



green living tips

green at heart
Your one-stop shop
for building sustainability



In addition to improving your home's energy efficiency, there are many things that you can do in and out of the home, to reduce energy usage and save money on bills. Here are some of Green at Heart's favourite ways to live more sustainably:

Make your home more energy efficient

- Install a solar PV system to reduce energy costs.
- Install a solar or heat pump hot water system.
- Installing insulation and improve ventilation reduces the amount of heating and cooling used. Insulating a home can save 45-55% of heating and cooling energy.
- Install a cent-a-meter to monitor which of your appliances use the most power.

Water Usage

- Shower time - reducing your shower time from seven minutes to four saves approx 36 litres per shower.
- Don't let the tap run while you clean your teeth, wash your face or scrub your hands (approx 15 litres of water wasted).
- Installing a water saving shower head and tap aerators can save up to 26,000ltrs of water per year. Installing efficient tapware elsewhere in the home also saves a lot of water.
- Installing water recirculation devices saves water and energy.
- Installing a rainwater tank or greywater treatment system saves water.
- If using a 'flick' mixer tap, keep the handle turned to cold. Having it in the centre position means that hot water is always being used, which often doesn't even heat up in time.
- Installing a hose extension to your washing machine lets you use washing machine water to water the garden.
- Replace older dual flush toilet cisterns with newer ones.
- A pressure limiting valve installed at the water meter helps reduce water use.
- Set your hot water system to 60 degrees Celsius.

Lighting

- Compact fluorescent lights cost less to run and last 10 times longer. The initial purchase cost is higher, but they are more economical in rooms where you use the lights a lot (such as front verandahs, hallways and family rooms). They can be fitted into conventional light sockets (bayonet or screw fittings) and are available in a range of colours, shapes or wattages. A CFL globe can save up to \$60 over the life of the globe.
- Always turn off lights when there's nobody in the room.
- Use the lowest wattage needed to light the room, e.g. hallways need adequate light, not bright light.
- Dusty or dirty lights can dim your lights by up to half, so regularly clean light globes, fittings, reflectors and lampshades.
- Turn off halogen light globes when not in use. Halogen globes are very inefficient, but can be replaced with LED globes. If you have a dimmer switch, keeping halogen globes on a dimmer setting can more than halve the electricity used.

Cooling

- Use natural ventilation wherever possible, keeping doors and windows open as much as possible to get good air-flow rather than using air-conditioning.

- Installing roof ventilation (eg: eave vents, whirlybirds) in conjunction with efficient insulation improves the air-flow in your home.
- Treating windows with tinted laminates decreases the amount of heat entering your house. Taping foil to windows is also an effective, cheap way of cooling a room with poor window insulation on very hot days.
- Good shading on windows on the eastern and western sides of the house reduces the amount of heat from the rising and setting sun. Tree shading, balconies, wide eaves, external shutters, blinds or awnings can keep a home much cooler. Look for options which encourage as much air-flow as possible.
- Set air-conditioners to as high a temperature as possible to reduce the amount of energy it takes to maintain a low temperature. 25 degrees is ideal. Each degree cooler can use up to 10% more energy.
- Close all doors and windows when using air-conditioning and make sure rooms are well sealed with weather stripping or door 'snakes' to stop warm air flowing in.
- Zone areas - close doors to areas not being used to maximise efficiency.
- Dress for the season rather than rely on heating and cooling.
- Dust your air-conditioner and service the air filters regularly. Turn off cooling in your living areas before going to bed. Rooms will stay cool for several hours if they're insulated.
- Switch off air conditioners at the wall or switchboard where possible (especially during winter). Most air conditioners use electricity whilst in standby mode, which can cost hundreds of dollars per year.

Waste Disposal

- Composting your food waste reduces the production of methane. A worm farm is a good way to assist the natural composting process, and is great fun for kids.
- Using cloth nappies and wipes instead of disposables massively reduces the amount of waste in landfill. There are also disposables made from sustainable and biodegradable materials which are much better for the environment.
- Reuse and recycle wherever possible.

Cleaning

- Use biodegradable cleaning and detergent products wherever possible to reduce the strain on our sewerage systems and the amount of chemicals used.
- Some of the simplest (and cheapest) products are the most effective – bicarbonate of soda, borax, vinegar and lemon juice are excellent for cleaning your home.
- Use cleaning cloths that can be washed and reused rather than disposable or single use products.
- Use a water spray bottle and water efficient mop-head rather than a large bucket of water to mop your floors.
- Sweep and mop your outside areas such as driveways rather than hosing them down.



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IN THE LAUNDRY:

Clothes Dryer

- Use clothes lines or clothes airers wherever possible.
- Install an undercover clothes line for rainy days, rather than using the dryer. In very humid weather, almost-dry clothes can be finished off for a few minutes in the dryer.
- If possible, have the clothes dryer vented to outside to release moist air. Alternatively, keep windows or doors open to improve ventilation when the appliance is in use.
- Set clothes dryer to warm rather than hot. Clothes take longer to dry, but less energy will be used therefore costing less.
- Clean the filter before every use.
- Never place dripping-wet clothes into the clothes dryer. Ensuring that excess water is removed or that clothes have been spun well in the washing machine before placing them in the drier reduces drying time and cost.

Washing Machine

- Always use cold water to wash clothes - it has been scientifically proven to be as effective, but costs significantly less.
- Change the wash cycle according to the type of load to reduce cost. Use the shortest washing cycle where possible.
- Adjust the water level according to the size of the load.
- Use biodegradable detergents.

IN THE KITCHEN:

Dishwasher

- When available, run dishwashers from the hot water tap rather than cold water unless you have a small electric hot water unit. Using the internal water heater increases the cost. (Note: check warranty conditions for your dishwasher before doing this)
- Change the wash cycle according to the type of load to reduce costs. Use the shortest washing cycle where possible.
- Wait until the dishwasher is fully loaded before you switch it on, reducing the number of times you use it.
- Don't rinse dishes before loading dishwasher, or, rinse only with cold water.

Cooking

- Keep oven door shut when cooking. Every time it's opened, more energy is used.
- Thaw foods completely before cooking, to save cooking time and energy.
- Keep pot lids on and simmer gently, rather than boiling rapidly.
- When making tea or coffee - only boil the amount of water that you require at the time. Boiling 1 cup of water uses the same amount of energy required to run a light globe for one hour.

- Cook outside in summer to reduce the amount of cooling used in the home.
- Use your microwave whenever you can, because it uses less than half the energy of an oven. Microwaves can cook three times faster, while using 70% less electricity.
- Stir or turn food over regularly to cook food evenly and speed up cooking time.
- If available, cooking using gas is more efficient than electric.

Refrigeration

- Use green bags (available from supermarkets) to store your fruit and vegies to extend their life.
- Turn off second fridge when not being used.
- Set your fridge to 3-5 degrees and freezers to -15 - -18 degrees.

Computers and Entertainment

- Turn off your computer at night, you will save an average of \$90 of electricity a year.
- Use the most energy efficient power management setting on your computer so that it hibernates when not in use.
- Printing on 2 sides saves paper and reduces waste.
- Reduce the brightness of your monitor.
- Turn equipment off at the wall rather than using standby mode, which still uses a lot of power. Use a powerboard for easy access to hard to reach switches.
- Use rechargeable batteries.

Shopping

- Use online billing/banking/loyalty programmes - saving on paper, ink, stamps, plastics, printing, fuel and general waste.
- Buying online reduces transport costs.
- Use reusable bags.
- Buy local - transporting food and other products consumes a lot of fuel, try to buy from local providers and farmers' markets.
- Avoid packaging - try to buy fewer over-packaged or disposable products.
- Buy only what fresh produce you need for the next few days to avoid wasting food that you don't use.
- Count the stars - compare energy rating labels before you buy an appliance. See www.energyrating.gov.au for more information.

Transport

- Consider your transport options - bike, bus, train, walking, car pooling.
- Plan your trips so that you make the most out of the drive.
- Idling your car's engine unnecessarily wastes fuel, as well as increases wear on your vehicle: idling for more than 10 seconds uses more fuel than is needed for startup.
- Fly less - holiday nearer home, if you must fly offset your flights' carbon emissions.