

# Healthy House

## Easy Ways to Green It Up

by Avery Mack

**L**iving green isn't difficult or expensive. Start small, one room at a time.

### In the Kitchen

Defrosting trays have been available for a while, and although they aren't a miracle solution, they are eco-friendly and easy to clean; thawing most meats, seafood and vegetables usually takes just 30 to 60 minutes. It's one way to avoid using the microwave.

Most cutting boards of sustainable bamboo or cork originate in China, creating a big carbon footprint. Glass boards are

breakable and hard on knives. Consider planet-friendly boards made of recycled cardboard and food-grade plastic combined with flax husks.

A countertop convection oven set about 25 degrees lower circulates heated

air to cook food 25 to 30 percent faster and more evenly than a conventional oven; it uses less energy and has fewer emissions. Foods come out crispier, which also makes for great veggie chips. A conventional oven is still best for soufflés, breads or cakes that rise as they bake.

Replace chemical-coated nonstick pans, disposable parchment paper and aluminum foil with reusable, eco-friendly, U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved silicone mats. They are easy to clean, affordable and available in many sizes and shapes.

Run the dishwasher when full and at night. Off-peak hours won't cut the electric bill, but are more efficient for the power plant, reducing its energy footprint.

Skip the garbage disposal to save water and energy. Use food waste for plant-nurturing compost. Plastics numbered 1, 3, 6 or 7 are prone to leaching into food or drinks. Recycle or repurpose those already on hand to store craft items, small toys or office supplies.

### On the Floor

Keep floors clean and healthy by leaving shoes at the door. They track in dirt, pesticides, chemicals, pet waste and leaked fluids from vehicles. Slippers or socks with a grip sole keep feet warm and prevent falls.

Bamboo flooring is sustainable and eco-friendly, but is also shipped from Chi-



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na. Using local products reduces shipping costs, supports American businesses and can give the home a unique design. “Logs salvaged from the bottom of the Penobscot River turn into flooring, ceilings and accent walls,” advises Tom Shafer, co-owner of Maine Heritage Timber, in Millinocket. “The cold temperature preserves the wood and gives it a natural patina. It’s now available in peel-and-stick, affordable planks called timberchic. Planks have an eco-friendly, UV-cured finish.”

For more flooring tips, see [Tinyurl.com/Eco-FriendlyFloors](http://Tinyurl.com/Eco-FriendlyFloors).

## In the Bathroom

Instead of air freshener sprays, hang pet- and child-safe plants.

Use fast-drying towels up to four times before washing. Hand towels see more frequent use, so change every other day. Longer wear makeup stays longer on a washcloth; to prevent reintroducing germs

to the face, use a facecloth only once.

All-natural cleaning products are easy to find or make. For some tips, see [Tinyurl.com/LovelyEcoLoo](http://Tinyurl.com/LovelyEcoLoo).

## In the Bedroom

From sheets and bedding to a fluffy robe, choose eco-friendly organic cotton in white, or colored with environmentally safe, non-metallic dyes.

Blue light from a smartphone, computer, tablet or TV can foster sleeplessness. “I keep all devices out of my bedroom and block all unnatural light,” says Leslie Fischer, an eco-minded mom and entrepreneur in Chicago, who reviews mattresses for adults and babies at [SustainableSlumber.com](http://SustainableSlumber.com). “I sleep on a fantastic mattress that won’t fill my room with pollution.”

A good pillow is a necessity. Citrus Sleep rates the Top Ten Eco Options at [Tinyurl.com/NaturalPillowPicks](http://Tinyurl.com/NaturalPillowPicks).

Mattresses should be replaced every eight years. In the U.S., an average of

50,000 end up in landfills each day. California law requires manufacturers to create a statewide recycling program for mattresses and box springs. An \$11 recycling fee, collected upon each sale, funds the Bye Bye Mattress program. Connecticut and Rhode Island also recycle them. “An alternative is extending mattress use with a topper,” says Omar Alchaboun, founder of topper-maker Kloudes, in Los Angeles.

## What and Where to Recycle

Find out where and what to recycle at [Earth911.com](http://Earth911.com). Enter the item and a zip code or call 1-800-cleanup.

Going green is money-saving, environmentally wise and coming of age, which makes eco-friendly products easier to access. Earth Day is a perfect time to make simple changes that can have long-lasting and far-reaching results.

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