

## ***Four Steps to a Greener Home***

*By Woodland Publishing, Inc.*

A rapidly growing world population and an increased threat of global warming indicate a need to change energy and resource consumption habits at a global level. The first step can be as simple as changing our own habits.

There are many options available for reducing impact on the environment, from eco-houses, complete with solar power and water recycling, to hybrid and alternative-fuel vehicles. For less money, homeowners can invest such devices as low-flush toilets and ENERGY STAR<sup>®</sup> approved appliances, designed to minimize use of energy and resources.

But if a new home or appliances don't fit your budget, don't worry. You can still make your house more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

1. *Enlightened Lighting.* Conserving energy and saving money is as simple as turning off the lights whenever a room is empty and relying on natural sunlight whenever possible. To conserve and save even more money, replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lamps, or CFLs. CFLs produce as much light as incandescent bulbs but use only a quarter of the energy and last up to ten times longer. CFLs save about fifty dollars over the life of one bulb and compensate for their higher price in about 500 hours. In addition, CFLs reduce greenhouse emissions from energy production.
2. *Money Down the Drain.* According to the Environmental Protection Agency, nearly two-thirds of the water used indoors in American households ends up down the drain. What can you do? Don't run the dishwasher or the washing machine until they are completely full. Turn off the water when lathering in the shower or while washing your hands, as well as when shaving. Install low-flow showerhead for under twenty dollars, and a high-efficiency sink aerator for less than five.
3. *Heating and cooling.* Reducing you heating and cooling bills also reduces greenhouse emissions caused by energy production. By installing a programmable thermostat, you can set your heater and air conditioner to shut off during the day while you are at work or at school, and to heat or cool the house just before your return. Even if you use a manual thermostat, conserve energy by turning it down just a couple of degrees during the day, and even more at night while you are sleeping.
4. *In the kitchen.* The United States Department of Agriculture reports that nearly half of the nation's water supply is used to grow crops that feed farm animals. Limiting meat in your diet to as little as one meal per week could have a tremendous effect on the environment. Think green!