

Going Green for a year yields plenty of energy-saving ideas.

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Dishwashers

Contrary to popular belief, a dishwasher is greener than hand-washing – if you run it with full loads and scrape rather than rinse.

Dryers

Do not over-dry laundry. An electric dryer operating an extra 15 minutes a load can cost up to \$34 a year. Also, clean the lint trap before every load. It's the safe thing to do and can save as much as \$35 a year in energy costs.

Washers

Wash only full loads of laundry and save as much as 3,400 gallons of water a year.

Plants

Group thirsty plants in one bed close to the house. Fill farther beds with drought-tolerant perennials that need little or no watering.

Garbage disposals

Feeding the disposal is greener than putting food waste in a plastic bag and sending it to the landfill.

Home electronics

Power them off. A home office with a computer, printer, fax machine, computer speakers, scanner and cordless phone could cost you \$100 a year in electricity.

Thermostats

Get a programmable thermostat and save as much as \$150 a year. Set it way up (in the summer) or way down (in the winter) when everyone's at work or at school and when they're asleep.

Doggie waste

Switch to doggie bags that biodegrade in the landfill-which means Fido's poop won't be forever preserved in the landfill in the plastic bag you grabbed without considering its end-of-life issues.

Leaky toilet

A leaky toilet can waste 200 gallons of water a day! Check for leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If you have a leak, color will appear in the bowl within 15 minutes.

Newspapers

A year's worth of papers from a big-city daily weighs almost a half-ton. Every ton of paper that gets recycled saves the equivalent of 17 trees.

Light bulbs

Switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs. If you replace five of your most-used incandescent bulbs with these, you can save \$25 to \$60 a year in energy costs.

CFL disposal

The mercury contained in compact fluorescent light bulbs should not be accumulating in a landfill or, even worse, incinerated. Check with your municipality to see whether it has a hazardous waste collecting date.

Hand soap

Rediscover bar soap, and eliminate the plastic bottle waste that comes with using liquid soaps.

Microwaves

Use them instead of the oven or stove to reheat food cook small portions. You will reduce cooking energy by as much as 80 percent.

Stoves

Match pots to the appropriate-size burner. A 6-inch pot on an 8-inch burner wastes more than 40 percent of the burner's heat.

Water for laundry

Forgo the hot water when doing laundry. Heating water to "hot" accounts for 90 percent of the machine's washing energy; only 10 percent goes to power the motor. Switching to "cold" can save more than \$400 annually.

Multiple-use products

Pay attention to all the single-use items in your life – the throwaway plastic water bottles, paper napkins, paper towels, disposable wipes – and try to figure out alternatives.

Tiles

Keep shower tiles sparkling clean without using chemicals. After a shower, use a microfiber cloth or chamois to wipe down tiles and fixtures or for glass, use a squeegee.

Brushing teeth

Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth and save as much as 10 gallons a day a person.

Recycling

Soda cans are small but not insignificant. Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a television for three hours.

Printer cartridges

Office Depot, OfficeMax and Staples take back ink and toner cartridges – and hand you a \$3 store coupon.

E-waste

Recycle your electronic waste – computer monitors, desktops, laptops, fax machines, printers, scanner, peripherals, keyboards, telephones, digital cameras, DVD players, televisions – which could be chock full of lead, mercury and plastics.

Pesticides

Avoid using them in your garden and yard. Build up healthy soil instead to help prevent disease.

Fertilizers

Don't over fertilize. Plants can absorb only so much; the rest pollutes waterways.

Native plants

Use them in your garden. They know how to fend for themselves.

Gardens

Don't sprinkle more than necessary or in the heat of the day when much water evaporates. Put drip irrigation and soaker hoses on timers to water at night or in the early morning.

Rain

Put a rain barrel under a downspout to collect free water for the garden.

Compost

It is the basic ingredient of good soil. Start with a simple heap of plant material or buy a bin to keep out the animals.

Garden plastics

Take cardboard boxes to the nursery and leave plastic nursery flats behind.

Garden power

Electric mowers, string trimmers, leaf blowers and hedge trimmers create less pollution and are more energy-efficient than gas ones.

Trees

Plant them. One mature tree takes care of the pollution caused by 13 cars per year.

Driving

Driving 75 mph instead of 65 mph can cut fuel consumption by as much as 15 percent. A clean air filter can improve gas mileage by as much as 10 percent. Properly inflated and aligned tires improve mileage by about 3 percent.

Reuse

Check out freecycle.org. It's a kind of 3-bay experience – but without the financial gain. The city-specific sites allow people to post items they want to get rid of and others who live close by, in turn, to “shop” for something they need.

Kitty litter

Consider alternative litter. There are more earthy-friendly, organic options than the standard clay litters, which pile up in landfills.

