



GOING GREEN

## 50 WAYS TO GREEN YOUR MOTHER (EARTH)

Who knew saving the planet could be so cool? Now being earth-conscious has become the very epitome of hip and buying carbon offsets is just the ticket to assuage guilt about that Hummer in the three-car garage or the double Sub-Zeros in the remodeled kitchen. Seriously, there are plenty of little things, simple things that each one of us can do to make our planet a little healthier. Here are 50 ways to help the environment right now.



By Nancy L. Claus



# Dos and Don't of RECYCLING

Tossing the wrong items in the recycling bin can contaminate good recyclables.



## Do Recycle:

- › Newspapers and inserts, magazines, junk mail, phone books, cereal boxes, shoe boxes, corrugated cardboard.
- › Glass bottles and jars, metal cans, caps, jar lids, aluminum foil.
- › Plastic bottles and containers with the logo on the bottom of three arrows chasing each other. Toss the caps unless they carry the logo.

## Don't Recycle:

- › Wet, waxed, or laminated paper including napkins, tissues, fast-food wrappers, or juice boxes.
- › Styrofoam or plastic bottles and containers with the numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7.
- › Magnetic items, aerosol cans or those containing paint or hazardous waste.
- › Windows, light bulbs, mirrors, ceramics, or Pyrex.

### Westchester County 2007

#### Household Chemical Clean-Up Days

**Playland Park, Rye:** November 2 (Friday 1 to 3 pm) and November 3 (Saturday 9 am to 3 pm)

**Croton Point Park, Croton-on-Hudson** November 9 (Friday 1 to 3 pm); November 10 (Saturday 9 am to 3 pm)  
Visit [www.westchestergov.com](http://www.westchestergov.com) for a detailed list of what is accepted and what is not.



## Cleaning

Buy eco-correct kitchen and bath products.

Any cleaning product that claims to disinfect or kill germs or bacteria contains a registered pesticide. You don't want to be breathing these. Replace toxic cleansers at home and at work with eco-friendly products from

companies like Method ([methodhome.com](http://methodhome.com)), Greening the Cleaning ([dienviro.com](http://dienviro.com)), Ecover ([ecover.com](http://ecover.com)), or Seventh Generation ([seventhgeneration.com](http://seventhgeneration.com)). Bon Ami ([bonami.com](http://bonami.com)) is a biodegradable scouring powder and Murphys Oil Soap ([colgate.com](http://colgate.com)) is a vegetable-based wood polish; both are available at most grocery stores.

- › Use **baking soda** to deodorize drains, clean countertops, and polish stainless steel. It is a natural substance—sodium bicarbonate—considered by many to be about the best natural cleaning product yet.
- › **White vinegar**, diluted with water, cuts through soap scum and is terrific on coffee and tea stains. Run it through your coffee maker periodically to get rid of lime build-up. It also is great at removing rust.
- › To clean toilets, try pouring a half-cup of **liquid chlorine bleach** into the toilet bowl. Let it stand for at least 10 minutes, and scrub with a long-handled brush. (But never mix chlorine bleach with ammonia—or any household cleaners—it's a killer combo.)
- › Switch to unbleached (or lightened without chlorine) **recycled paper products**, from paper towels to toilet paper, looking for those with the highest “post consumer waste” content. (No reason to destroy virgin wood to clean up spilled milk or other household hassles.) And, for heaven's sake, don't grab a handful of napkins at the takeout counter when one or two will do.

***Do you really need to drink your eight glasses of water a day from individual plastic bottles? Of course not. But when you can't avoid it, recycle them. Take them home with you if your office doesn't have a bin—only 23 percent of those 30 billion or so single-bottle servings ever get recycled each year.***



## DROWNING IN PAPER By the Numbers

**Paper Napkins:** If every household in the U.S. replaced just one package of Bounty, Scott, or Kleenex 250-count virgin-fiber paper napkins with Marcal, Seventh Generation, or 365 (Whole Foods) 100-percent recycled ones,  
**1,000,000 trees saved.**

**Paper Towels:** If every household in the U.S. replaced just one roll of Bounty, Scott, or Viva 70-sheet virgin-fiber paper towels with one roll of Marcal, Seventh Generation, or 365 100-percent recycled ones,  
**544,000 trees saved.**

**Toilet Paper:** If every household in the U.S. replaced just one roll of Charmin or Cottonelle (500 sheets) virgin-fiber toilet paper with Marcal, Seventh Generation, or 365 100-percent recycled ones,  
**423,900 trees saved.**

**Paper Cups:** If every one of us brought along our own coffee mug for our morning take-out lattes or Frappuccinos, we'd save, well, a heck of a lot of trees. (It would also mean that you wouldn't need one of those finger-saving sleeves; another big waste of paper.)

For complete listing, visit [www.nrdc.org/paper](http://www.nrdc.org/paper).

## 7 Ways to SAVE ENERGY



**1** Replace your most frequently used incandescent light bulbs with the strange-looking but highly efficient **compact fluorescent light bulbs**. (If every house in America changed just one regular bulb for a CFL, it would save as much energy as it takes to light more than 2.5 million homes for a year.) Sure, they cost more (about \$5 to \$10 a bulb vs. \$1) but they last five to 13 times longer. In the long run, a \$5 light bulb that lasts for 100 hours is cheaper than a \$1 light bulb that lasts for 10 hours. They do require special disposal—go to [earth911.org](http://earth911.org) for a zip code-searchable listing of sites. Also note the information box on page 148 on Westchester County clean-up days. The county will accept the bulbs along with many other household chemicals.

**2** Toss a couple of Nellie's **Dryerballs** ([nellieslaundry.com](http://nellieslaundry.com)) into your dryer. As they tumble in the dryer, they lift and separate the clothes, allowing air to flow freely, reducing drying time by as much as 25 percent.

**3** Contact NYSEG or Con Ed about getting an **energy audit** to find

ways to reduce your energy use at home, such as sealing ducts or adding insulation to the attic, basement, or garage. Doing so can reduce your home's carbon emissions by up to 10,140 pounds (the government estimates that the average

individual creates 22,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> a year) and reduce heating and cooling costs by up to 40 percent.

**4** For every degree you **lower your thermostat** in winter, you cut energy use by about 3 percent. Conversely, for every degree you raise the thermostat on the a/c, you cut use by 3 percent.

**5** A **ceiling fan** used with a/c makes a room feel six or seven degrees cooler. A whole house attic fan sucks all the hot air out of the house, making air conditioning more effective or unnecessary.

**6** Don't heat or cool rooms you don't regularly use; **adjust the thermometer** when away from the house for extended periods of time.

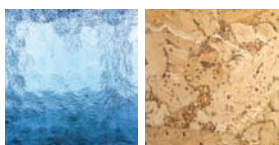
**7** **Insulate windows** with acrylic energy panels; use floor-length lined curtains to block drafts.





# AT HOME

- › **Decorate with houseplants**—they look pretty and absorb indoor air pollutants and replace it with pure, healthy oxygen.
- › **Don't allow anyone to smoke** in your home. The Natural Resources Defense Council considers cigarette smoke to be the No. 1 common household contaminant, containing a whopping 4,000 chemicals.
- › **Switch to soy** or beeswax candles; they burn cleaner than paraffin ones.
- › Use a vacuum with a **HEPA air filter** to pick up dust and allergens that regular vacuums often don't.
- › Use **microfiber cloths** (check the label on the package) or damp towels to capture dust; ordinary dusters just spread it around.



## For flooring, install natural linoleum, cork, or bamboo, and recycled glass or porcelain tiles

- › **Wipe your feet** on a doormat before entering your house, then leave your shoes at the door. Studies conducted in Florida and Massachusetts found that indoor air contained five to 10 times as many pesticides as the air outside, much of it tracked in on the bottom of people's shoes.
- › **Open a window** to ventilate your home of "off-gassed" chemicals. (Off-gasses are the nasty emissions from synthetic fabrics, plastics, vinyls, and household cleaners.)
- › **Use a dehumidifier**, if necessary, to keep humidity, bacteria, and mold at bay.
- › When remodeling, make sure you **choose VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds)-free paints** (Brands include Anna Sova, AFM Safecoat and the Eco Spec line of Benjamin Moore), formaldehyde-free building materials, and PVC-free wallpapers and carpets. Natural fibers like organically grown cotton, sisal, sea grass, or jute, or 100-percent sustainable New Zealand wool, are the greenest choices.
- › Instead of particleboard cabinets, which have toxic resins and timber products, look for ones made with **wheat straw**, a more environmentally friendly and renewable source. Look for the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) stamp to make sure wood products are certified-sustainable—meaning not coming from old-growth forests. Both Home Depot and Lowe's carry certified wood products.

- › For flooring, install **natural linoleum, cork, or bamboo**, and recycled glass or porcelain tiles.
- › Countertops made of **recycled paper, glass, or porcelain** are attractive and green. While granite is a natural substance, it has to be quarried out of the ground and requires toxic adhesives to keep it in place.
- › **Never dump paint**, oil, harsh cleansers, or other hazardous products down the drain (you really don't want them showing up someday in your water supply). One single quart of motor oil can pollute 250,000 gallons of drinking water, even when poured onto the ground. All service stations are required to recycle oil.
- › **Try using a plunger** or plumber's snake to unclog a drain before reaching for Drano or Liquid-Plumr,

which contain sodium hydroxide, also known as caustic soda or lye. You don't want to have any product that can burn your skin if splashed or cause vomiting if ingested getting into the water supply.

- › Or, toss a handful of baking soda mixed with a half cup of vinegar down the drain, followed with boiling water. **Flushing drains weekly** with boiling water can help keep them clear. Also, installing small screens atop drains will help keep hair, lint, and other clogging elements out of the pipeline in the first place.
- › **Maintain combustion appliances** like gas ranges (they can produce carbon monoxide—or worse). When it's time to replace them—or any appliance—upgrade to Energy Star appliances.
- › If your house has a **septic tank**, have it cleaned out every two to three years to prevent groundwater contamination. Bonus: your system will last longer.
- › When buying new home furnishings, **choose 100-percent natural, sustainable materials**. For example, instead of endangered teak, choose wicker, made from fast-growing willow reeds.



## Ask the Expert

# PAPER OR PLASTIC?

If green is the way to go, what's better to use: paper or plastic bags?

“Neither,” says Sean O’Rourke, environmental project coordinator for the Westchester County Department of Environmental Facilities. “Reusable bags are the best choice over all. Paper can consume more resources to produce; however, they are also more recyclable. Neither is the winner. Reusable bags are a renewable resource. They use minimal energy, can be machine-washed, and they can last for years. You can use them at the beach, at the farmers’ market, and, of course, at the supermarket. Some supermarkets actually give you a few cents of credit per bag if you bring your own, so eventually, the bag will pay for itself.”

› Ikea has started charging customers for bags and others are sure to follow suit. And Trader Joe’s enters your name in a raffle for a gift certificate when you **bring your own bags**. Nice incentive!

## GO PAPERLESS

› **ATM Receipts?** Forget them. If everyone in the country stopped taking receipts, it would save a roll of paper more than two billion feet long, enough to circle the equator 15 times.

› **Lose the phone books**, too. You know you look up everything online. So unless you’re using the Yellow Pages as a booster seat, call Verizon to stop delivery. Telephone books make up almost 10 percent of waste at dump sites.

› To **reduce junk mail**, register at [www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailinglist](http://www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailinglist). It costs one dollar to register, but hey, it’s worth it not to receive the 1.5 trees worth of junk that the average U.S. household gets every year.

› **Donate old furnishings** to charity rather than dumping in a dumpster, which goes to a landfill. Or list them on Westchester County’s free data bank of used furniture, appliances, office and baby equipment, tools and computer accessories. Everything on the “Treasure Hunt” website ([www.westchestergov.com/treasures](http://www.westchestergov.com/treasures)) must be free and the recipient must be willing to pick the items up.

› Apple and Dell will accept their own and other brands of **computers for recycling** from customers buying new ones. Westchester County will take them during household chemical clean-up days (see page 148).

**TECH ALERT:** Unplug televisions, stereos, and microwave ovens when you go away for vacations. You’ll save energy and your appliances in the event of a power surge or lightning strike.

**1 Front-load washing machines** have the best overall performance, according to *Consumer Reports*, resulting in cleaner clothes using less energy and a whopping 25 percent less water than top loaders. And use cold water instead of warm or hot for additional energy savings.

**2 Replace high-volume toilets** (pre-1994) that use up to six gallons per flush vs. 1.6 gallons in low-volume ones. Consider dual-flush toilets that allow you to select between two flow amounts. If you’re willing to go the extra carbon-neutral mile, go with the gold standard: composting toilets that turn human waste into compost.

**3 Those rainforest showerheads** are pretty and feel terrific on tired shoulders, but waste a pool’s worth of water. Install low-flow showerheads and faucets. If your showerheads predate 1992, consider replacing them to reduce overall water consumption. If you don’t want to change the fixtures, simply add aerators, which screw onto the end of the faucet, mixing air with water. It doesn’t affect water pressure, but will reduce the flow.

## 8 Ways to SAVE WATER



**4 Promptly fix leaky faucets** and/or running toilets. Left untended, these leaks overload septic systems and can drain an entire well. Replacing a washer or balky toilet chain can prevent a slow drip or leak from becoming a huge water waster.

**5** When it comes time to replace your conventional **hot-water heater**, buy a tankless model, which heats only the water that you use (you’ll save on fuel and never run out of hot water again). In the meantime, wrap your conventional unit in an insulated jacket.

**6 Rain gutters and spouts** should lead to soil, grass, or gravel areas rather than paved roads or driveways—better to water your lawn and let the earth filter impurities away.

**7 Sweep your sidewalks** rather than hosing them down.

**8 Plant drought-resistant shrubs** and grass that only needs to be cut once a month instead of once a week (check out NoMowGrass.com). A water-sipping drip-irrigation hose instead of sprinklers eliminates wasted water.

## Green Your Medicine Cabinet

It's not enough to keep chemicals out of your food—you don't want them in your shampoo, shower gel, or makeup, either. Look for organic, preservative- and paraben-free products (parabens have been linked to cancer) whenever possible.



### Lip Action

The Kiss My Face company says it is "obsessively natural," and it's putting its money where its mouth is. The company will donate one dollar from each sale of its new line of lip balms (Berry Warm, Eco-Coco, and Mango Melt, to name a few) to the Alliance for Climate Protection. Just \$3.49 each at Whole Foods.



### Back to Basics

Zia's soap-free, gentle cleanser removes dirt and makeup without drying; soybean oil quickly absorbs into the skin, leaving it soft and supple. Follow with sea tonic aloe toner and moisturizer. Cleanser, \$16.95; toner, \$13.95; moisturizer, \$19.95 at [www.zianatural.com](http://www.zianatural.com) or Whole Foods.



### Squeaky Clean

It's All Good combines rosemary and mint to make a delicious-smelling, totally organic shampoo and conditioner, just \$14.99 each at [www.noahsnaturals.com](http://www.noahsnaturals.com) or Wal-Mart.



### Organic to Go

Luzerne Labs wants you to keep to your organic regimen even on the road and offers this handy kit with everything you need to clean and nourish your skin away from home. Costs \$60 at [www.luzerneorganics.com](http://www.luzerneorganics.com).



### Protect Your Skin

Titanium and zinc oxides protect just as well as high SPF sunscreens, minus the chemicals that can be absorbed into your bloodstream. Sircuit Day Care contains micronized titanium dioxide, a natural mineral that helps deflect the sun's rays. Smells great too. Costs \$60 at [www.sircuitskin.com](http://www.sircuitskin.com) or at Static Salon, White Plains.



### Pure and Natural

Everything about this cleansing bar is pure and natural—even the packaging. Made of 100-percent post-consumer recycled paper, it has baby's breath seeds embedded inside: plant it, water it, and watch it grow! \$3.99 for two bars, at Target and CVS stores. Available in February, 2008.



### Say Spa(aahh)

EclipseSpa can now come to you with this new line of organic spa products, softly scented with lavender. Organic Sugar, Soy, and Tea Bubble Bath, \$18.95, Organic Body Moisturizer, \$25, at [www.Eclipse-Spa.com](http://www.Eclipse-Spa.com).



### Back to MAC

Once you've used up six M.A.C. cosmetic products, take the empties back to the M.A.C. counter and get a free lipstick in return!



## DO's AND DON'Ts IN THE KITCHEN

- **DON'T** use non-stick pans—their toxic emissions have been linked to bird deaths.
- **DO** cook in cast iron—it will boost your food's iron content.
- **DON'T** rely on processed food. It consumes a ton of energy to create, then needs to be reheated. Plus it can contain those nasty trans fats and high fructose sugar.
- **DO** count on five to seven servings a day of fresh fruits and veggies (see Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce on this page) for the ones with the least pesticide residue) and homemade goodies.
- **DON'T** buy pre-wrapped produce from the supermarket.
- **DO** choose local, organic (whenever possible) produce from farmers' markets ([www.agmkt.state.ny.us](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us)) or a CSA (community supported agriculture) farm ([www.greenpeople.org](http://www.greenpeople.org)).
- **DON'T** microwave food in plastic. While the FDA says the chemicals released while heating plastic is within the margins of safety, any amount is too much.
- **DO** use glass containers instead.

## CAR STUFF

- Keep an eye on your tires. Proper inflation improves mileage by up to 3 percent and extends the life of the tire. If you drive 12,000 miles a year, you could save up to 16 gallons of gas annually.
- Carpool: If the average commuter carpooled every day, he/she would save 500 gallons of gas and 550 pounds of exhaust emissions every year. Or work from home when possible.
- If you get a kick out of washing your own car, wash it on your lawn, which waters your lawn and allows the earth to filter away impurities. But it's best to go to a commercial car wash, which uses up to 100 fewer gallons of water per car.



## GREEN LAWNS

Go green with lawn products too. Wow! Supreme is a natural fertilizer and weed control product ([www.gardensalive.com](http://www.gardensalive.com)) that improves a lawn's ecosystem while zapping those pesky weeds and only needs to be applied twice a year, in spring and fall (similar non-organic products need to be applied three or four times. Scotts, makers of Miracle-Gro, now has

an environmentally friendly line called Organic Choice. Even better, start your own compost heap to recycle leaves, grass clippings, and food wastes into rich, loamy soil.

Try Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to control unwanted insects by the least toxic means: Unleash ladybugs near rose bushes to keep aphids away; set mouse traps indoors; try ant and roach traps that use nontoxic ingredients that affect the bugs' reproduction; use an insect repellent that contains the lowest concentration of the chemical deet that works for you, and wash it off when you get home.



## SHOPPER'S GUIDE TO PESTICIDES in PRODUCE

Even small doses of pesticides can be dangerous and washing and peeling fruits and vegetables doesn't completely eliminate them. The Environmental Working Group tested 43 common produce products and listed them from highest amount of pesticides to lowest.



### Loaded with Pesticides

It is worth the extra expense to buy these items organic:

**Peaches**  
**Apples**  
**Bell Peppers**  
**Celery**  
**Nectarines**  
**Strawberries**  
**Cherries**  
**Pears**  
**Spinach**  
**Lettuce**



### Virtually Pesticide-Free

These are safe to buy non-organic:

**Cabbage**  
**Bananas**  
**Kiwi**  
**Asparagus**  
**Sweet Peas (frozen)**  
**Mango**  
**Pineapples**  
**Sweet Corn (frozen)**  
**Avocado**  
**Onions**