

The Center for Green Building's Five Shades of Green Living

There are many ways to incorporate green products and processes into your daily life – and it can be easy and inexpensive to do. To help you get started, we've identified Five Shades of Green: begin with Light Green and easy to make changes, and work your way to Forest Green, the most encompassing and life changing.

Consider looking at your ecological impact by visiting www.earthday.net/footprint, and join us at The Center for Green Building to learn more.

1. Light Green – Easy to make changes

- **Cleaning products:** Begin using non-toxic household cleaners; this is the first and easiest step to take in improving air quality in your home. Many cleaning products on the market contain hazardous materials (as determined by the Environmental Protection Agency) such as formaldehyde, ammonia, chlorine bleach, and synthetic fragrances which are very harmful.
- **Recycle:** Participate in your town or city's recycling program. By simply choosing to recycle paper, glass, plastic and metal, you can ensure that a large amount of material stays out of the waste stream, and provides basic and resource-rich materials to be reused into new, and green, products.
- **Bring your own bag:** Bring your own reusable bags when you shop. The production of plastic grocery bags from non-renewable polyethylene plastic consumes 40% less energy than making paper bags. But in landfills, paper bags decompose in a month, while plastic could still be around in 1,000 years. Paper bags are heavier and use up more landfill space but are much more likely to be accepted for curbside recycling.²
- **Carry a reusable water bottle and/or coffee cup:** Americans use 4 million plastic bottles every hour, yet only one bottle in 4 is recycled. In 2002, that represented 4 billion pounds of plastic! It turns out that stainless steel and glass are the safest choices.⁸
- **Check your tires:** Check your tire pressure regularly. Under-inflation increases tire wear, reduces your fuel economy by up to 3 percent and leads to higher greenhouse gas emissions and releases of air pollutants. If you don't know the correct tire pressure for your vehicle, you can find it listed on the door to the glove compartment or on the driver's-side door pillar. More details on the [Fuel Economy Guide Web site](#).⁴
- **Buy local:** Buying local goods reduces the amount of fossil fuels required for the transportation of products from other parts of the country or the world. It also reduces the amount of plastic and paper products consumed in the packaging of such far-traveling products, and buying local reduces consumption of valuable natural resources.³
- **Work with the sun:** During the summer, close your shades and curtains during the day to keep the hot sun out of the house; open them in the evening to allow the cooler air to come in. During the winter, keep your curtains and shades open during the day to allow the warm sun in; keep them closed at night to keep the cold air at bay.
- **Take off your shoes:** You'd be surprised at how much dirt, pollen and pesticides get tracked in on the bottom of your shoes. When you enter the house, take off your shoes and leave them by the door. The house will be easier to clean, and you'll have much better indoor air quality.⁹

Sources:

² *New Canaan, Darien & Rowayton* magazine; May 2007

³ U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)

⁴ www.fueleconomy.gov

⁸ *Ideal Bite*, February 28, 2006

⁹ *Homes that Heal and those that don't*, by Athena Thomson

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