

Color Your World Green

CHANGE JUST ONE THING, AND YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY TO GOING GREEN

Going Green — yawn. As I sit at the computer trying to put this article together, I realize that we may be reaching the point of over saturation when it comes to “green.” Every paper, magazine and new TV show seems to have something about going green. We are constantly reminded that energy savings is at a critical stage, and everyone has felt the burden of high gas prices. So, what should a person do? Is this really all the fault of the big oil companies and their need to make more money?

In this first Green House column, you will see how shifting your lifestyle choices can be one of the most powerful things you can do.

Why should you care about going green? Most of you are either parents or have children that hold a place near and dear to your hearts. I have a 15-year-old son who believes that we grownups have screwed up the world almost beyond repair, and he is probably right. What pulled me into this wild and crazy world we call “green” was the need to be able to look him in the eyes and know that I am in fact trying to fix what is broken. It isn't too late. The technology and commercial availability of products, as well as the volume of knowledge out there on going green is huge. So, this is my way of giving you yet one more tool in your tool chest to make it easier to go green, starting with just one thing.

Have you ever stood in the hardware store and debated whether to spend the extra money to purchase compact fluorescent light bulbs, filled your car's tank and wondered if it was time to buy a hybrid, or pondered the concept of organic milk and produce versus mainstream? For many of us, this green movement is a lot like the adventures about 10 years ago when all of the nutrition articles were coming out. One day we were all supposed to eat a certain fruit, and the next day someone had found that if eaten in excess, it would cause cancer. One day bacon was good, and the next bacon was going to kill you. One day organic was hype, the next it was a good thing. Over time, we realized that it was up to us to figure out what was true.

Going green and being sustainable are just ways that humans need to figure out how to keep the earth healthy and how to manage its resources, both natural (earth, air, water) and living (humans, plants, animals), while adding the resource of economics to the picture. As much as I love living in a Pollyanna world, money is still a very valid part of that world. The good news is that it now makes economic sense to become a green consumer.

It can be as simple as changing a few light bulbs. It is one of the best things you can do for the environment and your budget.

Compact fluorescent light bulbs use at least two-thirds less energy than standard incandescent bulbs to provide the same amount of light, and they last up to 10 times longer. CFL bulbs also generate 70 percent less heat, so they are safer to operate and also can reduce energy costs associated with cooling homes and offices. CFL bulbs actually are beneficial to the environment. According to Energy Star, if every American home replaced just one light bulb with an



ABOVE: Make a difference by switching out your light bulbs for energy-efficient Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFLs). Photo courtesy U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, ENERGY STAR Program

Energy Star-qualified bulb, we would save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes for a year, more than \$600 million in annual energy costs, and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars.

A minor drawback to the CFL bulbs is that each bulb contains about 5 milligrams of mercury. This simply means that the disposal of the bulbs needs to be handled slightly differently, no big deal. The bulbs should be recycled, depending on your local recycling program, as to prevent them from ending up in landfills where they could contaminate soil, air and groundwater. So, now it's on your to-do list. Change out light bulbs and give the swirly guy a try.

Now your homework assignment: As you are changing out one or a dozen light bulbs, think about what you want to learn next, and e-mail your questions to gogreen@goinggreenusa.net.



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Create Mood With the Right Light

Energy Star-qualified CFLs can produce varying shades of white light. The shade of white light is identified by the correlated color temperature, which is measured in kelvin (K).

Lower kelvin numbers mean the light has a warmer color, while higher Kelvin numbers mean the light has a cooler color.

The majority of CFLs available in the market offer soft or warm white light (2700K–3000K), which is comparable to an incandescent bulb. This color range works well in most residential settings and enhances warmer colors (red, yellow, orange) found in your home.

Qualified CFLs are also available in higher kelvin color temperature CFLs (3500K, 4100K, 5000K, 6500K) and will emit more white to bluish-white light. These products are usually identified with the terms “bright white,” “natural” or “daylight.” These colors will enhance cooler colors (blue, green, violet) in your home.

Source: Energy Star