

Rotary District 9810 Sustainable Communities



Sustainable Communities
Walking Lightly on the Earth

‘Green Tips’ for Bulletins and Newsletters

1. Take a four minute power shower

By reducing your time in the shower from seven minutes to four, you could save over 25,000 litres of water per year. The Victorian Government offers rebates on water-saving shower heads, or they cost as little as \$20 at your local hardware store, and by using one you can reduce water use by another 20 per cent.

Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/thesustainables/1.htm>

And so you enjoy your water efficient shower, here’s a list of great 4 minute long songs to listen to.

Another brick in the wall - Pink Floyd

Burning down the house - Talking Heads

Holy Grail – Hunters and Collectors

The Animal Song – Savage Garden

Material Girl or *Express yourself* – Madonna

I’ll stand by you - The Pretenders

It had to be you - Billie Holiday

Karma chameleon - Culture Club

Leaving, on a jet plane - John Denver

Night moves - Michael Franks

The final countdown - Europe

The name of the game - Abba

Walking on sunshine - Katrina and the Waves

Your song - Elton John

Or you can sing *Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head*, *ah la* John Farnham, twice!

For information on rebates or more ideas on how you can save water around the home, search for ‘Our Water Our Future’ online.

2. Take reusable bags with you when you go shopping

Take your canvas bags

When you go

To the supermarket

Why use plastic ones when you know

You know the world can't take it

-*Canvas Bags* by Tim Minchin, a great Australian comedian (look him up on YouTube)

Australians use around 6.4 billion plastic bags a year; each one will take hundreds of years to break down in our environment and may even result in the death of marine creatures, like sea turtles who mistake them for jellyfish.

Switch to reusable calico, string or ‘green’ bags, or reuse your old plastic bags when you go shopping. Keep them in the car and make it a habit. Many retailers are beginning to charge for plastic bags, so it may even save you money.

Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/thesustainables/2.htm>

3. Reduce phantom power use

Did you know your TV and other electrical appliances still use power while on standby?

It's called phantom power and accounts for around 12 per cent of electricity use, costing Victorian households about \$125 million each year.

The surest way to kill phantom power usage, is to simply pull the plug. That means when you're done with your coffee pot, microwave, hair dryer and other devices, disconnect them totally from their power sources. Switching appliances off at the power point when not in use could save you around \$100 a year.

Next to the TV, which can draw 12 watts of electricity even after you flick off *American Idol*, the biggest standby energy hog is the home computer and its suite of devices. A printer can draw 11.5 watts when idling, and a subwoofer, 10.8.

If you find turning several appliances off each night a pain, try timers, or you can even buy power boards for the living room and study, which turn everything else off when you switch off the main appliance like the television or the computer or turn these off after a certain time of dis-use.

Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/thesustainables/3.htm> and thedailygreen.com

4. Sign up to Green Power with your electricity supplier

Over 90 per cent of our electricity is generated by burning coal, which creates greenhouse pollution and contributes to climate change.

Green Power is government accredited clean, renewable energy sourced from the sun, the wind, water and waste. Green Power produces no greenhouse pollution and is purchased on your behalf by your electricity company.

It only costs a small amount - \$3-4 extra a week - to purchase 100 per cent accredited Green Power, but it makes a significant contribution to our environment.

Contact your electricity supplier to make the switch to Green Power, and a cleaner, brighter future. Alternatively, visit www.greenpower.gov.au or telephone 1300 723 588.

Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/thesustainables/4.htm>

5. Buy the most energy and water efficient appliances you can afford

If you're in the market for a new appliance like a washing machine, fridge or air conditioner then consider buying an energy or water efficient model.

They often cost a little more than standard appliances, but save you money in the long term through smaller bills.

Energy efficiency rating labels from zero to six stars help you determine the efficiency and running costs of different models. Energy Star compliant home electronics products consume up to 75% less energy in standby mode than standard products do; an improvement of only 1 star can mean savings of around ten percent on running costs.

For water efficient appliances, look for as many A's as possible to help Victoria go easy on this precious resource.

Visit www.energyrating.gov.au for advice on choosing energy efficient appliances.

Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/thesustainables/5.htm>

6: Choose the right lights

This week's tip comes from Pat, founder of the District 9810 Sustainable Communities Committee.

"In 2006, we were living in a "halogen horror house". We counted up that our house had a total of 29, 50W, 12 volt halogen lamps. Assuming that we use these for an average of about 2 hours per day, these lamps were using about 1,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per year to run, at an annual cost of about \$120 (with rate increases this would be closer to \$180 in 2013).

We investigated the alternatives to halogen lamps at The Environment Shop (now called EnviroShop). Even then there were a number of different types of lamp available and the shop had a useful display to allow us to compare the different types. Some of these were quite expensive, so we were advised to replace our 50W halogen lamps with 6, 35W, high efficiency halogen lamps for the kitchen area and 20W halogen lamps for the rest of the house. This was expected to reduce our energy consumption by 54% per year and bring our annual cost for the halogen lighting down to \$56.00, not including initial replacement costs. Our total investment in the new lamps was \$193, with a pay-back period of about 4 years."

At your place, think about the types of lights you have installed and consider if switching to alternatives could save you a similar amount of money and energy.

- Visit The Enviro Shop in 594 High Street Thornbury (phone 03 9480 1905) or go to their website at: <http://www.envirogroup.com.au/>. For more information on down light alternatives try <http://www.todae.com.au/Products/downlightreplacements/>
- If replacing halogen lamps, choose lamps with the lowest wattage to provide adequate lighting for the room and, where possible, use energy efficient lamps

Source: Sustainable Energy Authority Victoria

http://www.sustainable-energy.vic.gov.au/seinfo/yourhome/lighting/tips_and_hints.asp

7. Look for products without unnecessary packaging

Recycling is great, but avoiding waste in the first place is even better.

Each year packaging waste grows along with our increase in consumption and less than half of our post-consumer packaging is recycled. The creation of such packaging uses up precious resources and litter is ugly to look at and adds to landfill.

The Federal Government, in its *Key Threatening Process in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (1999), has classified packaging waste as a direct threat to over 20 marine species. For example, up to 60 per cent of platypuses in certain regions have been found with lacerations to the body as a direct result of packaging litter.

So, next time you go shopping, choose the products with the least packaging, or packaging made from recycled materials and dispose of all packaging correctly and Keep Australia Beautiful.

Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/thesustainables/7.htm>

8. Increase your use of 'active transport'

Passenger vehicles in Australia produce almost 46 million tonnes of greenhouse pollution a year and are a major contributor to air pollution in urban areas.

By leaving your car at home and using 'active transport' – any journey that relies more on walking, cycling and using public transport – both you and our environment can breathe easier.

If your commute to work isn't conducive to active transport, consider other ways you can reduce car use, such as car pooling.

Visit www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au or www.travelsmart.vic.gov.au for more information on active transport, or www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au or www.viclink.com.au for public transport information.

Visit Bicycle Victoria www.bv.com.au and Parks Victoria www.parkweb.vic.gov.au for information on cycle routes.

For car pooling try local start up <http://www.ridesharingoz.com.au/> for someone to share the drive with.

Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/thesustainables/8.htm>

9. Grow plants native to your area

Gardens are a major water user, soaking up to 35 per cent of total household water use in some areas. Planting a water-wise garden using native plants is one of the most practical ways to save water and money.

Not only do native plants provide good habitat and food sources for bird and other organisms, they are generally adapted to Australia's dry climate, so require less water than exotic plant species.

Planting a native garden also reduces the threat of 'garden escapes'- common garden plants which, when not maintained, can spread into the local environment, become weeds and cause issues.

Ask at your local nursery for plants native to your area and advice on water smart garden design. Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/thesustainables/9.htm>

10. Go green when you clean

Whoever said you need chemicals to make your house spic and span?

Everyday household items like bicarbonate of soda, white vinegar and lemon juice can be very effective cleaning agents, and are far less harmful to our environment.

For example:

- White vinegar is a natural acid that can be used to clean and freshen almost anything! It works well on greasy surfaces, like tiles.
- A little bicarb-soda, a touch of water and a scourer or damp cloth are very effective for cleaning stainless steel sinks or laminex bench tops.
- Pure soap flakes are a far less damaging laundry detergent than many commercial products.

If buying commercial cleaning agents, look for those that are phosphate free, and where possible, low in sodium. These two agents can be very harmful to our waterways, and as a result, for our aquatic and bird life. Products like these are also generally safe to use if you have a grey-water system.

Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/thesustainables/10.htm>

11. Recycling Near You

You can't just put things like batteries, car batteries, computers, printer cartridges and mobile phones in the rubbish bin...so where DO you recycle them?

Many retailers who sell new replacements will recycle your old batteries, cartridges, appliances and phones as part of their service.

Other items can be dropped off to specialised recycling facilities or put out for hard rubbish collection. Some local council have annual hard rubbish collection periods, whilst others require you to arrange a specific collection date of your goods: go to your council's website for information in your area.

To find information about the recycling and waste services offered by your council, as well as local drop off options for items including and many more use the Search function at the following site: RecyclingNearYou, www.recyclingnearyou.com.au, or call the Hotline on 1300 733 712

12. Put your food or plant scraps in the compost or worm farm

Over half of our household garbage is made up of food and garden waste, most of which could be put in the compost or worm farms instead of going to landfill.

Composting can convert the waste into rich soil that can be used to make your garden grow. The process only takes a couple of weeks.

Contact your local council or visit Sustainability Victoria to find out more about how worm farms and composting works.

Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/thesustainables/6.htm>

13. Hot water from the sun

Do you currently have a gas or electric hot water system at either your home, holiday house or at work and are considering switching over to a solar hot water system?

The average family spends about 25% of its annual energy bill on just heating water. Installing a solar hot water system with a gas booster could save your family about \$200 a year and reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the same time. Government rebates change all the time so if you are considering a solar hot water system, check out <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/government/programsand-rebates/solar-hot-water.aspx> or <http://www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au>.

Although a solar hot water system costs about three times that of a gas heater, the pay-back period is only about 12 years. After that, providing hot water for your family with the energy from the sun will save you about \$200 each year.

If you are not yet ready to switch to a solar hot water system, you can still take steps to reduce the amount of hot water used in your home, such as:

- Making sure that temperature setting of the hot water storage unit is set to the minimum recommended temperature, usually 60°C
- Washing and rinsing clothes in cold water
- Using less hot water in the shower either by taking shorter showers, fitting a water efficient showerhead or fitting a flow restrictor to an existing shower head.

14. How wasteful are you?

According to the Australian Institute, a survey conducted by Roy Morgan Research in November 2004 has shown that we really are a wasteful society.

It seems that in 2004, each Australian household spent \$1,226 on things they did not use. As a nation, our wasteful habits cost over \$10.5 billion dollars per year. This is more than Australian governments spends on universities and roads.

According to the Institute, "Overall Australians threw away \$2.9 billion of fresh food, \$630 million of uneaten take-away food, \$876 million of leftovers, \$596 million of unfinished drinks and \$241 million of frozen food, a total of \$5.3 billion on all forms of food in 2004. This represents more than 13 times the \$386 million donated by Australian households to overseas aid agencies in 2003."

So, are you waste wise, waste-ish or just plain wasteful?

- Only buy what you really need (e.g., don't impulse buy, use a shopping list, don't buy large amounts unless you can use it all)
- Shop carefully – check use by dates, buy the ones with the longest dates
- Compost unused or rotten fruit and vegetables.

15. Social Sustainability

Sustainability is more than just environmental sustainability; it is also about social equity and fairness. The charity groups, such as the Salvos, do a wonderful job of helping the less fortunate in our community, as does your own Rotary club and the Rotary Foundation.

What you can do

- Give to charities generously - these gifts are often tax deductible
- Instead of your family giving you birthday presents each year, ask that they give a cash donation instead to a favourite charity
- Keep small change in the ashtray of your car and give generously at street corner or traffic light collections for charity groups (You never know, the collector might be a Rotarian!)

16. World Environment Day

June 5 is World Environment Day.

Maybe you'll celebrate by attending an event; check out what's happening in Melbourne at http://www.onlymelbourne.com.au/melbourne_details.php?id=11609.

Or perhaps you can just take a minute to mark the day by reflecting on what you have done at work and at home over the past year to reduce your impact on the natural environment. Have you bought and installed a water-efficient shower head or used public transport, instead of driving, or just built the habit of refusing plastic bag whilst shopping and taking your own. However small these acts, they all make a difference.

17. No-dig Gardens

No-dig Gardens are fertile, above ground gardens that can be grown on almost any surface: soil, lawn, clay or sand, even concrete.

Esther Deans, an Australian gardener, created the first No-dig Gardens more than 25 years ago using layers of lucerne hay, straw and compost directly on the hard clay soil of her suburban backyard. She discovered that this combination produced fantastic crops of vegetables without the hard work of digging the soil.

No-dig gardens are fantastic in Australia, as a great deal of our soil is nutrient deficient, hard to work and somewhat inhospitable to our favourite herbs and vegetables. Construction of these types of gardens has the two-fold advantage of both protecting and improving the existing soil; as the organic matter we use to fill our no dig beds breaks down over time, the health of the soil beneath improves, as does the structure, nutrient content, microbial and worm activity.

No-dig gardens are good for people with aging backs and knees, as they are an excellent way of bringing the garden up to you, rather than you going to the garden! The raised height of the beds means pets and other ground dwelling, garden-squashing backyard beasties (that includes soccer balls and wayward children!) can't reach the plants. These types of gardens are also great for renters or those who move a lot as many no-dig systems can be simply take with you.

Source: Sustainable Gardening Australia <http://www.sgaonline.org.au/?p=6966>

Look up 'no dig gardens' online or try <http://www.abc.net.au/gardening/stories/s867068.htm>

18. Green driving

With the cost of petrol regularly over \$1.30, we are all looking at ways to cut our fuel bill each week. This will also help the environment by cutting pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the RACV, one simple tip to cut fuel bills is to flow smoothly with the traffic. Be aware of traffic conditions ahead so you can anticipate the next stop and avoid unnecessary acceleration and braking. Driving a good distance from the car in front means you can see what is happening ahead and you don't have to brake every time they do. Of course, as well as saving fuel, smoother driving is also safer.

Check out the nine tips on the RACV website 10 tips to reduce fuel costs and help the environment at <http://www.racv.com.au/>.

19. Farm some worms!

Tigers, Reds and Indian Blues! Whatever can they be?

They are all worms! Not just any sort of worm though – they are all types of composter worms and they love to eat your food waste, shredded paper and your garden waste!

Composter worms are not your everyday garden worms; they like to live in a dark, moist, cool, environments that are rich in nutrients.

To cultivate compost worms, you can buy a special worm farm, such as RELN Worm Factory, from most gardening suppliers. One of these will cost under \$100.

Alternatively, just add some compost worms to your compost bin and let the worms do all the work for you. Just make sure that you keep the worm factory and your compost bin out of the sun, as too much heat will kill the worms.

Worms don't have teeth so remember to put in some soil, sand, leaves or something gritty like sawdust or ground up egg shells when you are feeding your worms; they need something to help them grind up the food and waste.

- Find out how to build a simple worm farm in a polystyrene box from the following fact sheet: http://www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au/documents/Worm_Farms_fact_sheet.pdf

20. Leaves down the drain

Leaves are a pain in the drain!

Leaves that are washed down drains either blown by the wind or swept with a broom, end up in our creeks and waterways. They will eventually break down, creating excess nutrients in the water and promoting the growth of algae. This reduces the amount of oxygen in the water and can affect the health of local aquatic life, both plants and animals.

You can assist by raking up the leaves in your yard (and street) and using them as mulch on the garden. This will help to reduce the amount of water needed by your plants, and reduce your water bill.

You can also add them to your compost bin. If the leaves are too large or you have too many leaves, rake them into a heap and run over them with a lawn mower, then add them to your compost heap.

Remember that, in composting, you need to add equal amount of dried leaves ("Browns", which are high in carbon) with fresh materials such as grass clippings or fruit and vegetable scraps ("Greens", which are high in nitrogen).

If you have too many leaves, as in autumn, you could leave them in a separate pile and add them in equal quantities to your compost bin with the "Greens" that you add every few days. Alternatively, you can add the excess autumn leaves to your green waste bin, but you will be losing all the wonderful nutrients that are bound up in the leaves and which could be returned to your garden as beautiful mulch or compost

21. Conserve energy in the workplace

Whether you work in an office or from home, consider these ideas to make your workplace more sustainable and save you money.

- Turn off all lights and equipment when they do not need to be operating.
- Use energy efficient office equipment and power saving functions where they will be most effective.
- Use the most efficient motors, make sure equipment is the right size for the job
- Use the most efficient lights – triphosphor tubes are cheaper to run than fluorescent lights.
- Replace incandescent globes with fluorescent tubes to save power as well as reduce air conditioning loads and reduce labour needed to change globes.
- Install skylights in the roof or walls to reduce the need for artificial lighting.
- Minimise expenditure on space heating. At 20°C, a 1°C increase can cost about 20 per cent more.
- Fit self-closing doors to reduce heat (or cold) loss from draughts.
- Minimise the use of hot water as it costs much more than cold water.

Source: http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/Business_Sustainability/SME/conserve_energy.as

22. Keeping your cool in the heat

Sustainability Victoria released a useful information sheet to help people to cope with extremely hot days without spending a fortune on energy bills to keep cool.

The top 5 tips to keep cool at home during scorches are:

1. Close external blinds and awnings, as well as curtains, to keep out the sun's hot rays (it's best to do this in the morning before it heats up)
2. Keep doors and windows closed to keep out hot air – and open them up as soon as the temperature outside has dropped
3. Dress appropriately and keep well hydrated
4. Avoid using appliances such as ovens, clothes dryers, dishwashers, irons and halogen lighting as they generate heat and make your home hotter - and save that roast for another cooler night.
5. If you have an air-conditioner, only cool the areas you're using and keep the thermostat between 24-27 degrees to reduce running costs while still staying comfortable.

And when all else fails, visit the local pool, shopping centre or cinema to cool off with others!

23. Be a friendly fan of aircon

Fans are particularly effective on still, humid days, and keeping you comfortable on warm nights, but did you know one refrigerative air-conditioner uses the same amount of energy as 30 portable fans?

To get the best use from your refrigerative air conditioner and save money, set the thermostat at between 24 to 27 degrees as every degree lower drives up your running costs by 15 per cent.

Make sure the system is only on when you're home, and always keep doors, windows and blinds shut when cooling.

Being energy smart during these hot days will not only help to keep you cool, but will save on energy bills and cut greenhouse pollution.

For more information and tips on keeping your home cool, visit Sustainability Victoria's website at www.sustainability.vic.gov.au or call 1300 363 744.

24. Water Efficient Labelling

The water awareness campaign of Melbourne Water and water agencies appears to be working, with research showing a 46% reduction in water consumption for Melbourne's households, compared to the average for the late 1990s.

However there is still no room for complacency. A study on the impacts of climate change on our water supplies suggests that in the future Melbourne will experience increased average and summer temperatures, reduced rainfall and more extreme events such as more hot days and intense storms.

According Yarra Valley Water, residential customers use slightly more than half of all the water supplied in Melbourne, and about 75% of that is used indoors.

National Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) assist householders to make informed decisions and choices about indoor household water appliances, such as toilets, showers, clothes washing machines, dishwashers, flow controllers and taps. Look out for these when you next buy a water appliance for your home or office.

Two useful websites:

- www.waterrating.gov.au Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) Scheme
- Melbourne Water Climate Change Study Implications of Potential Climate Change for Melbourne's Water Resources
http://www.melbournewater.com.au/content//library/news/whats_new/Climate_Change_Study.pdf

25. Hybrid Cars

This week's tip comes from Pat, founder of the District 9810 Sustainable Communities Committee.

"You have probably ridden in or may even own one of the new generation of hybrid cars. In Australia, two of the well known brands are the Toyota Prius hatchback and the Honda Civic Hybrid. Toyota released the Camry and Lexus the hybrid GS450h. Overseas there are many more brands available. I have driven Toyota Prius and found it to be a bit eerie at first.

When were braking, the petrol engine turned off, the car being powered totally by the electric engine. However, we soon got used to this and enjoyed the smooth ride and GPS navigation system, knowing that we were only using about 5.1 litres per hundred kilometres, compared to a typical small to medium car which uses 8-9 litres per hundred kilometres, like out 2006 Toyota Corolla. The Honda Civic Hybrid is even more fuel efficient using about 4.2 litres per hundred kilometres."

So what is a hybrid car? According to Choice Australia, it's a combination of an efficient petrol motor with an electric motor.

In the HONDA, the electric motor helps the petrol motor keep fuel consumption down, while the TOYOTA can run on the electric motor alone if the car is moving slowly. Both systems use the electric and petrol motors together when more power is needed. In both cars, the electric motor is powered by a battery. Whenever you brake, the electric motor converts to a generator and tops up the battery.

The TOYOTA system turns off the petrol engine when decelerating and in some light throttle conditions. The power-assisted brakes, power steering, air conditioning and other electrical systems continue to operate as normal. HONDA keeps the engine running on long downhill stretches, but on one cylinder.

Hybrid vehicles are increasingly coming down in prices compared to traditional petrol engine cars.

There is a great deal of research and development going on worldwide for vehicles that will use less fossil fuel. Some of these areas of research involve developing more efficient batteries, combining an electric engine with a more efficient diesel engine, and, in the long-term, hydrogen fuel cells. In the meantime, we can all try to use our cars less and to use public transport where possible.

Some useful websites to find out more about hybrid cars:

- Aussie Motoring: <http://www.aussiemotoring.com/2010/03/28/hybridcars-in-australia/>
- Hybrid Cars, Choice magazine: <http://www.choice.com.au/viewArticle.aspx?id=104663&catId=100462&tid=100008&p=1>

26. Small business heating

During the cold months, we want to keep our workplaces and homes warm enough so our fingers don't freeze!

According to Sustainability Australia, heating consumes around one third of a typical small business' energy bills. Reducing your heating costs could save you hundreds of dollars each year.

Consider these tips to save energy and money over winter.

- Turn off the heating when it is not required. Potential savings: \$250-\$700 per year
- Set the thermostats correctly – set for 18-20°C. Potential savings: \$70-\$200 per year
- Don't heat rooms that are only used occasionally. Close the doors to these rooms.
- Consider heating localised areas, rather than centrally heating the whole building. Potential savings: at least \$60 per year
- Program your thermostats to come on 30 minutes before work starts.
- Use simple timers to turn your portable heaters on and off automatically. Potential savings: up to \$3.50 per day per heater.
- Keep external doors closed where possible. Potential savings: \$180-\$400 per year.
- If your gas heater has a pilot light, turn off the pilot light over summer. Potential savings: \$20 per year per heater.

Source: Small Business Heating Hints Info Sheet Sustainable Energy Authority Victoria (Now Sustainability Victoria)

27. Green Gift Giving

According to Roy Morgan Research, in 2009 six million, or one in three, Australians received one or more Christmas or birthday presents that they never used or later gave away.

Consider asking your family to make a donation to your favourite charity, instead of giving you a gift that you will probably never use. Offer to do the same for friends and family.

And don't just resort to gift cards-according to the Canberra Times, over \$300 million worth of gift card credit was left expired and unused from the Christmas period of 2011.

28. Eco-friendly painting tips

Maybe you don't want a forest-green home, but you can still keep the environment in mind while painting. Here are some things to consider.

- Dispose safely. Never pour thinners, solvents or paint down the drain. Put them in tight-fitting jars or cans and have them picked up or delivered to a hazardous waste disposal site. For information about collections in your area, contact your local municipal or state government.
- Reuse. Paint thinner often can be reused. Over time, paint sludge settles on the bottom of the container. Pour the clean solvent off the top and use. When the thinner is gone, stuff an absorbent material into the can to dry the sludge before throwing the can into the trash. Consider giving unused paint thinner or stripper to local furniture refinishing shops or paint contractors.
- Air out cans before disposal. If there is a small amount of latex paint left in a can, leave the can open in a well-ventilated place. When it is completely dry, the can may be placed in the trash.
- Donate. Consider donating leftovers to a local theatre group, parks department, school, or organization, or take it to a community exchange. Many towns have “drop and swaps” once or twice a year.
- Reduce waste. If you have more than half a gallon left over, try to use it for another project. Try mixing several colours of similar paints together. Make sure cans are properly labelled.

Source: Ecoshare.org

29. Grand Green Designs

Building or renovating? There's plenty of ways you can reduce the environmental impact of building, and improve the sustainability of your new house or addition, without a great deal of extra work or expense.

1. *Think green from the word go*

Start thinking about how you can reduce the environmental impact of your building from the outset. Work with your site, not against it. How can you maximise the natural light and airflow? If you're starting from scratch, you might want to visit the site at different times of the day to get a feel for the breezes, the light and the views.

2. *Shop around*

When you're selecting a designer, an architect or a builder ask them about the work they've done in the past. They should have proven sustainable design case studies available. If they don't, keep looking.

3. *Make use of existing on-site materials*

Re-use where you can. Bricks can be ideal for paving, flooring can be used for fencing or shelving – rethinking how you can use materials might bring out the creative home builder in you that you didn't know existed!

4. Minimise your exposure to hazardous materials

Assess materials in the building to make sure you're aware of potential risks such as asbestos, lead contaminated paint or dust. Close contaminated areas off from the rest of the building and make sure you work with plenty of ventilation.

5. Dispose of hazardous materials properly

Materials such as asbestos should be disposed of properly as they can constitute a significant health risk. Licensed asbestos removal contractors can be found online.

6. Check your labels and get more information

Minimise your use of hazardous and environmentally unfriendly materials by checking product labels carefully. Claims such as 'natural' and 'organic' should be inspected closely – a product may contain natural ingredients, but only as a very small percentage of the whole. If you're not sure about claims made by companies, ask questions and do your research.

7. Design to minimise future use of hazardous materials

There are many ways design can minimise use of hazardous chemicals once the building work is done and you're living your new palace. Proper ventilation in wet areas will reduce mould, tight-fitting cabinetry minimises cracks and crevices loved by rodents and roaches, and insect screens will keep those insects outside where they belong.

8. Use sustainable materials

Source sustainable materials whenever you can. Again, check product claims carefully, and remember that salvaged or recycled materials such as timber are not only better for the environment, they often have a special warmth and patina.

9. Insulate. Insulate. Insulate!

Installing effective insulation is the best way to keep your house cool in summer and warm in winter – reducing your energy bills.

10. Sun and water

See if your house is suitable for solar panels. It will save your electricity costs in the long run and you'll be using less fossil fuels. Look at installing rainwater tanks and grey water recycling systems wherever possible.

Source: Ecoshare.org

30. Suit to sustainable

What do you wear to work, or every day? Synthetic fabrics may require expensive dry cleaning involving potent chemicals that can contribute to air and water pollution when not handled properly. The alternative?

- Check the label. Avoid clothing that requires dry cleaning. Choose cotton and wool. Natural fibres are easier to care for at home. Often they can be washed in cool water and hung out to dry, reducing chemical use and energy, too.
- Try fabric blends. Fabrics that are a blend of cotton and synthetic fibres can usually be laundered at home.
- Dress down. Fancier outfits seem to require more dry cleaning than casual wear. Encourage your office to implement a "casual day" on Fridays.

Source: Ecoshare.org

31. Cut down junk mail, not trees

Monitoring the mail you receive is a great way to cut down your clutter. You'll have less to dispose of, you'll feel less overwhelmed, and you'll take a step towards helping to save our environment.

Benefits include...

- Saving trees. More than 100 million trees are destroyed each year to produce junk mail. 42% of timber harvested nationwide becomes pulpwood for paper.
- Reducing global warming. The energy used to produce and dispose of junk mail exceeds 2.8 million cars.
- Saving water. About 106 billion litres of water are wasted to produce and recycle junk each year.
- Saving time. You waste about 70 hours a year dealing with junk mail.

Pick up a 'No Junk Mail' sticker for your letter box at any hardware or variety store. If you still want to receive catalogues from some brands, you can sign up for an email subscription through most retailers' websites. You can also sign up for 'paperless' monthly bank statements and household bills.

Source: Ecoshare.org

32. An Eco-friendly Coffee Break

Whether you prefer your java in the morning, at noon or at night, most of us are more interested in getting our daily caffeine jolt than pondering whether our cup of Joe is environmentally friendly. But even small changes in our coffee routines can add up to a lot less waste and a healthier planet!

- Invest in the perfect reusable mug and kick the Styrofoam disposable cup habit. Polystyrene isn't biodegradable, and after just one use most cups will end up lingering in a landfill for centuries.
- Resist the temptation to use individually packaged sugars, creamers, and throwaway stirrers. If your favourite coffee shop doesn't offer alternatives, consider politely asking them to change their ways.
- Check for Fair Trade certification. Fair Trade labels ensure safe working conditions and fair compensation for farm workers. Many Fair Trade certified commodities are also grown without the use of genetically modified organisms (GMO's) or pesticides.
- Go organic and shade-grown. Coffee that has been certified organic is grown and processed without toxic chemicals, and shade-grown or bird-friendly certifications promote the preservation of migratory bird habitats on coffee plantations. Rainforest Alliance's certification ensures a number of sustainable farming practices including shade coverage, water, and pesticide standards.
- Be your own barista. If you're on the market for a new coffee maker, try a French press. Unlike most coffee machines, French presses are manual, don't require paper filters, and use less water and energy per brew.
- Use only the amount of coffee grounds that you really need. If you're grinding your own beans, use the shortest time possible to obtain your desired coffee consistency.
- Give your coffee grounds a second life - keep them handy in the kitchen to scrub grease off of pots and pans or try placing them in the refrigerator to absorb common odours. Turns out used coffee grounds also make great plant fertilizer! Toss them in with your compost heap or sprinkle them on soil to add a natural nitrogen boost.

Source: Ecoshare.org

33. Sustainable fashion

Many of us are after more than value for money when we shop for clothes – we also want values in how our clothes are made. But what do we mean by ethical fashion and how can we spot it when we see it?

1. The entire supply chain

It's important to look at how workers are treated along the entire supply chain – both those who sew the clothes and those who produce the raw materials. Do they get a fair wage? What are their working conditions? What kind of hours do they have to work, and can they form unions to represent their views to employers? Ask questions and do your homework.

2. The raw materials

Ethical fashion also respects the earth. Growing cotton is a polluting business, causing damage to our rivers and soils, and on the people working in the fields. Shop for cotton that meets organic standards – while remembering to always question 'organic' claims. It's a word that's used too often, and frequently with little link to our real understanding of the term.

3. The treatment of the raw materials

The chemicals that are used in dyeing and processing cotton also need to be considered – again look for 'natural dyes' remembering to question what this claim means if it's used.

4. Australian-made doesn't mean ethically made

When we think of sweat shops, we often think of countries such as India and China. Many clothing workers in Australia, particularly home-based workers, receive as little as three or four dollars an hour, with no superannuation or annual leave.

5. Labels

Don't be afraid to question claims on labels. In Australia, business and union representatives have come together as [Ethical Clothing Australia](#). Accredited brands can display the Ethical Clothing Australia trademark on their Australian made products. This means everyone involved in the production received the legal rates of pay and conditions.

6. Uniforms

Encouraging the purchase of ethical uniforms and footwear in your workplace, local schools or community groups is an important way to have a direct and positive impact on efforts to support ethical clothing production and manufacture.

7. Go vintage

Rapidly changing fashions create a lot of waste. We buy something one day, and hate it the next. Fortunately recycling is all the rage in clothing – known more fashionably as "vintage". Forage through your local op shops and re-use yesterday's treasures. Or go to your local markets – you never know what you'll find!

8. Get swapping

Set up a local swap-meet. Your rejects will be somebody else's perfect outfit. You'll have fun, save money and stop a lot of fashion from ending up as landfill.

9. Up-cycle

Get out your sewing machine and adapt what you've got. You might discover your inner Chanel in the process.

10. Think before you shop

A lot of the time we buy things we don't really need. Be conscious of how you're spending. Invest in quality that will last – and don't be afraid to ask questions about where the item came from and how it was made. Your purchasing power can make a world of difference

Source: Ecoshare.org

34. How green is your lawn

Now that spring is here, it's time to begin dreaming about the grass growing beneath your feet. But a lot of lawns aren't very "green" - at least, not for the environment. Residential lawns can use a lot of toxic chemicals – over a kilo of pesticides per square kilometre. The poisons don't end at your front door. When it rains, pesticides may be flushed into local streams, rivers, and lakes, harming fish and plants along the way. Here are some tips to make sure your grass looks great - and is safe for pets, children, and other living things.

- Use natural fertilizers, which release nutrients slowly throughout the year, won't leach away, and support the variety of soil organisms that improve fertility and combat diseases.
- Water deeply but infrequently. Grasses do best when the whole root zone is wetted, and then dries out between waterings. Avoid frequent shallow watering that causes poor root development. Overwatering also promotes lawn disease.
- Aerate in the spring and fall. Use a rented power-aerator, or insert a garden fork six inches deep every four inches and lever back and forth to loosen the soil.
- Remove weeds using pincer-type weed pullers, which work great in moist soil and can be used standing up. Or, if you must, spot-spray problem weeds.
- Crowd out weeds by growing a dense lawn. Mow higher, leave the clippings, fertilize properly, and improve thin areas with aeration, overseeding, and top dressing.
- Create healthy soil. Earthworms and other soil organisms keep the soil healthy. By moving through the soil, they allow water and air to penetrate, and they recycle thatch back into nutrients that the grass can use.

Source: Ecoshare.org

35. Make 'Man's Best Friend' eco-friendly too!

How green is your dog? From greener grooming and natural food, to cleaning up after Fido and Fluffy's "accidents" and ridding them of pests, you can reduce your pet's carbon paw print and improve their health and quality of life.

- If you're looking to adopt, please visit a local shelter. There are thousands of deserving, adoptable pets at shelters and animal rescues just waiting for the right owner and a loving home. And adopting from a shelter means you won't be supporting mass-breeding puppy mills, known for housing animals in shockingly poor living conditions and contributing to over-population (having your pet neutered also helps with this problem).
- Organic for you and Rover, too! Most of us make an effort to buy as much healthy, organic food for our families as we can, so make sure to look for organic options when considering food for your pet. Conventional pet foods have been known to contain some pretty nasty ingredients including pesticides, added hormones, animal by-products, and antibiotics.
- Fleas and ticks cause misery to people and animals. On pets they can spread disease and parasitic infections. Then they may decide to feast on you! But you can avoid and get rid of these common pests without harming your pet, your family or the planet. Don't overlook the basics: Keep your pet clean; use a fine-toothed flea comb to remove existing fleas; and don't forget to dust and vacuum regularly - some people use borax to kill fleas by sprinkling it on their carpet, then vacuuming it up. Another way to keep fleas off pets is to add garlic and brewer's yeast to their meals, which makes them taste bad to bugs. Many such products are sold in pet supply stores.
- Bag your pooch's poop with biodegradable bags instead of plastic grocery bags. You can find biodegradable options at most pet stores. Remember: plastic bags take forever to decompose in landfills, and many of those bags end up in our waterways and oceans. Want to go the extra mile? Consider composting your pet's poop in a pet waste composter.
- Use natural grooming and pet-care products. Shampoos and other pet products often contain more chemicals than you bargained for, so make sure to read the label before lathering up your furry friends with a mega-chemical-cocktail shampoo. We're not recommending any particular brand - just apply the same caution about ingredients when purchasing your pets' grooming products that you would when purchasing your own.
- We all know that ID tags are an absolute requirement for any pet that will be spending time outdoors. You can even go green with your tags - just opt for a pet tag made from recycled materials like aluminium, steel, or silver.

Source: Ecoshare.org

36. Shrink Your Digital Footprint

Living in the modern, high-tech world is energy intensive. On the one hand, technologies have allowed us to forgo travelling to distant meetings for virtual interaction, store files electronically rather than cutting down trees for paper, and work remotely instead of spending long hours commuting. But the energy required for computing and storing data is growing rapidly. Here are some ways we can shrink our digital footprint:

- Ask IT companies to buy renewable. IT companies, like other businesses, are still getting most of their energy supply from coal-fired power plants and other polluting sources. Read a recent Greenpeace report [How Dirty is Your Data](#) to see where internet giants like Amazon, Facebook and Twitter rank on renewable energy usage and tell them to shift away from fossil fuels and nuclear.
- Choose efficient devices. According to the [Natural Resources Defence Council](#) (NRDC), much of the energy used in computing comes not from distant data centres, but from the devices we use every day. Efficient computers can use up to 80% less energy than their thirsty counterparts.
- Utilize green apps for energy monitoring. Research shows that when people know how much energy they're consuming, they use less. New software can deliver real-time information on the emissions generated by buildings, transportation, construction and more.
- Check your power settings. Ensuring your computer automatically shuts down when not in use is the single biggest energy saving opportunity on most computers. Also keep peripherals like scanners and printers unplugged if you're not using them.
- Donate or recycle electronics. Much energy is expended producing and shipping electronic devices, so it's vital to get as much "mileage" out of them as possible. Reusing electronics also keeps harmful metals and plastics from reaching landfills.
- Switch to 'the cloud'. Online file storage platforms like Dropbox and Google Drive reduce the need for paper filing; using your password protected account, your documents and photos can be accessed from any computer and you can share them with colleges and friends easily, with no need for bulky email attachments.

Resources:

[Saving Energy and Reducing Carbon in the Cloud](#) (Microsoft)

[Cool IT Challenge](#) (Greenpeace)

[IT's Low-Hanging Fruit: PC power management software saves money, energy](#)(Environmental Defence Fund)

37. Back to school

We all know instilling good habits is easiest when we're young, so more and more parents and educators are working to make kids aware of the importance of caring for our planet. As kids get ready to return to school in February after the holiday break, here are some simple tips to encourage sustainable habits and support a healthy environment... and healthy kids!

- Start with the basics. Remind kids to turn off the lights in the bathroom or any unoccupied room at home and at school. Encourage them to throw away any trash they find on the school playground, tell them to use both sides of their notebook paper, and suggest that they save unused chalk and art supplies.
- Carpool. If you live somewhere where bus service isn't provided, start a carpool and take turns with other parents in the neighbourhood to drop off and pick up the kids. You'll each save time, energy, and fuel.
- Lunch break. Pack kids' lunches in lunch pails or canvas bags instead of throwaway paper bags. Consider re-using plastic sandwich bags, or only using durable plastic containers. Be sure containers are safe, however, as some plastic lunch boxes contain harmful toxins such as PVCs.
- It might seem obvious, but check out your school's recycling programs. the youngest member for the Sustainable Communities Committee, Clare Caulfield of Monash Rotaract, got start in sustainability by running her high school recycling program. Ask whether recycling bins are available and accessible -- and if the kids are encouraged to use them. Make sure your child knows what can be recycled and what can't-have this discussion as they help you take out the rubbish.
- Make smart decisions while shopping. Buy school supplies with less packaging and seek those made with organic and/or recycled materials. Consider investing in sturdier products – this can ensure years of use from commonly used items like backpacks.
- Re-use school supplies that are in good condition. When you're in the middle of the back-to-school shopping frenzy, it's sometimes easy to forget about all those items you have at home that are still in good working condition. Binders, loose leaf paper, pencils and scissors are often only lightly used. Save money and resources by buying only what's really needed! If you can't re-use old products, donate them to your school or a local day care.
- Keep children in touch with nature. After-school time used to involve catching fireflies, exploring the neighbourhood woods, making mudpies, and just having a good time running around outside. This has changed dramatically in the digital age and children are less connected to nature, which can cause them to care less about its condition. Instead of plopping down in front of the T.V. or computer after school, encourage your kids get outside for an hour or two each day. Not much daylight left after the homework's done? Take a family walk after dinner, devote your weekends to outdoor-only activities like biking and hiking, or start a nature club for your family. Studies have shown children who spend more time outside are less likely to suffer from obesity, Attention Deficit Disorder, and depression.

38. Cold Facts About Fireplaces

When you light a blazing fire on a cold winter day it looks and feels wonderful, but it can be an expensive and inefficient endeavour. A fireplace sends most of the heat in your house straight up the chimney emitting as much as 680,000 litres of air per hour to the outside! But, there are ways you can limit the loss of heat when enjoying a quiet evening by the fire.

- Reduce heat loss by opening dampers in the bottom of the firebox (if provided) or open the nearest window slightly - only about an inch - and close doors leading into the room.
- Keep it clean by hiring a chimney sweep to inspect your chimney each year. And keep ash and soot from collecting in the fireplace to improve efficiency.
- Install tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system that blows warmed air back into the room.
- Check the seal on the flue damper and make it as snug as possible.
- Use grates made of C-shaped metal tubes to draw cool room air into the fireplace and circulate warm air back into the room.
- Keep your fireplace's damper closed when you aren't using it.
- Consider a gas fireplace if you are planning to install a new one. These provide the enjoyment of looking at flames but can be 70% more efficient than regular fireplaces.

Source: Ecoshare.org

39. Give the gift of green

This holiday season, consider giving gift to friends, family and co-workers that will last the whole year through... plants!

Among your many options:

- House plants with particular air-purifying qualities, like pathos, philodendron and spider plants.
- Miniature azaleas rose bushes, hibiscus, Christmas cacti or poinsettias.
- A set of seed packets for the vegetable or flower garden.
- A gift certificate for plants or seeds from a gardening supply catalogue or shop.
- Landscape plants native to your region of the country.
- A basketful of tulip, daffodil and crocus bulbs.

Source: Ecoshare.org

40. Is a real Christmas Tree green?

Our Sustainable Communities Committee member, Clare, always wondered which was more environmentally friendly, buying a cut fresh tree each year, or investing in one plastic Christmas tree and using it for a decade? You can find green advocates arguing both sides online, but turns out there's a third option: Why not consider planting a living tree for the holidays?

- Choose a healthy tree whose roots are balled and wrapped in burlap.
- Keep the tree outside until you're ready to bring it in for decoration.
- Make sure the tree remains well-watered.
- Keep the tree inside for no more than a week.
- Transplant the tree into a hole prepared before the ground froze.
- Plant the tree with plenty of organic matter; mulch and water well.

If you do opt for the fresh cut traditional tree instead of a live one, make sure to recycle it when the holiday is over.

- Trim off the branches and use them for mulch under acid-loving bushes and shrubs.
- Participate in local tree recycling programs.
- Chop the tree trunk into pieces that can be converted into firewood.

Source: Ecoshare.org

41. All I want for Christmas...is less paper waste

Christmas is such a wonderful time of year, full of goodwill and community spirit...and lots of paper! Make your end of year celebrations even greener by thinking out the sustainability of your Yule-tide actions.

- Recycle last year's cards into this year's gift tags. Use serrated scissors to cut the front of the card into appealing shapes and sizes.
- Make sure this year's cards are made from recycled paper.
- Put E-mail to work and send paper-free electronic greeting cards.
- Avoid wrapping paper. Use newspaper or brown craft paper that you can decorate yourself. Sunday comics also make a colourful, recyclable wrap kids will love! Or do what Sustainable Communities Committee member, Clare's, family does: keep and reuse gift bags and boxes.

42. Green golf

Next time you are out on the greens, think about whether your own actions are "green." Here are some easy suggestions on what you can do to help the environment:

- Walk the course instead of using a golf cart. If you do use a golf cart, keep your cart on the designated path.
- Replace all divots.
- Urge your golf course to replace its carts with electric-powered ones, which greatly reduce both air pollution and noise pollution.
- Carry your trash with you until a waste container is available.
- Recycle glass, aluminium, and plastic on the golf course. If your course doesn't have its own recycling program, urge them to start one.
- Buy recyclable products (biodegradable golf tees, golf balls made of rawhide instead of plastic).
- Accept the natural limitations and variations of turf grass plants growing in a natural environment. (e.g., brown patches, thinning, loss of colour). Be willing to play on brown grass during periods of low rainfall.
- Recognize that golf courses are managed land areas that should complement the natural environment. Respect environmentally sensitive areas of the course.
- Encourage maintenance practices that promote the long-range health of the turf and support environmental objectives. Such practices include aerification, reduced fertilization, limited play on sensitive turf areas, reduced watering, etc.
- Support golf course management decisions that protect or enhance the environment and encourage the development of environmental conservation plans.

Source: EcoShare.org

43. Raising a Glass to Truly 'Green' Beer

No doubt you've seen green beer highlighted at your local bar for St. Patrick's Day, and maybe you've even tossed back a few to celebrate the holiday. But what about making sure your beer is 'green' - meaning, earth-friendly - all year?

- Opt for an organic brew. When grown commercially, beer ingredients are typically chock-full of pesticides and chemicals. Do yourself and mother earth a favour by choosing beers made with fresh, pesticide-free hops, wheat, and barley.
- Go for glass over aluminium. When you have the option, it's always best to choose glass over cans since recycling glass is more environmentally friendly. Also, look for bottles packaged with little or no paper labels. More paper and packaging = more waste.
- Hosting a party? Skip the cans and bottles and go for the keg! Kegs are a win-win for your wallet and the environment. Not only are kegs reusable, but they also cut down on the waste you'd normally accumulate with loads of bottles and cans.
- When you break out the keg, be sure to have reusable glasses and cups on hand for your guests. Steer clear of those convenient solo cups – they will inevitably end up in a landfill near you.
- Order beer on tap when dining out. Many restaurants recycle, but it's always best to use fewer individual bottles. And if your favourite establishments *don't* recycle, now may be the perfect time to kindly suggest that they start.
- Speaking of recycling, be sure to remember to sort your own empties into your recycling bin. If you haven't gotten involved your local recycling program yet, there's no better time than the present to locate your best local options and nearest centres.
- Another great way to green your brew is to sip on some local brews. These days more and more beer enthusiasts are breaking into the brewing scene. And the good news for us? These beers are travelling shorter distances so they are often less expensive and fresher than foreign imports. Look for beer festivals and brewery tours near you to begin sampling some local flavours.

44. Coral reefs and sunscreen

While you can't dispute the importance of protecting your skin from UV damage by wearing sunscreen daily, a closer look indicates that some sunscreens could cause serious environmental damage and negatively impact your own health.

Coral reefs are an extremely important part of our environment; they contain biodiversity unlike any other ecosystem in the world. The millions of unusual animal and plant species living in coral reefs would not be able to survive without their coral habitats. And, as the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration explains, coral reefs are our "medicine cabinet of the 21st century," as they will likely yield important new discoveries and help cure diseases. If you're still in doubt about the importance of coral, reefs protect coastal areas from storms and erosion, and even remove and recycle excess carbon.

But, these amazing ecosystems are increasingly threatened. A study published in the Journal of Environmental Health Perspectives found that by promoting viral infection, sunscreens potentially play an important role in coral bleaching. It is estimated that over 5000 metric tonnes of sunscreen is released annually by tourists in reef areas, and because they are often petroleum based, they don't biodegrade.

When chemicals in sunscreen come in contact with reefs, the coral becomes stressed, pushing out the algae living inside and leaving behind a vulnerable skeletal structure. As coral reefs lose their biological inhabitants due to toxins, pollution and increased temperatures due to global warming, they also lose their pigments, becoming "bleached."

So, what can a health conscious individual do if they still want to protect themselves from sun damage? First, make sure to always bring along other sun protection like sunglasses, hats and umbrellas when you know you're going to be outside during the midday hours. Second, read about the potential risks of sunscreen, and then use your consumer savvy and responsible purchasing power to find a sunscreen that protects your health and that of the environment. Look for sunscreens that are free of petrochemical active ingredients and nano-particles. By all accounts, old fashioned zinc-oxide is as safe as ever!

Source: Ecoshare.org

45. Butterfly friendly

Butterflies play a critical role in maintaining the health of our environment. They help pollinate fruits, flowers and vegetables; provide food for other animals; and enchant children and adults alike with their beauty and flight. But like many other creatures, more and more butterflies are becoming endangered as the wild places they inhabit are lost to development or as they fall victim to pesticides.

Here's what you can do to help bring the butterflies back:

- Garden for wildlife. Grow plants butterfly caterpillars like to eat. In many cases, these will be plants that are native to your region; they'll attract native butterflies as well. Consult local gardening directories or contact your nearest agricultural extension agent for planting recommendations.
- Choose nectar-rich plants. Fill your garden not only with plants caterpillars will want to eat, but also with those from which butterflies can drink. Options include buddleia, heliotrope, milkweed, mint, verbena, and zinnias.
- Build a house. If your yard doesn't provide enough dense foliage to allow butterflies to hibernate and nest, build them a box they can use that offers protection from predators and harsh weather. The interior walls of the box should be rough enough to allow butterflies to grab a foothold. Scatter small twigs and leaves inside to promote hibernation and egg laying, and include thin vertical slats on the front to allow the butterflies to enter and exit. Make sure the box is hung no more than four feet above the ground and has a south or southwest exposure.
- Put out some water. A shallow dish or birdbath will provide the moisture butterflies need to thrive.

Source: EcoShare.org

46. Green Picnic Guide

Gearing up for a summer picnic? Here are some earth-friendly ideas to help you keep your outdoor gatherings fun, simple and green.

- Pack plenty of local, in-season fruits and vegetables and organic meat for you and your guests. Remember, fresh fruit “wraps” itself – no additional packaging needed! Check out local farmers markets and greengrocers.
- Consider re-purposing your canvas grocery tote as a picnic bag or try searching your closets for backpacks or holiday baskets to tote your food and picnic supplies. Choose washable, reusable cloth napkins and tablecloths.
- Skip the individually packaged drinks and opt for coolers (or kegs) filled with your favourite party beverages. For food storage and leftovers, pack reusable tins and canisters. If reusable isn't an option for cups, plates and utensils, choose biodegradable items or look for products made from recycled materials. Planning to grill? Look for recycled aluminium foil.
- Stick to sunscreen and insect repellents made with fewer chemicals and avoid spraying your entire picnic area with toxic pest products.
- Think green for your picnic activities and entertainment. Bring your favourite nature and wildlife field guides along with some binoculars and a journal for outdoor exploring, or bring sport equipment from home and enjoy an active game in the sunshine.
- Remember to take your waste with you. Leftover picnic food in trashcans is often tempting to park animals. Bring an extra storage container for food waste and a tote bag for recycling. Also, consider using your melted ice to rinse reusable dishes and utensils.

Source: Ecoshare.org

47. Tips for green camping

It's no secret that great weather prompts outdoor adventures and inspires exploration of the wonders of our natural surroundings. And one of the best ways to experience the great outdoors: camping!

Here are our green tips for making the most of your outdoor experience, while taking care to leave a healthy environment when you pack up and head home.

- Pick a local park or campground. The less distance you travel, the more fuel you'll save – and, of course, a shorter trip in the car also means more time to kick back and enjoy the main event.
- Rent or borrow your camping gear. There's no need to waste money and resources on shiny new equipment when you can borrow great stuff from your camp-enthusiast friends, family and neighbours! You can also pick up gently used items from a second-hand store or rent centre. Depending on where you're going and for how long, all you may need is a borrowed tent and a cooler. Remember, less is more when camping or hiking because it means you have less to haul in and out of the wilderness.
- Light up your nights with eco-friendly options. LED flashlights and lanterns are a great green camping choice since they require less power and last longer than non-LED lights. Manual wind-up or shake flashlights are also long lasting and battery-free!
- Pack reusable dishes for your cookouts and campfires. You can pick these up at your local second-hand shop, too! If you're an avid camper it's a good idea to have a set of camping dishes as well as a wash basin and biodegradable soap for cleaning up.
- Always leave your campsite better than you found it. Any scout will tell you that this is the golden rule of camping! Keep a reusable bag with you throughout your trip to pick up any trash or debris you find along the way. Recycle what you can and properly dispose of the rest.

Source: Ecoshare.org

48. Recycle Your...Lawn Mower?

Want to mow greener but a hand-push model isn't for you (or your large garden)? Regardless of the lawn mower you use, consider these tips for low-impact mowing.

- Mow only as often as you need to keep your lawn in good shape. For most lawns, that means cutting your grass no lower than 2.5 inches; keeping many grasses as long as 3.5 inches is ideal for crowding out crab grass and other weeds.
- Minimize the amount of pesticides and herbicides you apply to your lawn, and use organic fertilizers.
- If you're in the market for a lawn care company, seek out one that uses "natural" management practices as opposed to heavy chemical treatments.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn after you mow to provide your lawn with a natural (and free) source of nutrients, or compost the clippings for use in your garden.

Source: Green Seal

49. Lighten the load when travelling

Whether you are jet-setting to Bali or driving to your grandma's house in the next state, packing light will cut down on fuel use, as well as wear and tear on luggage and other items.

When flying, each additional 5 kg of weight on the plane per traveller requires an added 1300 million litres of jet fuel per year. More baggage also means security has to work harder to go through everything, requiring more energy for scanning and moving things around. The average wait time for checked luggage is 20 to 30 minutes, so you'll move through airports much faster if you can take what you need in a carry-on.

When driving, each additional 100 pounds of cargo will increase fuel consumption by about 2%. The less you take with you, the better your fuel economy will be.

By travelling light, you will need fewer luggage tags and airline stickers, further saving resources. Travelling is tough on luggage, and wears it out quite rapidly, so the less you take, the fewer suitcases or duffels you'll have to replace. Plus, you will be less likely to have luggage lost, or contents crushed or stolen. All those extra clothes, shoes, books and other items will last longer if you leave them at home, safe.

Source: thedailygreen.com

50. Shut the fridge door

Don't keep the refrigerator door open any longer than you need to and avoid the cold air from flowing out the door.

The next time you find yourself craving a mid-afternoon snack, make some time to think about what your stomach is asking for before you open the fridge door and stare mindlessly at its contents. The food inside isn't going anywhere and I doubt that anything new will appear in the time it takes you to mentally fix a snack! However, every time you open the refrigerator door, the cold air that keeps your food fresh is running out the door and the warm air from the room is taking its place. This is a problem because now your refrigerator's compressor is going to work hard to drive all that warm air out and bring the temperature back to normal, elevating not only your monthly energy bills, but also your environmental footprint.

According to *Home Energy Magazine*, door openings account for 7% of your fridge energy use while the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida says that poor open/close habits (like leaving the fridge door open while you pour milk on your cereal or coffee) wastes 50 to 120kWh a year. In the long run, 50kWh of energy saved could run your dishwasher 20 times and 100kWh could run your washing machine 50 times, that's almost a free load of laundry every week for an entire year.

So close the fridge door every time you're not directly taking something out of it instead of daydreaming with the door open. Remember, it's not a TV, even if you're into super foods these days your vegetables are not ready to entertain you with an improvised musical skit.

Source: TheDailyGreen.com

51. Green Your Feed

'Like' these sustainability pages on Facebook

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-
-
-
-
- And of course, our very own, Sustainable Communities