



April 22nd is Earth Day

This April 22nd marks the 40th anniversary of the first Earth Day, started to boost awareness about the environment – and to ensure that pro-planet types would no longer be ignored by legislators. But you don't have to be lobbying Congress to make a difference. Small actions can create big change – especially when it comes to the environment.

Here are some no- or low-cost ways to lessen your impact on the planet, create a healthier house and garden, and even fatten your wallet.

Save energy to save money.

- Set your **thermostat** a few degrees lower in the winter and a few degrees higher in the summer to save on heating and cooling costs.
- Install **compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs)** when your older incandescent bulbs burn out. They consume about 75% less electricity and last up to 10 times longer (10,000 hours as opposed to 1,500).

Replace one 75-watt incandescent bulb with a 25-watt CFL and save up to \$83 over the life of the bulb.

- **Unplug appliances when you're not using them.** Anything that has an LED (light emitting diode) that **glows** even after you turn it off continues to draw power (that you pay for). Your TV, cell phone charger, printer, and coffee maker are likely culprits. Unplug the offenders from wall sockets and plug them into **power strips** instead. When you leave a room, flip the strip switch to cut the flow of electricity. Unplug appliances and electronics that glow and you could save \$200 a year.
- **Wash clothes in cold water** whenever possible. As much as 85% of the energy used to machine-wash clothes goes to heating the water.
- Use a **drying rack or clothesline** to save the energy otherwise used during machine drying.



Save water to save money.

- **Take shorter showers** to reduce water use. This will lower your water and heating bills too.
- Install a **low-flow showerhead**. They don't cost much, and the water and energy savings can quickly pay back your investment.
- Make sure you have a **faucet aerator** on each faucet. These inexpensive appliances conserve heat and water while keeping water pressure high.
- **Do full wash loads.** Whenever you wash a few clothes or dishes at a time rather than waiting to wash a full load, you're wasting water, power, and money. The average American family of 4 washes about 540 loads of **laundry** a year, which consumes up to 21,000 gallons of water, and more than 150 loads of dishes, which uses about 1,500 gallons. Most of the energy consumed by washers goes toward heating the water -- about 90% in the clothes **washer** and 80% in the **dishwasher**. Combining half-loads, choosing short cycles, and using cold or warm rather than hot water in the clothes washer racks up savings. Wash 2 fewer loads of clothes and 1 fewer load of dishes a week and save up to 4,500 gallons of water a year.
- **Plant drought-tolerant native plants** in your garden. Many plants need minimal watering. Find out which occur naturally in your area.



Recycle Your Electronics



Americans tossed out a whopping 5.5 billion pounds of **electronics** – TVs, stereos, cell phones, and computers – in 2005, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. The result? Millions of pounds of chemicals and heavy metals ended up in the ground even though it's easier than ever to **recycle** electronics. If 1 million people recycled 1 cathode-ray tube TV this year, we'd keep 4 million pounds of lead out of the ground.

The average American household has 3 cell phones stashed in a drawer. Recycle, donate, or sell your unused cell phones. Old cell phones can be refurbished and resold and you'll receive money or a **tax deduction** for a donation.

The Consumer Electronics Association created mygreenelectronics.org to help people find a recycling resource in their area. The site also provides a list of electronics, from laptops to baby monitors, that are easier on the environment and your energy bill.

Look for the Label

When it's time to replace a household appliance, choose a product with an Energy Star label. A household with Energy Star products uses about 30% less energy than the average household – an annual savings of about \$570.



Sponsored by the EPA and the Department of Energy, the Energy Star program rates products from **light bulbs** to **kitchen appliances**. Energy Star labels guarantee that products are energy-efficient. For example, a battery charger labeled with the Energy Star logo will use 35% less energy than a standard one. You may even be eligible for a **tax credit** when you purchase an Energy Star product. For more information, visit energystar.gov.

An eco-friendly lifestyle doesn't need to be difficult or expensive. Here are some additional simple things you can do to **live a greener lifestyle**:

- ✓ Turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth or shaving.
- ✓ Pick up trash on the ground and discard of properly
- ✓ Use reusable cloth shopping bags
- ✓ Buy recycled paper items
- ✓ Recycle as much as possible
- ✓ Donate clothing to a charity
- ✓ Turn off lights when leaving a room
- ✓ Walk, car pool, or ride your bike when possible.



Sources:

http://www.worldwatch.org/resources/go_green_save_green

<http://www.bhg.com/home-improvement/remodeling/eco-friendly/easy-ways-to-go-green/>

<http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/home/green-living/ways-to-go-green>