

LIVING GREEN TIPS

All Year Around

Living Green Action "Celebrate Earth Day"

Celebrate Earth Day every day! One step makes a big difference to the global community. It began in 1970 and is observed annually on April 22nd. Check out the history of the movement and what you can do in your own life.

<http://www.earthday.org/earth-day-history-movement>

Saving Energy is a SNAP "Lighting"

The lighting in your household accounts for about 11% of your monthly energy costs, so here are some tips to help you reduce that amount.

- Decorate with lighter colors that will reflect the daylight or keep curtains open so you can keep the lights turned off.
- Use smaller track lights, table or floor lamps for focused tasks instead of overhead lights.
- Select Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs that fit the task.
- Only use dimming CFL's in dimming sockets.
- Dispose of old light bulbs at an approved recycle center.

Every Drop Counts "In the kitchen"

- Plug up the sink or use a wash basin if washing dishes by hand.
- Use a dishwasher; and when you do, make sure it's fully loaded!
- While you're at it, scrape that plate instead of rinsing before loading it into the dishwasher.
- Keep a pitcher of drinking water in the refrigerator instead of letting the faucet run until the water is cool.
- Thaw in the refrigerator overnight rather than using a running tap of hot water.
- Add food wastes to your compost pile instead of using the garbage disposal.

Do-It-Yourself Minor Home Repairs "Shutting off the Water main"

Nearly all plumbing emergencies can be helped by shutting off the water. Know where your water shut-offs are and tag them. The main shut-off valve is usually located near the front of the house, by the water meter or in the basement. The

valve is CLOSED by turning it CLOCKWISE and OPEN by turning it COUNTERCLOCKWISE.

Beyond Waste "Uses for Ziploc Bags"

Instead of throwing Ziploc bags away, try these other ideas for reuse:

- Make a changing mat – tear open the side seams of a gallon size bag and lay flat for an emergency diaper changing area.
- Pack accessories – organize by category, so they're easy to find in your suitcase.
- Knead dough – Use 2 quart-size bags as gloves to avoid getting your hands sticky. You can also use a bag to store extra dough.
- Create a temporary funnel – Improvise a funnel for anything from shampoo to children's beads and glitter.
- Clean a showerhead – Pour a little white vinegar into a bag, rubberband it to the showerhead and soak for a ½ hour.

Beyond Waste "Earth Friendly Gifts for the Mother in Your Life"

If you are going to be providing a gift for someone this upcoming Mother's Day, consider purchasing a native plant. This coming Saturday, May 10th (9:00-5:00pm) S.C.C. will be hosting the annual Garden Expo. There are information booths, plants and tools for sale. Find out more about this event here:

Once you have purchased the plant, include a card with these water saving tips:

- Plant drought resistant lawns, shrubs and plants. They use less water and are more resistant to local plant diseases. Group plants according to their watering needs.
- Add 2-4 inches of mulch or organic material around trees and plants. This will help to increase the ability of the soil to retain moisture.
- Position sprinklers to water lawn & garden and not the paved areas.
- Water the lawn only when it needs it. If you step on the grass and springs back, then it doesn't need water. Most lawns only need about 1 inch water per week.
- When you water the lawn place an empty tuna can in the middle. Once it is full, you have watered the right amount. This allows moisture to soak down to the roots.

- Water in the early morning instead of dusk. This step helps reduce water loss, prevent fungal growth and defense against slugs & garden pests.
- Try a different approach to watering shrubs, beds and lawns through: soaker hoses, rain barrel water catchment system, drip irrigation system or a variable spray nozzle.

For more tips like these visit: www.livinggreensnap.org

Healthy Homes "ARE YOU PREPARED?"

About 2,500 Americans die in residential fires each year. In most cases, the death could have been prevented with an early alert from a working smoke detector. This [Smoke Detector handout](#) (link below) provides information on keeping your detectors up to date and understanding the difference between the two major types of smoke detectors. Below are our answers to some of the most common questions we receive regarding smoke detectors.

- **How many smoke detectors do I need in my house?**

Install at least one on every level of the home and outside every bedroom group. Spokane Fire Department recommends one in every bedroom as well. (If a fire starts in a bedroom and the door is closed, the person inside would likely die before the smoke could activate the detector in the hallway.)

- **How much does a reliable smoke detector cost?**

An audible photoelectric single station model or dual-sensor photo/ion detector with long-lasting battery and hush button will cost between \$15 and \$30. Strobe detectors for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing range from \$60 to \$200.

- **Does the Spokane Fire Department give smoke detectors at no cost?**

The Department depends on grants and donations to install smoke detectors for low income homeowners, when possible. To find out the current availability of smoke or carbon monoxide detectors, contact Public Education.

(Home Escape Plan)

<https://static.spokanecity.org/documents/fire/prevention/escape-plan.pdf>

(Smoke Detector Information Handout)

<https://static.spokanecity.org/documents/fire/prevention/smoke-detector.pdf>

Healthy Homes "This MAY leave you BREATHLESS"

Do you know someone who suffers from severe asthma or allergies? The Centers for Disease Control estimate that in the U.S. 6.8 million children suffer from asthma today. Children and elderly home occupants are the most susceptible to unhealthy living environments.

On January 6, 2014 the NBC news show "Dateline" produced a 6 part series called "Breathless". Check it out here – It will leave you "Breathless."

<http://www.nbcnews.com/video/dateline/53993240#53993240>

Beyond Waste "What to do with All That Waste?"

Many spend time this season "spring cleaning". While you can donate, reuse, recycle or throw away those neglected & unwanted items. There are some products that are considered household hazardous waste and should be handled or disposed of with care to prevent harm to yourself, other living things and our environment.

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) is accepted at no charge at the following transfer stations only from residential customers and only when the materials have come from a private home or vehicle:

- Valley Transfer Station - 3941 North Sullivan
- North County Transfer Station - 22123 Elk-Chattaroy Road
- Waste-to-Energy Facility - 2900 South Geiger Blvd.

Hours of operation at all three sites are:

7:30 a.m. till 5:00 p.m., Seven days a week except major holidays

Materials should be in leak-proof containers with the contents labeled on the outside. No containers greater than 5 gallons. If you would like your gasoline, waste oil or antifreeze container returned, just ask the attendant. Sorry, other waste containers cannot be emptied and returned.

Accepted as HHW	Not Accepted as HHW
Aerosol cans (if not empty)	Biological wastes
Automotive batteries	Broken CFL lights
Automotive liquids (5 gal. or less containers, max. 15 gal.)	Commercially generated hazardous wastes
Batteries AAAA-D cell, button, lantern, alkaline, lithium ion, rechargeable	Computers and televisions (go to ecyclewashington.org for more info.)
Fire extinguishers	Containers of HHW over 5 gallons
	Empty containers (treat as garbage or recyclables)

Fluorescent lighting: Unbroken CFL bulbs and tubes (limit 10) Glues and adhesives Household cleaners Mercury-containing products like thermostats and thermometers Paints (empty paint cans can go as garbage) Pesticides and garden chemicals Pool and spa supplies Propane tanks Paint thinners and solvents Road Flares	Explosives (call 911) Household ammunition Medications Radioactive waste Tires (treat as garbage)
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Every Drop Counts "Outside Irrigation"

- Install drip irrigation where possible. Periodically check drip systems for clogged or broken tubing or emitters.
- Use soaker hoses where drip isn't possible. Stake a soaker hose to desired locations in flower beds, around trees and shrubs and in gardens. Determine the optimal pressure and watering time. Too much pressure causes soaker hoses to spray rather than sweat. Fasten soaker hoses to a hose timer and turn on the timer. You can regulate excess water pressure with a multi-port manifold and hose timers to supply several soaker hoses with ease.
 - Automate sprinkler systems. Use electronic or mechanical timers and soil moisture sensors to help water efficiently. Use an automatic timer or set a timer to remind you to turn off sprinklers. Use a kitchen timer if you can't install an automated system.
- Use hose-end shut-off valves for hand watering. Turn off the water as you move the hose from plant to plant.
- Repair leaks. Especially bad hose connections.
- Water early in the morning or in the early evening when the air is still and evaporation is minimal.
 - Install a rain sensor that allows your irrigation system to automatically shut-off when rainfall exceeds a certain amount.
 - Inspect irrigation systems and fix leaks, broken/clogged sprinkler heads.
 - Use a rain barrel to harvest rainwater from gutters for watering gardens and landscapes.

Energy Conservation "If it's hot, stay out of the kitchen!"

Cooking less in the summer saves energy! Take advantage of those cooler days to prepare extra meals and stash them in the freezer. If you have to cook inside, use the microwave, electric skillet, or a covered pot on the stove. Eat and drink cold foods such as: salads, fruits, sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, bread, cheese, ice water or milk.

Water Conservation "At the Car Wash"

If you need to wash your car during the summer months, make sure to wash them on the grass and not the pavement. Water and chemicals on a paved surface run-off flows into the storm drain contaminating lakes & stream. If you don't have an unpaved area to wash your car, take it to an Envirostar certified business www.envirostar.org.

Do It Yourself Minor Home Repairs "Gas Grill Troubles Getting You Hungry?"

This appliance sits outside in the cold and heat, rain and sun and takes a lot of punishment. This can cause your grill to act up and not work properly. Here are some tips on some of the most common problems with gas grills.

- **Safety 1st:** Make sure to turn off tank valve and disconnect fuel source before doing any repairs.
- **Low flame, low temperature, yellow flame:** Mostly caused from a sticky regulator that prevents enough gas to generate a good grilling temperature.
- **Uneven heating or hot spots:** You probably have a blocked burner. Use a wire brush to unclog and clean the holes.

Beyond Waste "To Use or Not to Use?"

I don't know about you, but summer is the time to eat & cook outdoors with family and friends. Have you ever used paper plates instead of the reusable ones? Is it environmentally friendly to use paper plates or use a dishwasher to clean reusable models? Before you purchase those paper plates consider: carbon emissions, transportation to store, water needed, trees that were needed, energy needed. It is better to use reusable dishes or dishes out of recycled paper than that paper plate. If you compost or have a green yard waste bin, you can put paper plates in them.

Healthy Homes "Summer Pest Control Tips"

- Seal cracks around home's exterior, especially windows, doors, air conditioning and water lines.
- Repair torn window and sliding door screens.
- Mosquitoes love standing water, so eliminate the source.
- Keep shrubs and trees trimmed away from the home.
- Keep pets' feeding and drinking area clear of leftover food.
- Inspect your outdoor garbage area for pest activity.
- Keep sheds and garage clear of food items and clutter, many pests will build nests.
- Vacuum and clean your floors on a regular basis.
- Clean countertops after each use.

Every Drop Counts "Smart Water Usage Month"

Watch this animated cartoon on the "Groundwater Story" from King County, WA.

http://www.leapingmedia.com/Media/groundwater_0413.swf

Healthy Homes "ABC News 20/20 Episode about Carbon Monoxide Story"

May 24, 2014, By [KELLEY ROBINSON](#)

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/mom-boy-killed-inside-poison-hotel-room-launches/story?id=23845260>

Beyond Waste "Home & In The Garden"

- Raise the cutting height of your lawn mower during the hot summer months to keep grass roots shaded and cooler, reducing weed growth, browning, and the need for watering. When you mow, "grasscycle" by leaving grass clippings on your lawn instead of bagging them or use a mulching mower. The clippings will return nutrients to the soil instead of taking up space in landfills.
- If you have a need for large lawn and garden equipment, such as tillers or chainsaws, you can reduce waste (and save money) by renting or borrowing the equipment.

- Have a yard sale to find new homes for clothes, toys, appliances, books, and other items.
- Check with local repair shops to see if they can use your old appliances for spare parts.
- Clean and properly store tools, toys, and outdoor furniture to protect them from damage, allowing you to keep them longer instead of sending them to the landfill.
- If you have a tile roof, check it thoroughly for cracks or missing tiles and use roofing made from recycled rubber or plastic to make repairs.

Beyond Waste "Waste Reduction Strategies Before School Starts"

- Before starting a new school year, sort through your materials. Many supplies can be reused or recycled. Notebooks, folders, and binders can be reused. Recycle unwanted papers and reuse your old folders and binders. Share your used books with friends, relatives, or younger schoolchildren.
- Make locker decorations out of old CDs. Decorate them with paint, stickers, rhinestones, or photos; stick magnetic tape to the back; and they're ready to spruce up your locker!
- Many schools reuse text books to save money and reduce waste. Covering your textbooks with cut-up grocery or shopping bags helps reduce waste and keeps your books in good condition. Be creative-use markers or colored pencils to give your covers unique and fun designs. Paper grocery bags are also great for wrapping packages.

Healthy Homes "Dust Mites"

Dust mites are tiny microscopic relatives of the spider and live on mattresses, bedding, upholstered furniture, carpets and curtains. These tiny creatures feed on the flakes of skin that people and pets shed daily and they thrive in warm and humid environments. No matter how clean a home is, dust mites cannot be totally eliminated. However, the number of mites can be reduced by following the suggestions below.

Preventive Strategies

- Use a dehumidifier or air conditioner to maintain relative humidity at about 50% or below.
- Encase your mattress and pillows in dust-proof or allergen impermeable covers (available from specialty supply mail order companies, bedding and some department stores).
- Wash all bedding and blankets once a week in hot water (at least 130 - 140°F) to kill dust mites. Non-washable bedding can be frozen overnight to kill dust mites.
- Replace wool or feathered bedding with synthetic materials and traditional stuffed animals with washable ones.

- If possible, replace wall-to-wall carpets in bedrooms with bare floors (linoleum, tile or wood) and remove fabric curtains and upholstered furniture.
- Use a damp mop or rag to remove dust. Never use a dry cloth since this just stirs up mite allergens .
- Use a vacuum cleaner with either a double-layered microfilter bag or a HEPA filter to trap allergens that pass through a vacuum's exhaust.
- Wear a mask while vacuuming to avoid inhaling allergens, and stay out of the vacuumed area for 20 minutes to allow any dust and allergens to settle after vacuuming.

Every Drop Counts "How much water does a leaking faucet waste?"

Check your faucets at home -- do any of them drip? Well, maybe it's just a small drip -- how much water can a little drip waste? True, a single drip won't waste much water. But think about each faucet in your home dripping a little bit all day long. What if every faucet in every home on your block ... in your town ... in your state also dripped? The drips would add up to a flood of water wasted down the drain.

There is no scientific definition of the volume of a faucet drip, but after measuring a number of kitchen and bathroom sink faucets, for our calculations below (numbers are rounded), we are going to use 1/4 milliliter (ml) as the volume of a faucet drip. So, by these drip estimates:

- **One gallon:** 15,140 drips
- **One liter:** 4,000 drips

Looking at it this way, it seems like that drop of water down the drain is pretty insignificant. But, as you can see by using the form below, all those drops flowing in "real time" can really add up to a flood.

If you would like to know how much your faucet would waste, visit this water drip calculator from USGS:

<http://water.usgs.gov/edu/sc4.html>

Healthy Homes "What does asthma have to do with energy conservation?"

In August, the Housing Improvement team attended the first ever Department of Energy sponsored virtual Energy Partnerships Conference. This past June, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed the Clean Power Plan that will cut carbon pollution from the power sector 30% by 2030. The plan provides guidelines for states to develop plans to meet state-specific goals to reduce carbon pollution that gives them some flexibility based on state's individual needs.

Each year, pollution from power plants contributes to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and missed days of work and school. So what would this plan mean for me?:

Check out more information here:

<http://www2.epa.gov/carbon-pollution-standards>

To go along with some positive changes, the United Nations has put out a "Synthesis Report" on the status of climate change. This is not great news, but if you are interested in the top 5 facts taken from the report you can view them:

<http://www.motherjones.com/blue-marble/2014/08/un-ipcc-climate-change-synthesis-report>

Do It Yourself Minor Home Repairs "Funny Home Improvement Story"

This is the time of year when we finish those home improvement projects. Read a story submitted from Brian Whitworth of Mesa, Arizona to the <http://www.todayshomeowner.com/funniest-home-improvement-story-contest-winners/>

If you are a pet owner, then you would sympathize with this event.

I turned thirteen in September, making me about ninety in dog years, so I've got a few miles on me. But this story isn't about me, it's about my human. As humans go, he can fix about anything: doors, windows, faucets, sprinklers, dog collars . . . you name it, and he'll take a wrench to it.

Last Labor Day was water heater day, a good time to change out the bad heating element in the bottom of the tank. The first hour of a project is always cool resolve . . . and tool gathering, lots of tool gathering . . . and coffee. Next: electricity off, no Einstein hair today. Then of course the ceremonial dragging of the garden hose from the backyard, into the front driveway, through the garage and connected to the water heater drain spout. Notice

the calm rhythm and the air of confidence. At this point I usually move in for a quick tummy scratch while the mood is still upbeat.

Next: shut off the water, but first make sure Momma and the girls aren't in the shower – lesson learned. Now just open the drain spout, and out it will pour; through the hose, down the driveway and into the gutter. Time for a quick cup of coffee while the contents of the fifty-gallon tank rush into the street. But wait, what's that? A quick look down the drive shows that the predicted cascade of water is instead a very slow dribble. The look on his face says that is not the expected result.

Troubleshooting mode now. Open the faucets in the kitchen and bathroom, then walk to the end of the driveway to observe more dribbling. Consternation. Mess with the drain valve to make sure it is open. More coffee and time to mow the lawn. More dribbling. Lunch. More dribbling. Maybe the water level has at least dropped below the top heater element. If he can just loosen the top element a bit to release the vacuum ... ow, ow, ow, oh, hot, ow . . . ah, nuts and chestnuts! Flood control mode. Now everything is running, even my human. Run, Master, run. The water is running down the driveway, so also the newspaper and my dog dish. I guess the plan worked, as the hose is running better, too.

Things are moving along good now, as soon as he gets the garage mopped up we should be able to finish this project and go for a walk. New element in, wires reconnected, hose removed and dragged to backyard. Time to refill the tank and turn on the power. Water supply on, close faucets in kitchen and bathroom, step back to the garage to check for leaks . . . quick, close the drain valve!! Flood control mode. Just a little more mopping and he should be ready for our walk. Maybe next week I'll help him tackle that ceiling fan replacement.

Beyond Waste "Solid Waste Reduction for September"

www.epa.gov

- Compost is great for your lawn and garden. Put raked leaves and other yard wastes into a compost bin and keep out of landfills.
- Paint both interior and exterior areas of your home during cool, dry fall days.
- While stocking up on cold-weather gear, buy recycled content items such as fleece clothing and blankets made from recycled soda bottles.
- Replace old insulation with insulation made from recycled paper, glass, and other recovered materials.
- While performing routine home and car maintenance, dispose of potential hazardous waste materials at local transfer stations.

Healthy Homes "8 Ways to Keep Dust at Bay"

The solution to most household problems is to attack the source. But you can't eliminate the sources of household dust. You can't even do much to reduce them, because more than 90 percent of household dust comes from people and fabric.

Our bodies constantly shed tiny flakes of skin. Our clothes, bedding and furnishings constantly shed barely visible fibers. These flakes and fibers float on the slightest air currents and settle on every surface in your house. In a spot sheltered from air movement, the particles stay put. In other areas, they constantly rise and settle as doors swing open and people pass by.

Even if fighting dust is a battle you can never completely win, you can save a lot of time and energy with these dust-busting strategies.

#1 Keep closet floors clear for easy cleaning. Box or bag items on shelves that keeps fibers inside closed containers. Slip large garbage bags over clothes that you aren't wearing.

#2 Upgrade your furnace filter. A filter upgrade can make a noticeable reduction in dust. Standard fiberglass filters are good, pleated ones are better, but pleated electro-static filter system is the best. Check the filters monthly, especially if you have dogs & cats and change at least every three months. Dirty filters can restrict airflow and damage your furnace.

#3 Rotate bedding weekly. Frequently wash sheets to reduce skin flakes, fibers and dust in the air. Every time you roll over in bed a puff of dust goes into the air.

#4 Capture dust don't spread it around. Use damp rags or disposable electrostatic cloths that attract and hold dust. Cloths that attract dust with oils or waxes also work well, but can leave a residue on furniture.

#5 Beat and shake area rugs. Shake them outside three or four times a year. Carpets are the biggest dust reservoir. If you have serious allergies tear out wall-to-wall carpet and install hard flooring. If you can't do that, vacuum pathways and busy areas at least once a week. Drape large area rugs outside over a fence and beat them with a broom or tennis racket. A good beating removes more dust than vacuuming.

#6 Take cushions out for a beating. This removes deeply embedded dust. The only way to eliminate dust is to buy leather or vinyl covered furniture. Vacuum horizontal surfaces weekly and vertical surfaces monthly.

#7 Clean the air while you clean the house. Turn the fan on while cleaning. Vacuums whip up dust with their agitator or blowing exhaust stream. Dust settles

on surfaces you have just cleaned. Turn the thermostat fan on if you have a forced air system for about 15 minutes after you are done cleaning. Then turn back to "Auto" when done.

#8 Match the vacuum to the flooring. Upright vacuum with a powerful agitator is best for carpet. Some canister vacuums also work well. If you have wood, tile or vinyl flooring, use a canister vacuum without an agitator.

Read more: <http://www.familyhandyman.com/cleaning/cleaning-tips-to-reduce-household-dust/view-all#ixzz3Bj3BdY6y>

Saving Energy is a SNAP "Energy Innovation Through Play"

<http://www.unchartedplay.com/>

The company "Uncharted Play", has invented 2 products that take advantage of children's innate desire to be outside and play. "Think out of bounds" is their motto. People can purchase a "Soccket" soccer ball or "Pulse" jump rope that generates renewable energy through hours of play. In third world countries, this can power an LED light for hours, where energy resources are unreliable. Check them out.

Do It Yourself Minor Home Repairs "Learning how to do repairs?"

Labor can account for 45-60% of a professional's cost to do a home repair project. It may take you longer, but it will save you money. Next time a friend, neighbor or repair person is working on a repair ask the following:

- Could you please explain to me what you are doing? I am really interested.
- What does this product/tool do?
- Do you use this order of steps for a reason?
- What are the safety risks of this repair?
- Can I help you with anything?
- If I were to perform this repair myself, do you have any recommendations?
- Where did you get that replacement part?
- How did you know which one to choose?

Beyond Waste "Uses for Chalk"

If you have any left-over chalk and don't know what else to do with it. Try these uses instead of tossing into the garbage:

1. Remove ring around the collar stains by marking the stains with chalk before the wash. The dust helps absorb the oils, making the stain easier to clean.
2. Wrap chalk in cheesecloth and store with silverware. It absorbs moisture and helps prevent tarnishing.
3. Rub chalk over the handle of a screwdriver to prevent slipping.
4. Draw chalk lines around entry points for ants in your home. Many chalks contain calcium carbonate, which ants don't like.
5. Cover hairline cracks in walls until you're ready to paint by rubbing over them with a matching color.

Healthy Homes "Keep Your Home Contaminant-Free"

- Purchase and install carbon monoxide detectors for each level of your home and within 15 feet of each sleeping area.
- Don't use foggers or aerosol sprays to eliminate pests.
- Leave asbestos-containing materials undisturbed.
- Perform a radon test of your home.
- Limit use of products that contain Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's).

Saving Energy is a SNAP "Refrigerators"

Here are a few tips to keep your refrigerator operating efficiently all year around:

- Keep temperature at 38 degrees and the freezer between 0-5 degrees.
- Check to make sure that your door seals are air tight.
- Cover liquids and wrap foods stored in the refrigerator.
- Clean coils twice a year. Use a vacuum, coil brush or cloth to clean them. Make sure to unplug or turn off electricity before performing the task.
- Keep top of refrigerator free of clutter. If storage is an issue, place a small utility shelf on top.

Do It Yourself Minor Home Repairs "Tips for Clogged Drains"

- Notice when your drain begins to act sluggish. This may mean that there is a light clog.
- When you have to clean drains, pour a pot of boiling water down them. You can add a little bit of detergent to cut any grease build-up.
- Don't use chemical drain cleaners. They contain harmful chemicals, which can be corrosive on drains and bad if it gets on you.
- If several fixtures at once stop working, or drainage from the second floor shows up on the first floor, a main line has a problem and you need a plumber.

HEALTHY HOMES "Keep Your Home Dry"

- Run an exhaust fan while showering & cooking.
- Clean the bathroom regularly and make sure water is not pooling anywhere.
- Fix leaky pipes immediately.
- Seal cracks in your home with caulk.
- Purchase a hygrometer to measure the humidity in your home. It should be between 30-60%.

Saving Energy is a SNAP "Vampire Power"

If you are like the rest of the U.S. the amount of electronics and/or computers that you have in your household have doubled in recent years. These devices left plugged in can increase your energy bill even if they are turn off. Here are just a few tips to help bring down energy usage from these items.

- If it is plugged into a wall outlet it is drawing energy. Unplug items that you are not using or plug them into a power strip.
- Turn items off when you are not in the room such as; TV's, entertainment systems and computer.
- Put your computer in low power mode. This helps equipment run cooler and last longer.
- Use the power management settings on computers and monitors.
- Turn off a laptop's Bluetooth or wireless capabilities when not in use.

Do It Yourself Minor Home Repairs "Electrical Safety"

- Treat electricity with respect. Don't try shortcuts.
- Inspect cords and plugs regularly. DON'T use them if they are frayed, cracked, loose, etc.
- Use electrical appliances that are Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) approved.
- Don't use electrical appliances in wet areas.
- Don't take apart or repair something that is still connected.
- Turn off large appliances if there is a power failure.

If you smell burning plastic or a switch feels warm, you may have a short or overload. PLEASE CALL AN ELECTRICIAN.

Every Drop Counts "Drops to Watts"

It takes a considerable amount of energy to deliver and treat the water you use every day. For example, letting your faucet run for five minutes uses about as much energy as letting a 60-watt light bulb run for 22 hours.

Heating water for bathing, shaving, cooking, and cleaning also requires a lot of energy. Homes with electric water heaters, for example, spend one-quarter of their electric bill just to heat water.

With climate change concerns, pervasive droughts, and high energy prices across the country, nearly everyone is looking for ways to conserve resources and cut costs. The good news is that by using a little "water sense" we can all save water, energy, and money.

Find out more tips to improve your Water Sense here:

http://www.epa.gov/watersense/our_water/start_saving.html#tabs-1

Beyond Waste "How to Grow Your Valentine Cards"

This is a family friendly activity that produces a Valentine's card that you can plant.

<http://www.makeandtakes.com/handmade-plantable-greeting-card>

Saving Energy is a SNAP "Space Heating"

Here are just a few quick tips to help reduce your energy costs and keep your home safe, comfortable and warm:

- Clean and dry areas around your heating and cooling systems.
- Block off an unused fireplace with insulation or cardboard.
- Measure your indoor humidity and ensure that it is between 30-60%.
- Check and replace furnace filters.
- Test your home for air leaks and seal with caulk or weather stripping.

Healthy Homes "Keep Your Home Clean"

- Sweep floors daily to keep the dust away.
- Mop floors weekly and use the 2-bucket method. Feel free to either contact Kim Kreber or attend a workshop to learn more about this method.
- Wash dishes after each meal and deep clean the kitchen sink at least once a week.
- Don't leave pet food out overnight.
- Vacuum the house weekly, preferably with a HEPA filter.
- Adopt a shoes-off policy for your home.