

# Being a Better Earth-Steward

## **Tip #1 – Replace your incandescent light bulbs *which get more than three hours of use per week* with compact fluorescent bulbs.**

Compact fluorescent bulbs use much less energy than traditional incandescent light bulbs. A lot of the energy for an incandescent bulb goes into producing heat. Some people say to replace *all* of your light bulbs with compact fluorescents. However, in a couple of years, there will probably be a new light bulb on the market known as a “LED” (Light-Emitting Diode). These LED lights use far less electricity than the compact fluorescent bulbs and last longer. Right now LEDs are extremely expensive and the light from them is not very good. Therefore, I recommend that, for now, you replace your incandescent bulbs which get a lot of use: the greatest savings, but requiring the least expense and use of Earth’s limited resources.

## **Tip #2 - Dry your clothes outside rather than using a clothes dryer.**

Compare a clothes dryer and a clothesline: How much energy and Earth’s resources did it take to create each of these? How much gas and/or electric energy does it take to operate each of these? What does it cost to purchase a clothes dryer, compared to the cost of a clothesline and necessary hardware?

When I moved into my house, it had a clothes dryer but no place to hang up clothes outside. So one of the first things I did was look around the back yard to find two existing wooden structures to attach a line to. Then I went to a local hardware store and purchased a clothes line (plastic with wire inside), two large metal eyehooks (it looks like a 1” ring with a screw on one end), two snap clips (similar to what is on the end of a dog leash), and a bag of clothespins. I drilled a pilot hole in the side of the shed and another on the side of the gazebo and screwed in the metal eyehooks. Finally, I tied the line to one eyehook, clipped it onto the shed and stretched the line across the yard, where I tied it to the other clip, which I had attached onto the eyehook on the gazebo. Voila! I had a clothesline, which could be easily put up when needed. The best part? It paid for itself within two months and has continued to operate for over six years *using absolutely NO ENERGY!* After six months of not using my clothes dryer, I stored it in the shed. The next year I gave it away. Here in Arizona, I’ve found that wash can dry outdoors in as little as 20 minutes! Over the past years, there have only been one or two days a year when I have wanted to do laundry but the weather wasn’t conducive to drying clothes outdoors. But, after all, how many rainy days do we have here in Phoenix?

I realize that some people may live in an apartment, condo, or in a neighborhood where strict homeowner association regulations prohibit hanging laundry outside. But for those of you where it is possible to do this, it is a great way to save, money, the environment and enjoy the outdoors!

## **Tip #3 – Achieve comfortable temperatures by regulating air and sunlight coming into the house and by wearing appropriate clothing.**

We want to allow as much heat as possible into our homes during the heating season and keep the heat out during the cooling season. We also want to try and produce as little heat and humidity in the house during the hot months. Some ways to help stay cool during warmer weather:

- use awnings and shade cloth to keep the sun off of your windows and outside walls
- close curtains and blinds when you are not home; when home, keep them closed on the sunny side.

- Open windows, where possible to do so safely, to allow cool air in at night (on nights when it is cooler outside than in the house); close windows and doors tightly when it is hotter outside. Be careful to close up as soon as it is warmer outside than in the house. A breeze coming in the windows may feel good, but if it is warmer air, it will eventually heat up the house.
- If you have an evaporative cooler, use the “fan only” setting at night to bring in cool air; Use an indoor/outdoor thermometer or a thermometer indoors and one placed outdoors in the shade to be able to tell the actual temperatures.
- Move your activities to rooms on the cooler side of the house
- Wear cooler clothing
- Prepare cold meals, such as salads or cool summer soups
- Cook outside using a sun oven
- Shower outside
- Use a fan on the “low” setting in the room you are in to create a gentle breeze
- Use less lights; switch to compact fluorescent bulbs

Trick Question: If you let a fan run for several hours in a room, and there was no other influence on the temperature, would the actual room temperature (a) get cooler; (b) get warmer; or (c) remain the same?

Answer: The actual room temperature will (b) get warmer. Fans make us feel cooler because the air movement they cause helps the moisture on our skin to evaporate more quickly. Remember how cold you feel if there’s a breeze when you get out of the pool? A fan on “low” or “medium” in the room we’re in will help us feel cooler and allow us to not have the air conditioner set as cool or perhaps make the air conditioner unnecessary. Therefore, it will save energy. However, a fan will not actually *lower* the room temperature. For that reason, don’t leave fans on when you’re not in the room. In addition to using electricity unnecessarily, the fan motor generates a small amount of heat and can increase the actual room temperature.

**Tip #4 – Fast from using your car one day each month – or one day each week! Take the bus, carpool, walk or stay at home. Be creative in how you get around or in what you do that day. Make it a spiritual day of reflection and reconnecting with neighbors. This Tuesday, April 22, is Earth Day, a perfect day to do something special to honor Mother Earth.**

Some things to do without using your car:

- catch up with things at home, such as gardening, cleaning, arts and crafts
- get to know your neighbors
- walk to a local store
- walk just for exercise
- call family or friends
- call someone who is ill or unable to get out
- pray, meditate, write, sketch, paint
- most of all: be creative and have fun!

**Tip #5 –Take your own reusable cloth or canvas bags with you to the store when you go shopping and keep the paper and plastic ones out of the landfill. “Paper or Plastic?” Neither, thank you! I brought my own cloth bags.”**

Did you know that the plastic bags NEVER decompose? They only break down into smaller pieces of plastic.

I put my cloth bags on the checkout conveyer belt, in front of the food. Otherwise, many cashiers may start putting the items in plastic bags before you can get their attention.

**Tip #6 – Are there “vampires” in your house constantly draining electricity? Unplug appliances, such as certain radios, televisions, cell phone chargers, printers, etc., whose transformers are using electricity even when the appliance is off.**

A transformer changes the household electricity from AC (Alternating Current) to DC (Direct Current), which many appliances use. A sure clue that an appliance has a transformer, which is constantly on, is if there is a square or rectangular “box”, measuring approximately 1” by 2”, attached to the plug. Some transformers are internal, though, making them difficult to spot. Other appliances, such as newer televisions, are always in “ready mode” so that they come on more quickly. But the downside is wasted energy.

Some of the “vampires”, such as the transformer for the doorbell as well as the one on the sprinkler control, need to be left on. Others, such as the television, computer printer and some radios could be easily controlled by plugging them into a power strip and turning the switch “off” when not in use. This will also protect the appliance from power surges.

How many vampires can you find in your house?