

A young girl with long brown hair, wearing a purple shirt, is smiling and hugging a tree trunk. The tree trunk is grey and textured, and the background is a soft-focus green. The text 'Green Living Guide' is overlaid in the top right corner.

# Green Living Guide



# Green on a Budget

**A**dopting a greener lifestyle doesn't have to be expensive. There are small ways you can live a little greener without investing in major renovations or additions.

During the Great Depression, people had to learn to be creative, ration and re-purpose items in order to make them last and make their money stretch. While it is unfortunate that it can take hard times for people to think of creative ways to save, it can also lead to more eco-friendly options.

You don't need to drastically change your lifestyle in order to make greener choices. Here are just a few ways to go green without breaking the bank.

## REDUCE

A large component of green living is reducing your consumption of energy. This is largely comprised of actions that require no financial investment.

Actions such as turning lights off when you leave a room and unplugging appliances when they are not in use can make a dramatic impact. Also consider limiting your consumption of central air conditioning and heating — especially when you are not at home.



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Reducing water consumption by switching to a “low-flow” shower head and running your dishwasher on its “light” setting (as most loads do not require the power of a “normal” wash) will save gallons of water — and loads of dollars — per year.

## RE-PURPOSE

Another crucial aspect of green living is re-purposing

items whenever possible. This means shopping at second-hand stores, flea markets and yard sales as well as donating unused items of your own to your local shelters.

Don't forget about “upcycling.” Get creative. Items such as tattered beach or bath towels can be cut down and used for kitchen or shop towels. At times, our home interiors can get stale and we can overlook a

solution as simple as taking furniture from one room into another and using the piece in a different way.

## REPLACE

There does come a point, however, when re-purposing or “making do” is just not possible anymore. When this is the case, ask yourself if there is a greener or more energy-efficient option in the market-

place.

It could be worth a larger upfront cost to invest in the long-term benefits. Replace old-fashioned light bulbs with LEDs. While shopping for appliances of any kind, look for the Energy Star label. Consider replacing your water heater with a tankless version, as they use much less energy by heating water only on demand.



# Installing Raised Beds

If you are interested in growing your own vegetables but are intimidated by a full garden, raised beds could be the perfect addition to your yard. Raised beds allow you to garden a contained portion of your landscape and bring your garden to a height that is easy to reach without the risk of damaging other plants.

They also allow you to garden without stepping on the loose soil within them. The lack of compaction helps keep plants happy.

## TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND

Following a few simple tips will help ensure that your raised beds are successful.

- Be sure to build the frame with rot-resistant cedar, which is safe to use around edible plants.

- Choose an area of your yard that receives a lot of light.

- Remember that one of the benefits of raised beds is that they eliminate the need to enter them. Keep them at a maximum of 4 feet wide for easy reach.

- If your raised bed is located at ground level, increase drainage by turning the soil beneath the bed area with a rotary tiller or pitchfork before filling the bed with a mixture of soil and compost.

## KNOW YOUR COMPANION PLANTS

There are a lot of opinions about companion planting, but one thing is certain: Planting the right plants near each other can greatly reduce incidence of pests and disease.

Be sure to talk with your local nursery about what you like to eat and how big of a bed you are planning. They



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can help you decide on vegetables as well as help you set up a planting schedule so that you can enjoy fresh produce in every season.

## POT PLANTING

Do you live in an urban area? Not a problem! Many vegetables thrive in a “potted” environment, which can easily

be contained and maintained from a small balcony. Tomatoes, zucchini and peppers are especially happy to grow in a container.

Don't forget about fresh herbs. They can add loads of flavor to your meals and can be kept in small pots in a sunny window sill.



# Homemade Cleaning

Simple ingredients from your pantry can be used to create green cleaning products that are both easy to make and gentle on the environment.

They also will be cost-effective, as the cost of commercial products can be very high.

Consider the following natural alternatives to marketplace chemical cleaners.

## NATURAL ALTERNATIVES

- **Vinegar.** The holy grail of natural cleaning agents, vinegar dissolves dirt and soap scum and is a natural deodorizer because it absorbs odors instead of covering them up. There are two main types of white vinegar: Diluted and undiluted. Undiluted vinegar is stronger and should be saved for deep cleaning.

- **Baking soda.** Baking soda is a mild abrasive cleaner that naturally deodorizes, which makes it a great replacement for commercial cleaners filled with harsh chemicals.

- **Lemon.** Lemon is one of the strongest food acids and is very effective against most household bacteria.

- **Essential oils.** While they don't have cleaning properties per se, they do give your homemade solutions a fresh invigorating smell. Consider adding orange oil to your glass



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cleaner for a zesty, fresh scent.

## GREEN CLEANING SOLUTIONS

If you are just starting out with homemade cleaners, it is best to begin slowly and replace only your most commonly used products before diving into other cleaners. Start out by replacing both

your all-purpose cleaner and your glass cleaner.

**All-purpose home cleaner:** Mix equal parts white vinegar and water.

**All-purpose glass cleaner:** Mix 2 cups water, 1/2 cup white vinegar and 1/4 cup rubbing alcohol. (Don't forget your essential oils. Just one or two drops in your chosen

scent will do.)

## HEALTHY HABITS

Outside of switching your cleaning products, there are other habits you can practice to help keep your home clean.

For example, open a window every once in a while. Modern homes are generally kept tightly shut, with very little natural

air flow. Opening the windows on a regular basis helps exchange the air in your home.

It also is important to approach your house cleaning in a particular order. You should clean your house from top to bottom – literally. This keeps dust, dirt and bacteria from spreading to areas you've already cleaned.





# Buy Smarter — and Smaller

It turns out bigger isn't always better. One of the fastest (and most efficient) avenues to greener living is downsizing your living space.

The size of your living space immediately affects your carbon footprint but also impacts many other lifestyle choices

that can lead to a “greener” and more sustainable life. That all means we can “live large” by living smaller.

## **YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT**

A carbon footprint is defined as the total amount of greenhouse gases produced to directly and indirectly support human life. Smaller homes reduce your carbon footprint in a variety of ways.

They require fewer materials to build, which means less energy used to produce build-

ing materials. Fewer materials also means less energy to maintain. You will essentially have less square footage to cool, heat, light and keep clean.

This reduces your family's carbon footprint — and your monthly bills. Everybody wins.

## **SUSTAINABLE LAND USE**

Smaller living spaces also have less impact on land space. This is especially true with apartment buildings and condo high rises.

A free-standing home is

exposed to the elements on all sides — plus the roof. The typical apartment shares three walls, with only one exterior wall.

Apartment buildings also capitalize on vertical space. While a typical American home might occupy 3,000 square feet of land for four people, an apartment building could house 250 families and occupy only a few acres.

## **ECONOMIZE POSSESSIONS**

Living in less space means

you literally have less space in which to put things. This puts your possessions in a new light. Which items serve a purpose? Which items bring you joy?

Through downsizing, you can prioritize your possessions and only keep what is necessary.

This allows you to re-home or donate the rest, while also making fewer future purchases. In the long run, you will save money — and energy — by downsizing your life.



# Water-Saving Strategies

**W**ater conservation is a crucial component of living a greener lifestyle.

Not only will conserving water save you a significant amount of money on your monthly utility bills, but by limiting your water usage, you help to correct the damaging effects of nationwide overdrawing on this resource.

There are many strategies you can apply to conserve water. Whether you've heard these strategies before or

not, you may not have considered the real impact each strategy has on water conservation. Here are three strategies for water conservation and their positive impacts on the environment.

## **TURN OFF THE WATER WHILE BRUSHING YOUR TEETH**

You've heard this one before. It is the most commonly used water-saving strategy — but very effective in saving massive amounts of water.

While it might seem as if you brush quickly, gallons of water can escape down the drain unused as you brush. If

you turn the faucet off, you could save more than 2,000 gallons of water each year. Imagine if every person in the United States followed this strategy.

## **WATER YOUR LAWN IN THE EARLY MORNING OR EVENING**

These are the coolest times of the day (without you having to water your lawn in the pitch black of night), which means less water falls victim to evaporation.

If you water your yard in the middle of the day, at least 14 percent of the

water will evaporate before reaching the plants' roots — and depending on your climate, this statistic could be higher.

## **EAT AT LEAST ONE VEGETARIAN MEAL PER WEEK**

While you might not think about it, a lot of water is required to grow the grain that feeds cows and chickens.

According to One Green Planet, 2,644 gallons are required to produce 3 pounds of meat. Replacing just one meal per week of beef with a vegetarian option can save thousands of gallons of water each year.



# The Greenest U.S. Cities

We all have a responsibility to protect our planet. Many municipalities are doing their part, from offering incentives to promoting recycling programs and other green initiatives to passing new codes and reforming dated regulations.



WalletHub analysts recently compared America's largest 100 cities across 20 "green" indicators to determine the greenest cities across the nation.

The cities were compared across four key dimensions: environment, transportation, energy sources, and lifestyle and policy. Here is a look at their findings.

## OVERALL RANK FOR GREENEST CITIES IN AMERICA

**1. San Francisco, Calif.**

**Fun fact:** In 2007, San Francisco was the first city to ban plastic bags. The city has plans to be "waste-free" by 2020, and is already 78 percent of the way there.

### **2. Honolulu, Hawaii**

**Fun fact:** Honolulu has the country's highest per capita rate of homes with solar panels.

### **3. San Jose, Calif.**

**Fun fact:** Happy Hollow Park and Zoo is the nation's first

amusement park and zoo to receive LEED certification from the U.S. Green Building Council

### **4. Fremont, Calif.**

**Fun fact:** Fremont has plans to reduce its greenhouse-gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020, and is more than halfway to achieving that goal.

### **5. San Diego, Calif.**

**Fun fact:** San Diego is home to the nation's largest urban park, Balboa Park.

### **6. Washington, D.C.**

**Fun fact:** The District has the biggest bike share network in the nation.

### **7. Oakland, Calif.**

**Fun fact:** The city is home of the nation's cleanest, freshest tap water.

### **8. Portland Ore.**

**Fun fact:** Portland has more than 92,000 acres of green spaces with a connected system of trails and parks for walking and biking. Not to

mention their public transit is impeccable.

### **9. Sacramento, Calif.**

**Fun fact:** Sacramento County's landfill is creating electricity through decomposing waste – about 14 megawatts of power, which is enough to power approximately 10,000 homes.

### **10. Minneapolis, Minn.**

**Fun fact:** As of 2009, the city had a 31.5 percent urban tree canopy.

## LOWEST GREENHOUSE-GAS EMISSIONS PER CAPITA

While these cities may or may not have made the top ten list overall, they do have the lowest greenhouse-gas emissions per capita, and therefore deserve recognition.

- 1. Honolulu, Hawaii**
- 2. Riverside, Calif.**
- 3. Mesa, Ari.**
- 4. Oakland, Calif.**
- 5. Santa Ana, Calif.**

## HIGHEST GREENHOUSE-GAS EMISSIONS PER CAPITA

These cities have a lot of work to do if they want to move higher on the sustainability list, as they were reported as having the highest greenhouse-gas emissions per capita.

- 1. Houston, Texas**
- 2. Denver, Colo.**
- 3. Oklahoma City, Okla.**
- 4. Louisville, Ky.**
- 5. Corpus Christi, Texas**



# Sustainable Statistics

Concern for our environment and humans' impact on its health has never been greater. Our modern way of living has brought with it many environmental concerns, including pollution, excessive overflow of landfills and large carbon footprints.

While people and organizations at all levels have taken significant steps toward more sustainable living and business practices, there is still much that can be done — especially at the individual level.

Consumerism and consumption of resources is a crucial aspect of green living. While a T-shirt may not seem like a big deal, much goes into how it is made, cared for, stored and discarded.

Here are 10 statistics on how much Americans consume and recycle.

- According to Treehugger, the United States makes up less than 5 percent of the world's population but consumes more than 30 percent of its resources.

- According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, more jobs are created for each unit of electricity generated from renewable sources than from fossil fuels. Additionally, fossil-fuel technologies tend to be capital intensive, whereas renewable energy technologies are more labor intensive. This means fossil fuels create fewer jobs and cost more to produce.

- The Worldwatch Institute found that 100 billion plastic bags are thrown away each year, with less than 1 percent of them being recycled. This leads to the death of approximately 1 billion birds and mammals from the ingestion of plastic.

- National Public Radio reports that the average size of the American home has nearly tripled in the last 50 years.

- Americans spend more on shoes, jewelry, and watches (\$100 billion) than on higher education, according to Psychology Today.

- According to the Huffington Post, the average American throws away approximately 65 pounds of clothing per year.

- One out of every 10 Americans rent off-site storage — the fastest growing segment of real estate over the past four decades, according to New York Times Magazine.

- According to the U.S. Department of Energy, 25 percent of people with two-car garages don't have room for their vehicles to fit inside them, and an additional 32 percent only have room for one vehicle.

- Nearly 40 percent of food in America goes to waste — approximately \$165 billion worth of food annually. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, stunting due to malnutrition and lack of food affect 161 million children around the world each year.

- According to a recent Neilson audience report, homes in the U.S. contain more televisions than they do people. On average, each household has three working television sets.

