

Green Livings



The Green Home Office

Working hard to book your biggest client or generate your best revenue numbers this year? You may be surprised to find that having a green, organized home office space can help you hit your goals.

Remote workers and employees who have flexible employment structures that allow them to work from home understand that it can be difficult to carve out a professional, comfortable home office.

From the supplies and materials you use to the amount of electricity needed to power your space, how you work in your home office can have a big impact on the environment.

GREEN SUPPLIES

The next time you shop at your local office supply store, ask what types of green options they have. This can include going with recycled paper products. These types of materials help reduce your carbon footprint, especially if you use a lot of paper for your work.

Eliminate disposable products as much as possible. Examples are non-refillable pens or pencils that seem to hit your trash can often. Making these simple choices in the materials you buy can greatly reduce the amount of trash you contribute to landfills.

WHAT'S YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT?

Think sending your files to the cloud means you're doing your part to clean up the environment? The servers and stor-



age platforms that store your information are actually emitting energy to manage data.

Make a habit of keeping your online file storage to a minimum to lessen your impact on the Earth. Every digital file stored is consuming

energy somewhere in the world.

FURNITURE CHOICES

How you outfit your home office can play a big role in how eco-friendly your space is. Consider investing in furniture

that fits your budget as well as your environment-focused principles.

Shop smart at your local, family-owned furniture stores for the best quality and value. Why buy three chairs over the next five years when you can

invest in one high-quality option?

Consider your furniture an investment in your business and your productivity. The more comfortable you feel, the more focused you will be on the work at hand.

Live Green, Save Some Green

Going green doesn't have to be expensive. Quite the opposite, in fact. By investing in a sustainable, green lifestyle, you can save major money in the long run. Don't just wait for Earth Day. Spend some time today and tomorrow making more environmentally focused decisions.

Your actions will snowball into each other and lead to you taking the right steps. Your behavior can inspire others to make similar changes in their lives.

You have the power to influence major positive change in your community and the world as a whole. Are you taking the right steps? Consider these three ways to save some green by living green.

START WITH THE HOME

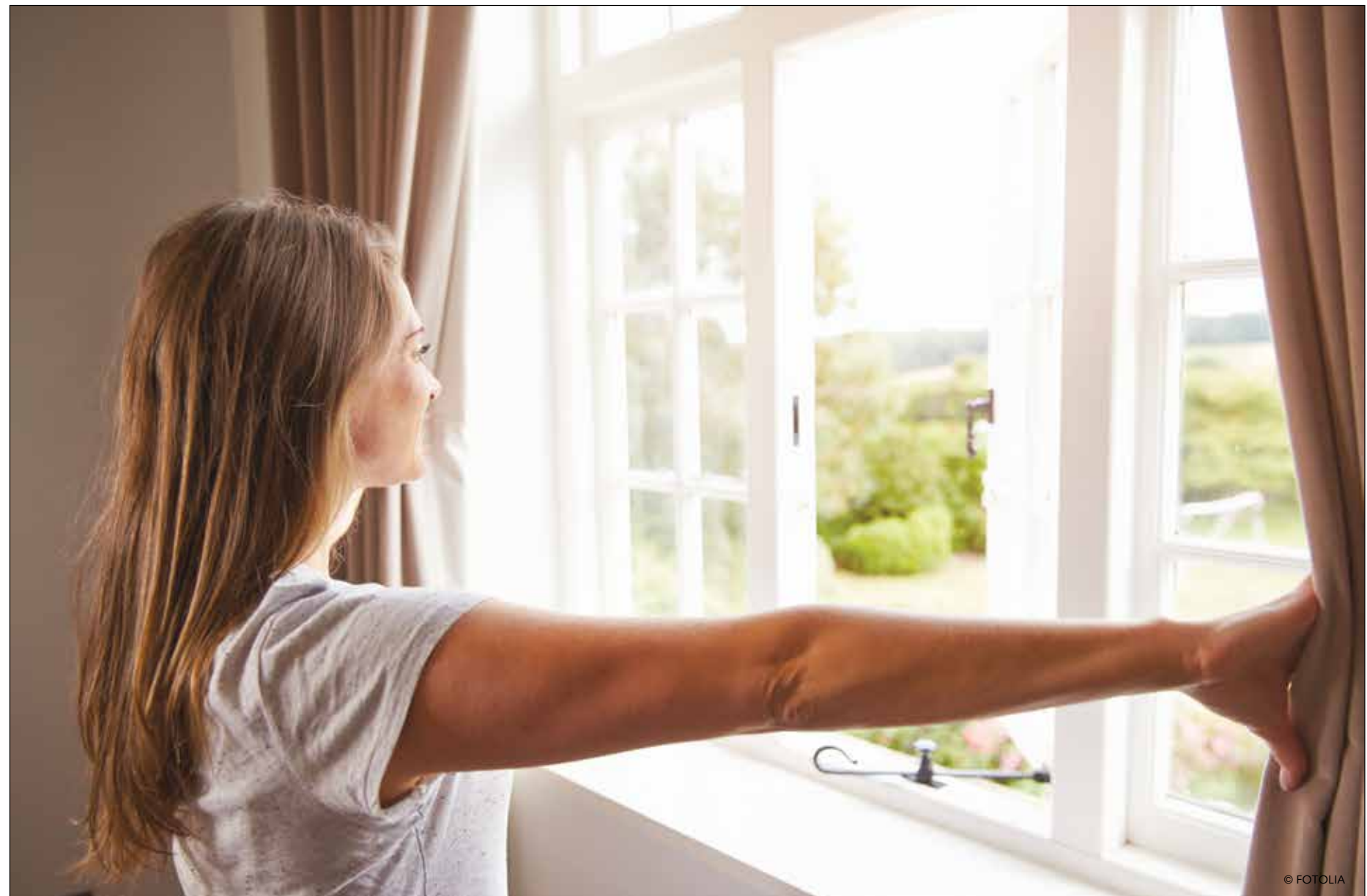
Where do you spend most of your time? For most people, the answer is "home." Why not take the necessary steps to make sure it's as eco-friendly as possible?

Check for drafts around your home. These can lead to major leakages in your heating and air systems — and major leakages from your wallet. Hire a professional to take a peak around your home or do it yourself.

Use spray foam insulation to fill in cracks or holes around the foundation. Seal drafty windows with caulking. These simple steps can go a long way toward making your home more energy-efficient.

ADJUST YOUR APPLIANCES AND THERMOSTAT

Check the settings on your refrigerator, freezer, micro-



wave and stove. Are they set to the manufacturer's guidelines, or have you adjusted them? Determine if they are turned up too high to make sure you're not spending too much on electricity.

When it comes to your thermostat, use a digital

option that can adjust your home's temperature throughout the day. Download the smartphone app for your thermostat that allows you to choose your home's temperature remotely.

These steps can lead to big changes in your heating and

cooling bills.

SUNLIGHT IS YOUR FRIEND

There may not be a more powerful ally in the fight against environmental waste than the sun. You can strategically harness the heat of sunlight by adjusting the amount

of window dressings you have in your home — and how you use them throughout the day.

Leave west-facing rooms more exposed in the afternoon to help naturally heat your home from the sun's rays. This can be especially helpful advice in the cold winter months.

Green Home Building

The numbers show that green building techniques are not a passing trend. No longer an alternative form of construction, contractors everywhere are working hard to integrate eco-friendly approaches into their methods and services.

According to research conducted by McGraw-Hill Construction, green builds in the residential sector are expected to total \$85 billion in economic activity by the end of 2016. The group also estimated that by 2018, 62 percent of home-builders will be building 60 percent or more of their new homes green.

As more builders get into the green building space, the prices of the required materials will likely drop due to supply and demand.

Whether you're a builder or a buyer, the world of home construction is taking on a new shade of green — and the transition looks to broaden in years to come.

BUILDING SMALLER

We've all seen the reality television shows evangelizing the tiny house lifestyle. Living in homes with smaller geographical — and environmental — footprints is all the rage for younger couples who may not have the need for a lot of space.

Even if you're not looking to take it to such an extreme, consider building or buying your next home on a smaller scale. Be thoughtful and creative in determining your space needs.

Maybe you don't require that extra bedroom or large finished basement. Every square inch of extra space means more energy is required for heating and cooling.

SOLAR IS THE FUTURE

When you build your home, you have a unique opportunity to incorporate solar power. As the sun is the ultimate source of clean, eco-friendly



energy, this is a great strategy.

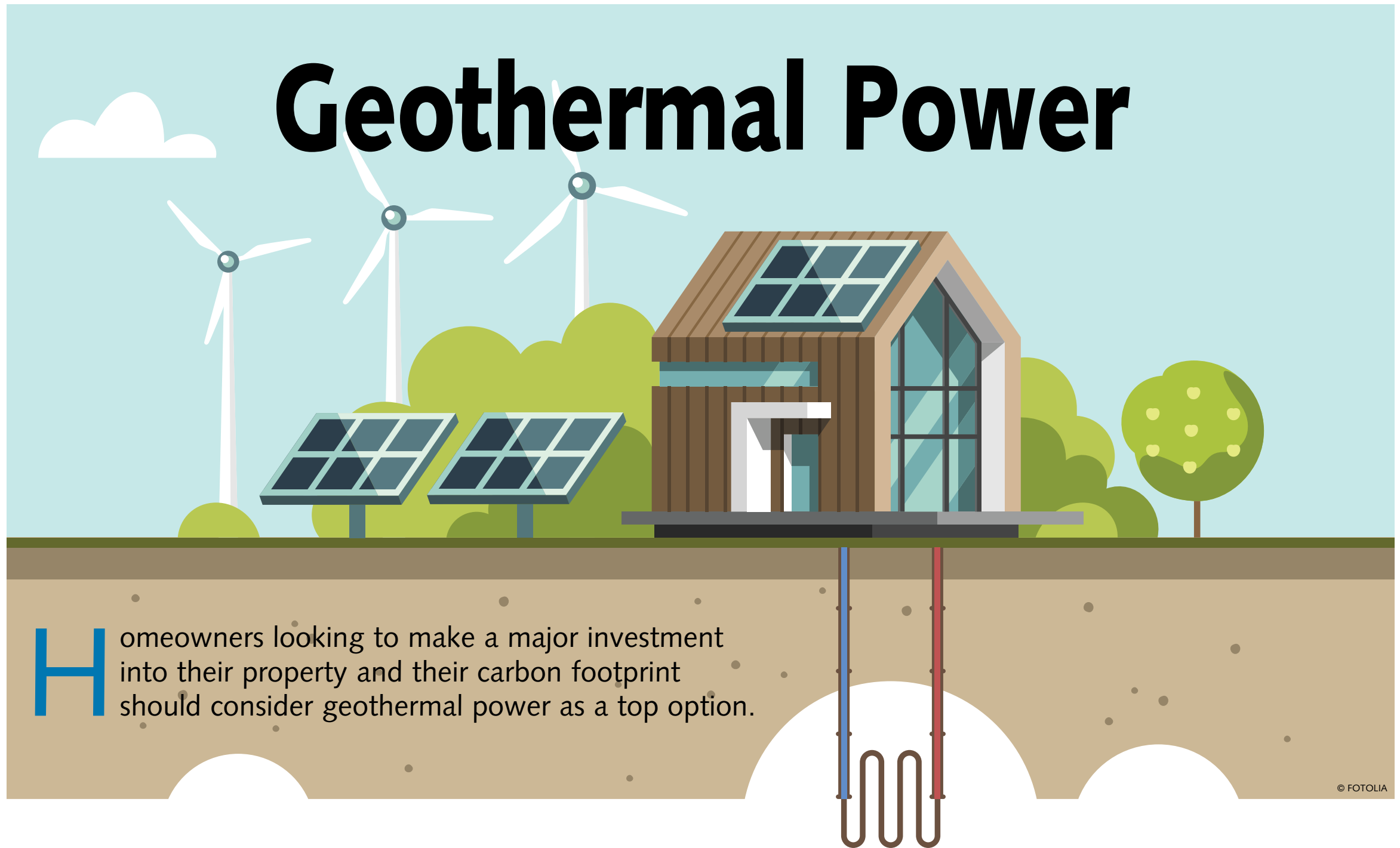
Solar also can be integrated into an older home. You can equip your roof with new solar panels. Even if you plan on still using purchased electricity for

portions of your heating and cooling, adding solar can dramatically decrease your dependence on more expensive power.

Call your local solar contractor to get

a quote on adding panels to your new or existing home. You may be surprised how quickly investments into sun-powered systems can pay for themselves.

Geothermal Power



Homeowners looking to make a major investment into their property and their carbon footprint should consider geothermal power as a top option.

The initial cost can be higher than installing a traditional heating and air system, but the long-term savings can make it a worthwhile endeavor.

Consider these statistics from the Geothermal Resources Council:

- Geothermal power plants employ about 1.17 persons per megawatt. Adding related governmental, administrative and technical jobs, the number increases to 2.13.

- Over the course of 30 to 50 years, an average 20-megawatt geothermal power facility will

pay nearly \$6.3 million to \$11 million dollars in property taxes plus \$12 to \$22 million in annual royalties. Seventy-five percent of these royalties (\$9.2 million to \$16.6 million) go directly back to the state and county.

- Geothermal flash plants emit about 5 percent of the carbon dioxide, 1 percent of the sulfur dioxide and less than 1 percent of the nitrous oxide emitted by a coal-fired electricity plant of equal size.

HOW IT WORKS

With geothermal systems,

the earth becomes your source of energy. During the winter, heat moves from underground to your home's HVAC system. In the summer, your AC removes excess heat and dissipates it underground.

NATURAL ENERGY

Below the Earth's crust, the layer of hot, molten rock continuously produces heat, mostly from the decay of naturally radioactive materials. The amount of heat within about 33,000 feet of Earth's

surface contains 50,000 times more energy than all the oil and natural gas resources in the world, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

ULTIMATE EFFICIENCY

An official EPA study on energy efficiency listed geothermal heating and cooling systems as the most environmentally friendly heating and cooling systems. Geothermal heat pumps are extremely efficient, using the constant temperature underground to

heat and cool a home instead of fluctuating external temperatures.

AN EXPANDING MARKET

As more homeowners opt for geothermal heating and cooling systems, state and federal policies are likely to encourage developers to tap into the technology. The Geothermal Energy Association estimates that 125 projects now under development around the country could provide up to 2,500 megawatts of new capacity.

Benefits of Composting

Composting may be a foreign concept to some, but for many it's the only way to enrich soil, suppress pests and lessen their carbon footprint.

To create a regular habit of composting your grass clippings, vegetable waste, fruit scraps and coffee grounds, you will need to follow some sort of routine. That's the best way to remain dedicated to building and maintaining a quality pile that has a major positive impact on your garden for years to come.

The benefits of a great compost pile are two-fold. Not only will you better the environment, you'll also enhance your ability to grow healthy, large produce and flowers in your garden beds.



WHAT IS A COMPOST PILE?

When it comes to building an effective compost pile, you need brown materials, green materials and water.

Brown items include dead leaves, twigs and branches that provide carbon for your pile. Greens can include grass clippings, vegetables, fruits and coffee grounds that give your pile plenty of nitrogen.

Water helps in quality com-

post development, providing plenty of moisture to help break down organic matter. A strong compost pile has equal amounts of browns and greens in alternating layers. Use different-sized particles, as well, for maximum impact.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Composting doesn't just give you a place to get rid of your excess waste. It keeps your garbage out of the landfill,

helping reduce methane emissions. It also allows your soil to retain moisture and minimizes plant diseases.

Compost can improve the overall health and productivity of your garden, lessening the need for chemical fertilizers that you may consider using for growth. You'll be left with a pile that produces bacteria and fungi that break down your organic matter into a rich nutrient-filled material.

HOW TO BUILD A PILE

According to the National Resources Defense Council, follow these tips to build an effective compost pile (which can take between two months and two years for best results):

- Select a dry, shady spot near a water source for your compost pile or bin.
- Add brown and green materials as they are collected, making sure larger pieces

are chopped or shredded.

- Moisten dry materials as they are added.
- Once your compost pile is established, mix grass clippings and green waste into the pile and bury fruit and vegetable waste under 10 inches of compost material.
- Cover the top of the compost with a tarp to keep it moist. When the material at the bottom is dark and rich in color, it's ready to use.

Green Your Holidays

Tis the season to be jolly! If you're throwing a party, add some green-inspired touches by making environmentally conscious decisions about your invitations, food, drinks, presents and decorations.

Put your craftiness on full display with homemade materials dominating your party's theme. If you are unable to handmade some of your materials, pop into your local home improvement or craft store for ideas.

You also can consider a local party planner or interior decorator to help you with your sustainable design ideas. The more local flavor you bring to your party, the less dependence on fuel for shipment and the more money you are re-investing into your local community.

PAPERLESS INVITES

If you're considering sending paper invitations, it may be time for a new approach. The overuse of paper can hurt our forests and result in unnecessary materials in our landfills. Consider going virtual for this year's party invitations.

You can easily find free online party invitation services for these purposes. If you're using a party planner, ask them to follow green principles when choosing materials and products for your gatherings. Your guests will be impressed with your commitment to environmental sustainability.

LIGHTING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Think of the best parties

you've been to. How important was lighting to the overall mood? Ambiance is a huge factor in how a room feels and looks.

Consider hanging LED holiday lights for the smallest impact on the environment — and your electric bill.

There also are sustainable candles on the market that can be placed strategically around the room for a sophisticated design scheme. These can be made out of soy or palm oil, which can burn just as brightly and beautifully as other materials.

GREEN DECORATIONS

Bringing nature to the inside is a classic move to achieve sustainable design. Take a walk through your yard for ideas. There you can find natural materials such as pine cones or evergreen that can enhance your space.

Homemade wreathes made of holly also are great choices for designing your doors or walls.

These types of decorative touches will bring your party to the next level while also maintaining a dedication to green design.



Green Eating Tips

Looking to lose your love handles or tighten your core? Searching for a way to feel better and have more energy for exercise? The color green may be your solution.

Losing weight and getting fit are long-standing resolutions on New Year's, but also throughout the year for many people who struggle with their weight. Consider the following tips when trying to incorporate green eating into your diet. The results could help you reach your goals faster than you might think.

VEGAN AND VEGETARIAN

You don't have to look far to find credible research pointing to the benefits of a plant-based diet. A recent study published in the *Journal of Hypertension* revealed how those eating a vegetarian diet had a 34 percent lower risk of having the condition compared to those who were not.

This doesn't mean you have to entirely eliminate meat from your diet. Experts recommend you find a healthy balance and work toward incorporating more plant-based foods into every meal.

EAT LESS

There is no need to complicate your overall eating habits. The more calories you consume, the more weight you gain, especially if you're not working in enough exercise.

Some general practices to consider when fighting the battle of the bulge are making yourself smaller portions and avoiding buffets. When you're



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eating with friends, try to eat slowly and delve into conversation. Eating slowly will help your stomach tell your mind it's full before you pile on too much dessert.

THINK LEAFY

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests having vegetables and fruits take up the largest portion of your plate. This can be a

challenge if you don't regularly buy enough produce.

Fill up a solid portion of your shopping cart with leafy green vegetables and luscious fruits. Shop at your local farmer's

markets and grocers to make a double-impact on the environment. Doing so means you're consuming healthy foods while supporting those dedicated to sustainable growing methods.