

Green Living



'Green' Your Home

In our quest for more sustainable living, many of us have made green improvements to our home, such as adding energy-efficient appliances or replacing drafty windows. But is this really enough to lower our environmental footprint and make a difference for generations to come?

Green home efforts can have long-lasting impacts on our planet and also help lower our energy costs at home. It's a win-win.

There are some goals — such as installing solar panels — that can take you months or years to save for and eventually execute. Then there are other goals that are more attainable in the near future.

Read on for tips and tricks to make your home more efficient and environmentally friendly.

STEPS TO TAKE TODAY

What are your daily habits when it comes to creating waste at home? Are you using plastic water bottles that you dispose after one use? Consider adding a few durable water bottles or insulated travel cups to your cabinet that will help you reduce your overall waste.



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Another idea for an immediate green improvement is looking for leaky faucets that need to be fixed and ensuring that all electronics and chargers are unplugged when not in use. These simple steps can greatly reduce your overall water and energy consumption.

STEPS TO TAKE THIS MONTH

Follow these tips from the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention when tackling some relatively immediate projects that can make a positive difference.

Install new insulation to conserve energy and spend less on heat and air conditioning.

Use a programmable thermostat to time your heat and air conditioning for when you are in your home. These types of devices will shut off while you are away, giving you big savings in energy and money.

Weatherproof your home by caulking, sealing or weather-stripping outside openings.

Conserve water by installing aerating and low-flow faucets and shower heads.

STEPS TO TAKE IN THE FUTURE

Looking for a major upgrade? Check with your local home improvement stores for their options on tankless and on-demand water heaters.

These units have been proven to save up to 30% of energy compared to standard natural gas tank heaters.

Installing solar panels can be a costly investment, but one that pays off for years to come. Using the sun's energy to power your home versus a traditional energy company can reduce your environmental footprint and help lessen your dependency on non-solar energy sources.

Reduce your Water Usage

It's easy to take water for granted in our daily home life. We wake up, brush our teeth, take a shower, pour a cup of coffee and fill up our travel mug before heading out for the day. And we do so without giving it a second thought.

What if we stopped for a second to truly realize what kind of impact our usage has on the world around us?

When it comes to water, we're always looking for ways to reduce our usage. You've probably seen news reports of municipalities facing crippling water shortages. We as humans are responsible for some of the blame, as overuse of our natural resources can put future generations in peril.

What can you do at home to limit your water usage? First let's look at some interesting statistics to see where we are as a country.

The average American family uses more than 300 gallons of water per day at home, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Roughly 70% of this use occurs indoors.

Less than 1% of the earth's water supply is available for human use. The rest is either salt water found in oceans, fresh water frozen in the polar



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ice caps or inaccessible for practical usage.

If all U.S. households installed water-saving features, water use would decrease by 30%, saving an estimated 5.4 billion gallons per day. This would result in dollar-volume savings of \$11.3 million per day or more than \$4 billion per year. This

according to the Handbook of Water Use and Conservation.

WATER USAGE ISSUES

Here are some key consequences identified by the EPA tied to our continued overuse of the earth's most precious resource:

- Higher water prices to ensure continued access to a

reliable and safe supply.

- Increased summer watering restrictions to manage shortages.

- Seasonal loss of recreational areas like lakes and rivers when the human demand for water conflicts with environmental needs.

- Expensive water treatment projects to transport and store

freshwater when local demand overcomes available capacity.

As Americans, we can't simply wait for the government to fix our water usage and shortage issues. We can make a big impact together by taking simple steps throughout our days to help conserve water and improve the overall health of the planet.



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Teach Kids about Green Living

Many times, it is easier to teach new habits to children than it is to teach adults.

Children are not stuck in their ways yet and behaviors are easier to break. Parents should take advantage of this by teaching them sustainable green living habits.

These can range from healthier eating and smarter energy usage, to appreciating the value in shopping locally in your region. Whatever you decide to focus on, make sure you are consistent and holding them accountable for their actions — and make sure

you're holding yourself to the same standard.

SUSTAINABLE EATING

Teaching your kids sustainable eating habits is easy. Making sure they follow through is a whole other story.

The easiest way to show your kids the importance of healthy eating behaviors is by modeling it yourself. Do routinely buy foods that require vast production, processing and packaging before they are ready for consumer purchase? If yes, then you have some changes to make when it comes to sustainable eating.

Manufacturers use various chemicals to package highly processed foods. These types

of processed and packaged foods are also dependent on transportation, which means the usage of fossil fuels.

The Environmental Protection Agency urges you and your children to choose foods that:

- Do not harm the environment;
- Support and preserve rural communities;
- Are healthy and nutritious;
- Respect farm animals;
- Provide farmers with fair wages;
- Are free of added toxins;
- Are grown locally; and
- Do not harm the health of farm workers.

The point? Eating fresh, local foods — including

meats, fruits and vegetables — can go a long way in decreasing your environmental footprint as a family. And your kids will take notice too.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Many scientists link pollutants released by vehicles to an increase in air pollution and global warming, not to mention adverse health effects, including premature mortality, cardiac issues, asthma and lung problems.

By adopting more sustainable methods of travel — and teaching their importance to your kids — we can all play our part in putting a stop to these unnecessary environ-

mental and public health issues.

Here are a few ideas from the CDC:

- Walking and bicycling;
- Public transportation;
- Carpools;
- Vanpools; and
- Telework and alternate work schedules

Encourage your kids to start loving their bikes early in life so they consider it a viable mode of transportation later in life. Do you have kids in college? Teach them about the rules of the road and where to find quality bike trails. They may just end up playing a role in lessening the overall impacts of costly transportation issues.



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Green Shopping Tips

Shopping locally won't just fill your home with unique, custom items. It will fill your heart knowing you're making a big impact on your region and the wider world.

Local shoppers end up being economic drivers in their areas because of what small business owners invest back into their towns.

Here are some interesting statistics from the publication Fit Small Business regarding consumer behavior and local shopping trends.

- Globally, retail sales are expected to top 26.29 trillion by the end of 2019.
- In the United States alone, retail accounts for \$2.6 trillion

in sales.

- Retail and food services in the U.S. accounted for \$513 billion in November 2018.
- 67% of millennials and 56% of Gen-Xers consumers prefer to shop online.
- For every \$100 spent at a local small business, roughly \$68 stays in town.
- 72% of shoppers search online before entering a brick-and-mortar retail store.
- The average monthly income for a small to midsized

retailer is \$22,340.

How many of these statistics speak to you? Is there more you can do to trade some of your online or big box shopping habits for more of a local shopping approach? You may influence others to do the same, causing a chain reaction of sustainable shopping behavior.

MAKING SECONDHAND A FIRST PRIORITY

There are many ways to

shop in a sustainable way, including visiting local second-hand stores for your clothing needs. Many churches and nonprofit organizations offer secondhand clothing to help their local communities.

Consignment shops are actually en vogue when it comes to finding great deals on quality clothing. And while you're focused on adding to your wardrobe, you're also helping keep clothing out of landfills longer. This helps

maintain a healthier environment in the long run.

FIND GREEN BUSINESSES

Today's consumers are in love with small businesses that produce their products in sustainable ways. Many companies even give back portions of their profits to help fund philanthropic missions or support those in need. One great resource for finding such companies is Green America's Green Business Network. Find the organization online to find a list of sustainability-focused companies trying to make a difference in your region.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle



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Since our childhoods, many of us have heard the motto: Reduce, reuse and recycle. But are we putting this into practice on a daily basis?

Are our actions actually helping the earth remain a sustainable place to live, or are our behaviors compromising the air, water and land quality that

we depend upon for life?

THE BASICS

The most effective way to reduce your environmental waste is to not create it. Companies are making products every day, sure. But our usage as consumers is what controls the production and volume of distribution of these products.

Making a new product— say, a plastic water bottle — requires a lot of materials and energy. These materials must be extracted from the earth

and then transported. In the case of plastic water bottles, they may also be added to landfills after you use them, creating unnecessary trash in an already overused industry.

Your personal reduction and reuse of products are the most effective ways you can save natural resources, protect the environment and save money — things we can all agree on.

HOW TO REDUCE, REUSE

So how can we pull this off in a way that doesn't inconvenience our lifestyles while still

allowing us to make a positive impact on the environment?

Here are some ideas:

Buy used products. Look around your local business shopping scene. There are consignment shops and lumber yards that offer all sorts of used materials. Clothes, building materials and toys can be just as good as new. You can find bargains on these materials too, saving you money in the long run.

Avoid excessive packaging. Manufacturers that make products with less packaging are

using less raw materials. This leads to financial savings, which can then be passed along to you. Consider buying in bulk to reduce excess packaging that will eventually end up in our landfills.

Donate. Instead of discarding unwanted appliances, toys, tools or clothes, try donating them to your local secondhand store, church or school. These organizations can always use extra materials, and your donation can help them meet their needs while also keeping multiple items out of the trash.

Men and women alike are looking to ditch harsh chemicals in favor of green materials when it comes to personal care products.

A 2018 McKinsey & Business of Fashion study revealed that 66% of global millennials are willing to spend more on sustainable fashion brands. And cosmetic manufacturers are taking notice.

The shift in creating natural and environmentally-friendly ingredients has taken the beauty industry by storm. Why should you be focused on buying natural and sustainable cosmetics?

Two main reasons:

Environmental benefits: To protect the planet for future generations, we should all be invested in social and environmental responsibility. One of the main benefits of sustainable products is their kinder environmental impact, including less waste in landfills and less chemicals leaching into our water systems.

Health benefits: Many cosmetic products contain petrochemicals, which can actually be highly toxic to humans. Synthetic products have been linked to headaches, eye damage, acne and even premature aging.

By choosing sustainable cosmetics, you are investing in the long-term health of the planet and yourself.

WHAT ARE GREEN COSMETICS?

Personal care brands are becoming more focused on



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using all-natural ingredients in their products. Here are some examples of what's being used:

Natural oils: Palm, coconut, argan and avocado oil are all popular options when it comes to building a safer, more sustainable lotion or makeup product.

Agricultural plants: Soybeans, corn and other agricultural plants are being utilized to produce oils and alco-

hols, giving manufacturers cheaper, more sustainable ways of sourcing critical ingredients for their products.

WHAT NOT TO USE

If you're looking to protect your body — and the planet — from harmful chemicals, there are certain personal care products to avoid. Here are a few that the Environmental Protection Agency recommends keeping out of your

daily routine:

BHA and BHT: These are synthetic antioxidants used as preservatives most commonly found in lipsticks and moisturizing creams. The European Commission has released evidence that BHA and BHT disrupt the endocrine system, according to the EPA.

Coal tar dyes: Coal tar dyes are listed as p-phenylenediamine or colors titled "CI" and followed by a five-digit num-

ber on their labels. Some medical studies have linked these dyes to cancer in humans.

Aluminum: Commonly used in antiperspirants, aluminum enters the body through the underarm tissue and blocks sweat ducts. There have been links to breast cancer, Alzheimer's disease and osteoporosis, so choose your deodorant and anti-perspirants wisely.

Green Living: By the Numbers

Sometimes to see the benefits of green living, you have to look at the serious issues our world is currently facing.

Environmental factors are causing harm to our bodies, water systems and the places we work, live and play.

Thirteen million deaths annually and nearly a quarter of all disease worldwide — including 33% of illnesses in children under age five — are due to environmental causes that could be avoided or prevented, according to the World Health Organization.

This statistic alone should convince all of us to start lessening our environmental footprint to save lives and make a positive impact on our world.

Check out the following statistics from various government and environmental sources, and let them give you motivation to start making changes today — both for our current and future generations.

STATISTICS ABOUT EMISSIONS

Here is some concerning data, according to the Sustainability Management School.

- Nine out of 10 people worldwide breathe polluted air.



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- An estimated 7 million people die every year from air pollution, with almost 90% of deaths occurring in countries of low and middle incomes.

- According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide need to fall 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net-zero around 2050.

- Currently 55% of the world's population live in urban areas. This is expected to increase to 68% by 2050; The

built environment is responsible for half of all global energy use and half of all greenhouse gas emissions.

- Buildings consume one-sixth of all freshwater, one-quarter of world wood harvests and four-tenths of all other raw materials.

- The construction and later demolition of buildings produces 40% of all waste.

- Building occupants in high-performing, green-certified office environments “scored 26% higher on tests of

cognitive function, had 30% fewer sickness syndromes, and had 6% higher sleep quality scores than those in high-performing but non-certified buildings.”

TAKE SOME ACTION

We can all agree that these statistics are alarming, but what can we do on an individual level to make an impact?

The Environmental Protection Agency recommends taking a closer look at our daily activities that may be

causing the emission of unnecessary amounts of greenhouse gases. According to the EPA, we produce greenhouse gas emissions from burning gasoline when we drive, burning oil or gas for home heating, or using electricity generated from coal, natural gas, and oil.

Check out EPA.gov to find their Individual Greenhouse Gas Emissions Calculator. Use your number to motivate you to improve your daily habits to create a more sustainable environment around you.