

Eco-tip: There's nothing more charming than dimming the lights to set the mood of a room, but for soft and non-fossil fuel lighting, try a few candles. Avoid spending money on over-packaged, artificially fragrant paraffin wax products that are derived from crude oil and emit carbon dioxide. Beautiful beeswax candles are much more environmentally friendly and are often available from a local supplier; plus you can add a personal touch with a few drops of essential oil — much more romantic. — From "True Green Home," \$19.95, nationalgeographic.org

Make it a game to be green

by Robin Tierney

Since Earth Day's debut in 1970, a fringe movement has gone mainstream as people go green for diverse reasons: conserving natural resources, reducing pollution, protecting health, earning tax rebates, de-stressing in walkable, nature-oriented communities, saving money.

At the Urban Land Institute's annual conference, Shyam Kannan, a real estate consultant with Bethesda company RCLCO, described three green demographic profiles based on a survey of 1,200 homeowners nationwide:

Altruistic Forest Greens. This predominantly young segment is growing in size, income and influence. Chris, a recent college graduate I met on DC's Metrorail system, gave up the car he once couldn't wait to own; he finds public transportation "less complicated." He checks labels to assess the eco-impact of his purchases, choosing environmentally

and ethically produced items even when they cost more; he buys album downloads instead of CDs to reduce packaging consumption; and he carries a reusable water bottle and packs a fold-up carryall bag. Inconvenient? No, he said, "it becomes habit."

Greenback Greens. "They're about the buck," Kannan says. "They want to save energy and money. Their focus is not on carbon footprints, but utility bills." This segment profoundly affects the spread of energy-efficient technology. "They'll pay \$8,000 to \$13,000 more to make their home green — but they want payback in five years." The average return for green investments is 10 years, "so that mismatch in payback period explains why [demand] is not skyrocketing."

Healthy Greens. Concern for their health and that of their families drives these folks. They seek better indoor air quality, organic foods, and minimization of chemicals and toxins

in their purchase decisions.

Currently, Kannan says, only 2 percent of residential buildings are green. "The average consumer does not make the connection between their home and environmental degradation." Of those surveyed, 43 percent want their next home to save energy, and 75 percent were interested in reducing effects on the environment.

"Toxin-free" is now a household name. Kannan says he believes interest in formaldehyde-free finishes has overtaken granite countertops. A growing number are insisting on Energy Star-certified appliances, paints with less volatile organic compounds, whole-home air filtering systems, tankless water heaters, rainwater collectors, and the recycling of construction waste during homebuilding and renovations.

On the other hand, he says that building with straw bales, recycled soda bottles and similar other green

materials is "weird."

As utility companies modernize, consumers will be able to make smarter energy use decisions based on real-time data. Ninety-five percent of consumers want more detailed information on their energy use, but only 20 percent are willing to pay for it, according to research presented by Oracle Utilities Vice President Guerry Waters at the EnergyBiz Leadership Forum last month.

Oracle's study confirmed consumers' embrace of energy- and money-saving steps such as replacing light bulbs, adding insulation and upgrading to higher-efficiency appliances.

As economic issues color this Earth Day, it clearly helps when the greener you go, the more green you'll save.

Robin Tierney is a freelancer who writes about health and environmental issues. E-mail her at robbintierney@gmail.com.



You only use natural and organic products, like the ones from California Baby (californiababy.com). **15 points**



You attended a baby shower and bought the mom-to-be eco-friendly and organic onesies from Rock n Roll Babies. \$24 at rocknrollbabies.com. **5 points**



You treated yourself to Lush's Charity Pot hand and body cream. Every penny of the price goes directly into a charitable fund that supports humanitarian concerns and environmental protection. \$20.95 at lushusa.com. **10 points**

Surf the Web

Earth Day 2009 events and campaigns
 • earthday.net
 • earthday.enviroink.org

You planted a vegetable garden — complete with tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce and carrots. Now you'll enjoy fresh produce all season. **30 points**



You walked to your local vegetarian restaurant for supper and saved gas while getting some exercise in. **10 points**

You carpooled to work this week and plan to keep it up. **7 points**

You celebrate Earth Day every day. **100 points**

You biked to work today. **20 points**

Instead of using pesticide to kill pesky bugs inside your home, you opted to use poison (away from pets and kids) and have the bugs eliminated that way. **7 points**



Instead of holiday or birthday cards you send e-cards. And for parties, Evite is the way you go. **5 points**

You bike EVERYWHERE. **50 points**

You bought all your produce (and some treats, too) at the local farmers market. **10 points**



Start them young: You bought "50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth." \$12.99 at andrewsmcmeel.com. **5 points**

Earth Day festival

It's not too late to celebrate Earth Day:
 • Free Earth Day events begin at noon today on the National Mall. Visit greenapplefestival.com.
 • Fairfax ReLeaf tree planting runs from 2:30 to 5 p.m. today. You can volunteer to plant trees to preserve native habitats and improve air and water quality, as well as wildlife habitats. Visit fairfaxreleaf.org.
 • Green Apple Festival — post-show cleanup starts after the festivities are over from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on the National Mall.



It's better to park your car and go inside to get fast food than to sit in the drive-thru and let your car idle. You walked inside to pick up supper. **5 points**



You gave a family member a grocery bag made from recycled juice containers. \$24.95 at bazurabags.com. **10 points**



You attended a baby shower and bought the mom-to-be eco-friendly and organic onesies from Rock n Roll Babies. \$24 at rocknrollbabies.com. **5 points**

You planted a vegetable garden — complete with tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce

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