renewable energy sources such as clean coal or natural gas are some of the ways people are "greening-up" their lives.

As Americans, making these changes is extremely important when considering how wasteful we have become as a country. However, many of these improvements we are making are one-time upgrades; once we purchase that new 'energy efficient' refrigerator, we never think again about the purchase we just made or many other changes we can and should make to our everyday lives. This article will cover four aspects of going *beyond the green* to define ways in which we can all help to create sustainable, positive changes to our society.

If you're not familiar with issues over livable fair wages or fair labor standards, consider yourself lucky. That means that you are (most-likely) earning an appropriate, livable wage. However, there is and has been an alarming

trend in some countries in which the only jobs available to people is that of working in a factory or factory-like setting, for eight to twelve-plus hour shifts, with a salary of just pennies per day. This structure is in existence due to the single driver of the market, price. When a corporation develops a desired product in which the market creates a demand, such as shoes, clothing, or handbags, there is a need for mass production of that product. One of the ways in which corporations can 1) make profits on their products and 2) keep the prices of their products affordable for the masses is to employ workers at an employment rate below the national standards. (<http://www.livingwagefairtrade.com/about/econdevthory.html>, Living Wage, LLC, 2003).

There are ways in which we can all attempt to support livable wage laws for people in other countries. The first sure way is to purchase fair trade certified goods. If you have ever researched companies from which you purchase products, you will see a fair trade certified statement on many of their websites or even on product labels if in fact they support fair trade

and livable wage laws. You can review fair trade companies at: www.fairtradefederation.org/. There is an overwhelming amount, especially of fair trade coffee products, on the market that can be purchased at your local grocery stores here in Somerset County. Some websites where you can purchase fair trade goods are: www.globalgoodspartners.org, www.butterflymama.com, www.worldofgood.com (sponsored by ebay), and <http://www.onevillagegifts.com/>.

In line with purchasing fair trade items to support livable wages, it is important to support our local communities and buy locally made and sold products. To make an effort towards sustainable living, we must each take pride in our small businesses and support them. The Somerset County Business Partnership (www.scbp.org) is a wonderful reference to search and find local businesses.

Another change we can make towards living a sustainable life is to always recycle. It is imperative that everyone deposits cans and bottles into recycling bins, however that is simply the minimum effort we should be making. Some

we should be making. Some communities now have the technology and equipment to permit us to recycle cardboard, compressed cardboard packaging, all glass and plastic (numbers 1-7), and metals. In addition to recycling via a recycling center, there are numerous websites that have listings of items that people no longer need or want, in a sense; this is another version of recycling. Visit www.craigslist.com or www.freecycle.org to find or post any item you desire!

The final way in which we can create a sustainable community is to simply use less! Making changes toward greener, more efficient living is important, however, if we throw out appliances and materials that we already own, just to purchase a greener and possibly cleaner model, we are not being green! Living a green and sustainable life can be accomplished by using the items we have and utilizing them until they are no longer assisting us or doing what we need them to do. It's important for us to make the simplest change of all and that is to use less; less energy and resources, including financial resources, and we will be on our way towards a more sustainable life

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 American Lung Association's Healthy House program
www.healthhouse.org
 EPA's Indoor Air Quality pages: www.epa.gov/iaq
 Non-toxic Home Cleaning:
www.eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_solutions.htm

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