

Green Thoughts:

☞ When a vinyl shower curtain needs replacing, instead of trashing, wash and air dry; fold and store in the trunk of your vehicle to use as a small tarp.

☞ Flatten all boxes for recycling. Any boxes that are larger than 3' x 3' must be cut to at least that size.

☞ In addition to recycling shredded paper, the paper can also be used in the garden. Spread the shredded paper along a garden path and then place a layer of mulch on top to hide the paper. Mulch can be obtained free for the taking at various areas in Fairfax County; there is a free mulch area at the park at Baron Cameron Drive in Reston.

☞ Instead of bagging leaves in plastic bags mow over the lawn with leaves in place when the leaves are not too thick so that they can add nutrients to the lawn. Make sure to remove any sticks. Another solution, rake the leaves into a large tarp and haul to an out-of-the way area in the back yard and either allow the leaves to decompose over the winter or put them through a shredder and use the leaf mulch around shrubbery.

☞ As each incandescent light bulb stops working, replace with the energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulb. There are now many more styles and sizes.

☞ Air dry more laundry. The clothes hold their color longer and it saves electricity. Either a folding clothes rack or a shower rod enables clothes to be air-dried indoors.

☞ Before turning on the dryer, clean the lint trap. Also, never leave the house with the dryer running just in case of fire.



The first day of each month, either clean or replace the furnace filter. If replacing it, write the date in **bold** print on the side as a reminder of the last time it was replaced.

☞ Instead of using all new gift paper, consider alternatives. In addition to using recycled paper; other paper could make a gift interesting. Some suggestions for quirky gift paper are out-dated maps, programs from events. Of course the popular gift bag is wonderful since it can be reused by the recipient. Instead of always using ribbon to adorn the gift, think of some fun alternatives as tiny pine cones, or sea shells tied with string or raffia.

☞ Keep a basket near your computer to place any paper that is no longer needed, but is clean on one side. It can be used on the other side for other purposes.

☞ Sometimes it is the small things that count (just a drop in the bucket). Often the everyday tasks that are done more efficiently and better for the environment are also money-savers. *One* person can make a difference and *one* person can influence others.

☞ Fix drippy faucets right away and “running” toilets.

☞ When washing clothes, use cold water. Wash a full load whenever possible, but when doing only a half-load, adjust the water level accordingly.

☞ When preparing dishes for the dishwasher, if any dishes need rinsing, do it with a small amount of water in a container instead of allowing water to just run.

☞ Whenever turning off the water, always turn off the hot water faucet first. It may only be a few seconds difference, but it is the small steps that can make a difference.

☞ When brushing teeth, turn off the water while brushing and no need to wet the toothbrush prior to applying toothpaste.

☞ English ivy is listed on the Reston Association website as an invasive plant. Many yards in Reston have the vine growing on the property. It can easily take over the intended planting area. When it attaches to trees, it can continue to climb into the branches and eventually kill the host tree. It would be beneficial for homeowners to remove all English ivy from ones property. There are other ground covers that will hold down the soil, but yet not take over.

☞ During these cold days, research alterative ground covers that are not invasive. Autumn ferns are a great selection since they look great year round and can tolerate dryer soil than most ferns. There is also a selection of plants that can withstand some foot traffic in gardening centers called “stepables”.

☞ If you have a problem area in your yard that plants don’t do well either because the ground is too wet or too dry, consider other choices other than English ivy or turf. For instance a serpentine path of river rocks may be a solution for compacted soil or large tree roots and a water garden could be a possible solution for an area that retains too much water.

☞ There are now so many electronic cast-offs in the typical household. Instead of tossing the electronics after replacing them, decide the best way for giving them away. If the item is still usable, donate to an organization that could use it. There are organizations that collect cell phones with rechargers, for instance to be given to the troops, for battered women for emergencies. If the cell phone is not usable, then turn it in to a recyclable site.

☞ In the foyer of Best Buy stores, there are recycling kiosks for drop off of small items, like ink jet cartridges, batteries, cell phones, CDs, DVDs, PDA/smart phones and Best Buy gift cards. The Best Buy gift cards are actually reused. Office Depot also collects ink jet cartridges for recycling.

☞ A couple of good websites for more information about Best Buys recycling program are: www.bestbuy.com/green and www.bestbuy.com/tradein.

☞ Since gas consumption is expensive, consider ways to improve your mileage. Driving with extra things in the trunk of your car reduces fuel efficiency by perhaps 2/5 of a mile per gallon.

Check your tire pressure to the proper levels in your vehicle's manual. Under-inflated tires by even two pounds cost 1 percent in mileage.

☞ Idling more than 30 seconds cost more than turning the vehicle off and on. Consider parking and going inside the bank or fast-food restaurant rather than having the motor running while conducting business.

☞ One way to reduce the cost of auto insurance is to take an online driver improvement course. Some courses cost as low as \$20, but reduce the premium by more than the cost of the course and the reduction remains in effect. Contact your auto insurance company to get details on which course is recommended and how much you would save.

☞ Reduce your paperwork of bill paying by setting your checking account online and using bill pay. The banks guarantee the payment is received on the date that you indicate and you save postage and not having to judge how long a bill takes to arrive prior to the due date.

☞ When staying over night at a motel or resort, check to see if there is in-room recycling of newspapers, aluminum cans, plastic and glass bottles or if there are recycling bins in a public area. Some places are now offering recycling for guests.

☞ After pumping gas, turn the gas cover until it clicks 3 times to prevent loss of vapors.

☞ Clean, folded small bags that fast-food comes in make good litter bags for the car.