

Seven Ways to Green Your Home

By Nancy Spann

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), the nation's foremost coalition of building industry leaders working to promote environmentally responsible, profitable, and healthy places to live and work, has offered the following tips on how individual homeowners can reduce their impact on the environment and lower utility bills.

1. Switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) can produce a huge energy savings. Replace some (or all) of your incandescent bulbs with fluorescents and enjoy reductions in heat production, energy use, and electric bills.

Savings: Changing five of the most frequently used light bulbs in your home can save you \$100 per year on electric bills.

2. Program your thermostat

When you are at home, keep the thermostat at 78 degrees F (or higher) in the summer and 62 degrees F (or lower) in the winter. Programmable thermostats allow you to program the systems to reduce output when they are not needed (e.g., when no one is home during the day, or in the evening when everyone is sleeping).

Savings: Reduce your energy bill by \$100 per year or more.

3. Plug air leaks

This simple step can go a long way toward keeping your home at the temperature you desire, saving money on heating and air conditioning bills and more. Common leaks occur around windows, doors, and other wall penetrations. Plugging those leaks with weather stripping and caulk can be a simple task for anyone. Plugging electric outlets will also reduce air leaks.

Savings: Reduce your energy bill by \$100 per year or more.

4. Tune up your heating and cooling (HVAC) system

Have a checkup for your HVAC system every two years to make sure it is running efficiently. Be sure to clean the filter monthly during times of peak usage; a dirty filter can significantly reduce the efficiency of your HVAC.

Savings: Reduce your energy bill by \$100 per year or more.

5. Choose energy star appliances

Energy Star® qualified products meet a high level of energy efficiency, which can translate into savings on electric bills. When considering the price of a new appliance, take into account not only the purchase price, but also the long-term savings associated with an energy-efficient appliance.

Savings: Reduce your energy bill by \$50 per appliance per year or more.

6. Reduce water use

Indoor: Use less water by adding aerators (available for a few dollars at your local home supply store) to sink faucets and by changing low-flow showerheads.

Outdoor: Incorporate native plants in your landscape plan and minimize high-maintenance landscaping such as turf grass to conserve water, while still maintaining a beautiful lawn.

Savings: Reduce your water bill by as much as \$100 per year.

7. Switch to green power

Green Power is an optional utility service for customers who want to help expand the production and distribution of renewable energy technologies. With green power, you do not have to change your electricity provider. Instead, customers choose to pay a premium on their electricity bill to cover the extra cost of purchasing clean, sustainable energy. More information on green power can be found at <http://www.eere.energy.gov/greenpower/markets/index.shtml>.

For more information see the following website:

www.usgbc.org