

HOME
CARE

with a flair

GO GREEN!

Tips for improving your home, the environment and your budget

It seems every time you turn around, another household product or device is harmful to you or the environment. Here are some environmentally friendly alternatives which can also conserve money.

Water drains resources and energy

You could be flushing away 20.1 gallons of water per day. Upgrade from a 3.5 gallons-per-flush toilet to 1.6 "gpf" and save 14,500 gallons per year per person. Repairing a leaking toilet can save up to 5200 gallons a year.

An inexpensive showerhead replacement can cut consumption up to 70 percent. A new faucet should be rated .5 to 1 gallon per minute (gpm). Add an aerator head to older faucets to reduce the flow while still providing ample water.

Energy bills in hot water?

Heating water consumes 19% of the average home's energy. Insulate pipes and the heater itself. A recirculation system efficiently cycles heated water back to the heater and may pay for itself in three years.

If your water heater is 15 years old, a new efficient system can pay for itself in a few years and continue saving energy for years after. Models with a heat trap at the top are more efficient at maintaining hot water levels. Also, consider a tankless model, which is up to 34% more efficient than traditional models.

Materials matter

Sealed tile and stone give bathroom floors and countertops a long life and preserve resources, plus they're easy to clean. Stone can be reclaimed for other projects at replacement time. Avoid wood, cork, and bamboo since water can degrade them more quickly. No carpeting – a mold haven.

For caulking, get low-VOC caulk (Volatile Organic Compounds), which is far less toxic than others, lasts at least 10 years and cleans up easily. Use acrylic latex for plumbing surfaces and wood gaps, and polyurethane caulk for masonry. They both last much longer than other caulks – up to 20 years. Instead of latex-based paints, use low VOC options. As we've seen, there are a lot of opportunities to make your home green-friendly– and budget friendly.



Simple Solutions

Replace your standard incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescents, which last 13 times longer and use 75% less electricity.

Replace your old large computer monitor with an LCD flat-screen, which uses 1/3 less electricity.

Shut the refrigerator door on a dollar bill. If the bill slides out easily, it's time to replace the seal.

Regularly change or clean your furnace filter for cleaner air and a longer lasting system. Have yearly maintenance checks.

Check for toilet tank leaks by putting food coloring in the tank, then waiting to see if it seeps into the bowl.

Only run your dishwasher with a full load.

Don't pour chemical cleaners down the drain and into the water supply. Follow the packages' disposal instructions.

Turn your hot water heater down to 120° F from the standard 140° to save 5 to 10% of its energy consumption and still enjoy hot water.

Connect a timer to an electric heater to reduce the temperature at night, week days and during vacations.

For a new wood floor, consider bamboo. It grows faster than most trees, so it's more renewable. And it's tough!

Plant a tree – or several. They help purify the air and absorb carbon monoxide.

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TOP 10 HOME REPAIRS

Things that home inspectors watch out for

- 1 **Improper surface grading and drainage.** Leads to water problems in the basement or crawl space.
- 2 **Improper electrical wiring.** Insufficient electrical service to the house, inadequate overload protection, dangerous connections.
- 3 **Roof damage.** Leakage from damaged shingles or improper flashing.
- 4 **Heating systems.** Broken or malfunctioning controls, blocked chimneys, unsafe exhaust disposal.
- 5 **Poor overall maintenance.** Cracked, peeling paint surfaces, crumbling masonry, makeshift wiring or plumbing, broken fixtures, structural problems.
- 6 **Structurally related problems.** Problems in other areas lead to problems with foundation walls, floor joists, rafters and window and door headers.
- 7 **Plumbing.** Old or incompatible piping materials and faulty fixtures and waste lines.
- 8 **Exteriors.** Windows, doors and wall surfaces leading to water and air penetration. Inadequate caulking and weather stripping.
- 9 **Poor ventilation.** Over-sealed homes leading to excessive interior moisture and rotting plus indoor pollution.
- 10 **Miscellaneous.** Primarily interior components, often cosmetic.

Source: Home Hints eNews from U.S. and Canadian home inspector surveys.



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