

Living Green is making choices in our day-to-day lives that reduce our impact on the environment and move us in the direction of a sustainable lifestyle – one that is healthy, ecologically sound, economically viable and socially just.

DRIVE EFFICIENTLY TODAY

There have already been drastic price jumps at the gas pumps this spring. The average price for peak driving season this summer is projected to be \$3.70 from the Energy Information Administration with debate about the national average reaching \$4.00. The EIA also reports that global oil production will begin a slight decline in 2012, which might mean even higher prices in the future.

The time to conserve is now. For the environment, for the local, regional, and global economies and for all car drivers on the planet, let's start conserving gasoline as well as electricity.

There are many ways to save money by making changes at the wheel or with alternate transportation. Some people have even exceeded the official mileage ratings for their vehicles by adjusting driving habits. These tips were adapted from www.Hypermiling.com about how you can update your driving style:

First, **Know Your Mileage.** The next time you fill up your gas tank, mark down the car's total miles from the odometer, then record the total miles again on the next refill. Use the total miles driven during that

period (say, 359.5) and divide by the number of gallons used to fill up (maybe, 11.5 gal). The "miles per gallon" is $359.5 / 11.5 = 31.3$ mpg.

Second, **Become Aware of Driving Habits.** Take a whole day to drive super carefully. You might start coasting more and giving more space to other cars. You may find that you apply your brakes up to 25% more when you drive without paying attention to other drivers. Frequent braking lowers fuel efficiency.

Third, **Slowly Accelerate From Stops.** This one is simple. Accelerating quickly uses more fuel to reach the same speed than if you had accelerated a little slower.

Other tips for making car habits be more fuel efficient are to keep the tires pumped and not to let the engine idle. Contrary to conventional wisdom, starting your engine takes the same amount of energy as idling for 6 seconds. So, if you're sitting for more than a minute, turn off the car and expend your own energy to turn that key one more time.

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Carpooling is a good way to maximize the use of vehicles, but read here to save gas every time you drive.

5 IDEAS FOR SPRING CLEANING

A clean space makes us happier and more productive, but staying healthy and combating sickness is another reason to dust, scrub, and disinfect your home. Here are five areas to remember:

Wipe Exercise Equipment

Use a tea tree oil in a spray bottle to wipe down your equipment regularly, and during your spring clean, clean them thoroughly.

Sanitize (or Replace) These Items

Sponges, toothbrushes, dish towels, cutting boards. Soak rags in white vinegar or spray it onto surfaces like the cutting board and let dry on its own.

Tackle Mold

Mold can cause all sorts of res-

piratory problems as well as infections, so getting rid of it is important. Dry out anything that is damp, such as basements (use a dehumidifier) and carpets. Fix leaks in plumbing and roofs, and wipe up spills. Combine 10 drops of tea tree oil or 10 drops of Grapefruit Seed Extract to two cups water for an antifungal spray.

Chase the Dust Bunnies

Dust bunnies lurking in the corners and under beds mean colonies of dust mites, and that can mean anything from allergy to asthma attacks. Use central air systems sparingly and clean out the air ducts. Clean floors thoroughly this spring with white vinegar/water solution on hard floors. If you have carpet, vacuum

thoroughly. The ideal vacuums for picking up fine dust and pollen are HEPA filter vacuums or a cyclonic model.



Declutter the Office

Extra clutter on your desk contributes to those germey surfaces, so don't forget your cube when it's time for Spring cleaning duties — especially the keyboard, mouse, and phone.

EARLY SEASON GARDEN PLANNING

At this time of year every gardener is preparing to plant. Before beginning the frantic work of getting seeds down "in time", put together a garden plan and check out our article "Organic Gardening for Beginners" in the Mar/April 2010 Living Green Newsletter at www.LivingGreenSnap.org.

The first thing to focus on is to avoid planting the same thing twice in a row. Plant families need to alternate locations because they will deplete the soil of their most needed nutrients, and different families have different nutrient demands. Additionally, if one crop had a dis-

ease or pest problem in the previous year, the same problem will devastate that family of plants this year. For that particular plant family it's best to grow it every other year at most. See a list of plant families in the sidebar of this article.

The average last frost date for this year is May 2nd. After this date it is considered safe to plant seeds and seedlings for cold season varieties. Some hardy starts can be planted a week or two earlier if a row cover is used when temperatures drop near 32 degrees.

The Nine Main Groups

- Onion family: onions, garlic, leeks, shallots
- Carrot family: carrots, celery, parsley, parsnips
- Sunflower family: lettuce, sunflowers, some leafy greens
- Cabbage family: cabbage, broccoli, brussels sprouts, kale, many leafy greens, rutabaga, kohlrabi
- Spinach family: beets, chard
- Cucumber family: cucumbers, melons, squash, gourds
- Pea family: peas, beans
- Grass family: corn, wheat, oats, rye
- Tomato family: tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, potatoes

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LET THE SUN SHINE

In the United States, electrical power is generated by facilities that rely on coal, natural gas, or nuclear power—all sources that come with serious environmental problems. To a lesser extent, electricity is generated from renewable power like solar, wind, geothermal, and others.

Solar Power 101

The sun is the most abundant source of potential energy we have. The earth receives enough energy from the sun in a single minute to meet the world's energy demand for a whole year.

Most homes get electricity from their power company which is part of the power grid. All power companies share the grid to buy and sell electricity among themselves and to distribute to homes and businesses. The grid is connected by power lines from which electricity enters each home and runs through the meter which counts how much electricity the home takes in. By adding a solar power system, the home can add to their own electricity. Photovoltaic cells

(PV) capture energy from the heat of sun rays and convert it into useable electricity. It's possible for homes and businesses to have enough solar panels to supply all their electricity.

After being converted, the power enters the home as DC (direct current) electricity which must be gathered by an "inverter" and inverted into AC (alternating current) electricity. This is the useable form that household appliances connect to through power outlets in the building. A battery is often connected to the inverter to store back up electricity. The battery can provide power when the sun is not feeding the PV panels.

The inverter can also perform another purpose. When there is extra electricity produced and not used by the building, the inverter can push electricity out the meter and into the



The Wildhorse Alternative Energy project, east of Ellensburg. The windmills are a popular sight, but it is hard to see the solar array when driving along I-90.

power grid. This can actually make a home's meter run backward and feed power to the local utility company which they will normally buy back in the form of credits.

Check the next edition of Living Green's newsletter as we continue this series on alternative energy technology.

NO-IDLE ZONES FOR SCHOOLS

Spokane Clean Air (SCA) has created some no-idle zones at local schools. SCA says that there are many negative effects from idling cars:

- Excessive idling is hard on today's engines.
- Fuel doesn't undergo complete combustion in idle mode. This can result in

dirty spark plugs and contaminated engine oil.

- Frequent restarting has negligible impact on engine components like the battery and starter.
- Vehicle exhaust is the leading source of toxic air pollution in Washington.

- Idling wastes gas and pollutes the air.



**NO-IDLE
ZONE**

UPCOMING EVENTS

3/25-4/10 CANstruction

Spokane Displays at River Park Square of interesting buildings made from cans of food by local architects and engineers with a people's choice vote. Cans will be donated to 2nd Harvest.

3/31 SNAP Understanding

Credit Class At SNAP Financial Access, 212 S Wall. 1pm-3pm. Free, registration required at snapwa.org or call 456-7174.

3/31 Beginning Bike Maintenance

At REI, 1125 N Monroe. 7pm -8:30pm. Must register at rei.com/spokane or call 328-9900.

4/9 Dishman Hills Natural Area Service Project

Bring work gloves, water, and non-powered tools (if possible) to help clean up the DNHCC. 9:30-1pm. Meet at the Camp Caro area, 625 S Sargent Rd. Call REI to register 328-9900, or just show up.

4/11 SNAP Volunteer Open House

For current or interested

volunteers in SNAP programs. At SNAP, 212 W 2nd, ste 100. 5:30pm -7:30pm. For information Call 744-3370, ext 242.

4/15 Spokane Valley's Discovering Spring

Opening Day event for the Discovery Center Playground with tree planting and dedication from the mayor. From 3pm-5pm, 2426 N Discovery Place, Spokane Valley.

4/19-5/24 SNAP Business Plan Workshop Series

Learn how to design your own small business plan. At West Central Community Center, 1603 N Belt. Free, 6pm-8pm. Must Register at 456-7174 ext 110.

4/23 Earth Day Spokane

2011 Earth Friendly Community booths, food, and celebration. 11am-5pm. On Main St between Brown and Division. For more info, see www.EarthDaySpokane.org.

4/11-4/15 Potting Seedlings

Help the Lands Council pot plants for recovery projects.

Days and times TBA, please call Kat for more information at 209-2403.

4/27 Living Green Class

Hosted by SNAP's Living Green staff, come learn the best practices for reducing your impact on the environment and saving on household bills at the same time. Free. Please contact livinggreen@snapwa.org or 744-3370 ext 242 to reserve a seat.

4/30 COUNTRY FAIR at

P.e.a.c.h. Community Farm, 10425 S. Andrus Rd. Cheney. 11am-5pm. Cheesemaking, kids games, gardening workshops, chicks for sale, great food, and live music. \$5 for adults. Bicyclists and kids FREE.

www.peachlocal.com 216-9273

4/30 Spring Compost Fair

and Arbor Day Celebration at Finch Arboretum. 11am -2pm. County residents are eligible to receive free compost bins for participating. Call 625-6800 for info.

Garden Planning, cont'd from p. 2

A common practice is to till and loosen soil early in the season prior to planting. Many gardeners, however are practicing the No-Till Method. This method is the ideal way to keep soil structure as it has been tilled for you by earthworms and other beneficial insects all year long. It is impor-

tant to add layers of compost and mulch continually over the years. Then make rows either by simply pushing aside mulch or making rows by adding rows of aged compost. It is crucial to avoid walking on the rows at all, or keep the planting in raised beds that also won't be walked on.

VOLUNTEER! Bring the message of sustainable living to people throughout the community as a Community Educator. If this sparks your interest, call 744-3370 Ext. 242.



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