

Green Earth

2011

It starts with you.



Want to ditch the bottle?

FIND ECO-FRIENDLY, HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES TO BOTTLED WATER

Staying hydrated is incredibly important. Most Americans are aware of the problems caused by dehydration, and as a result over the years we have developed a new love: bottled water. It's clean, safe and relatively inexpensive — and according to some it tastes better than tap water.

But, unfortunately, there is nothing green or sustainable about bottled water. Americans drink more than 30 billion bottles of water each year. That is a pretty hairy figure.

Even scarier is the fact that all of those bottles create around 1.5 billion tons of waste each year. What is green about that? And there is no evidence that bottled water is safer or healthier than tap water, especially when it is combined with a water filtration system.

So, if you want to live a sustainable lifestyle, what are your options?

1. Buy larger containers of bottled water. If you absolutely must drink bottled water, use five-gallon jugs or larger. That way, you're still reducing the amount of plastic waste you create.

2. Use a reusable water bottle.

Reusable bottles are made from a variety of materials, including stainless steel and BPA-free plastic. They are also available in many colors and styles. Attach a water filter to your sink if you're worried about the water quality.

3. Become more educated. What we're doing to our water sources is just as frightening as the amount of waste we create. Pollution is causing many of our water sources — and those that supply water to bottling companies — to become contaminated with bacteria, pollutants and even pharmaceutical residue.

So, become educated and do your part in helping keep our water safe for us and the rest of the planet.

By making these changes you can help become part of the sustainable solution to our waste production problem.



Minimize your impact

TIPS ON REDUCING YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

The world of today is quite different from just 100 years ago. In 1910, many people in the United States still did not have indoor plumbing. Now, just a century later, people can use as many as a hundred gallons of water daily to flush the toilet.

In the 1950s, many families had one car to share among the members of the family. Today, many households have two, three, or more vehicles that are used daily.

Unfortunately, many people have no concern for how they are affecting their environment by the choices they make. In fact, most people do not even realize the size of their carbon footprint, which is basically defined as the impact their activity has on the environment. If you are concerned about your impact on your environment, the following are some tips on saving energy that can reduce your carbon footprint:

COMPOSTING

One great way to reduce your carbon footprint is to create your own soil. Start composting and use the soil you create to grow your own vegetables. Not only will you save money, you will be adding more oxygen into your environment and creating less waste.

SAVE WATER

Learn what you can do to save water in your home. One important step is to put out rain barrels. Water collected in the barrels can be used to water your garden. You will be saving water while fulfilling the needs of the plants.

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Plan a green wedding

Planning a wedding but don't want to hurt the planet? Here are some tips on how to keep some of your wedding basics green:

INVITATIONS

The most obvious option for eco friendly invitations is to use recycled paper, but you could also consider sending a packet of seeds along with the invite.

Your invites are a perfect place to make any mentions of green-oriented plans you have for guests. Are you asking for only a certain kind of eco friendly gift? Is your dress material free of animal rights concerns? Put a note in the invite so guests know that the environment is forefront in your wedding planning.

GIFTS

If you and your groom already have your household set up, consider asking for donations to a worthy cause in lieu of gifts. Or put an organization on your registry so guests have the option between a gift and a donation.

Another good way to green the gift aspect of your wedding is simply to create a registry at an eco-friendly store. Online stores are particularly good for this when there is no global or countrywide eco store all your guests can access.

FOOD

Local, sustainable foods are at the forefront of the environmental movement. Find a caterer and a cake chef who either regularly use local foods or are able to do so for your wedding.

During the reception, put "know your farmer" cards on the tables so guests know their food is local. For foods or ingredients you can't find locally (sugar, coffee, etc.) choose organic and fair-trade products to stick with your green theme.



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REDUCE YOUR FOOTPRINT

AIR DRY

Instead of using electricity to dry your clothes, make saving energy your top priority and hang them out to dry. You can even save energy by washing them in cold water instead of hot or warm water.

BUNDLE UP

In the winter, learn to put on a sweater in response to lower temperatures. Just turning down the thermostat a couple of degrees can have a big impact on how much energy you are using.

LIGHTS OFF

Turning off lights early is also a great way of saving energy. The lights of the television are often enough for anyone to see clearly. If not, at least get into the habit of shutting off the lights when you leave the room.

CARPOOL

Transportation can consume a lot of energy and anyone that uses a vehicle to get to work should try carpooling. Sharing rides and making as few trips as possible can reduce your carbon footprint by a lot.

SECOND-HAND

Whenever you think an item is worn-out or you simply don't need it anymore, list it for free in your local paper or have a garage sale to get rid of all of your unwanted items. In fact, learning to shop second-hand can easily help your cause of reducing the amount of energy used. All you need to do is consider how much energy is actually being used to make new products and you will understand just how important second-hand shopping can be.

RECYCLE

Change your recycling habits. Most towns and cities in the United States have a recycling program. While many do not enforce it, everyone will benefit when you start recycling your glass, paper, and plastics.

These are just a few of the things you can do to reduce your carbon footprint. Saving energy may seem like a chore for a lot of people, but it doesn't have to be. It is all a matter of forming new and more environmentally-friendly habits.

The less negative impact you have on the environment the healthier your environment will be. Furthermore, if you start changing your own habits and let others know what you are doing, you may just find that you could have a very positive effect on others.



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Making your business green

SMALL COMPANIES CAN LEARN LESSONS FROM BP'S OIL SPILL

The BP oil spill has taught businesses that green marketing is essential for companies that want to maintain their public image.

Beginning in late spring last year, BP began running public service advertisements on broadcast radio informing the public of its serious commitment to process claims and find ways to stop the oil leak.

Even though BP is a company that is suffering from this tragedy, its marketing department is working overtime to preserve its public image.

As a business owner, you can learn from this world-famous example — consumers want to know how your company is socially responsible. Try these four tips for marketing your green business practices.

1. Research the possibility of adding “green” labels to your products or services. You will have to support the claims your labels make. If your customers find out you are not really offering green products, you can damage your public image and possibly face legal problems. To make this process easier, choose products from suppliers with an established reputation for green production.

2. Post information on your company blog about environmental issues related to your business. Consumers want to read green information. When you inform consumers about green trends in your indus-

try, you increase their environmental awareness. If you don't know where to begin, subscribe to a free Web content service. Choose “green” or “environmental” as the category for targeted Web content.

3. Look around your community or online for ways to partner with other businesses. If you decide to form a green partnership online — such as by sharing an electronic data warehouse — you can market this partnership through your Web site. You would be surprised how consumers end up at your site when they see your company information posted online by a green business partner.

4. Hire green employees. If you can hire people with a background in green technology, green business, or environmental science, these employees will be free green ambassadors for your business. Environmentally-conscious people represent your business to everyone they know, and they do it naturally.

Green marketing makes sense for your business. Why else would the EPA create a guide called “Greening Your Products?” Through strategic use of green marketing, you can develop a green business image for your company.



Switch to native grasses

FOUR REASONS WHY YOUR LAWN COULD BE GREENER

Most lawns are hard to maintain because they are made from varieties of imported grasses that aren't acclimatized to the area. They take a lot of watering, fertilizing and mowing as a result. But native grasses could be a great choice for your lawn for these four reasons:

1. Native grasses require much less water to stay green and healthy looking.

Since native grasses are used to the local climate, they are perfectly suited to the average amount of rainfall for your area.

Because of this, they can easily survive with less water than most imported grass varieties. Watering may still be required during unusually dry periods, however, because not all native grasses are drought resistant.

2. Native grasses thrive without the aid of chemical fertilizers.

Harmful chemical fertilizers are often required to keep imported grasses looking their best. This

is neither good for the environment or for the people who come in contact with your grass.

Native grasses on the other hand, are more environmentally friendly because they do not require chemical fertilizers to stay green and healthy looking.

3. Native grasses have deep root systems that help to stop harmful soil erosion.

Imported grasses often have shallow root systems because they are not acclimatized to the local soil conditions. This isn't the case, however, for native grasses.

Since native grasses are used to the soil conditions in their natural environment, they are able

to create much deeper root systems, which in turn, helps to prevent soil erosion.

4. Native grasses are more eco-friendly because they can be mowed less often.

Native grasses often grow much slower than imported varieties and do not need to be cut quite as short.

Because of this, you will save time by not having to mow your lawn as often, while reducing the harmful effects that using a gas-powered lawn mower can have on the environment.

Mowing your lawn less often also reduces air and noise pollution, while helping to conserve our limited supply of fossil fuels.



Earth Day every day

IT'S IMPORTANT TO TEACH KIDS ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

Gaylord Nelson, a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, founded Earth Day in 1970 as a way for citizens to protest the wasteful treatment of the Earth's natural resources and to make positive changes.

In addition to unifying people from all walks of life in support of the environment, the Senator's call to action resulted in the formation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Since 1970, Earth Day has focused on highlighting different environmental issues and celebrating Earth's beauty.

But Earth Day doesn't have to be the only day we learn about the planet. Every day is a great opportunity for kids to learn about their world and think about how they can make a difference. Children are naturally idealistic and full of imagination. Here are some ideas for teaching them about the planet and the significance of caring for their surroundings:

START AT HOME

Teach kids about the importance of conservation at home. Brainstorm ideas for using less water and electricity, such as limiting showers and turning off lights and appliances that are not in use. Point out that many of these ideas will save money as well as natural resources.

Make recycling fun. Color code different containers and teach the kids how to separate recyclable materials such as newspapers, aluminum, glass,

and cardboard. Older kids can look up the numbers on the bottom of plastic items and determine which ones are accepted by local recycling centers or curbside pickup services.

If you live in a state that charges deposits on bottles and cans, give your kids the incentive to collect them and return them to the store in order to earn a little spending money.

BUY GREEN

Choose reusable items for food rather than disposable ones whenever possible. Examples include food storage containers, water bottles and other beverage containers, and even cloth napkins instead of paper. Consider these options when packing school lunches, planning a picnic, and storing leftovers.

Encourage everyone to send out e-cards and electronic invitations for events and holidays rather than paper cards. There are many free sites and services available online for creating original greetings.

For kids (and adults) who enjoy making crafts, there are many ideas both online and in craft stores for Earth Day projects to do together. Make environmentally focused crafts or art projects a part of a special fami-



PHOTO: ELENATHEWISE / YAYMICRO.COM

ly night, or as an activity for a kids get-together.

GET INVOLVED

Participate with your kids in a cleanup event in your community. If you live near a beach, a lake, or a park, local cleanup efforts are easy to organize and always appreciated. Talk with your kids about the negative effects of littering and vandalism while clearing the area of trash and graffiti.

Plant a tree in your yard or neighborhood. This small act of beautifying his surroundings will have a large impact on a child.

Take your kids on a hike or a bike ride, or just spend more time out-

doors enjoying nature. Taking advantage of the seasons where you live will foster an appreciation in your kids for the Earth's beauty.

Above all, make caring for the Earth a positive idea. While it is important to stress the fragility of the Earth and our natural resources, there is no sense in frightening young children with a "doomsday" attitude. If you present environmental issues in a fun way, kids are more likely to participate in the projects and remember the lessons.

Also, kids are idealistic and nearly all of them go through a phase of wanting to save the world. Affirm to them that one person can make a difference.

Shining sustainability

WANT TO SEE HOW TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY? ASK THE SMALL KANSAS TOWN OF GREENSBURG

It began with a devastating tornado in May 2007 that left little of the original town. After recovering from the initial shock and grief, the residents found potential in the face of tragedy.

The town of Greensburg, Kan. — population 900 — soon became the first in the United States to pass a resolution that all city-owned buildings earn LEED Platinum accreditation. Other buildings followed.

LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is an internationally recognized green building certification, and LEED Platinum is the top level of certification. That means buildings that meet this standard are some of the most efficient in the world.

In Greensburg's case, the

town made remarkable progress. The Arts Center, opened exactly one year later, is a LEED Platinum building, the highest level of certification for green building. It is powered by wind, solar and geothermal energy.

In September 2009 another green building opened, the BTI John Deere Greensburg dealership. The implement dealership earned platinum certification, thanks to its incorporation of "skylights and electrical systems that cut energy use by half, plumbing fixtures that save almost 40,000 gallons of water a year,

and two wind turbines out back that spin in a steady wind and generate a part of the dealership's electricity," according to the New York Times.

The Kiowa County Hospital opened in February 2010, making it the first LEED Platinum hospital in the nation. It features:

— A wind turbine that generates some power needs.

— Water efficiency measures that include a bioswale filtration system that reduces wastewater by half. Collected rainwater is used to flush toilets.

— Energy-efficient lights and controls.

— R-25 wall insulation, light-colored roof and parking area.

Homes have been re-built. Some residents went beyond conventional ranch styles, embracing environmental designs and materials. They have seen energy bills reduced by one-half to two-thirds.

A new high school will take full advantage of natural light while geothermal systems will provide heating and cooling.

Not all great projects have to begin in disaster, but they do need to begin with an overall

vision that is rigid in its adherence to specific goals and standards. All the components of sustainable building are well known and their effectiveness is being proven in living labs such as Greensburg.

Planners in Greensburg had to overcome objections from those who wanted a quick fix. Similarly, planners everywhere must fight the status quo and special interests if higher environmental building standards will become the norm.

If the planners in Greensburg can stand up to these pressures, surely others can, too.



The Arts Center in Greensburg, Kan. is one of many public buildings that have been designed to strict efficiency standards after a tornado destroyed the small town.

PHOTO: ERIC ASCALON