

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

2. Sage Green – Changes that require some thought

Now that you've started to incorporate "green" into your lifestyle, here are some additional things to do; some require additional effort – composting, for example – but are not difficult to do.

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

- **Switch to Green Power:** Fairfield County suffers from some of the highest air pollution in the country. Green Power is an optional service for customers who want to help expand the production and distribution of renewable energy technologies. You do not have to change your electricity provider; just let them know that you choose to pay a small premium on their electricity bill to cover the extra cost of purchasing clean, sustainable energy. ³ www.ctcleanenergyoptions.com. For additional information on green power, visit <http://www.eere.energy.gov/greenpower/markets/index.shtml>.
- **Compost:** Save your leaves, grass, and appropriate kitchen waste (fruit, vegetables, coffee grinds, tea bags). Compost is one of nature's best mulches and soil amendments, and you can use it instead of commercial fertilizers. Best of all, compost is cheap and you can make it without spending a cent. www.compostguide.com
- **Cut your grass:** Using a gas mower contributes more to global warming than driving a car! Invest in a push mower – they're quiet and provide great exercise – or hire a firm that uses them instead. ²
- **Pesticides:** Go organic. Some 100 million pounds of pesticides are used by homeowners in homes and gardens each year, even more when commercial companies are added in. Suburban lawns and gardens are known to receive far heavier pesticide applications per acre than most other land areas in the U.S., including agricultural areas. Studies show that these hazardous lawn chemicals are drifting into our homes where they contaminate indoor air and surfaces, exposing children at levels ten times higher than pre-application levels.
- **Conserve water:**
 - Use a low-flow shower head; the shower accounts for more than 20% of home water use. By replacing the existing shower head with a low-flow model, you can cut that use by two-thirds. And you'll hardly notice the difference in water flow. ²
 - Turn off the water while brushing your teeth. You can save up to 20,000 gallons of water a year. ¹⁰
 - Sweep instead of hosing down your driveway. Junk that you hose off can eventually get to waterways. ⁸
 - No need to rinse dishes before putting them in a dishwasher; new machines can handle it.
- **Program your thermostat:** When you're at home, keep the thermostat at 78 °F or higher in the summer and 62°F 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). You may reduce your energy bill by \$100 per year or more! ³
- **Drive smart:** [Many factors](#) affect the fuel economy of your car. To improve fuel economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, go easy on the brakes and gas pedal, avoid hard accelerations, reduce time spent idling and unload unnecessary items in your trunk to reduce weight. If you have a removable roof rack and you are not using it, take it off to improve your fuel economy by as much as 5 percent. Use overdrive and cruise control on your car if you have those features. For more tips to improve your gas mileage, visit the [Fuel Economy Guide](#). ⁴

Sources:

² *New Canaan, Darien & Rowayton* magazine; May 2007; ³ U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC);

⁴ www.fueleconomy.gov

¹⁰ 50 Simple Things Kids Can do to Save the Earth

¹¹ *Ideal Bite*, July 16, 2007

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