

# GREEN LIVING GUIDE

FOR RESIDENTS | 2022 - 2023



# STRIVING FOR AN ECO-FRIENDLY LIFESTYLE

**The Green Living Guide** offers a comprehensive approach to adopting a more sustainable lifestyle. Small changes can make a huge difference, and there are many added benefits to striving for an eco-friendly way of living.

These guidelines contain numerous no-cost and low-cost ways you can go green. There are simple and easy measures you can take to save energy, conserve water, limit your waste, improve your surroundings, and reduce your impact on the environment.

By following the recommendations set forth in this guide, you can not only save money, but you can also positively contribute to creating a healthier and more environmentally-sustainable community.

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# ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Decreasing energy use reduces greenhouse gas emissions and can save money.

## HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

- **Keep windows closed** when the heater or air conditioner is running.
- Verify vents are **free of obstruction**.
- If you have a programmable thermostat, **set the temperature so heating/cooling is minimized** when you are at work or away for an extended period.
- In the winter:
  - **Slant blinds** downward to permit sunlight to enter the room and increase warmth (this can serve as an insulator).
  - **Switch the ceiling fans** to spin in reverse to circulate warm air downward (the fan will turn clockwise when looking at the fan from below).
  - Place a **draft stopper** under exterior doors.
  - **Layer clothing** in the winter. The Department of Energy calculates that your energy bill will increase 3% for each degree you raise the thermostat.
- In the summer:
  - **Close the blinds** (with the slats in the up position) as tightly as possible. This will reflect light and heat and create a pocket of air.
  - **Switch the ceiling fans** to spin normal to circulate warm air to the ceiling (the fan will turn counter-clockwise when looking from below.)

## ELECTRONICS

- Delete old **files off the cloud** to reduce energy used by data centers. All files that you have on the cloud are stored in data centers, which use energy.
- **Remove your screen saver.** Screen savers use almost as much energy as during active use.
- Some electronics draw electricity when they are plugged into an outlet (phantom electricity). **Plug electronics into surge protectors and turn off power strips** when electronics are not in use.
  - **EXCEPTION:** Electronics that require power in order to access an Internet connection for regular updates.
- Save money by **shutting down a home computer** if you don't expect to use it for the next two hours. Turn off the monitor if the computer is not going to be used within the next 20 minutes.
- As you replace equipment, look for energy-efficient products that conserve energy, such as those labeled **ENERGY STAR® certified** in the US.

## THE KITCHEN

- **Thaw frozen foods** in the refrigerator before cooking to reduce cooking time.
- Minimize the number of **times the oven door is opened** during baking. Each opening can reduce the oven's temperature by 25°F / 14°C.
- When possible, **use smaller appliances** to cook.
- Cover pots and pans when cooking to reduce cooking time.
- To ensure food safety, keep the refrigerator temperature set between **36°F to 40°F / 2.2°C to 4.4°C** and the **freezer at 0°F / -17.8°C**.
- **Don't overcrowd the fridge** or freezer; freezers should not be more than two-thirds full.
- Keep the freezer and refrigerator organized to **reduce the amount of time searching** for items when the door is open.
- Turn off the drying function of the dishwasher. Leave the door open to **air-dry dishes** instead.

## LIGHTING

- Take advantage of **natural daylight**.
- When working or reading, **use task lighting** (such as desk lamps) rather than lighting the entire room.
- **Regularly dust** lamps and light fixtures to remove dust obstruction light emission
- **Turn off lights** in unoccupied rooms.
- Switch to **LED lights**.



# WATER CONSERVATION

Proper water conservation practices can help protect wildlife habitats by reducing the need for new water sources. Saving water reduces the energy needed to treat and deliver the water, all while decreasing your water bill.



## THE KITCHEN

- If the sink is equipped with a sprayer, **use the sprayer** to rinse dishes and **don't leave the water running**.
- Load the **dishwasher to capacity**. A full load will save water, energy, and detergent.
- **Avoid rinsing dishes unnecessarily** before loading them in the dishwasher.
- Select the **short cycle** option on the dishwasher.
- **Keep drinking water in the refrigerator** instead of letting the tap run while you wait for the water to cool.
- Store empty pitchers or basins near the sink to **collect water that runs** while adjusting the water temperature. The water collected can be utilized for drinking water, rinsing dishes, filling pet bowls, or watering plants.
- **Wash fruits and vegetables** in a pan of water instead of washing them with water running continuously from the tap.
- **Soak pots and pans** instead of letting the water run while scraping clean.
- Dropped **ice cubes can be used to water plants** rather than throwing them in the sink to melt.
- Instead of using running water, **defrost food in the refrigerator** for water efficiency and food safety.



## THE BATHROOM

- **Report malfunctioning water closets / toilets or dripping faucets** to property management.
- Strive for **short, efficient showers**.
- **Turn off running water** when washing face or brushing teeth.
- When running a bath, **plug the tub before turning on the water** then adjust the temperature as the tub fills.



## LAUNDRY

- Always **adjust the washer's load setting** to match the laundry load size.
- **Washing clothes in cold water** saves both water and energy and helps clothes keep their colors.
- **Choose biodegradable detergents** over traditional, synthetic detergents made from petrochemicals.
- **Use eco-friendly dry cleaners** that do not use perchloroethylene ("perc"), a chemical that can be harmful to humans.



## IRRIGATION

- **Identify any leaks, flooding, or over-use of irrigation systems.** Fix or report to responsible parties (e.g., property manager, Homeowners' Association, or local authorities).

# REDUCE & REUSE

Source reduction is the best way to conserve resources and reduce pollution. Challenge yourself to find ways to either go without or reuse.



## PAPER

- **Stop junk mail** by registering at [dmachoice.org](https://dmachoice.org).
- **Unsubscribe from catalogs** with [catalogchoice.org](https://catalogchoice.org).
- **Opt out of receiving insurance and credit card offers** at [consumer.ftc.gov](https://consumer.ftc.gov).
- Utilize email and **pay bills online**.
- Use **electronic notes** and to-do lists on smartphones.
- **Reuse any paper** that has been printed on only one side as note paper.
- Use a **white board or dry erase marker on mirrors** to write reminders and notes.
- **Avoid buying wrapping paper**. Reuse gift bags, magazines, or newspaper.
- **Buy in bulk** to reduce packaging.



## REUSE

- Utilize **reusable coffee filters**. Some are even made from renewable resources such as hemp or organic cotton.
- Keep **reusable shopping and produce bags** in the car so they are on hand while shopping.
- Avoid buying water in disposable, single-use bottles. Instead, **use reusable BPA-free water bottles**.
- If there are concerns regarding water quality or taste, **use a water filter pitcher** to fill glasses and reusable bottles. Learn about water quality in your area: [homewater101.com](https://homewater101.com).
- **Reusable mugs and insulated cups** keep coffee hot longer and reduce the amount of non-biodegradable Styrofoam entering the landfill. Some coffee shops offer a discount when customers bring in their own reusable mugs.
- Pack lunches in a **lunchbox** and use **reusable sandwich bags and containers**.
- Use **cloth napkins** instead of paper napkins.



## FIX FIRST

- **Repair ripped or worn clothing** by taking them to the tailor for repair. This is likely less than the price of a new pair.
- Take **worn or damaged shoes** and leather goods to a cobbler.
- Use electrical tape or Sugru® to **mend headphones and laptop chargers** with exposed wires.
- Cracked **cell phone screens can often be fixed** without replacing the whole phone and typically at a much lower price.
- **Dropped your phone in water?** Quickly and carefully power off the phone, remove the battery and SIM card (if possible), and dry the phone with a towel. Place all parts in uncooked rice (wrapping the phone loosely in a paper towel first), or in a Ziploc® bag with desiccant packets, and leave for 24–72 hours to absorb any remaining moisture. (Bonus: save any desiccant packets from products you purchase to prepare for this type of accident.)



## PRINTING

- **Only print when necessary**.
- Always **review a document in Print Preview** to find and correct mistakes before printing.
- If your printer duplexes (**double-sided printing**), set it as the default.
- When printing a web-page, copy and paste the link into [printwhatyoulike.com](https://printwhatyoulike.com) to **optimize the web page for printing** (for free).
- Use software such as [PrintGreener.com](https://PrintGreener.com), which **analyzes documents to identify ways to reduce waste**.
- **Save on ink** usage by switching to fonts with a lighter font weight or a smaller size (e.g., Century Gothic, Courier, or Garamond).

# WASTE MANAGEMENT, RECYCLING & COMPOSTING

Recycling allows individuals to decrease the negative impact of the waste they produce by saving landfill space and reducing water and air pollution.



## ELECTRONIC E-WASTE

- **Used cell phones and accessories** can be recycled at most major phone retailers or through non-profit organizations raising money through cell phone recycling programs.
- Most large national electronics stores offer **recycling drop-offs** for TVs, DVD players, cell phones, cameras, music players, computers, and appliances. Some retailers even offer a pick-up service.
- Send old iPods, iPhones, mobile phones, Macs, or PCs to Apple for free where they will recycle it. Oftentimes, rebates or discounts are applied when old devices are traded in for new devices.



## LIGHT BULBS, BATTERIES, AND INK/TONER CARTRIDGES

- Handle CFLs safely and dispose of them responsibly. **CFLs contain a small amount of mercury** and recycling these bulbs prevents the release of mercury into the environment. Check the local area home improvement store about disposal.
- Recycle old **general-use, phone, and laptop batteries** at a local drop-off center.
- Most major auto parts stores accept **used car batteries** for recycling.



## GREASE

- **DO NOT** pour used cooking oil down the drain. This practice can back up the sink and cause problems throughout the sanitary sewer system.
- Research local cooking oil recycling options provided by the municipality, such as **recycling drop-off sites**.
- If grease must be thrown away, allow the oil to cool and solidify, then **place it in a sealable container**, such as a peanut butter jar, and place in the trash.



## RECYCLING EVERYTHING ELSE

- Check with the property manager for guidance on **recycling plastic, paper, aluminum, and glass**. Visit [earth911.com](http://earth911.com) for recycling locations of other items.
- **Donate non-perishable foods** to food banks or local food pantries to help reduce food waste.
- **Donate or sell to charity thrift stores or resale shops**. Charity thrift stores accept many types of items, from furniture to dishes to books.
- **Utilize websites** such as [Facebook Marketplace](https://www.facebook.com/marketplace), [eBay](https://www.ebay.com), or [Craigslist](https://www.craigslist.com) to donate, sell, and buy items.
- **Recycle shoes** at [Soles4Souls](https://www.soles4souls.com). Check the website for drop-off locations.
- **Return the hangers and plastic bags** to dry cleaner on the next visit.
- **Reuse Styrofoam packing peanuts**, take them to a UPS store, or find a local recycling center that will accept them.
- Join a community forum, such as [Freecycle](https://www.freecycle.org), [Nextdoor](https://www.nextdoor.com), or [Buy Nothing](https://www.buynothing.com), to trade with others. Freecycle, for example, is a grassroots, nonprofit movement of people who are **giving or receiving goods for free within their neighborhoods**.



## COMPOST & FOOD WASTE

- If the community offers composting, **compost what is accepted and drop off at proper disposal sites**.
- If the community does not offer composting, consider researching **local composting companies and subscribe for pickups or drop off your compost**.

# SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING

Making more environmentally-conscious purchases has positive impacts on community health and wellbeing, the environment, and the local economy.



## EVERYDAY PRACTICE

- Buy **secondhand** when possible.
- Choose items made from rapidly renewable resources, such as **cotton, wool, hemp, soy, bamboo, and cork**.
- Avoid excess packaging by **choosing larger sizes/quantities** instead of smaller, individually packaged items.
- Purchase products in **reusable containers**.
- Purchase **products that can be recycled** at the end of their useful life.
- **Shop local** whenever possible.
- Support **small businesses**.
- Look for **third-party** green-certified products (e.g., Fair Trade Certified™, UL GreenGuard Certified, EcoCert® Cosmos, B Corp®).



## FOR THE HOME

- Purchase paper products that are made from **post-consumer recycled content or bamboo**.
- **Switch to rechargeable batteries wherever feasible.** Bring old batteries to a local office supply store or electronics store for proper recycling.
- Read cleaning product labels carefully before purchasing. If a product has a warning label because it contains **known hazardous chemicals**, consider one of the alternatives in the Green Cleaning Section of this guide.
- Purchase **recyclable plastic pump-spray bottles** instead of aerosol cans.
- Replace appliances with **energy efficient appliances** to reduce water use and energy consumption.



## FOOD

- Purchase **local, in-season** produce to support the local community and reduce the distance produce travels.
- Shop at your **local farmer's market**.
- Look for **Fair Trade Certified™** items.
- Local, **organic free-range eggs** are generally higher in vitamins and minerals than mass-produced eggs.
- Participate in the **“Meatless Monday”** campaign. Animal-based foods have a larger carbon footprint than plant-based foods.
- Choose dairy products with **no artificial hormones or antibiotics**.
- Learn about the **“Slow Food”** movement.
- **Buy organic fruit and vegetables**, if possible. Apples, strawberries, and grapes are the top three most contaminated foods with the highest amount of pesticides.



## CLOTHING AND PERSONAL CARE

- Host a **clothes swap** with friends.
- Shop **resale shops**. Often you can find new items that still have tags.
- **Learn about slow fashion/ethical fashion.** Support brands that take into account an item's full life cycle, which includes sourcing, shipping, and end of life (as well as resources).
- When buying new clothing, look for items made from **recycled or renewable materials**, such as cotton or hemp.
- Choose **petroleum-free cosmetic products** that do not contain mineral oil, paraffin, or propylene glycol. See [Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep®](#) database for toxicity ratings of common cosmetic products.
- Look for **certified organic plastic-free** personal-care products.
- Use **aluminum-free** deodorants.

# GREEN CLEANING

Green cleaning keeps toxins and chemicals out of the air, water and soil.



## GREEN CLEANING PRACTICES

- To lessen moisture in the home, **always use ventilation when cooking and bathing.**
  - Many vacuums disperse small bits of dust. Look for vacuums with **HEPA filters** (high-efficiency filters that catch tiny particles) and dirt sensors that signal when a carpet is clean.
- Plain water on a cloth works great for the vast majority of dusting chores. If something more powerful is necessary, **choose the least-toxic product for the job.**
- To keep indoor air clean and lessen contaminants tracked into homes on the soles of shoes, consider becoming a **shoe-free household.**



## REMOVING STUBBORN CLOTHING STAINS

- Treat stains before washing instead of buying specific heavy-duty chemical products.
  - **Blood:** soak in cold water or club soda.
  - **Coffee/Tea:** soak in a solution of warm water and borax.
  - **Grass:** rub with glycerin.
  - **Perspiration:** rub with white vinegar.
  - **Tar:** rub with eucalyptus oil.



## INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREVENTION

- **Disinfect high-touch surface areas**, including (but not limited to) door handles/knobs, handrails, light switches, faucets, kitchen equipment, countertops, and other surfaces that are frequently touched throughout a day.
- Follow the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Guidelines](#) and manufacturer instructions for safe and **effective disinfectant use.**
- If available, **purchase cleaning products** developed by a member of the [Global Ecolabelling Network.](#)



## BAKING SODA USES

- Place a box or small bowl of baking soda in the fridge, freezer, or cupboard **to absorb unpleasant odors.**
- A paste of baking soda and water can be used to **make stainless steel appliances shine.**
- Sprinkle baking soda into a wet **toilet bowl or white sink**; allow to sit for 10-15 minutes and then scrub.
- To create a **tub-scum cleaner**, mix baking soda and a “green” liquid soap to a honey-like consistency. Apply it with a little elbow grease and perhaps a splash of white vinegar.
- To **remove odors from carpets**, sprinkle with baking soda. Let stand for at least 15 minutes, and then vacuum. Repeat as needed.
- To help **remove spills**, blot as much as possible then clean as normal. When finished, sprinkle with baking soda and then vacuum. This can decrease the chance that the spill could cause unpleasant odors later.



## VINEGAR USES

- For cleaning, **choose white vinegar**, as brown vinegar will typically stain porous surfaces.
- Some **air fresheners use harsh chemicals.** Instead, lightly spritz your space with white vinegar (the smell will quickly vanish).
- Add 1/4 cup (60ml) of white vinegar to the washer **to remove any mildew smells** from towels and sheets.
- A cup (240ml) of white vinegar will **clean a washing machine.** Run it through a regular cycle, without clothes.
- Deodorize and clean the **garbage disposal** with white distilled vinegar ice cubes (freeze full-strength white distilled vinegar in an ice cube tray). Run several cubes down the disposal while flushing with cold water.
- **Clean the microwave** by mixing 1/2 cup (120ml) of white distilled vinegar and 1/2 cup (120ml) of water in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat inside the microwave. Baked-on food will be loosened, and odors will disappear. Wipe clean.

# TRANSPORTATION

In addition to positive environmental impacts, switching to active and alternative forms of transportation can provide financial benefits as well as physical and mental health benefits.

## WALK OR USE ALTERNATIVE TRANSIT

- Use a smart phone to find nearby **walkable shops, restaurants, services, and activities**.
- **Discover local public transit** by checking online public transit trip planners, such as [Google Maps Transit](#), which provides a map, step-by-step instructions, and photos to help reach the destination. Look into using bike/scooter share as an alternative form of transportation.

## EFFICIENT DRIVING TIPS

- When considering purchasing a car, compare the [fuel economy](#) and opt for the **more fuel-efficient vehicle** option.
- Aggressive driving (speeding, accelerating rapidly, and braking erratically) **wastes gas**. Save money and reach your destination safely.
- Use **cruise control** on the highway to maintain consistent speed and save gas.
- Turn off the vehicle's engine when it is parked to **avoid excessive idling**.
- Keep **tires properly inflated** for optimum gas mileage and safety.
- Consider **carpooling or ride-sharing**.

## WORK FROM HOME

- If possible, **telecommute or work from home** at least one day a week instead of driving. Benefits include saving on parking costs and **increased productivity**. Save on travel expenses by **teleconferencing**.
- **Move, share, and edit information virtually** with web-provided services.

## BIKING

- Biking is a **clean** form of transportation.
- Be sure to take **appropriate precautions** for safety:
  - Always **wear a helmet**.
  - **Ride with traffic**, not against it.
  - **Be visible**, especially when riding at night. Wear bright colors and use flashing lights and reflectors.
  - **Do not weave** through traffic.
  - **Use bike lanes**, if available.
- Regularly **maintain your bike**. It is essential to maintain adequate tire air pressure and working brakes.
- Be aware of **local laws** that apply to bicycle riders.
- Always ensure your bike is **secure**:
  - Use an **appropriately sized U-lock**, such as those made by Kryptonite®.
  - Lock bikes in a **visible, well-lit area** and to a permanent fixture that cannot be easily cut or broken. **Lock your tires** to the bike frame to prevent theft.
  - Keep a **current picture of the bike** to give to authorities if stolen.
  - Consider purchasing a **GPS anti-theft device** for your bicycle, such as Sherlock (sherlock.bike).
  - Verify that your **renter's insurance** covers your bike (it likely does).



# RESOURCES

## [coolclimate.org](https://coolclimate.org)

CoolClimate's mission is to massively scale up the adoption of climate solutions.

## [sustainableelectronics.org](https://sustainableelectronics.org)

This nonprofit organization is dedicated to the responsible reuse, repair, and recycling of electronic products.

## [epa.gov/cfl](https://epa.gov/cfl)

This website provides information about Compact Fluorescent Lightbulbs.

## [epa.gov/recycle/electronics-donation-and-recycling](https://epa.gov/recycle/electronics-donation-and-recycling)

Electronics donation and recycling is a great way to help conserve resources and natural materials.

## [fueleconomy.gov](https://fueleconomy.gov)

Learn more about fuel economy at the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy.

## [greenamerica.org/green-living](https://greenamerica.org/green-living)

Their mission is to harness economic power—the strength of consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace—to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society.

## [greenamerica.org/green-business-index](https://greenamerica.org/green-business-index)

Find green, healthy, and ethically produced products and services for home and work.

## [lamprecycle.org](https://lamprecycle.org)

One-stop source of information about recycling mercury-added "lamps."

## [meatlessmonday.com](https://meatlessmonday.com)

This is a nonprofit initiative of The Monday Campaigns, working in collaboration with the Center for a Livable Future ("CLF") at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

## [slowfood.com](https://slowfood.com)

Slow Food® was founded in 1989 to prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions, counteract the rise of fast life, and combat people's dwindling interest in the food they eat.

## [wateruseitwisely.com](https://wateruseitwisely.com)

Sign up for their newsletter for water-saving ideas.

## [greenchoices.org](https://greenchoices.org)

This site includes information about simple and effective green alternatives that make a real, lasting difference.

## [epa.gov/environmental-topics/greener-living](https://epa.gov/environmental-topics/greener-living)

EPA has tools to help reduce an individual's environmental footprint.

