

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

Winter, 2024 Number 1

Living Even Greener



This newsletter is a cooperative project with University of Georgia Extension Housing Program, and Oregon State University Extension/ Deschutes County.

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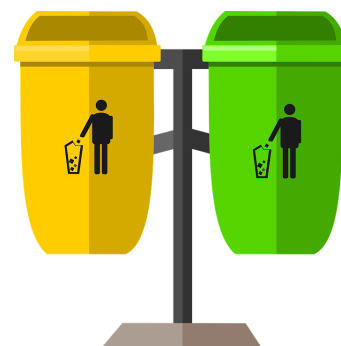
Written by Pamela R. Turner, Professor and Extension Housing @ Indoor Environment Specialist, University of Georgia

You may have already made several changes to help the environment, like taking reusable bags to the store or replacing your light bulbs with Energy Star qualified lighting. That's great! We can all do a little more to conserve natural resources, reduce waste, and perhaps save money. Consider these tips.

- **Downsize** Give away things you no longer use. Donate to a local non-profit or check social media to see if there are local sites for passing along items.
- **Recycle right** Many of us recycle, but we sometimes contaminate our recycling with items that should not be recycled. Contact your local recycling company and learn more about what to put in the bin and what to leave out. *When in doubt, throw it out!*
- **Compost** Start a compost pile for food scraps, grass, yard clippings, and dead plants. You will reduce your garbage and improve your garden soil.
- **Sweep** Instead of hosing off driveways and sidewalks, use a broom to sweep them.
- **Repair** Watch "how to" videos online and use your newly acquired knowledge to repair small electronics, bicycles, and exercise equipment.
- **Mend** Take a class or watch a video to learn how to sew on a button, mend a tear or darn your socks. Instead of tossing, repair.
- **Buy quality** When buying new clothing, select quality items rather than

inexpensive fashion items. Purchase trendy items from thrift stores. Invest in a few quality items that will last through fashion trends.

- **Reduce use of plastic** Switch to more environmentally friendly options like reusable containers, foil or wax paper.
- **Invest responsibly** Select socially and/or environmentally responsible investments for your retirement and investment accounts.
- **Air dry** Line dry laundry items on a drying rack or clothesline when practical to lower your energy bill. Delicates will last longer. Enjoy the fresh scent of sun-dried cotton sheets and towels.
- **Improve home energy efficiency** Invest in your home to make it more energy efficient. Adding more insulation can save 10-50% of your heating bill, especially if it is added to the attic, floor, and rafters. Other things you can consider are: (a) Install insulated windows; (b) Install a tank-less water heater; and (3) Replace old appliances with Energy Star-rated appliances.



(Image Source: Pixabay)

Energy Saving Tips for Homeowners and Renters

Written by Jackie E. Ogden, CFCS – FACS Agent, Chatham County, University of Georgia

Cost-effective energy tips can help save energy dollars and reduce your carbon footprint. Everyone should try to reduce their daily energy use. As a renter you should inspect the housing unit before signing the lease. Ask the utility company to provide the annual energy usage of that property prior to signing the lease. Below are some tips to help you reduce your energy bill.

Check Your Refrigerator and Water Heater

Home appliances account for about 13% of the average home's energy use. Your refrigerator is a major energy consumer. Make sure it operates more efficiently by not overpacking your refrigerator and making sure the gasket around the doors is sealing tightly. An easy way to check the gasket is to place a one-dollar bill between the seal and the door. If you can easily pull the dollar out when the door is closed, then your seal is not working properly.

The water heater is also a major energy user. To increase its efficiency, insulate the unit and pipes, however, do not cover the thermostat or burner compartment. If your older water heater produces a popping sound when operating, this is a sign that there may be sediment build-up in the water heater tank that will impact the equipment's efficiency. Consult with your plumber to flush out the grit or consider replacement. You may be able to find do-it-yourself videos for

regular grit maintenance. If your water heater is 10 to 15+ years old compare new options for water heating equipment including tank-less water heaters.

Other Tips for Saving Energy at Home

- Have your heating and cooling systems inspected and serviced by a professional at least once a year
- Inspect and clean or change air filters every 3 months.
- Use high-quality air filters during smoke season. Look for air filters that screen tiny PM 2.5 smoke particles that can harm lungs and other organs in humans and pets.
- Consider changing lighting to ENERGY STAR certified light bulbs when new lights are needed.
- Reduce drafts by adding weather stripping around doors and windows, installing storm windows, and sealing ductwork.
- Check the insulation and add more if needed, especially in the attic, exterior walls, and crawl space. Learn more about where to add insulation in your home on [Department of Energy website](#).
- Make sure appliances are working properly. Keep a log to track when equipment has been serviced and warranty dates for each appliance.

- Learn to read clothing and laundry soap labels. You will find that a lot of your clothes will come clean in cold water. They will last longer if you launder them inside out and don't over-dry them.
- If you are replacing appliances, consider buying ENERGY STAR certified products.
- Lower the thermostat an additional 3 degrees during the day and 10 degrees at night. Dress in layers and add a blanket if needed.
- During the winter, open the curtains to let the sunshine in and close them at night to keep the heat in.



(Image Source: Pixabay)

Some utility companies will do a free audit of your home to determine energy use. They may offer incentives to implement energy conservation practices that will provide financial savings.

Safe Outdoor Play for Young Children in Cold Weather

Written by Diane W. Bales, Professor and Extension Human Development Specialist, University of Georgia

When the weather gets cold, many parents and ECE teachers wonder whether it's safe for children to play outside. Young children's bodies do not regulate temperature as well as adults' bodies do, so children can become chilled easily. Before you go outside, check the temperature and wind speed. If the temperature is below 30 degrees Fahrenheit and the wind speed is above 10 mph, it may be safer to play indoors.

If you do venture outside during cold weather, here are some tips to keep children warm.

- Dress children in layers. Pay special attention to covering hands, feet, and head – these areas are most easily affected by frostbite.
- If you're playing in snow, be sure outer layers (including coat, pants, boots, and gloves) are waterproof.
- Wrap a scarf around the child's neck before putting on the coat for extra warmth.
- Be sure children are wearing sunscreen on their faces, even in cold weather.
- Limit outdoor time, and go back inside when children show any signs of feeling cold – including red cheeks, shivering, or chattering teeth.



(Image Source: Pixabay)

Helpful Hints for Healthy Homes

January is National Radon Action Month

Radon risk varies in Oregon. However, the Oregon Public Health Division recommends that all homes test for radon regardless of the risk level assigned to the home's geographic location. Take action and test your home for radon gas. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, resulting in the deaths of around 21,000 people each year. About 2,900 of these deaths occur among people who have never smoked. Radon is often referred to as the silent killer. You can't see, smell, or taste it. But exposure to radon is a preventable health risk. The only way to know if the radon in your home is high is to test. A short-term test is easy and inexpensive. A hardware store can help you.

Check for Air Leaks

Do the tissue test to check where the leaks are in your home. On a windy day, hold a tissue near the closed windows and doors in your home. If the tissue floats horizontally or parallel with the floor an air leak exists. When you find a leak, seal it with latex-based caulk or weather-stripping that can be purchased from a local hardware store. Sealing can reduce heat losses by up to 30 percent.

Protecting Indoor Air from Wildfire Smoke

This Oregon State University Extension Service web page educational article was revised and published in the OSU Extension catalog in March, 2023. With nearly 4000 views online in 2023 it is one of the leading publications viewed online in the Family and Community Health program. It is now available in English and Spanish at a new link: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pub/em9379>

Home Safety Tips

Written by Pamela R. Turner, Professor and Extension Housing @ Indoor Environment Specialist, University of Georgia

During the winter, we spend more time indoors and may accumulate



(Image Source: Pixabay)

stuff inside our homes, leading to more trips and falls. There are simple things you can do to reduce the risk of falling.

- Run extension cords along the wall and not under rugs or across high traffic areas.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and shower.
- Install extra lighting on stairs inside your home and along out-

door pathways.

- Add nightlights in hallways and bathrooms.
- Keep flashlights near sleeping areas.
- Reinforce handrails.

Make time to do a complete assessment of your home. Use the UGA Extension [Home Safety Checklist](#) for general safety tips and the checklist for [Childproofing Your Home](#).

Food Safety and Preservation Tips— Canning Basics

Written by Glenda Hyde, Associate Professor of Practice, Oregon State University Extension

For best quality and safety, use up-to-date canning recipes from reliable sources: OSU Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Center for Home Food Preservation and the latest edition of canning books published by major manufacturers of home canning supplies.

Use boiling water canning only for high-acid foods (fruits, acidified tomatoes, jams, jellies and pickles).

Use a pressure canner for low-acid foods (veggies meat, fish and poultry). Use jars, lids and screw bands de-

signed for home canning.

For best quality and safety, preserve only fresh, quality produce.

For altitudes over 1,000 feet, adjust processing time when canning in a boiling water canner and pressure when using a pressure canner.

Store all canned foods in a cool, dry dark location and use within one year for best quality.

Free OSU Extension Food Preservation Resources

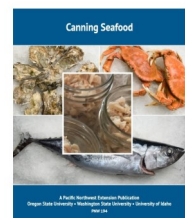
Online: beav.es/
OSUFoodPreservation

Hotline: **800-354-7319**

OSU Extension, Deschutes County office: **541-548-6088, option 4**

Ask Extension Email: **extension.oregonstate.edu/ask-expert**

Canning Timer and Checklist App: **beav.es/canning-timer**



Healthy Home Hacks

~ Pamela Turner, UGA Extension Housing and Indoor Environment Specialist

~ Diane Bales, UGA Extension Human Development Specialist

Stainless steel appliances can be cleaned with a solution of warm water and a few drops of mild dish soap.

Clean the inside of the microwave with a microwave-safe dish filled with water and dish soap. Turn the microwave on for 1 minute then wipe with a wet sponge. Add a lemon half to the water to add a fresh scent.

Use shaving cream to remove water stains from shower doors. Allow the shaving cream to sit for 15 minutes, then wipe off.

Cleaning Hacks for Seasonal Affective Disorder

Source: American Cleaning Institute



(Photo credit: American Cleaning Institute)

Many of us start feeling down when the days get shorter. This could be mild, or a more substantial mood

change known as seasonal affective disorder or SAD. Health care providers and mental health professionals have therapy and medication options that can help. There are also several self-care options that can be included in a treatment plan, including cleaning. We're sharing cleaning hacks to help chase away the winter blues.

Clean Your Windows – Don't wait for spring to clean your windows. Sure, there may not be as much light available in winter, but bring what sunshine there is inside through sparkling windows. And then try to set up your working and living space so that you're spending more time near those sunny windows.

Declutter – Clutter has been shown to affect your mental health. In the winter, when you're inside a lot, it can have a bigger impact. Pick a manageable size area that you see a lot and work on organizing it. As a bonus, as you move things around you'll be getting exercise, which is a tried-and-true SAD treatment.

Clean Outdoor Spaces – Soak up some sun, even if it's chilly by getting outside. Clean out the garage, wipe down the patio furniture, put the garden to bed, or choose another outdoor cleaning task. In addition to getting you outside, it also gets you prepared for the warmer, longer days ahead.

Cold Water Saves

Adapted by Glenda Hyde, Associate Professor of Practice, Oregon State University Extension from American Cleaning Institute Cold Water Saves Initiative

Think hot water washing gets your clothes the cleanest? Think again. With today's technology, innovation and detergents, you can get the best cleaning performance in cold water. Washing clothes in cold water uses less energy.

Save Energy. About 90% of the energy the washing machine uses goes towards heating the water.

Save your clothes. Many garment care labels in your clothing specify to wash in cool or cold water. Your clothes can fade, shrink or bleed when washed in the wrong water temperature. The right temperature can prolong the lifespan of your clothes and save you money. Step 1) Read the garment care label. Step 2) Turn down the temperature on your washing machine. *Brrrr-illiant!*



Credit: American Cleaning Institute

This newsletter has been adapted and edited by Glenda Hyde, Associate Professor of Practice, Oregon State University Extension Family and Community Health Program in Central Oregon with permission from the co-editors of Healthy Indoor Environments newsletter, University of Georgia Extension: Dr. Pamela R. Turner, Housing and Indoor Environment Extension Specialist and Dr. Diane W. Bales, Human Development Extension Specialist,



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