

Easy Being Green

Written by Written by Hayley Mitchell

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April is Earth Month, so let's make the effort to go a little more "green." Here are some simple tips to do your part in keeping the environmental healthy and waste-free:



Go Paperless:



Not only are you helping to reduce paper waste, but many people report being more organized and timely in their bill paying when they say no to a mailed paper bills, and request to only receive bank statements and bills via email. When you receive your bills in your email, make those payments online and you also save yourself the postage cost.

Energy Upgrades:



It might cost more than those new granite counter tops, and it certainly not as fun, but investing in energy upgrades is starting to pay off, now that federal tax credits are back in 2009 (and available til 2016) on installing energy-efficient systems in your home. Solar is the big winner 30 percent of the cost of qualified systems is a tax break. See www.energystar.gov for more information about this.

Reuse or Repurpose:

One way to cut down on your daily garbage is to look at what you are throwing away and see if it actually can avoid the dump by being used elsewhere. When you get a package in the mail, don't just toss out all the bubble wrap save it for when you have to ship something and use it over again. Same with paper bags. Don't just throw away those lovely Saks bags from your last shopping spree these make great lunch bags and be used at least five more times before they need to be tossed out.

Stop With the Water Bottles:



If you drink lots of water (like you should be doing!) opt for a reusable water bottle rather than using up dozens of disposable plastic bottles. Some work places are banning plastic waster bottles and insisting that employees use reusable bottles that they can fill up with filtered water or water from the water cooler. There are some absolutely adorable waster bottles out there, so you'll look good while reducing your carbon footprint. See www.nalgenechoice.com for cute bottle options.

Freecycle:

This is a great new term for getting rid of old junk, but without heading to the landfill. "As they say, one mans trash is another man's treasure,"

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so before you throw away old clothes, old books, even building materials, think about if someone else might want it and then "freecycle it." Give your old books and clothes to Goodwill or to the various clothing recycle boxes you often see at the grocery store parking lots. Even larger items that you think might be garbage, like old sinks and doors, can often be of use to someone. Post your items on Craigslist.com in the free category and quite often somebody will be quick to come pick up your old junk. You are saving space in the landfill, helping out another person and also getting rid of your old stuff quickly and easily.

Support Local Green Companies:



Whenever you can, shop local. Not only does this stimulate local economy, but it also helps the environment by reducing the carbon footprint left by shipping from afar. Also, look for companies with green practices. www.shopezaurus.com sells "green" gift wrap and note cards and is locally owned and operated.