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Going Green to Save Green

There are lots of ways to go green to help the environment, but going green can also help your wallet. Many of the changes people make to better the planet result in a cost savings too.

Use cold water to wash your clothes. Skip the dryer and hang your clothes to dry. You can string a clothes line in your basement or laundry room. During the summer months, hang your clothes outside. You'll consume less energy and see a reduction in your electric bill.

For every degree you lower your thermostat in the winter or raise it in the summer, you can save between 1 to 3 percent on your energy bills. Adjust your temperature settings at night and while you're away to help keep your heating and cooling costs under control.

There are some easy ways to cut back on your water consumption, and your water bill, too. Do you water plants and flowers? If so, set out buckets to collect rain water and run off water from your downspouts. This water can be used to water plants. Try taking shorter showers. If you have 4 people in your household, and you each shorten your shower by 5 minutes, you'll save between 32 to 80 gallons of water a day!

Ask your electric company if they'll provide a free energy audit of your home. Many electric companies will do this and recommend ways to reduce your energy usage.

There are dozens and dozens of ways to save money and help the environment. Look around your home and see how many ways you can come up with.

Did you know?

Water usage increases by 30% in the summer. Reduce your water bill by installing a rain barrel.

- Place the rain barrel where your gutter drains off for the ultimate collection of rainwater.
- Look for a rain barrel where the water is completely contained to avoid attracting mosquitoes. Some rain barrels provide the option of planting on the top.
- Try to slightly elevate the rain barrel off the ground for ease of filling your watering can or attaching your hose.
- Do not drink the water from the rain barrel as it can contain harmful bacteria.
- Drain the water from the barrel before winter.



Q: I want to save money and help the environment by buying as many things used as possible, so I do a lot of shopping at places like the Goodwill or through places like Craigslist. Is there anything that I shouldn't buy used because of safety issues?

A: It is wonderful that you're following the three Rs of being green (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). But, yes, there are some things you should never buy used or you should use great care when purchasing.

When it comes to baby items, never buy a used car seat. Once a car seat has been in an accident, it cannot be used again. If you're buying from a stranger, you don't know if the seat has been in an accident. Also, many people don't realize that car seats "expire." After 5 years a car seat should not be used.

Do not buy drop-side cribs. That applies to old or new cribs.

Be careful when buying soft furniture, and especially mattresses, which could potentially harbor bed bugs and bacteria.

Finally, be wary of used electronics, particularly items like laptops and plasma television sets. Laptops get knocked around a lot and may not be in the best condition. Plasma televisions wear down over time and are very expensive to repair if they break.

Eating Organic on a Budget

As people become more concerned about the environment and their own health, they may begin to consider adding organic foods to their diet. But eating organic can be very expensive.

Organic foods can cost more than double what the non-organic versions cost, but there are ways to introduce organic foods to your diet without completely busting your budget.

First, shop around. Your regular, large chain grocery store may only have limited organic choices and is likely pricey too. Check out local Farmers' Markets. The produce will be fresher and less expensive than a chain store.

No matter where you're shopping there are two simple rules that will help keep your food costs down: Buy what's in season and buy in bulk.

Produce in season is always less expensive than the stuff that is out of season.

Buying in bulk generally keeps the price down. Consider joining a buying club where the food is purchased in bulk for a better price, and the cost is divided among the members. If you're buying in bulk on your own, just be prepared to properly package and freeze everything you won't be able to use in a timely manner. Generally organic food should be eaten within six months of freezing.

You'll pay less for organic food if you buy store brands, so be prepared to make changes if you're a brand loyal shopper. As long as the food is stamped as USDA certified organic, you know you're getting a quality product.

Like with any grocery shopping, watch for coupons and in-store specials on organic brands. Stock up when things go on sale, especially if organic meat goes on sale. Meat is one of the priciest items on the menu, so buying on sale and freezing it for future use really helps keep the budget under control.

In addition to buying meat on sale, cut back on the meat in your diet. Try having several meat-free meals each week. This is a valuable cost cutting tip even for those who aren't trying to eat organic.

If you can't afford to eat all organic all the time, or it's difficult to find organic products in your area, introduce some organic foods into your diet.

There are some fruits and vegetables that are more important to buy organic than others.

Produce with thicker, tougher skin is more resistant to contamination by pesticides. Recently the Environmental Working Group released a list of the produce that contains the most pesticides, and the produce that is least contaminated by pesticides. Try sticking to organic for the most susceptible produce.

Dirty Dozen Plus:

Apples
Celery
Cherry Tomatoes
Cucumbers
Grapes
Hot Peppers
Imported Nectarines
Peaches
Potatoes
Spinach
Strawberries
Sweet Bell Peppers
Kale/Collard Greens
Summer Squash

Clean 15:

Asparagus Papayas
Avocado Pineapple
Cabbage Sweet Peas (frozen)
Cantaloupe Sweet Potatoes
Corn
Eggplant
Grapefruit
Kiwi
Mango
Mushrooms
Onions

Resources

www.ewg.org - Environmental Working Group

www.vegweb.com - vegetarian recipes

www.thedailygreen.com

www.onlinebudgetadvisor.com

The Advantage Challenge

Advantage CCS challenges you to ...Make more meatless meals to save money in your food budget. Look for new and creative recipes that don't contain meat. Or take some of your tried and true recipes and swap lentils, extra vegetables or tofu for the meat. When you're cooking with spices and seasonings, you'll hardly miss the meat. The key is to be creative and willing to try new things. Let us know what you come up with - email recipe ideas to hmurray@advantageccs.org

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