

Going Green Starts at Home

Small changes you can easily make can have a big impact on the environment.

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MURFREESBORO, Ark. - Small changes you can easily make can have a big impact on the environment, says Robbie McKinnon, Pike County extension agent with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture.

For instance, by recycling paper, you can reduce the amount of trash going into landfills and help the environment, McKinnon says.

"Making recycled paper uses 64 percent less energy and 58 percent less water than making new paper," she says. "About a third of our trash contains paper."

You can also have a big impact on the environment by reducing the amount of fossil fuel energy you use.

"Fossil-fueled power plants generate pollution," she says. "The electricity generated by the average single family home puts more carbon dioxide in the air than two average cars."

In parts of our country, surface water and ground water are being pumped faster than they are being replaced by rain and snow. Sometimes, we waste water without even thinking about it. We can protect clean water by using it efficiently.

McKinnon offers these tips for saving water:

- * Don't let water run when you're not using it. You don't need running water while you're brushing your teeth or scrubbing your hands. Wet your hands, and then turn off the water while you scrub with soap. Turn it back on for rinsing.

- * Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth in the morning and at bedtime. This can save up to 8 gallons of water per day, which equals 240 gallons a month.

- * Report leaks immediately. A leaky faucet wastes gallons of water in a short period of time. Leaky faucets that drip at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water each year.

* Install aerators. Aerators go inside faucets and reduce the water flow but add air, which keeps the pressure feeling strong. You can double the faucet's efficiency without sacrificing performance. Look for the "Water Sense" label.

* Run full loads in the dishwasher and washing machine. Lower the water heater thermostat. Insulate the hot-water storage tank, but don't cover the thermostat.

There are several ways to reduce the amount of energy you use. Here are ways you can save energy:

* Replace standard incandescent bulbs with fluorescent tubes or compact bulbs. Fluorescent lights use much less electricity and last about four to 10 times longer.

* Take advantage of daylight. When using natural light, you may be able to turn off some of your electric lights. Open the curtains or use sheer or light curtains. On hot summer days, close the shades to keep heat out.

* Turn off the lights when not in use. If you leave a room, turn the lights off. Use fewer lights.

* Conserve energy while heating and cooling your home. In the summer, set the thermostat to 76 degrees F. or above. In winter, set the thermostat to 68 degrees or lower. Open the curtains because sunshine helps warm a room.

* Turn your thermostat back 10-15 degrees while you're away. If you turn the thermostat back for at least eight hours a day, you can save about 10 percent on heating and cooling bills.

* A programmable thermostat can return a comfortable temperature to the room before you arrive.

* Turn off equipment when it's not in use. It's a misconception that a computer will last longer if it's never turned off. Turn off computer monitors. Automatic switching to sleep mode or manually turning monitors off is always the better energy-saving strategy.

* Unplug chargers and adapters when not in use. The transformer in the adapter draws power continuously, even when the laptop is not plugged into the adapter. It's best to plug them into a power strip and turn the strip off when you're away.

The Cooperative Extension Service is part of the U of A Division of Agriculture. For more ideas to save money, visit <http://www.uaex.edu>.

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