



Why Green Matters

Green is in! Not just because it is currently popular but because going green for the environment is the right thing to do. Recycling and conserving energy is not a new idea as many cultures around the world have been earth conscious for hundreds of years.

The current popularity of going green seen on the media, the internet, and in publications is good for awareness and educating new generations of the importance of recycling and energy conservation. The focus and attention on the environment encourages individuals to leave a green legacy instead of their carbon footprint to future generations.

We can all take action to help reduce, reuse, and recycle! Going green helps the planet and makes a positive impact on the local economy. It can create family bonds and provide projects that benefit many people. As governments search for alternate energy solutions, you too can find ways to reduce your impact on the environment by making a difference to both the earth and your budget.

In addition to purchasing organic, turning down the thermostat, turning off lights, decreasing water usage, and recycling; we reflect on other ways individuals can embrace the going green initiative and start making a difference.



Experience the Benefits of Gardening

“Going Green” can also refer to gardening. Many individuals and family members are starting their own gardens today due to economic reasons or just the natural wellness from growing organic plants.

Consider starting a garden on a balcony, your patio, on a rooftop, in a sunroom, or in a back corner of your yard. Here are a few tips before you begin:

- ❖ If you rent or have a homeowner’s association, make sure you check rules or covenants.
- ❖ Check for available sunlight. Areas that face north and east have less sunlight hours than west-facing gardens.
- ❖ Do you have a local supply of water?

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- ❖ When watering, it is better to water thoroughly and less frequently than to water lightly and more often.
- ❖ Plan for a mixture of colors and textures (both plants and containers).
- ❖ Plant taller plants in the back and smaller plants in the front.
- ❖ Have a large plant serve as a focal point.
- ❖ You can group plants together but make sure not to crowd them.
- ❖ Consider the combined weight of pots, soil, water, and plants.
- ❖ Check the view through windows and from the outside before finalizing your plans.
- ❖ Take a moment to consider how the garden area will look in all four seasons.

There are many benefits that come from creating your own garden. You can grow flowers, bushes, shrubs, vegetables, herbs, and many other wonderful plants. Below is a list of some of the benefits that come from a personal garden:

- ❖ **Fresh** – organic, fresh vegetables and herbs are right outside your door.
- ❖ **Convenient** – you don't have to shop for fresh produce or pay for packaging and transportation costs.
- ❖ **Inexpensive** – there is such a minimal expense with seeds and seedlings that your bounty will offset any cost associated with a garden.
- ❖ **Healthy** – green plants inside can cleanse the air while homegrown vegetables can be organic with no preservatives and all natural ingredients.
- ❖ **Basic** – gardens reduce unnecessary cost from transporting produce to grocery stores and help support local economies.
- ❖ **Family Friendly** – a garden is fun for all ages. It can be a source of inspiration, and learning; a great family project to do together.

Complete the Circle

Many Americans are embracing the idea of recycling and the need to do our part. Recycling stations can be found in small towns and large cities across our country. Recycle bins are set out by curbs and each day thousands of people recycle paper, cardboard, tin, plastic, and glass. However, recycling the items is only one half of the process needed to complete the circle.

In order to complete the recycling process, we must also purchase items that are made from recyclable material. When shopping, do you look for and purchase items that are made from recycled materials? Take an extra second to make sure the items you purchase say “post consumer recycled content” on the packaging.

Recycled content can be found in many items on your grocery store shelves including cereal boxes, paper towels, facial and toilet tissues, bottles, and packaging. You can also find products including reusable tote bags, clothing, jewelry, plastic lumber, and rubber playground mulch which are made with recycled content.



Our every day purchases have the power to create a demand for recycled-content products and support ongoing recycling programs. By bringing recycling full circle, we can truly participate in a green incentive that will have a major impact on the environment.



Cooking Smart to Conserve Energy

For many of us the long wait for summer is finally here. However, conserving household energy in the summer can lead to different challenges than what we find in the winter months. During winter, we can balance high heating bills by throwing on another layer of clothes, wrapping up in blankets, or finding alternate sources of heat like a fireplace or low consumption electric heater. However, during the summer months, staying cool is not always easy. There is only so much we can do in hopes of keeping cool. Now imagine how difficult it is to cool an entire house.

However, by changing the way you cook during the summer you can decrease some of the energy you use by following some of these great tips:

- ❖ **Microwave more.** Instead of using the stove, use the microwave which has less of an effect on the cooling bill and uses less energy.
- ❖ **Eat more cold food.** Don't even turn the stove or microwave on. Summer time meals like sandwiches, salads, fruit, cottage cheese, and yogurt do not need to be cooked.
- ❖ **Cook in the early morning or late in the evening.** If you are planning a meal that has to be cooked, do so in the early morning or late evening. You can always save it for the next day and then use the microwave to heat it up.
- ❖ **Use a timer.** If you do need to cook during the day, use a timer. Opening and closing the door to check on your food increases the length of time to cook and lets hot air escape from the oven.
- ❖ **Use a well fitted pan.** If you use natural gas to cook, make sure your pans fit well on the burner and they are not warped or dented. A well fitted pan increases efficiency and decreases cooking time.
- ❖ **Choose the right kind of pan.** Copper pans on burners and glass dishes in the oven are best for collecting heat the fastest therefore decreasing your cooking time.
- ❖ **Turn off the oven early.** By turning off the oven early and letting the meal continue to cook in the residual heat also helps eliminate energy consumption.



Composting Basics

Did you know that yard trimmings, brush, and food residuals account for nearly 24 percent of the U.S. waste stream that ends up in landfills? Instead of sending this unnecessary waste to your local landfill, consider a composite pile the offers the benefits of resource efficiency and creating a useful product from organic waste.

Items good for composting:

- Animal manure
- Cardboard rolls
- Clean paper
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Cotton rags
- Dryer and vacuum cleaner lint
- Eggshells
- Fireplace ashes
- Fruits and vegetables
- Grass clippings
- Hair and fur
- Hay and straw
- Houseplants
- Leaves
- Nut shells
- Sawdust
- Shredded newspaper
- Tea bags
- Wood chips
- Wool rags
- Yard trimmings

What not to compost:

- Black walnut tree leaves or twigs
- Coal or charcoal ash
- Dairy products
- Diseased or insect-ridden plants
- Fats, grease, lard, or oils
- Meat or fish bones and scraps
- Pet wastes (soiled cat litter, etc)
- Yard trimmings treated with chemical pesticides

The benefits of compost include:

- Enriching soil or regenerating poor soil
- Cleaning up contaminated soil
- Preventing pollution, erosion, and silting
- Economic advantages

Backyard Compositing

1. Select a dry, shady spot near a water source for your compost pile.
2. Add the three layers of compost:
 - Browns – dead leaves, branches, twigs, etc.
 - Greens – grass clippings, vegetable waste, fruit scraps, and coffee grounds and filters, etc.
 - Water
3. Make sure larger pieces are chopped or shredded.
4. Moisten materials as they are added.
5. Once your pile is established, mix grass clippings and green waste into the pile.
6. Bury fruit and vegetable waste under 10 inches of compost material.
7. *Optional:* Cover top of compost with a tarp to keep material moist.
8. When the material at the bottom is dark and rich in color, your compost is ready to use (approximately two months to two years).

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Make Your Home Green

We can all do simple things to make our homes more ecologically friendly. Here is a list of ideas that range in price and offer simple solutions.

- Recycle cardboard, paper, tin, glass, aluminum, and plastic.
- Unplug appliances not in use.
- Use a power strip for electronics. This single act will eliminate 60-80% of energy consumption that takes place when electronics are turned off but still plugged in.
- Install a programmable thermostat to keep your house comfortable all year long.
- Use compact fluorescent light bulbs with the Energy Star label.
- Air dry dishes instead of using your dishwasher's drying cycle.
- Lower the thermostat on your hot water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Take short showers instead of baths.
- Wash only full loads of dishes and clothes.
- Use the cold water setting to wash the laundry.
- Fix leaky faucets.
- Let your grass grow longer helping to eliminate erosion and decrease the frequency of mowing with a gas powered mower. ❖

