



125 Ways to Go Green...

Save Green at the Same Time

By Ken Northams



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Introduction

We are all increasingly feeling the need to help the environment in the face of global warming. Most people would like to "go green," but think that it would be more expensive to change their ways than just carrying on as always.

Well, the good news is that you **can** save money while staying green. You can adopt all kinds of environmentally friendly habits that will keep a sizable portion of your hard earned money firmly in your pocket.

Isn't that the best of both worlds? You get to do your bit for the good of mankind, spending less in the process.

Of course, you need to know all the best strategies. Some of them are obvious and touted by everyone who preaches the green life.

However, there are lots of little known ways to make a huge difference that very few people talk about. It is mainly those kinds of strategies that this ebook concentrates on.

Even if the worst predictions of our planet's fate from man-made global warming fails to actually come about, we can all benefit greatly by adopting green measures. Earth's resources are for all to enjoy and we should not be wasting them, even when there appears to be plenty to go round.

Some of the statistics stated in this ebook may shock you. It shocked me too. It soon becomes obvious that we humans are a wasteful lot, or at least we have been. But there will never be a better time than now to change your ways, go green and save green at the same time.

Even if you only take up one single tip from this ebook, that will be worth it. There are 125 green strategies in this ebook to help you save your money and still be green, so you have little excuse not to start doing several of them - or all of them! ■

The Home

The home is one of the places where you can make the most savings and also the biggest environmental impact. There are so many things that can be improved or changed in any home.

These measures typically don't cost the earth – sometimes nothing at all, and the savings gained can be considerable over time.

Even if you are not in a position to invest in greener ways, you can still make a tremendous difference at little or no cost. You just have to know how.

This section, dealing with the Home, is the largest, so it has been divided up into three basic sub-sections:

- The Kitchen
- Home Appliances
- Heating & Insulation

Each of these sections is dealt with in depth. The tips offered are the best in terms of overall savings for you, as well as in terms of positive overall environmental impact.

I realize that not all of the green strategies will suit everyone, but there are plenty to go round, so expect to find some that can fit into your lifestyle perfectly. ■

The Home

The Kitchen

Green Strategy #1

Want to save the environment from one ton of carbon every year? Start today by only filling your kettle with the amount of water you actually need every time.

Most people fill their kettles to the brim. They waste electricity – and their money – in the process.

Persuade another 14 families (15 all together) to only fill their kettles with what they actually need and a whole ton of carbon will be prevented from floating into the atmosphere to do its irreparable damage.

If only your family did this for one week it would save enough energy to light up your house for a day, or run your TV set every evening for a week.

Green Strategy #2

Cooking requires heat, so conserve it to save money. Keep a lid on all the pans being used in cooking. Water will boil around 6% faster in pans with a lid on, thereby saving time, electricity and your money, as well as giving the environment a break.

Green Strategy #3

If you are cooking in the oven, keep the door closed. Most modern ovens have a see-through door to let you see what's happening inside. Use it!

Around 20% of oven heat is lost every time the door is opened. If you're trying to bake a cake, for example, and you keep opening the door to see how it's getting on, then you are cooking at 80% of the correct temperature, while wasting energy and money!

Green Strategy #4

If you use commercial cleaning products in your kitchen, **STOP!** They are expensive to buy and expensive to produce.

You can make your own cleaner from a mixture of vinegar, salt and baking soda. It will clean perfectly, and it will contain no toxic chemicals, thereby helping the environment. It will cost a great deal less too.

Not convinced? Think about this... We dump some 32 million pounds of damaging toxins down our drains every year, just from household and kitchen cleaning products alone.

What kind of damage do you think that is doing to the environment? Well, you don't have to do it anymore.

Here's another simple recipe for an all-purpose cleaner, courtesy of Greenpeace:

- ½ cup pure liquid soap
- 1 gallon hot water
- ¼ cup lemon juice

It's safe and effective, and costs very little.

Green Strategy #5

I'll bet you use one of those hard plastic scrub pads to get the baked on grime off your pots and pans. Then after a week or so you throw it away and start using a new one.

Bad idea.

Consider using something more permanent that will last a very long time, and will get the dirt off too. A good old-fashioned scrubbing brush will do that. Yes, I'm serious. It will last for months, if not years, and it can be recycled over and over again.

You save money and the environment doesn't get clogged up with old plastic scrub pads. Isn't that a great idea?

Green Strategy #6

Do you follow cookbooks to the letter? You shouldn't always take their advice as being good advice. It often is, but not always.

You don't have to pre-heat an oven for every dish, unless for bread and pastries. Just shove the dish in the oven and switch on, setting it at the right temperature. And re-read **Green Strategy #3** in case you've forgotten.

Green Strategy #7

Eat in more often. Americans eat out on average around five times a week! Meals that are prepared commercially are costly and may contain chemicals and ingredients that are less than really good for you.

Go for the healthier option and save your money. The environment will benefit from a little less commercial cooker activity too.

You could find yourself saving around \$100 a month from eating more modest meals at home. You won't go hungry either, and you'll know what all the ingredients are.

Green Strategy #8

Cook once and eat twice. This is a great way to save all round. If your oven can hold two chickens, and I'll bet it can, then why not roast two instead of one every time?

Two chickens will cook in about the same amount of time that one will. Now, do the math... You will cut your cooking time in half, saving electricity or propane cooking gas – and guess what happens to all the money saved! Yep, it stays right in your pocket.

You also save a lot of time when you come to prepare your next meal. Remember, it doesn't have to be just chickens. This will work with turkeys, roast beef, etc. And I surely don't have to mention the environmental benefits...

Green Strategy #9

An interesting statistic from Bicycling Magazine tells us that you can save around \$2,000 a year on health costs on average by simply eating enough fruit and vegetables.

The average weighted price of fresh vegetables is around 64 cents per pound and the average weighted price of fresh fruit is around 71 cents per pound. The average price of a pound of beef is around \$4.15.

OK, so you save money, but does it help the environment?

Oh yes!

A lot of the costs are in bringing the end product to the market. Vegetables and fruit are cheaper to produce. Their production is less harmful to the environment too.

Consider also that vegetables are plants and most fruits grow on trees, which both absorb CO² and give out oxygen. Cattle, pigs and sheep don't do that.

In fact, they do the opposite. Cattle especially produce a lot of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. They breathe it out and expel millions of tons of it in other ways that are best left unmentioned.

So, when you breed a lot of cattle for food... You figure it out.

Green Strategy #10

How many times do you or your children eat a bowl of cereal and end up with all the cereal gone, but a quarter cup of milk left at the bottom of the bowl, which gets drunk on its own?

You could save around six gallons of milk a year if the cereal and the milk both ended at the same time.

No, I don't mean put in more cereal, I mean put in less milk! You'll save money and ease up a little on the need for milk production too.

Now, imagine if every single person who eats cereal every morning did the same...

Green Strategy #11

And sticking with milk, if you find it on sale at a bargain, buy a lot at the cheaper price and freeze it.

Milk will freeze just fine. It takes a little while to thaw out, so you do need to plan ahead a bit. The fat can separate from the milk, so it needs a good shake after thawing too. Apart from that though, it will taste exactly the same after thawing out as fresh milk will.

Green Strategy #12

You can consolidate your cooking and save both in money and energy.

It's perfectly possible to cook for a whole week in one go. It will take a little planning and probably a whole afternoon (Sunday afternoon perhaps?), but after you've cooked for the week, all you have to do is freeze or chill the individual meals, ready for heating up when you need them.

This idea was popular during World War II when resources were more scarce. It still makes sense though.

You don't have to cook the whole meal, of course. If you plan to have pasta with a meat dish, just cook the meat beforehand as pasta cooks fast and is best fresh.

Use your common sense and make a plan, and you'll be amazed at how easy it is and how much you can save for yourself and the planet.

Green Strategy #13

Whatever happened to the idea of pot roasts? They don't seem to be so popular these days, which is a pity when you consider that cooking a chicken in a slow cooker for seven or eight hours uses **one third** of the energy that cooking it in an oven does.

The same applies to any meat you might want to cook, as well as vegetables and whatever else you can think of.

If you have cheap electricity at night, which is common in some places, then make use of it to slowly cook something overnight! It can be that simple.

Green Strategy #14

I'll bet you've been wondering when I was going to mention organic food. Well, here it is, and more importantly, here's why you should eat organic food.

It probably is better for you, but if you're serious about going green, then organic food is the way to go.

Carbon dioxide (CO²) is captured and stored in organic soils much better and more effectively than in ordinary soils. This makes organic foods much more friendly to the planet.

Here's an example of how good organic growing could be:

If we grew all our corn and all our soybeans in organic conditions, some **580 BILLION tons of CO²** would no longer be pumped out into the atmosphere.

Green Strategy #15

Serve up less food on the family's plates. Americans have a wasteful habit of serving up too much food. This leads to an amazing amount of waste.

On average, 30% to 50% of the food we buy gets dumped! And that's whether we eat at home or eat out. Americans throw away a mind-numbing 14 million tons of food a year!

That works out at about 100 pounds a year for each of us just dumped in the garbage can. Try explaining that to people in third world countries who spend their days starving, just wondering where their next meal is coming from.

Train your family to reach a point of zero food waste. It simply makes sense from every possible angle.

How much could your family save in a year of practicing zero food

waste? How much would the environment benefit from it?

Green Strategy #16

Does your home use bottled water? Yes? You could be throwing away a whopping \$1,400 on average every year!

Worse than that, only around 5% of the empty plastic bottles ever get recycled. That means 95% of them end up in landfills.

You could invest around \$100 for a multi-stage water filter to fit to your existing water supply. It's already safe to drink, but this will make it taste great – every bit as good as bottled water, and you'll save around \$1,300 a year on average. The environment will feel better too without all that plastic being dumped in landfills.

If you still need to carry water in bottles, consider using reusable bottles. You can get stainless steel water bottles, for example, that will last a lifetime.

Consider this: Americans burn some **1.5 million barrels of oil** every year just to produce all the plastic bottles of water we use.

How many cars would that power for a year?

Around 100,000! That's the number of cars in a fair-sized city.

Green Strategy #17

Remember science classes? The boiling point of water at sea level is 212 degrees Fahrenheit. It changes though with increased pressure. This is the basis of the pressure cooker.

Food will cook three to four times faster in a pressure cooker. It often tastes better too. You use less energy in cooking, so you save money and help the environment.

One other benefit is cooking on hot days. Because cooking times are drastically reduced, the kitchen doesn't heat up so much, so there's less need for increased air conditioning, and less energy used all round!

And if your grandmother tells you horror stories of the old days when pressure cookers occasionally exploded, that was then. Technology has moved on a lot, and pressure cookers are completely safe to use these days.

There are other major benefits to cooking in a pressure cooker...

You know how some foods seem to taste better the second time round as leftovers? They taste great the first time round, but there seems to be more flavor when the food has lain for a time.

This is especially true of stews and sauces, and it's because the flavors bind together and mature better given a little time. That's what a pressure cooker does first time, every time! The higher heat and the increased pressure squeezes, combines and melds the flavors together faster. The proof is in the taste!

Pressure cookers use less liquid for cooking, so the nutritional value is increased. This means that the food you cook is actually better for you. Phew! Convinced yet? I hope you are...

Green Strategy #18

Fit a sink faucet aerator to the kitchen sink. This will reduce the amount of water you use. Some 15% of the average household's water consumption goes on faucet use.

A faucet aerator provides water under increased pressure, but less of it, so it does a similar job. It gives you a needle spray pattern that's actually more efficient too.

Cost to buy? Minimal. Benefit to your pocket and the environment? Immense!

Green Strategy #19

Where would a bunch of kitchen "be green and save money" tips be without the mention of recycling?

You can and should sort out all your kitchen waste that can be recycled. All the glass, bottles and containers can be sorted and save the landfills from being clogged up any more than necessary.

For example, how long do you think it takes a glass bottle to decompose and become a natural part of the environment again? Let me tell you: 4,000 years.

That means that the glass bottles you throw out that get dumped in landfills will not blend back into nature until the 61st century! Is that what you want to have happen to your glass waste?

Take a drinks can that gets recycled. It can often be back on a supermarket shelf in another form in about two months time. That's just one good reason for recycling used cans.

Incredibly, the average child in America goes through some 500 drinks cans a year. Consider that you can often redeem cans and bottles for rebates. That just has to be worth doing.

Ten years ago we threw 37,000 bottles and cans into landfills – every minute! How many do you think we are throwing away into landfills today?

You may also be eligible for a reduced garbage collection charge if you sort out the different items for recycling, and of course the environment benefits too. ■

The Home

Home Appliances

Green Strategy #20

Use your dishwasher! This is one appliance that actually uses less energy than the manual alternative. Dishwashers are efficient devices. They use less water than someone standing over a sink usually does, and they usually clean dishes better too.

There are a few things to keep in mind though:

- Always use the dishwasher with a full load (but not overloaded). That way it works at its most efficient level and provides the greatest savings.
- Don't rinse off food waste; scrape it off to save on water.
- Set the dishwasher to the lowest heat level you safely can. Check the manual for this.
- Don't use the automatic air-dry function. Simply let the dishes air dry naturally. It takes a little longer, but costs nothing!
- Don't use the rinse function on your dishwasher. It can use up to seven gallons of hot water! You normally don't need it.
- Buy an Energy Star Rated dishwasher if you don't already have one. You can save 33% off your old dishwasher bill. An Energy Star Rated dishwasher uses at least 40% less energy than an old dishwasher will.

Green Strategy #21

Your water heater is probably set to 140 degrees Fahrenheit. You can reset it lower to 120 degrees and still have all the benefits. However, your water heating costs will drop by up to 10% and the environment will benefit from lower energy consumption.

Green Strategy #22

You could consider the benefits of installing a tankless water heater. Tank-based water heating systems suffer from standby heat loss.

This is due to the fact that your water tank needs to have hot water in it at all times, but most of the time it simply waits for you to need it. When you don't need hot water, the system cycles between heating the water and waiting for it to cool to the level where it needs re-heating again.

When you do use hot water in any quantity, cold water flows back into the tank to keep it full. This has the effect of actually lowering the temperature of the water, requiring even more energy to heat it up again!

A tankless water heater simply heats the water on demand. Water pipes are heated directly when the hot water tap is turned on and the water keeps being heated until it is switched off.

This is extremely efficient and minimizes waste, saving you money and minimizing the negative impact on the environment at the same time!

A tankless water heater will cost a bit more to install, but you will make your money back within a year or so. After that you can expect to save up to 50% on all your water heating bills every year.

Green Strategy #23

Insulate your water heater tank with an insulating blanket if you still use that system. You can save half a ton of carbon dioxide emissions escaping every year by simply doing this. You'll save money big time too.

Don't stop with the tank though, insulate the pipes leaving the tank as well. Usually the hot water has to heat the cold pipes before it is able to provide hot water at the sink faucet, which may be some distance from the tank.

The better insulated the whole system is, the more you save both in cash and reduced CO² emissions.

Green Strategy #24

Your washing machine puts 90% of its energy consumption into heating up the water. You can save considerably on this by using a cold-water detergent and switching to a cold, or at best, warm water setting.

If all washing machines in the country ran on cold water, clothes would get just as clean as they do now, and we'd save 1% on CO² emissions nationally as some 30 million tons of CO² would no longer be poured into the atmosphere.

Makes sense, doesn't it.

You may be able to get discounted rates if you run your washing machine and other appliances during off-peak hours, typically during the night. Check with the utility company for this.

Green Strategy #25

Stop using fabric softener in your washing machine. You don't need it, but there's a more compelling argument against it: fabric softeners contain damaging toxins that will be released into the environment.

There are eco-friendly softeners available that will soften, but do not contain toxins. Use them instead if you still feel the need for softening your clothes.

Green Strategy #26

Don't use a dryer! These are the greatest energy guzzling appliances there are.

Your grandmother used a clothes line and air-dried her clothes. The amazing fact about this method is that it works! And it's free! And it doesn't hurt the environment – not one single drop of CO² or any other greenhouse gas escapes from clothes freely drying on a line!

Imagine that...

However, if you **MUST** use a dryer you can lessen the negative

impact by taking a few simple common sense measures:

- Use a large super absorbent towel in the drier. This will cut down the drying time by up to 10%, saving money and energy.
- Keep the lint filter super clean. Check it after every drying cycle.
- Make use of the cool-down cycle. This lets the clothes finish off drying with the residual heat in the drier as it cools down.
- Check the drier vent regularly and clean it out if necessary.

Keeping your drier in tip-top condition will lessen its negative impact on the environment and cost you less. Though it will always be better to stop using the drier altogether.

Green Strategy #27

Your refrigerator should not be kept too cold. This appliance is for keeping food cool and it should do this at a temperature of between 37 and 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

Many refrigerators have a freezer compartment too. This should be kept at 5 degrees Fahrenheit.

To check these temperatures you will need a good thermometer. Place it in a glass of water in the middle of the fresh food storage area of your fridge and leave it for 24 hours.

If it reads outside of 37 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit, adjust the setting and check again until you get it just right.

You can check the freezer compartment of your refrigerator by placing a thermometer between two frozen packages. Packs of frozen peas are ideal for this.

Green Strategy #28

Defrost your refrigerator on a regular basis. I've seen fridges with two inches of solid ice at the back of the freezer compartment. Do you have any idea how much extra energy is wasted by this?

Ice build up in a fridge should never exceed one quarter of an inch, and even that is too much. You'll save a surprising amount of money by keeping ice build up down, and you'll use less energy too.

Green Strategy #29

Is your refrigerator door seal working properly?

You can test it with a one dollar bill, or even a hundred dollar bill if you prefer. It's not the value, but the paper that makes the test effective.

Open your fridge door and close it again on the dollar bill. With the bill half in and half out of the fridge, try gently pulling the bill free of the door. If you can do this easily, you may need to re-seal the door. If there is a fair lot of resistance, then the seal should be fine.

Green Strategy #30

Never leave food or liquids uncovered in the fridge. Apart from a burning effect a fridge may have on uncovered foods, they may also release moisture. This will have the effect of making the compressor work harder, using more energy and costing you more.

Green Strategy #31

Most of your appliances can become vampires, sucking the power from sockets even when switched off.

This is especially true when an appliance is placed in standby, such as with a TV. Don't be lazy; get up off your backside and actually switch off the TV at the set! Then unplug it from the socket when you have finished watching it for the evening.

You should do this with every appliance you have, regardless of what the manual may tell you. How long can it take to plug in and switch back on again anyway? It's easy and quick to do.

According to CNN, while each appliance, TV, VCR, DVD, computer, printer, blender, etc, etc, may only drain a very small amount, all together they can account for up to 5% of your electricity bill.

That's \$5 for every \$100 you pay. It adds up! So, unplug every time, or invest in a power strip that can be completely switched off. This is the easiest way to do it, and the laziest too. But it will save you money, and help the environment too.

Green Strategy #32

I'll bet you have the heating turned up in winter higher than you need it to be. Try lowering the thermostat just one degree. You won't notice the slightest difference. Believe me. But you will notice a difference on your electricity bill.

Lower it two degrees. You'll still be warm. Say you start off at 72 degrees Fahrenheit, a common room temperature, and you lower it to 70 degrees. That's still comfortable, very comfortable!

I'm willing to bet you could survive in a room temperature of a mere 68 degrees. Try it for a few days and see. You'll save a lot of money over the winter, and you'll help the environment too.

Green Strategy #33

It gets hot in summer. Americans especially have so conditioned their lives that they virtually live from air conditioned room to air conditioned room.

We leave the air conditioned house, step into the air conditioned car, drive down to the air conditioned mall and shop for whatever we want – probably an air conditioning unit or two...

Try turning the temperature control up on your air conditioning unit this summer. Think of it this way. If the outside temperature is a quite hot 90 degrees, then an indoors temperature of 85 degrees will feel relatively cool.

You don't need to have your house – every single room – set to 70 degrees in summer. It will still feel cooler at a much higher temperature.

Try slowly increasing the temperature a degree at a time until it feels uncomfortable, then set it down a degree or so and leave it at that. You'll be amazed at how much heat you can comfortably stand,

and how much you save too. Try it!

Green Strategy #34

You can save water in your shower in several ways. The obvious one is to take shorter showers, but by fitting low-flow attachments to your shower, you can save an amazing amount of water, saving money and energy into the bargain.

You want figures? OK, a low-flow shower head will save around 3,000 gallons of water for each person every year. That's a lot!

Remember, you can (and should) fit low-flow attachments to all your sink taps. You can fit a low-flow toilet too. This will save even more water for you and your family.

Green Strategy #35

Change your lighting. You may not think of your house lights as appliances, but they are. If you use incandescent bulbs, the old standard light bulbs, then you will benefit all round from changing to CFL bulbs, or compact fluorescent light bulbs.

They use around 75% less energy and will last around 10 times longer. They also produce 60% less heat, most of the energy they use goes into producing light.

That might seem obvious. I mean, that's what a light bulb is designed to do. Well, the older incandescent light bulbs produce more heat than they produce light. That's a measure of their inefficiency, so change to CFL bulbs and save on everything.

You should also check out the newer LED lights. You may not find them entirely suitable as main house lights, though many people do. But the good news is that LED's are even more efficient and cost even less to use than the highly efficient CFL light bulbs.

Green Strategy #36

Your entire water system can be costing you money if there are leaks. A single steady drip can account for up to 250 gallons a month! That's 3,000 gallons a year, and you will be charged for it –

water you didn't use or even see.

Check your toilet system for leaks by adding a few drops of bright food coloring to the toilet water tank. Don't flush for at least 30 minutes and see if the color appears in the toilet bowl.

If it does, then you have a leak and it will need to be repaired.

If the color doesn't appear within 30 minutes, then everything is fine. However, you'd better flush the food coloring away or the next person to use the toilet may wonder what's going on.

Green Strategy #37

If you don't have a low-flow toilet, then you can improvise by filling a half gallon plastic bottle with water, securing the cap on firmly, and placing it in the toilet water tank.

This can reduce the toilet flush by up to 40%, but still leave enough water to flush everything away efficiently.

Green Strategy #38

In summer, use the dishwasher, washing machine and any other large appliances in the morning or later afternoon when it's cooler. These appliances give off heat, which will only make your air conditioner work harder if you use them at the height of the day.

Conversely, in winter you should use them at the cooler times of the day to help heat up the house and take some of the burden off the heaters!

Green Strategy #39

Don't use a hair dryer! This appliance is among the top three of power-guzzling appliances. Besides, it's better for your hair to be gently dried with a soft towel before being left to air dry.

What's that? You don't have time to wait for your hair to air dry?

Of course you do! Make time. You are saving money and helping the environment here. Make time. ■

The Home

Heating & Insulation

Green Strategy #40

Use your heating thermostats wisely. If you lower the house temperature overnight by 5 degrees and turn it up again in the morning, you will save a lot of money and use a lot less resources.

You can also have unused rooms set to a cool setting in winter, rather than keep the whole house heated.

If you go away for a weekend you can lower your overall house heating to 55 degrees. This will keep the pipes from freezing, but will dramatically reduce your bills.

Green Strategy #41

If you are having a party, save a bit on your heating bill by turning the thermostats way down. A human body in an enclosed room gives out heat roughly equivalent to 175 watts of power. That's a very bright light bulb!

If you have 20 people in a room, that's the equivalent of a 3.5 kilowatt heater! It will get pretty warm if you leave the room heating at its normal setting, so turn it down for the evening and save all round!

Green Strategy #42

Use programmable thermostats to control your heating if possible. If they are properly programmed, they can reduce close to 2,000 pounds of greenhouse emissions a year in an average home, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

They also state that if every home in the US adopted these measures and ensured that leaks were minimized or even sealed, then the country could prevent 169 billion pounds of greenhouse

emissions a year.

All you have to do is work on **your** home!

Green Strategy #43

Consider installing solar panels. They can be expensive to install, but they work well in places where there is plenty of light. They don't need hot sunshine to operate, just light, so bright winter days are good enough.

You may not be able to completely run your home on solar power, but you can do quite a lot with a little bit of careful planning.

Green Strategy #44

Have your furnace serviced once a year and change the air filter whenever it needs changing. This can greatly reduce your heating bill as the furnace will run more efficiently, costing less to run in the process.

Green Strategy #45

Air returns and heating vents should be kept clear of all obstructions. Keep furniture or rugs and carpets clear and let the air flow go unhindered. This will increase the efficiency of the system, saving you money and keeping down on resource usage.

Green Strategy #46

Conserve heat. Insulate every part of the house that can be insulated if you have not already done so.

The loft is a very important place to insulate. Heat rises, and if your loft is not properly insulated, the heat will just keep rising - straight out of the roof! Of course, your hard-earned money will effectively pour out of the roof with it.

You can also insulate your wall cavities. Heat will go wherever it can, not just up, so insulate the sides as well. Some 40% of heat loss is often attributed to the lack of cavity wall insulation.

If you already have home insulation, you might benefit from upgrading it. Six or seven inches of insulation is common, but an extra three or four inches won't cost much more, and the savings gained will be immense over the years.

Green Strategy #47

Consider using eco-friendly insulation materials if you are insulating from scratch, or upgrading your existing insulation. Cellulose insulation, using shredded old newspapers and magazines, or insulation made from formaldehyde-free fiberglass, is much more friendly to the environment than traditional materials are.

These new eco-friendly materials will insulate every bit as good as the older materials will, and you'll save money through efficient insulation and the environment will benefit too.

Green Strategy #48

Drafts can seriously lower a room temperature. Make sure that all possible areas of drafts are closed off. Weather stripping is cheap to buy and it can seal loose doors and windows, making them more effective at keeping the heat in and the cold out.

Of course, the reverse is true for the summer months. Proper seals will help to make your air conditioning more effective and will save you money.

Green Strategy #49

This may seem obvious, but I'll say it anyway: replace any single glazed windows with double, or even triple, glazing. Single glazed windows were common in the old days, but they are not very good at insulation; the heat will escape as easily as if there is nothing there.

Double glazing is very efficient at trapping heat in a room, or keeping it out on hot summer days. And triple glazing is even better still. The cost of upgrading can be quite steep, but you will save considerably in the long term. Consider it as a sensible investment in your future.

Green Strategy #50

If you have single glazed windows, and you simply can't afford to upgrade to double glazed windows, then here's a simple and inexpensive tip that can help: cover your windows with bubble wrap.

OK, it sounds silly, but it really does work. It lets light in, though you cannot see through the windows properly, but it will reduce heat loss through the window by about 45%. That's a very significant amount!

The idea is simple: cut a sheet of bubble wrap to fit the window exactly, spray it gently with plain water, and stick it on to the window. It should stay there. And when you remove it there isn't any difficult mess to clean up.

You save money by retaining heat and the environment saves by having less demand on its resources!

Green Strategy #51

Insulate any open fireplaces you may have. Before I go any further, let me make it perfectly clear that this applies **ONLY** to fireplaces that are not actually being used!

I heard recently of someone who read of this idea, liked it and blocked up his chimney, then lit a fire. The house burned down.

However, if there are open fireplaces that are not being used, they are acting as vents for all the heat you are producing. You'd be as well off throwing a fistful of dollars out of the window every morning!

Insulating your open fireplaces that you are not using is easy. A large sheet of cardboard from a large box cut to size can usually do the trick.

This will prevent the heat from escaping up the chimney, and prevent drafts from entering down the chimney.

You can get more fancy if you like, but it's best to make the insulating material removable so that you can use the fireplace again whenever you want to.

NOTE: One word of warning about insulating and sealing your home: you do need fresh air to enter the house. If your heating system does not introduce fresh air, then make sure that you do at some point through each day.

If you have sealed the house tight and insulated well, you should consider installing carbon monoxide detectors in addition to your smoke detectors. This will tell you if there is a build up of carbon monoxide, which will mean that not enough fresh air is entering the building. ■

The Garden & Yard

The garden and yard are green areas where people can enjoy nature. This is where you can have flower and plants of your choosing.

You may have a fountain, or just a plain lawn. You may have a deck patio, garden accents, a lawn statue, solar powered lighting, or any number of things to make the area attractive.

Your garden and yard will generate waste. It's what you do with the waste that's important. The overall space also needs careful consideration.

Your little bit of green can be a haven of savings and can be greener than just its color. All it needs is a little bit of planning and thought... ■

The Garden & Yard

Green Strategy #52

Let's start with the most obvious one: compost!

You should start a composting bin for all the vegetable matter you might ordinarily throw away. Leaves from trees in autumn, as well as anything pruned or cut off can all be composted.

A good compost will provide excellent soil material for nourishing young plants. It's a clever way of recycling, really.

Look to the kitchen as well for decomposable materials. Food waste will compost easily and it's an ideal way to dispose of it. Composting food and vegetable matter turns it into nutrient-rich soil. You can buy this sort of thing of course, but it's much more satisfying and cheaper to make it yourself.

Green Strategy #53

Consider planting drought-tolerant tree species in your garden. These include crepe myrtle, ash, or ginko, and shrubs from rosemary to barberry and juniper.

Why?

Global warming could create drier conditions. If you have plants competing for increasingly drier soil, you will have problems. Drought-tolerant tree and shrub species will survive better and not demand as much water.

Green Strategy #54

Do you really need all the large lawn space you have? It costs money to mow the lawn regularly during the summer months. If you can cut down on your lawn space and replace it with an area where grass doesn't grow, you will save money and time and use less resources.

Green Strategy #55

Water the lawn in the early morning when there is more moisture in the air, and when the water will be retained in the soil for longer.

At the heat of the day any water you introduce onto the lawn will evaporate faster. It will not have time to penetrate down as far as it needs to go either. This will waste water, your time and your money, as well as earth's resources.

Green Strategy #56

Consider upgrading your lawn irrigation system. If it is quite old, then it almost certainly wastes water. Modern irrigation systems are much more efficient at distributing water. You can save 30% to 60% by using a smart irrigation system.

Green Strategy #57

If you live in a hot dry place, you can help your garden's soil by adding polymers. These help by retaining moisture for longer periods, thereby helping plants and flowers to grow more efficiently.

Green Strategy #58

Install a rain barrel to catch rainfall from the roof. This is an old idea, but a good one. The rain is free after all, and it is excellent for watering plants and flowers as it doesn't contain unnecessary chemicals. You can save on water bills by utilizing this simple idea!

Green Strategy #59

Do you enjoy driving your lawn mower up and down the lawn on a Sunday afternoon?

Get some exercise and stop unnecessary pollution by getting rid of your motorized lawn mower! Get an old-fashioned, but sensible lawn mower that needs to be pushed in order to work.

It isn't hard work and it gets the job done just fine. You get good exercise, you save money and the environment benefits too. ■

Computers & Printers

Most homes now have a computer and printer. They are very common, and they are now so much more powerful than their early cousins were a mere 25 years ago.

As with all electric machines, they consume power. Today's computers are much more efficient at doing so, but improvements can still be made if you know what to do.

Printers are wasteful by their very nature. Paper comes from wood, which is the material of trees, and we print far too many sheets of paper that we really don't need most of the time.

By adopting a few simple principles, everyone could seriously reduce their wasteful nature with their computers and printers. This would not reduce the effectiveness of the appliances – just make them less wasteful, more environmentally friendly, saving money for everyone! ■

Computers & Printers

Green Strategy #60

Turn off your computer when you stop using it. Leaving a computer on all the time is extremely wasteful. And if you use a monitor, it is more wasteful still.

If you feel you must leave them on, make sure they go on standby or sleep mode as soon as possible when not in use.

Green Strategy #61

Upgrade your CRT monitor if you still use one. The older cathode ray tube monitors are not very efficient in terms of energy use. The newer LCD monitors are much more efficient and use less energy. They also take up less space too.

Green Strategy #62

Print less. Or not at all, if possible. Paper doesn't grow on trees – it is trees! If you really have to print, then consider using duplex, or double-sided printing to save half your paper needs. You'll also save a tree or three.

Green Strategy #63

Recycle your printer ink cartridges wherever possible. Some printer manufacturers have schemes to help with this. Use them!

Over 200 million used printer ink cartridges end up in landfills in the US alone. When you consider Europe, Canada, Australia, Japan, China, and any number of other countries, then you can see why recycling **YOUR** used printer ink cartridges makes sense.

Green Strategy #64

If you are upgrading your computer anyway, consider upgrading a desktop and monitor unit to a laptop.

Laptops typically use less than 20% of the energy that a dual computer/monitor system uses. A laptop uses about 50 watts to a dual system using about 270 watts.

Green Strategy #65

Plug your computer and printer, and any other device you use with them, into a power strip. When the equipment is not in use, switch it off!

This will prevent vampire energy use where electricity is still consumed because appliances are left plugged into the sockets. ■

Car & Fuel

We have a love affair with the car. It started well over 100 years ago and it has continued unabated ever since. We are always looking for ways to go faster with more power and panache, ignoring the cost to ourselves and the environment.

It can't go on forever...

We eagerly await the day when a clean, cheap and reliable source of energy powers our cars. There are exciting developments with electricity and hydrogen, as well as other technologies, but so far the internal combustion engine powered by gasoline or diesel fuel accounts for the majority of cars on the roads worldwide.

In the meantime we owe it to ourselves, and everyone else, to adopt driving habits that minimize the harmful impact that the motor car has on the environment.

The really good news is that when we start driving in such a way that the negative footprint of our cars is minimized, we usually pay less at the same time!

That obviously makes a lot of sense. So why are not more of us doing it? You can make a start now and hope that others follow!

The USA has only some 2% of the crude oil reserves in the world. However the USA consumes around 25% of all the oil production in any one year. Yes, the math doesn't quite add up, and we have to import 60% of the oil we use.

How much do we use?

A good question... All the cars, buses and trucks, etc in the USA consume a whopping great **20.5 million barrels of oil a DAY!** That's what it takes to keep the country mobile. Isn't it time you did something to help – and save yourself some money at the same time? ■

Car & Fuel

Green Strategy #66

Don't drive!

Do you have to drive? If you live in a rural part of the country you may have little choice when you need to travel a long distance. But if you live in a town or city there's most likely a bus service you could use, or you could walk.

You could also consider getting a bicycle, which will provide you with transport and good exercise – and lots of savings in your pocket!

Green Strategy #67

Become a smooth driver. I don't mean someone who poses and tries to look cool behind the wheel. I mean someone who brakes gently and accelerates gently.

Driving smoothly will put less stress on your car. It will consume less gas too. The car parts will last longer and the gas will get you further. You save and the environment saves too.

Green Strategy #68

Consolidate your driving trips. Don't drive to the local store every day. Go once a week and stock up properly.

Do you have to drive your kids to school every day? Perhaps a neighbor and you could get together and share the driving.

Think of ways to reduce your driving. You will save fuel and save on resources too.

Green Strategy #69

Reduce your speed. Driving at 70 miles per hour is expensive. A much more efficient speed for the average car is around 55 miles per

hour. You will still get to where you are going at that speed, and you will burn less fuel too.

Green Strategy #70

Dump all the excess weight in your car. Your car will burn more gas with every pound of increased weight.

Go through the trunk and see if there is anything you can leave out. In some cases you can probably dump up to 100 pounds of unnecessary stuff. That will increase your car mileage considerably over time and save you money too.

Green Strategy #71

Give your car a tune up. Like so many other things, a car works at its most efficient when everything is working at its best possible. Your car will consume less gas, go further and save you money all at the same time. It will also lessen its drain on the environment too.

Green Strategy #72

Carpool to work as much as possible. You don't have to work at the same place in order to do this. You just all have to be going in roughly the same direction.

There are close to 130 million workers in the US. Close to 80% of them drive to work alone. Carpooling can save a lot of money for everyone.

Green Strategy #73

Check what your car's recommended fuel octane level is. Don't get a higher fuel octane if you don't need it. Higher fuel octane levels are usually more expensive.

Green Strategy #74

Tire roll resistance accounts for 20% of your car's fuel consumption. That's the energy needed to get the tires rolling and keep them rolling.

Tires, like most other things, work best when they are in peak condition. Keep your tires properly inflated. Tire roll resistance increases with under-inflated tires. Check the pressure regularly and keep it at the recommended pressure. Also check wheel alignment. Badly aligned wheels **WILL** cost you a lot of money!

Green Strategy #75

Never sit with the engine idling for more than one minute. Re-starting the engine consumes about the same amount of gas that an idling engine consumes in about one minute.

You will save gas and money if your wait is going to be more than a minute by switching the engine off!

Green Strategy #76

Around 16 million gallons of gas is wasted every year from cars sitting in line at places like Burger King.

You can eat healthier and save gas by cooking at home and staying home! This way your meal will cost less – you cook it – so you don't have to drive anywhere to get it!

Green Strategy #77

Anticipate ahead. This will help to prevent those last minute hard braking events that scare everyone and consume unnecessary gas, putting added strain on your car's parts at the same time.

Keep thinking ahead and anticipate bends, braking gently in plenty of time. See the red light up ahead so that you don't have to screech to a halt because you weren't ready. Anticipate and keep your blood pressure down too.

Green Strategy #78

Replace an old and worn gas cap. Check your gas cap for wear, especially the seal. If you find any wear, replace it.

A worn gas cap with a faulty seal will let fuel evaporate out. You'd

be better pouring the gas down the drain. At least you'd have some control that way.

Green Strategy #79

Do you have an overhead luggage rack that you don't actually use all the time? Remove it.

An overhead luggage rack adds drag, which in turn means more gas used. Save some money and only put it in place when you need it.

Green Strategy #80

Put on your seat belt **before** you start your car's engine. If you are like most people, you start the engine, then put on the seat belt. This can waste several hundred dollars in wasted fuel every year. It all adds up!

Green Strategy #81

Reverse into a parking space instead of driving straight in. The reason is that you can drive straight out on a cold engine instead of maneuvering on a cold engine. It's more efficient and greener.

You could save around 25% better fuel economy doing this. If everyone in a medium sized city also did it, they could collectively save a much more interesting total of \$15 million every year!

Green Strategy #82

When the time comes to replace your car, consider getting a fuel-efficient car. Smaller cars are generally much more efficient than huge gas-guzzling SUV's. New hybrid cars can offer a good solution. Check them out.

Green Strategy #83

Change your car's air filter regularly. Doing this will improve gas mileage by as much as 10% and save up to 28 cents per gallon. ■

Office & Workplace

The office and workplace are traditionally places of unnecessary wastage. Employees seem to think that because it belongs to the company they work for, it doesn't matter if they are wasteful.

Not so!

Waste is waste whoever owns what's being wasted. It costs money, a lot of money in the case of offices and places of work. We all need to be a lot more responsible and try to limit the drain on resources.

It is down to the management really. Workers will do what they are told to do, by and large. They will take the lead from a good boss who is also a good leader. All too often though, it is the boss who shows the workers how to be wasteful.

Regardless of who sets the example, we can all do better in the workplace. We can all take positive steps to reduce or even eliminate wasteful habits. It only makes sense after all. ■

Office & Workplace

Green Strategy #84

The biggest single cost in many offices and workplaces is the electricity bill. You can overcome this to some extent by installing CFL bulbs, or compact florescent lights. They are much more efficient and use less energy.

Put all electric devices at each desk on a power strip that can switch off. Computers and printers that are left plugged in drain power and cost money, costing the environment even more.

Green Strategy #85

When you are replacing a printer, consider getting an all-in-one device that combines printer, scanner, copier and fax. Each component in an all-in-one device works as good as a dedicated one, and having a four-in-one machine is much more cost-effective than having four separate ones.

Green Strategy #86

Telecommute if possible. Increasingly, companies are seeing the advantages of having their workforce working from home.

There are distinct advantages for the workers too. You don't have to commute for a start. In most cases you just need a good high-speed Internet connection, a computer and perhaps a printer and fax.

Green Strategy #87

Give customers the option of receiving their bills by email instead of sending out paper bills. Everyone saves this way and it works just as effectively too.

Green Strategy #88

Reduce the need for business meetings by conferencing on line. Today's computers are fast and efficient. They can easily cope with a web cam for virtual face to face meetings. Also, there are plenty of software choices for on line conferencing that come free to use.

Business travel is an expense that is not always needed. Some workers may view it as a perk, but it's costly and often unnecessary.

Green Strategy #89

Print double sided (duplex printing) and recycle all used paper. Some 21million tons of paper – no, I don't know how many trees that equate to – gets thrown away by businesses every year.

That works out at around 175 pounds for every office worker in the country!

Think whether or not you actually need a physical printed copy of a document. You could save paper, money and trees by printing to PDF instead!

Green Strategy #90

When you replace office equipment such as printers and computers, find a good home for them.

Most old office equipment is still in fine working condition and is just being upgraded. There are plenty of charities or low income families who will gladly accept your old equipment and give them a second life.

Green Strategy #91

Consider changing over to an environmentally-friendly web host. They are as competitively priced as the ones who don't care, and they usually take steps to reduce their ecological footprint by buying carbon offsets, as well as other measures.

Green Strategy #92

If business travel is essential (and it usually isn't), then consider putting employees on trains instead of planes.

It may take a little longer to reach the destination, but trains are much more ecologically friendly than planes ever will be. You will save money and carbon emissions!

Green Strategy #93

If you are advertising a job, allow applicants to submit their applications on line. Your business may not advertise for jobs very often, but consider a large employer like a city administration who advertises for say, four jobs a month.

Let's say that around 150 people apply for each job and around 50% of the applicants are qualified. The usual way is to have 75 printed applications for review by the Board. Each application is on average five pages long. That's 375 sheets of paper. Only five of them, one application, will be kept on file, the rest is thrown away.

If you have an on line application, on the other hand, you will save 375 sheets of paper for every job advertised (in this example). That would be 1,500 sheets of paper a month (four job postings a month).

That's 18,000 sheets of paper a year. Let's say that the average sheet of paper measures .004 inches thick. That's a paper stack standing six feet tall! And every year it gets thrown away.

Why?

Save money, save trees and provide on line job applications! ■

Leisure Travel & Vacation

We all love to travel, preferably to far away places where life is exotic and exciting. This usually means flying on gas-guzzling jets – a very unfriendly way to vacation as far as the environment is concerned.

This doesn't mean we are doomed to stay home forever, though. Far from it. We can enjoy traveling and vacationing as much as we want, but we should do it in a much more eco-friendly manner.

Think about it. A vacation is only really a break from the monotony and drudgery of every day work and living. You can do that without consuming vast amounts of energy by staying closer to home. That's one way.

If you do go far away, there are other ways to reduce the negative impact too. You just have to be willing to discover them. ■

Leisure Travel & Vacation

Green Strategy #94

Instead of planning a vacation, plan a staycation.

The idea is not to travel far away with all the associated cost, gas-guzzling jets, expensive hotels, etc, etc.

The idea is to stay closer to home. A vacation doesn't have to be exotic. It needs to be a break from boring work and chores. You can travel 50 miles, or even 100 miles from where you live and I'll bet you'll find something – or even a lot of things – that will make it really worthwhile.

You'll save a ton of money, you won't be responsible for tons of carbon emissions, and you'll thoroughly enjoy yourself at the same time.

Statistics tell us that on major break weekend, such as Labor Day weekend, at least 35 million Americans will travel more than 50 miles from home. You don't have to be one of them.

Try it!

Green Strategy #95

If you do travel further away, then you can reduce your ecological footprint considerably in many ways.

Instead of getting glossy brochures and maps of the area you plan to visit, find all the information on the Internet and print it off from there. You don't really need color, so print in black and white for greater savings. You don't really need pictures, so don't print them.

You get the idea... You can almost certainly get all the information you need from travel web sites instead of buying expensive guide books.

Green Strategy #96

Travel light. Most people pack twice as much as they actually need. Once you have packed your case, remove half of it and see if you can get by with that. You will probably find that you can. You can most likely save by not having extra baggage charges, or if you are traveling by car, the lighter load will save fuel. Lighter is better all round.

Green Strategy #97

Purchase a solar charger for your phone, iPod, camera, etc. Unless you plan going to the Arctic in winter, there will most likely be plenty of light where you are going and enough to power a solar charger. You will save on electricity (OK, not yours, but saving is saving, after all), save on carbon emissions and feel good about being green!

Green Strategy #98

Try to plan vacation trips so that you can stay with friends and family if possible. You will save on hotel bills and enjoy seeing old friends and family again.

Of course, they will probably expect to reciprocate the visit, but why not, after all. There are savings to be made for everyone – and the environment too.

Green Strategy #99

Home exchange offers a viable way of enjoying a far away vacation without the expense of hotels, etc. The idea is very popular and relies on families exchanging homes with each other.

You will get to know the other family's neighbors, you'll shop at their local shops and markets, and see life in their part of the world in a way that you never would otherwise.

Ecologically, home exchange is a great idea. You simply “become” the other family for a couple of weeks, and they “become” you. The savings to be made are considerable, and the experience of local immersion in the culture and way of life is invaluable.

Green Strategy #100

Travel by train whenever possible instead of plane. Trains are among the most environmentally-friendly means of transport available. Modern trains are comfortable and relaxing. Of course, they do take longer on the journey than a plane, but the journey can be considered a part of the vacation, so enjoy it.

Need I say that traveling by train is cheaper than traveling by plane? You'll be responsible for less carbon emissions too!

Green Strategy #101

If you rent out a car at your vacation destination, rent out a small economical car. Sure, it's fun to rent out a big car that looks cool, but think first. If you don't need a big car, don't rent one!

Here's a better idea – rent a bicycle, or one for every member of the family!

Green Strategy #102

Visit protected areas such as parks and nature reserves. This will help to ensure that they stay maintained. There is often a charge to help with maintenance, but it's usually very reasonable, and after all, it's for a sensible cause.

Green Strategy #103

Buy local souvenirs and hand crafts to help support local craftsmen and artists. However, watch out for souvenirs that exploit the environment and wildlife. Local hand crafts are often less expensive than commercially produced ones, which generally use more resources as well.

Green Strategy #104

Bring your own refillable water bottle. Go back and check out **Green Strategy #16** if you need convincing.

With your own refillable water bottle you can drink all the water

you want, refilling it from the local water supply. You save money and the environment saves from not having a few dozen extra empty plastic bottle to struggle with.

Green Strategy #105

Thoroughly explore one place, rather than country hopping and trying to cram in half the world in just two weeks.

The idea is sometimes known as slow travel. It means that you simply slow down and squeeze every last bit out of the place you go to. You start exploring the immediate area around where you are staying, then you widen the circle a little bit at a time.

In this way you can spend two weeks in an area of say, 20 miles in radius, and have a really great time in the process. And of course, you will save money and keep your negative ecological footprint to an absolute minimum.

Green Strategy #106

In case you missed **Green Strategy #31**, remember to physically unplug **EVERY** electric appliance in your home before leaving on your vacation. You will save money if you do. ■

Shopping

Shopping is a necessary evil, or a most enjoyable pastime, depending on your point of view. A woman out shopping for a new dress will view it quite differently from a husband dragged along to the local mall for the week's grocery shopping.

We all have an unparalleled opportunity to be greener and save money too when it comes to shopping. Curiously, we usually don't exercise our opportunities in this respect.

We cannot really blame merchants for their wasteful habits. They will sell you anything you are prepared to buy. But if you insist on being green and eco-friendly, then they will sell you products that conform to that too.

This is where one of the the greatest opportunity lies. We all have a power to determine what we are offered when we go out shopping, so insist on goods that are nice to the planet, and that offer great value at the same time. ■

Shopping

Green Strategy #107

Buy locally produced food as much as possible. You will be helping the local economy, and you will be helping to reduce the hidden costs involved in food production, transportation and distribution.

The average American meal travels some 1,500 miles before a knife or fork touches it. That means increased freight charges and fuel costs. You can help to save on these, and save your own money too, by seeking out local produce.

Farmer's Markets are ideal for this. The quality is great and the price is great too. And because it's local, it doesn't travel halfway across the country to reach you!

In fact, you can reduce the amount of traveling your food has to do by an impressive 80% at least!

Green Strategy #108

Buy in bulk as much as possible to help avoid unnecessary packaging and smaller containers.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Americans generate some 80 million tons of waste from packaging, labeling and empty containers. That's about one third of the country's overall total for solid waste!

When you buy in bulk you save considerable in packaging, labeling and containers. And guess what – you save money too!

Green Strategy #109

Use coupons wisely. Yes, they can be a nuisance and they might make you look like a penny pincher, but they make sense, even if you do earn a good wage.

Here's the wise bit though: only cut out coupons for goods you

would be buying anyway. Why bother cutting out a coupon because it seems like a bargain if you hadn't intended to buy the item in the first place?

Green Strategy #110

Before going to the supermarket or local store, make a list. OK, so most of us do that, but here's the bit that makes the list work: stick to the list rigidly!

Don't go impulse buying once you get inside the doors of the store. Yes, the advertising is clever and persuasive, but you are smarter, so stick to the list.

The only exception is if you suddenly remember something you really need that you forgot to put on the list, but be honest with yourself. This tip will save you money and save valuable resources too.

Green Strategy #111

Leave the kids at home when you go shopping.

Why? Because they use strong emotional and persuasive messages that can turn even the most determined parent into a whimpering, complying idiot.

Make your list, stick to it without your kids grinding you down with their pleas. You'll save even more money...

Green Strategy #112

Take your own shopping bag with you to the store.

Do you know how many of the ubiquitous plastic shopping carrier bags end up in landfill tips every year?

Close to 4 trillion! Some 99% of all plastic shopping bags produced. That's a sad statistic that you don't have to add to.

Consider this: just 14 plastic shopping bags contains enough gasoline to power an average car for one mile.

Green Strategy #113

Don't buy water in plastic bottles. This has been said before a couple of times, but it bears saying again.

The water in your tap at home is potable, which means it is safe to drink. Get a filter unit fitted if you don't like the taste of it. A charcoal filter will get rid of chlorine, heavy metals and various other impurities. You should also get a reusable water container. You'll save money and the environment will quietly say, "Thank you."

Consider this: Americans buy 2.5 million plastic bottles of water every hour! Only around 25,000 of them will be recycled. The other 2,475,000 empty plastic bottles will end their days in landfills.

And during the next hour the very same thing will happen. There are 24 hours in every day, so the good news is that 600,000 empty plastic water bottles get recycled every day; the bad news is that 59,400,000 don't!

That's sad and so preventable. ■

Christmas

Christmas can be an incredibly wasteful time. Think of all the wrapping paper torn off presents and thrown into landfills. Why? There are alternatives, so let's make use of them.

Christmas is essentially a Christian event. However, it has become so commercialized that it is now difficult to know what it is anymore. Let's bring back the joy and sheer fun of Christmas.

If we bring the environment into the picture and consider how to minimize the negative things we do over the Christmas festivities, then that is a start in the right direction. We can, of course, save money too... ■

Christmas

Green Strategy #114

We all exchange gifts at Christmas with friends and family. It's a great tradition and one we all look forwards to.

Do you buy Christmas gifts in a store, and have them gift wrap?

It seems such an easy way to do it, and many of us just let the store gift wrap. They usually have such nice looking paper, and the finished gift looks so professionally made up.

And unnecessarily expensive and usually non-recyclable too!

You can gift wrap cheaper using recyclable paper that makes the whole process much more eco-friendly. It will be personal too, and not wrapped by someone who couldn't care less about who receives the gift.

Then the gift wrapping paper is usually thrown away immediately to end up in a landfill – expensive and non eco-friendly. You can do better.

Think about it...

Green Strategy #115

Staying on the subject of gift wrapping, why not re-use something that has already served a good purpose, and that will be appreciated by the person who receives the gift.

Your children's artwork – their drawings and paintings (you do keep them, don't you?) will make excellent gift wrapping paper for close relatives.

Imagine the surprise of a grandparent on receiving a gift wrapped in little Johnnie's best picture of a house and garden. The paper can be recycled and you save money – and someone gets to appreciate a special personal touch!

If you don't have any of your children's artwork, or if you don't want to part with the precious memories, you could use the comic section of old newspapers as a colorful and bright alternative.

The Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest environmental organization. They have calculated that if every family in the country gift wrapped just three of their gifts by recycling existing paper, children's artwork or old newspaper sections, the amount of paper saved would be great enough to cover a very impressive 45,000 football pitches!

Green Strategy #116

Do you hang a wreath on your front door at Christmas time? Many people do. You can make your own totally eco-friendly one, saving money too.

If there's a nearby park, or if you live near woods, evergreen branches and dried twigs can easily be shaped into a circle of green, and strung cranberries can add some contrasting color. The end product will look great. It will be completely biodegradable and will cost you no more than a little pleasantly spent time.

Green Strategy #117

Are your Christmas lights LEDs this year? The light emitting diode lights (LED) are much more efficient than the old type, and they are much more reliable and greener too. ■

Personal Hygiene

It's important to maintain good personal hygiene. And of course, there is a whole industry built on this concept. We are bombarded by images of beautiful bodies, beautiful because they used some product or other, and we are told that we need the product too in order to become beautiful.

It isn't really so.

We can maintain perfectly good personal hygiene without spending a small fortune on products, some of which actually harm the environment.

We can take more control of our lives and start to develop habits that are more in keeping with a healthy planet, as well as a healthy body.

We'll save money and ease the negative burden our planet has to suffer. That's worth doing, isn't it? ■

Personal Hygiene

Green Strategy #118

Use old coffee grounds to exfoliate dead skin off your hands and feet.

Take the used coffee grounds and mix in some liquid hand soap. Scrub your hands together, or scrub your feet with the mixture. The coffee grounds will get rid of anything excess and the soap will keep it clean.

Green Strategy #119

Go back to using the "old-fashioned" safety razor. It isn't all that old-fashioned in any case, and it will save a lot on unnecessary waste.

The ubiquitous plastic disposable razors just fill up landfill sites, while the small steel safety razor blades are much more earth friendly.

You will also save money; razor blades are not expensive. Also, they are not called "safety" razors for nothing. They are perfectly safe, so don't worry about injuring yourself!

You could go one step further and start using a really old-fashioned cut-throat razor. Why not? Your grandfather managed just fine! That razor will get rid of any stubble, leaving your face as smooth as a baby's bottom, and there are no disposable parts.

Perfect!

Green Strategy #120

For women traveling on the road less traveled, there can be a problem finding tampons.

Eco-friendly alternatives exist. One alternative allows you to take it with you wherever your travels may take you. It's a reusable

menstrual cup. However, you should try it out in the comfort of your home before setting off to the ends of the earth where you may have few, if any, alternatives.

The idea is not new. Leona Chalmers may not be a household name, but she is the person who first received a patent for a menstrual cup. That was back in the 1930s.

The internally worn reusable menstrual cups are made of either natural gum rubber, or medical grade silicon making them perfectly safe. The idea works, it's extremely green, and it certainly saves money.

Another alternative is washable sanitary pads. This is pretty much how your grandmothers lived, so again, it's not a new idea. But it saves money and it's eco-friendly. ■

Miscellaneous

This section holds all the little bits and pieces that didn't quite fit in anywhere else. They probably do belong in one or other of the previous categories, but somehow they seem to fit best in that catch-all category – Miscellaneous.

It doesn't seem to matter how well anyone organizes a list, there is always a few items that just don't seem to fit in anywhere properly.

Here then is a short, but important, collection of the Miscellaneous items on our list. ■

Miscellaneous

Green Strategy #121

Make better use of your local library. They have more than books these days. You can borrow music, magazines and movies too, and most libraries have Internet connections available should you need one.

Green Strategy #122

Do you pick up a cup of coffee on your way to work? One that comes in a little plastic or paper container? And do you dump the container in a trash can when you've finished drinking it? Most people do, but you don't have to.

Consider taking a reusable mug with you and asking the person serving you coffee to fill it up. They will most likely agree, and you can feel good about saving the environment a little.

OK, you won't save much money on this one, but you will feel really good and totally superior to everyone else who chucks their used coffee container in the trash! Honest.

Green Strategy #123

Register with the Direct Marketing Association's mail preference service and opt out of receiving junk mail. They will then add you to the Do Not Mail database, and you should receive no more junk mail.

Most people don't know they can do this, but if you are fed up with receiving several trees of paper each week, begging you to buy something or other that you don't need, register now!

Green Strategy #124

Don't throw away old clothes. There are many charity and thrift shops that will gladly take them from you. This is simply a way of recycling your cast-off clothes, and if they are not badly worn, someone else will value them.

Green Strategy #125

Natural, or green burials are becoming popular. While a death in the family is never an easy time, it can also be a very expensive time, costing around \$6,500 on average.

You can reduce that cost and help the environment a lot too by having a green burial. It will cost around \$1,500 and the savings are made by not using expensive chemicals that embalm and interfere with the natural decaying process, and are therefore quite unnecessary.

Over 800,000 gallons of formaldehyde is used in funerals every year in the US. It's not really needed. Another 90,000 tons of steel is also used in caskets, again unnecessary.

Then there's the special wood that looks great on the funeral day, but immediately gets dumped in a hole in the ground! Green funerals make a lot of sense from every angle. ■

Conclusion

I hope you have enjoyed this book of tips helping you to go green and save green at the same time. I'm sure you have probably come across some of the tips before, and others you may consider to be just commonsense. However, I feel sure some of them surprised you, and pleasantly, I hope.

Now you can clearly see that Kermit the Frog had it all wrong when he said, "It ain't easy being green."

It *is* easy if you have the will and determination. It will save you money too if you approach things the right way, and you will make a difference to the environment – quite a big difference over time.

Our planet is facing an uncertain future. It is our only home, and we have an obligation to ourselves and to future generations yet unborn to do whatever we can to ensure that life, not only goes on, but is able to go on for as long as possible.

I wish you the very best in your endeavors to **Go Green ... Save Green at the Same Time!** ■

Good luck!

Ken Northams