

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

inside & out

## 52 ways to go green at home for the next eco-friendly year

By The Denver Post

Posted: 04/17/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT



(The Denver Post)

**1. Join the party.** Attend a zero-waste workshop. Take a guided nature walk. Appreciate artwork made from recycled materials. Teach a toddler to recycle. It makes little difference how you and yours opt to observe Earth Day, as long as you participate. You can find a list of local events at [denverpost.com/earthday](http://denverpost.com/earthday).

**2. Reject "greenwashing."** Green business is good business. That means some companies co-opt environmentalist language without updating their practices, according to NSF International, a nonprofit public health organization ([nsf.org](http://nsf.org)). What follow are its tips for increasing your own awareness about greenwashing.

**3. More than skin deep.** Don't be misled by pretty pictures or the use of earth-friendly colors on product labels. Just because a label shows a forest doesn't mean the product inside is green.

**4. Look for meaningful claims.** Be wary of products making generic claims like "100 percent natural" or "environmentally friendly" without details to support those claims. Some products also advertise meaningless claims, like being "CFC-free." CFC, or the ozone-depleting chemical chlorofluorocarbon, was banned more than 20 years ago.

**5. Stamp of approval.** Look for a seal or certification mark from a recognized, independent third party specializing in green claims, such as the Forest Stewardship Council or the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System.

**6. Judge a book by its cover.** Check out a product's packaging. While the product may be green, is the packaging green and can it be disposed of in an environmentally safe way?

**7. Ditch the thesaurus.** Look at ingredients. A long list of ingredients, or ingredient names that a

Advertisement



**UNIVERSITY of  
SAN FRANCISCO**

**End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!**

**Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing**

→ SEO & Paid Search	→ Internet Law
→ Online Branding	→ Media Buying
→ Web Analytics	→ Social Media

➔

1-800-268-9943

[USanFranOnline.com/FD](http://USanFranOnline.com/FD)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

re difficult to pronounce, may be a red flag.

**8. Fragrance free.** Avoid products where fragrances are the key ingredient. According to NSF, most fragrances are man-made and can be irritants.

**9. Breathe easier.** Read product usage instructions. Avoid those that display warnings on the label such as "caution" or "use in well-ventilated area." This typically indicates that the product is hazardous to you and/or the environment.

**10. Do the math.** Question percentage claims such as "this product contains 50 percent more recycled content." Fifty percent more than what?

**11. Know the difference.** Be cautious of hidden trade-offs. For example, many products today are more energy efficient but may still be produced from hazardous or non-recyclable materials.

*As consumer demand for green home products continues to rise, stores have started to offer a wider array of green home furnishing options. The following 10 green design trends for 2010 were compiled by Mohawk Industries (mohawkind.com), a maker of sustainable flooring.*

**12. Mind what's underfoot.** Choose carpet made from renewable or recycled materials. These days, that includes carpet made from such unusual materials as corn sugar or recycled plastic bottles.

**13. Skip the irritants.** Make over your walls with non-toxic paint or paint that contains no- or low-volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

**14. Work your walls.** If low-VOC paint is too ordinary for your decorating taste, consider the array of green wallcoverings showing up lately alongside hip, modern wallpaper looks. Some options include bamboo wallpaper, grasscloth and recycled polyester products. For inspiration, try this blog: [greenwallcoverings.com](http://greenwallcoverings.com).

**15. Drape your home in style.** Use certified organic fabrics to create window treatments or accent pillows. You may be surprised at the array of colors and patterns now available.

**16. Opt for old age.** When choosing hardwood flooring, consider using reclaimed wood.

**17. Choose high-impact upgrades.** Select kitchen or bathroom countertops made from recycled glass, ceramic or bamboo.

**18. Go for oldies but goodies.** Breathe new life into vintage pieces by pairing them with fresh accessories. Reupholster an old arm chair or add an accent pillow for a fresh, new look.

**19. Light the way.** Install dimmable compact fluorescent lights, which generally consume less electricity and last many times longer than standard incandescent bulbs.

**20. Manage mercury.** Compact fluorescent light

Advertisement



UNIVERSITY of  
SAN FRANCISCO

End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

- SEO & Paid Search
- Online Branding
- Web Analytics

- Internet Law
- Media Buying
- Social Media

➔

1-800-268-9943  
[USanFranOnline.com/FD](http://USanFranOnline.com/FD)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

bulbs save money but they also contain mercury, a hazardous chemical. So prevent them from ending up in landfills and potentially infecting the local water supply. Some government agencies and waste management companies specially collect these bulbs. Visit [earth911.org](http://earth911.org) or call 800-CLEAN-UP for a list of CFL disposal options. If there is no place to recycle them near you, seal them in a plastic bag before putting them in the trash.

**21. Be a water warrior.** When installing new bathroom or kitchen fixtures, look for those with the WaterSense label, a sign that the Environmental Protection Agency tested and certified the product to make sure it's water-efficient.

*While we're on the subject of what makes sense when it comes to conserving water, here are six conservation ideas directly from the EPA.*

*According to the agency: "By making just a few small changes to your daily routine, you can save a significant amount of water, save money and preserve water supplies for future generations." Read more at [epa.gov](http://epa.gov).*

**22. Don't flush your money.** Toilets from 1992 or earlier tend to use at least 3.5 gallons per flush. New and improved high-efficiency models use less than 1.3 gallons per flush — that's at least 60 percent less than their older counterparts. Word to the wise: Older homes or those without PVC sewer lines may not be good candidates for high-efficiency toilets. Because these models use less water pressure, they may not be powerful enough to push refuse through

older pipes.

**23. Fix that leak.** Leaky faucets that drip at the rate of 1 drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water each year, according to the EPA. If you're unsure whether you have a leak, read your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, you probably have a leak.

**24. Shower power.** A full bathtub requires about 70 gallons of water, while taking a five-minute shower uses 10 to 25 gallons, according to the EPA.

**25. Tap this.** Turning off the tap while brushing your teeth can save up to 8 gallons of water per day, which equals 240 gallons a month, according to the EPA.

**26. Outside, be a drip.** Drip irrigation systems use much less water than conventional in-ground sprinkler systems. They are also much more efficient because little or no water is lost to wind, runoff or evaporation.

**27. Dominate wash day.** High-efficiency washing machines use much less water. To achieve even greater savings, wash only full loads of laundry or use the appropriate load size selection on the washing machine. For more energy savings, consider washing all clothes in cold water.

*The American Institute of Architects ( [aia.org](http://aia.org) )*

Advertisement



USF

UNIVERSITY of  
SAN FRANCISCO

End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

- SEO & Paid Search
- Online Branding
- Web Analytics

- Internet Law
- Media Buying
- Social Media

➔

1-800-268-9943  
[USanFranOnline.com/FD](http://USanFranOnline.com/FD)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

wants people to know that there are plenty of cost-effective, eco-friendly design and renovation projects that will spruce up your home and positively affect the environment. Among the green ideas from these home design experts:

**28. Find hidden gems.** Before shopping for costly new pieces of furniture, take a second look at unused or forgotten pieces in areas like the basement, garage or guest bedroom. In many cases, long-ignored decor can easily be refurbished with a little know-how.

**29. Do an insulation investigation.** Insulation leaks and cracks can exist in both new and old homes, leading to energy waste and inflated bills, according to the AIA. A home energy audit will provide valuable conservation ideas.

**30. Get some direction.** The ReDirect Guide is a free, green business directory — like a phone book just for eco-friendly goods and services. Colorado is one of the few states in the country that has one, and a new Guide for 2010 comes out this week. Visit [redirectguide.com](http://redirectguide.com) for more information and local green resources.

**31. Borrow with confidence.** If you plan to buy a home built to meet greater energy-efficiency standards, you may qualify for an energy-efficient mortgage (EEM), also known as a "green mortgage." This will increase your borrowing power and yield certain discounts. Find a broker or lender who specializes in such mortgages like Alpine Banks of Colorado ([alpinebank.com](http://alpinebank.com)).

**32. Dodge the draft.** If there are cracks and gaps around your windows, doors, electrical outlets or window air-conditioning units, you could be throwing away hundreds of dollars in expensive treated air every year, according to a recent article for Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate ([bhgrealestate.com](http://bhgrealestate.com)). Seal or fill as many gaps as you can. In winter and summer months, keep doors and vents closed to rooms that don't get frequent use; no sense in heating or cooling a room that's empty.

**33. Get filter fever.** In the average U.S. home, more than 50 percent of energy costs go toward heating and cooling, according to Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate. Change filters on both forced-air furnaces and air conditioning units often to ensure optimal efficiency.

**34. Air dry.** There are upward of 88 million dryers in the U.S., each emitting more than a ton of carbon dioxide per year, according to the Discovery Channel's Planet Green initiative. Since dryers are such energy suckers, skipping them altogether can make a real difference. Other green laundry ideas include wearing clothes multiple times before washing them, and making your own liquid laundry detergent by combining boiling water with grated bar soap, Borax and washing soda. Look for complete directions at [planetgreen.discovery.com](http://planetgreen.discovery.com).

**35. Be a mean, green cleaning machine.** Housekeeping is one area where consumers find it easy to be green. Sure, there are more eco-

Advertisement



USF

UNIVERSITY of  
SAN FRANCISCO

End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

- SEO & Paid Search
- Online Branding
- Web Analytics

- Internet Law
- Media Buying
- Social Media

➔

1-800-268-9943  
[USanFranOnline.com/FD](http://USanFranOnline.com/FD)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

friendly cleaning products then ever. But for real peace of mind, try one of these home formulas: Use vinegar and water to freshen up floors, walls and cupboards; instead of using chemical scouring agents, consider using baking soda, which is also an odor absorbent; use lemon juice to dissolve soap scum; or, use cornstarch (or baking soda) to help deodorize rugs and carpets. Sprinkle about 1 cup per room, then vacuum after 30 minutes.

**36. Wed wisely.** As we head into wedding season, brides might consider one of these green options: Select recycled paper invitations; use locally produced foods and beverages for the reception or rehearsal dinner; encourage guests to carpool or offer group transportation.

*Assuming that all gardening and landscaping projects are green is like assuming that all salads are healthy. Sure, gardening is a great way to work toward a greener lifestyle, but it's important that green gardeners take steps to reduce their waste and restore their yard's natural habitat. The next six tips are from O, The Oprah Magazine ( [oprah.com](http://oprah.com) ), The Daily Green ( [thedailygreen.com](http://thedailygreen.com) ) and ehow.com .*

**37. Reap what you mow.** Gas-powered lawn mowers pollute the air. Battery-powered motors also have a negative environmental impact as manufacturing the batteries causes lead emissions. The greenest way to cut grass is with a manual mower. (It's also a great workout.) Then, leave the clippings on the lawn for free, eco-friendly fertilizer.

**38. Get the dirt on your soil.** The phosphates and nitrates in fertilizer contaminate waterways and kill fish. Have your soil tested to see what nutrients it needs, then look for labels listing "natural organic" and "slow release" ingredients. To avoid runoff, never apply fertilizer before heavy rains or to frozen ground.

**39. Go native.** With your plants, that is. Local plants will grow best in your soil with the least assistance from chemicals. Growing native plants also reduces the need to ship plants to your area.

**40. Stop bugging out.** Pesticides are contaminants; they hurt animals, reduce biodiversity and are linked to birth defects and cancer. Keep your garden healthy without pesticides, through compost and mulch use and frequent mowing. Ask your plant store about choosing pest-resistant varieties. And remember: Bugs are good for your plants. Only 5 to 15 percent of them are actually pests.

**41. Don't go with the flow.** Up to 75 percent of household water use during growing season is outdoors. Runoff can carry pesticides and other toxins into lakes, rivers and oceans. Perennials need less water than annuals, and older trees and shrubs need even less. Water in the early morning to avoid evaporation during the day and mold growth at night, and use a soaker hose or drip irrigation system.

**42. Select sustainable wood.** Garden fencing

Advertisement



USF

UNIVERSITY of  
SAN FRANCISCO

End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

→ SEO & Paid Search

→ Online Branding

→ Web Analytics

→ Internet Law

→ Media Buying

→ Social Media

→

1-800-268-9943

[USanFranOnline.com/FD](http://USanFranOnline.com/FD)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

can be eco-friendly. Bamboo is a green option because it's a hearty grower and lives a long time. Just make sure any other wood you buy isn't endangered.

*The Daily Green, which calls itself "the consumer's guide to the green revolution," and Instructables ( [instructables.com](http://instructables.com) ), a site where people document their DIY projects, are great places to uncover upcycling ideas like the following green home decorating and fashion projects. These instructions were condensed, so check the sites for detailed steps and project pictures.*

**43. Rock a bike chain bracelet.** Put that old bike chain to use by turning it into an edgy bracelet. First, thread a small screw through the ends of a bike chain. If need be, hacksaw off the end of the screw so it isn't too long for your wrist. Next, put one or two layers of Teflon tape on the screw to get a good fit.

**44. Make a suitcase ottoman.** For this funky, easy upcycled decorating project, you will need: upholstery fabric, muslin, foam backing, an old suitcase, plywood, pipes, plumbing fittings and tools. Remove the top of the suitcase. Cut and build the plywood cushion frame. Cut the foam to the same size as the plywood. Affix muslin over the foam, and upholstery fabric over the muslin. Drop the upholstered cushion into the suitcase bottom. The fit should be quite snug. Next, turn the suitcase over and affix the plumbing fittings where you want them. Finally, screw in the pipe-legs.

*One great thing about going green when you entertain at home is that the experience becomes communal. These tips for hosting a green party are from [epicurious.com](http://epicurious.com) .*

**45. Imagine a better invite.** Use electronic invitations, make your own invitations using recycled materials, or send invitations printed on recycled paper.

**46. Mind your menu.** Leave your global appetite behind and think local. Shipping ingredients from another part of the world requires a tremendous amount of fuel. Look to your nearest farmers' market or CSA (community-supported agriculture) for in-season fruits and vegetables, as well as meat, eggs and dairy products. They're fresher, taste better and are often less expensive.

**47. Grow cerebral centerpieces.** Wrap a baby tree from a local nursery in burlap and tie it with a shiny ribbon. You might even embellish the burlap with pretty flourishes like fake butterflies. Place the decorated tree on a cake stand as a living centerpiece, then plant it after the party.

**48. Use plants for place cards.** Collect large leaves from the yard and write dinner party guests' names right on the leaves with a nontoxic permanent marker.

**49. Serve with style.** Reusable plates, cups and utensils are the greenest choice but not always

Advertisement



**Florida Tech**  
UNIVERSITY ONLINE

## Bring the Classroom to Your Home With a Degree Online From Florida Tech

**APPLY TODAY!**  
[FloridaTechOnline.com/FD](http://FloridaTechOnline.com/FD) | 1-888-253-5946



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

feasible for large groups. The good news is that affordable, environmentally friendly, disposable dishware is becoming more common. Some brands include Recycline, Cereplast, Greenhome and Whole Foods' 365 brand.

**50.** Use aluminum foil. Clean foil can be crumpled up and tossed into the recycling bin, making it a better option than plastic cling wrap. But don't risk contaminating a load of recyclables: If your foil is covered in baked cheese and sauce, toss it in the trash.

**51.** Be the cat's meow. Pets are now part of the American family. That means pet parents should help Fido live a greener life, too. Some ways to do that include adopting from a local shelter instead of buying an animal from a specialty breeder, spaying and neutering your animals to prevent overpopulation, switching to natural and organic foods and treats, scooping up poop into biodegradable bags, offering toys made from upcycled or recycled materials, and using non-toxic pet care products.

**52.** Join the movement. You can glean countless ideas from other everyday folks who hope their small green steps contribute to big ecological change. Check out the Billion Acts of Green project sponsored by the Earth Day Network. Simply log on to [earthday.net](http://earthday.net) to record your latest green lifestyle change and read up on what other people are doing. "Once people make these changes in their own lives," says Earth Day Network President Kathleen Rogers, "they're going to start demanding (green policies and products) from the people they elect and the

companies they buy from."

— *Compiled by Elana Ashanti Jefferson*

Advertisement



**Florida Tech**  
UNIVERSITY ONLINE

## Bring the Classroom to Your Home With a Degree Online From Florida Tech

**APPLY TODAY!**  
[FloridaTechOnline.com/FD](http://FloridaTechOnline.com/FD) | 1-888-253-5946



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™