



It's Easy to Be Green

At Home and On the Road

by Avery Mack

"Living green means living well, using what you create with minimal waste," says Mike Bond, an ecologist and bestselling activist author in Winthrop, Maine. Here, he and other savvy sources share tips to go ever greener in ways that are painless and affordable.

Start Small

✓ Choose the best bulb for the job.

Light bulbs can confuse even informed shoppers. Incandescent bulbs last more than 750 hours, but aren't energy-efficient. Fluorescent bulbs use 75 percent less energy than incandescent and last 10 to 15 times longer. A 20-watt compact fluorescent light (CFL) uses 550 fewer kilowatt-hours than a 75-watt incandescent bulb. For additional information, check Tinyurl.com/EnergyInfoLightBulbs. For a free app showing the best buy, visit LightBulbFinder.net.

✓ **Use appliance thermometers.** Widely available, this useful tool will confirm a correct operating temperature

of 37 to 40 degrees in the refrigerator and zero degrees in the freezer. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, a warmer fridge allows bacteria to grow, while 10 degrees cooler than the ideal range increases energy use 25 percent. Chiller units work harder if the room temperature exceeds 70 degrees, so keep appliances out of direct sunlight and away from the stove.

✓ Find the right seeds and plants.

Then get quick advice on how many to buy and how and when to plant using the SmartGardener.com step-by-step app. It encompasses more than 3,000 organic, GMO-free, edible varieties.

✓ **No dishpan hands.** A full load of dishes in a water-efficient dishwasher uses four gallons of water versus 24 gallons for handwashing them, according to Seametrics, which manufactures flow meters.

✓ **Test the toilet.** If a few drops of food coloring added to the toilet tank colors water in the bowl, replace the flap. It's an easy and inexpensive DIY task. The U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency reports that one in 10 homes leaks a cumulative 90 gallons a day.

✓ **Fix the faucet.** One drip per second equals 3,000 gallons a year wasted, Seametrics calculates.

✓ **Reset the hot water heater to 120 degrees.** This safe and efficient setting also reduces corrosion and mineral buildup.

✓ **Discover soap nuts and wool dryer balls.** Dried soapberry fruit shells contain saponin, which works like most detergents and soaps. Toss five or six whole shells (one-half ounce) in a wash bag with the laundry. They're good for five to eight reuses. All-natural sheep's wool dryer balls shorten drying time, soften and fluff fabric, reduce static and help keep pet hair off of clothes.

✓ **Change the car's air filter.** Maintain a clean filter according to manufacturer's guidelines and visual inspection, about every 30,000 to 45,000 miles.

✓ **Use an oil-change service.** In Connecticut alone, do-it-yourselfers change 9.5 million gallons of motor

oil a year, and 85 percent of it ends up in sewers, soil and trash as a major groundwater pollutant. *Earth Talk* reports that one quart can create a two-acre oil slick; a gallon can contaminate a million gallons of fresh water. While the more costly chemicals in synthetic oil create the same amount of pollution as traditional oil, it doesn't need to be changed as often.

✓ **Carpool.** The Green Living Ideas media network condones Uber, Lyft and Sidecar apps for making ridesharing ultra-accessible.

Go Greener

✓ **Replace old appliances with energy-efficient models.** Check out a unit's Energy Star rating. Consider a tankless heater for hot water on demand, rather than 24/7 heating.

✓ **Choose eco-tires.** Low rolling resistance improves gas mileage and reduces emissions. Keep tires properly inflated and periodically rotated for longer wear. Watch for future innovations in sustainable materials currently in research and development.

✓ **Ban idling.** Don't idle an electronic fuel-injected engine for more than 30 seconds when parked in cold weather; it warms up faster by being driven, explains the U.S. Department of Energy. Fuel injection engines took over in the 1980s and early 90s. Only older carburetors need a couple of minutes' warm-up. The Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory further advises, "Idling for more than 10 seconds uses more fuel and emits more CO₂ than engine restarting."

✓ **Ask for pet- and eco-friendly antifreeze.** Choose less toxic red-orange propylene glycol antifreeze instead of green ethylene glycol antifreeze, which is poisonous to pets and people. Dispose of both types properly, as they are toxic to wildlife and fish via groundwater, as well.

✓ **Green-clean car windows.** Choose a brand like Evergreen Windshield Washer Fluid, which is plant-derived, eco-friendly, non-toxic and biodegradable. Traditional blue fluid is methanol, combined methyl alcohol and wood alcohol, and extremely poisonous, especially to children and pets.

Go Big

✓ **Switch to a heat pump.** "A heat pump works the reverse of a refrigerator; it takes cold air from the outside and turns it into warm air inside, and uses no oil or gas," explains Bond.

✓ **Go solar.** It's the eco-alternative to conventional electricity generation. "Solar means that you're creating your own power," says Bond, who has used solar for years. "It works on an elegant cycle—create energy, use energy." Leased solar panels reduce the cost of equipment, which has dropped dramatically in recent years.

✓ **Get a hybrid car.** In combination with solar power, a hybrid vehicle can reduce or eliminate daily energy costs. "An electric car is perfect when commutes are not long," Bond discloses. "If charged in the day, it can serve as the battery for a solar home at night, when no power is being created."

Connect with freelance writer via AveryMack@mindspring.com.

GO-GREEN APPS

Here are three apps we suggest among the many available.

- **Green You** is a free app. It calculates our eco-friendliness and suggests steps toward a deeper shade of green. ItAnyPlace.com/support/greenyou
- **Recycle** offers a free national database of 100,000 recycling and disposal locations for 200 products. Specify the item and find local options with contact information. Earth911.com/eco-tech/irecycle-now-on-android
- **eEcosphere** helps users discover, adopt and share the best sustainable living ideas and makes it easy to share specific actions and ideas with friends via social media. eEcosphere.com