

Green Begins With Me

Tips for Living Green

Well, it's official: the new black is green - living green, that is. New companies devoted to helping reduce folks' carbon footprint are springing up all over. Hybrid cars, renewed interest in recycling, eco-friendly business practices - all are devoted to cleaning up the nation's collective teenage bedroom. **How can you jump on the eco-bandwagon?**

- . **Fix Any Plumbing Leaks** - sinks, tubs, showers and toilets all should be inspected for drips and leaks. The tiniest drip can add up to a lot of wasted water. Better yet, install water-saving faucets, toilets - you can even buy conservational water pipes to replace your old plumbing.
- . **Install a programmable thermostat to save energy.** At least turn down the heat at night, during the day if no one is home and any time you leave the house.
- . Use compact, long-life fluorescent light bulbs. They're more expensive, but they last several times longer than the old-fashioned kind.
- . Many utility companies perform **home energy audits** for their customers. This will let you know where you're being wasteful, and where you can save energy and money. Your audit may point out that you need new or additional insulation. You may find that your windows and doors aren't as tight as you thought. Seal it all up with weather stripping and caulking. By preventing heat from escaping, you automatically reduce your energy consumption.
- . Another place for insulation: your electric (NOT NATURAL GAS!) hot water heater as well as the pipes. Just make sure the insulation is no closer than six inches from the heater.
- . During the winter, change the filter in your furnace every month. If the filter is allowed to collect dust, it will make your furnace work harder, use more energy and potentially shorten the life of this expensive appliance.
- . **Use non-toxic cleaning alternatives in your home**, such as baking soda, vinegar, etc.
- . **No more plastic furniture** - make sure your furnishings are constructed out of natural materials like wood, metal and glass.

- . **Read the labels** of the items you're buying and avoid the use of polyvinyl chloride (also known as PVC or vinyl). It can creep up in toys, flooring, shower curtains, etc.
- . **Compost your food waste** and use as nutrient-rich soil for your lawn.
- . **Cut down on paper products.** Paper towels and napkins can be replaced with cloth rags and napkins.

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SAVE GAS, SAVE MONEY

Gasoline consumption has reached an all-time high, as have gasoline prices. Four dollars a gallon is coming soon to a gas station near you. Oil companies post record profits and have finally come clean about the reason: there's no shortage. They just want to make record profits. Unfortunately, in this country we're all prisoners to our cars, so we're prisoners to the ever-increasing gas prices. We're just stuck with it. Or are we?

There are things you can do to lower your consumption of gasoline. Sure, they're little things, and they don't release us completely from our shackles, but taken together they can ease the burden as much as it can be eased.

- . Avoid aggressive driving . Drive the speed limit! . Remove excess weight from your vehicle. . Use your cruise control. . Use your overdrive gears. . Keep up on your tune-ups. . Check and replace air filters regularly. . Keep your tires properly inflated. . Use the recommended grade of motor oil. . Plan and combine your outings. . Change your work schedule to avoid driving in rush-hour traffic. . Think about buying a more fuel-efficient vehicle. To compare vehicles, go to www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/ratings2008.shtml.
- Don't bother: . Driving with the windows down instead of using the air conditioner.
- . Spending your hard-earned money on additives, special magnets or other gimmicky products that promise to improve a car's fuel efficiency. They don't work. . Buying higher-octane gas.



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Tips for Living Green (...continued)

- . Bite the bullet and start depending on **reusable items**, such as water bottles, food containers, batteries, pens, razors, etc.
- . Instead of going to a carwash or letting your garden hose run, wash your car when it rains - get out there with your chamois and your eco-friendly soap and have at it.
- . **Leave your car parked as often as possible.** Ride your bike, walk or take public transportation. Even carpooling is better than riding alone when it comes to energy consumption.
- . Whenever possible, think globally but **buy locally.** Transporting food across country uses up an obscene amount of fuel. An added bonus is that it's good for the local economy.
- . Cut down on your battery usage. The hazardous waste created by the lead in batteries is a danger to the environment. Instead, **use rechargeable or solar-charged batteries.**

THE Trivia Block

*In the past century,
the average global
temperature of the
Earth rose about
1 degree Fahrenheit*

- . Avoid products with excess packaging. Reward companies who use packaging sparingly.
- . **Stop using plastic bags!** Plastic grocery bags are a quadruple whammy: they never decompose, they're hazardous to wildlife when they inevitably end up in their habitats, they're made from petroleum products and they can be a danger to the folks in your own household.
- . Avoid the use of aerosols.
- . Instead of lubricants containing solvents, use castor or mineral oils to lubricate switches and hinges.
- . Use water-based latex house paints instead of oil or solvent-based paints.
- . **Be very mindful of what you throw away.** Never dispose of paint, solvents, motor oil in your garbage can. Talk to your garbage collection company for proper disposal procedures of hazardous wastes.
- . **Never throw away a computer.** The lead is a hazard to the environment. Most cities now have specialty companies that recycle computers. Look in your yellow pages under computer disposal.
- . Living green will make you into a giver. Instead of throwing away old books, donate them.
- . Give last season's wardrobe to Goodwill or ARC.
- . Don't want your old photos and/or letters? Don't heap them on the landfill - donate them to your local historical society.
- . Don't take that old dishwasher or refrigerator to the dump, donate it.



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"Programmable Thermostats"

"Paperless Transactions"



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