



it's easy being green

Doing your part to protect
the environment often isn't more costly.
In fact, you can save hundreds
of dollars each year by
doing a few simple things.

by Sandy Smith

"The earth is the LORD's and everything in it" (Ps. 24:1, NIV). "I consider that verse to be a kind of mandate to take care of the earth, to be a good steward," says Lori Todd, a stay-at-home mother of two. "If everyone took a little time to make a few minor changes, the overall effect could be dramatic."

Pediatric nurse Miranda Allen saw green behind the green movement. "At first, it was just to save some money. Once I started reading [more], it seemed like a good thing to give back. We've gotten so much from this world that I felt obligated to take care of it."

David Bach, author of *Go Green, Live Rich*, says, "You can save money by caring about the environment, and you can make money by investing in this huge environmental transformation that is starting to shake the global economy." Start here.



A whopping 75 percent of energy used by home electronics and small appliances is sucked up when the appliance isn't being used.

1. Ditch the bottled water.

Each year approximately 1.5 million barrels of oil — enough to fuel 100,000 cars for a year — are used making plastic water bottles. Forty million bottles a day go into landfills. It will take 70 years before they begin to decompose.

"Bottled water can cost 10,000 times as much as tap water," says Diane MacEachern, author of *Big Green Purse* and the tip-heavy Web site *biggreenpurse.com*. "Switch that spending to things that have value."

If you don't like the taste of tap water, buy an in-home filter for less than \$30. And carry a stainless steel bottle filled with water; there have been recent health concerns over hard-plastic bottles.

2. Take care of your car.

Anything that improves fuel efficiency has a direct impact on your wallet. Keeping your tires inflated to the manufacturer's recommendation will improve gas mileage by 3.3 percent. Go for another 4.1 percent by getting a tune-up. Clean air filters can add another 10 percent. And remember, for every 5 miles per hour you drive faster than 60 miles per hour, it's like adding another dime onto the cost per gallon.

3. Eat locally grown food.

Fruits and vegetables are trucked between 1,500 to 2,500 miles to the stores. Of the energy used in the U.S. each year, 4 percent is devoted to produce food and 10 to 13 percent to truck it. Studies show that the freshest fruits and vegetables are better for us.

Consider joining a community-supported agriculture co-op, where local farmers grow produce throughout the season and deliver it to their members weekly for a set fee. You'll get to try a variety of fresh products and, as an added bonus, many are grown organically, preventing pesticides from leaching into the soil and water supply. (If every U.S. household replaced one pound of canned fruit with fresh produce during the growing months of June, July, and August, it would power the kitchen appliances in 21,000 households for an entire year.) Find a local grower near you by entering your ZIP code at localharvest.org.

3 Simple Steps to a Green Kitchen

The kitchen is likely the heart of your home, and it can make a big difference in your recycling efforts. Here are three high-impact changes you can make:

1 RUN THE DISHWASHER.

It saves more water — up to 20 gallons — than hand washing. But run only full loads; turn off the drying function, and don't rinse the dishes before loading.

2 GO MEATLESS during at least one meal per week.

In the United States, 70 percent of grains grown go to feed animals who will become food. And we waste a lot of it; the average American tosses 22 pounds of edible store-bought meat each year. It takes 5 pounds of grain and 2,500 gallons of water to produce each pound of beef, compounding the waste.

3 COOK EFFICIENTLY.

This means putting pans on burners that are properly sized (which can save about \$3 per month for an electric stove and half that for gas). Don't preheat the oven when you're cooking foods that will be in there for an hour or more or when broiling. For items that need to rise, don't preheat for more than 10 minutes. Turn off the oven or an electric stove top about 5 minutes before the cooking time ends, and use the residual heat to finish. Make sure your cookware has tight-fitting lids to reduce cooking times.

4. Let there be CFL light.

The energy used by the average home creates twice as much pollution as a car. Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL) use 70 percent less energy and last 10 times longer. They may cost more initially, but each bulb will save \$50 to \$60 over the course of its lifetime. Allen saw a \$10 per month savings on her electric bill just by making the switch.

There is a bit of confusion and a note of caution with the CFLs though. Because CFLs use a different language than incandescent, consumers need to read the packaging to know what size CFL to get to replace that 60-watt bulb. It's on the package but may take a little looking to find it. And CFLs do have traces of mercury, which is only believed to be a problem if the bulb breaks. "People don't want to bring mercury in the house," MacEachern said. "But a power plant

generates four times as much mercury producing an incandescent bulb than a compact fluorescent."

A bulb broke in her daughter's room recently. "We did what the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] advises," MacEachern said. "Swept the contents into a plastic zip-top bag and put it in hazardous waste disposal. Then we aired out the room for a half an hour."

5. Slay the vampires.

A whopping 75 percent of energy used by home electronics and small appliances is sucked up when the appliance isn't being used. It's called "vampire electricity," and it can cost you \$40 to \$100 per year. MacEachern recommends buying a power strip and flipping that switch off whenever equipment isn't in use.

6. Kill indoor air pollution.

According to the EPA, the air inside our homes is more polluted than the air outside. So what's causing it? Enemy No. 1 is fragrance, ranging from what we spray to mask odor to scented chemicals we use to clean. "They really dirty the air when we spray them," MacEachern said. "Find the source of the problem, and open the windows for a few minutes. And buy cleaning products that have fewer chemicals."

Baking soda and vinegar are old standbys (see doityourself.com/stry/vinegarbakingsoda). If you're not gung-ho on making your own, MacEachern recommends Bon-Ami. "It's a mineral that's soft enough so it won't scratch but abrasive enough to be effective on every surface."

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7. Get the family involved.

Task your children to remind you to take canvas bags to the grocery store. Another easy idea is to create a compost bin and make your own fertilizer. The EPA estimates that 25 percent of trash is compostable (for tips on composting and how to build your own see compostguide.com). For more ideas about family activities, look in the resources section of creationcare.org.

When Todd was in grade school, she insisted on using recycled paper.

Now her 4-year-old son helps water herbs in the garden and can discern between recyclables and trash.

When her son wanted to help her clean, she made a concoction that was chemical-free for his use. "Once I realized his cleaner worked as well as mine, I abandoned mine and started using his. Now we can clean together and I don't have to worry about my kids breathing in fumes from any of the toxic cleaners. I also don't have to worry about them ingesting poison." □