Hawaiian Telcom

Sustainable Living at Home

Simple Tips for a Greener Life

Sustainability isn't just for the office; you can make a difference right at home. Small everyday actions add up. Here's a quick guide with simple tips on water conservation, energy savings, cleaner air, smart recycling & reuse, and sustainable shopping to help you live greener every day.

Water Conservation

Conserving water at home protects our island environment and can lower your utility bills. Try these simple habits to save water and energy:

- **Turn off the tap when brushing teeth or shaving.** This easy step can save as much as 3,000 gallons of water per year.
- **Fix leaks promptly.** A dripping faucet or running toilet can waste thousands of gallons over time, so repair leaks to stop water going down the drain.
- **Install efficient fixtures.** Consider low-flow showerheads and WaterSense-labeled faucets/toilets that maintain pressure while using less water. They work great and cut water use.
- **Rethink outdoor watering.** Water only when needed. If you do water plants, choose drip watering systems instead of sprinklers. Plant native or low-water plants that thrive with less care. In drier areas, using rocks or mulch instead of grass can also help save water.

look for WaterSense Meets EPA Criteria

Fun Fact: Replacing old faucets and aerators with WaterSense models can save the average family 700 gallons of water per year (EPA).

Energy Savings

Using energy wisely at home reduces utility costs and carbon footprint. A few bright ideas for saving power:

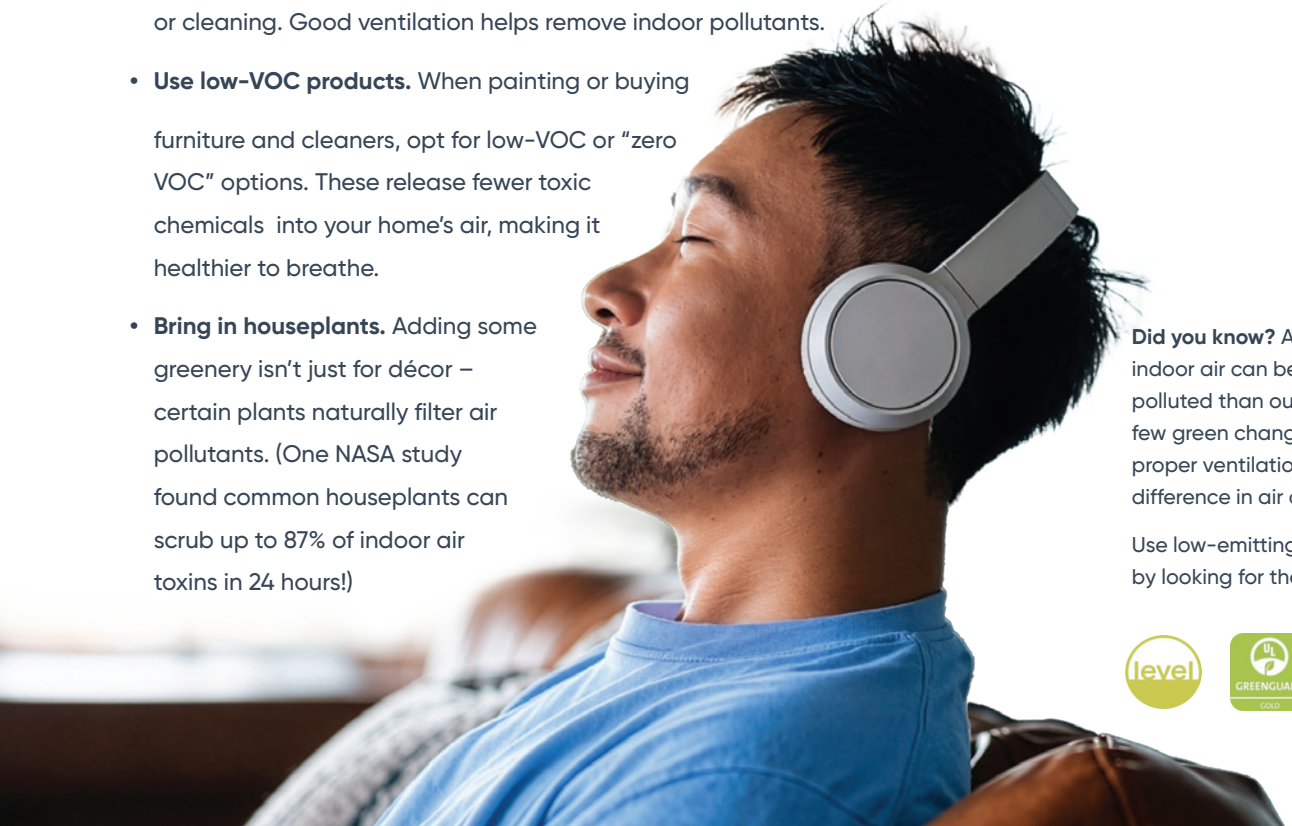
- **Switch to LED lighting.** LEDs use far less electricity and last much longer than old bulbs and can last up to 25 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs.
- **Power down & unplug.** Turn off lights, computers, and electronics when not in use. Unplug chargers and use smart power strips to eliminate power draw from devices in standby mode.
- **Choose ENERGY STAR® appliances.** When upgrading appliances or electronics, look for the ENERGY STAR label. These products use 10–50% less energy than standard models, saving you money over their lifetime.
- **Make the most of daylight and shade.** Open curtains during the day and plant a tree to shade your AC and cool your home. Planting the right tree in the right place can make a big difference.
- **Be smart with outdoor lighting.** Use dark sky fixtures that reduce light pollution and put outdoor lights on timers or motion sensors.
- **Wash and dry efficiently.** Wash clothes in cold water and air dry dishes and clothes whenever possible to save energy and help items last longer.

Did you know? Many home energy efficiency measures qualify for utility rebates. Check your utility's website to see if you can get money back on efficient bulbs and appliances.

Breathe Easy (Air Quality)

Indoor air quality affects your health and comfort. Keep your home's air fresh and clean with a few simple steps:

- **Let the fresh air in.** Open windows or use exhaust fans regularly to circulate air, especially when cooking or cleaning. Good ventilation helps remove indoor pollutants.
- **Use low-VOC products.** When painting or buying furniture and cleaners, opt for low-VOC or "zero VOC" options. These release fewer toxic chemicals into your home's air, making it healthier to breathe.
- **Bring in houseplants.** Adding some greenery isn't just for décor – certain plants naturally filter air pollutants. (One NASA study found common houseplants can scrub up to 87% of indoor air toxins in 24 hours!)



Did you know? According to the EPA, indoor air can be 2–5 times more polluted than outdoor air. That's why a few green changes, like plants and proper ventilation, can make a big difference in air quality.

Use low-emitting products and furniture by looking for these trustworthy labels:

Smart Recycling & Reuse

Reducing waste at home starts with thinking beyond the trash can. Aim to "reduce, reuse, then recycle" in that order (remember, reduce and reuse come first!):

- **Cut down single-use items.** Replace disposable plastics with reusables: carry a refillable water bottle (save on plastic waste) and bring your own bags or containers when shopping. Small actions like refilling a bottle instead of grabbing a new plastic one really add up over time.
- **Give items a second life.** Before you toss something usable, consider donating or selling it. Old furniture, electronics, or clothing can often be refurbished, donated, or sold, reducing waste and benefiting someone else. For example, gently used furniture can find a new home instead of becoming landfill waste, a win-win for sustainability.
- **Recycle the right way.** Set up a system to separate recyclables (paper, bottles, cans, etc.) and learn your local recycling guidelines. Proper sorting means more of your waste actually gets recycled instead of ending up in landfills.

Fun Fact: Recycling just one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a television for about 2 hours (EPA). Imagine the impact when we recycle all our cans, bottles, and paper products properly!

Sustainable Shopping

Every purchase is a chance to choose sustainability. Whether you're buying groceries, clothes, or home goods, keep these tips in mind:

- **Look for green labels.** Eco-labels help you find products that meet environmental standards. Examples include ENERGY STAR (energy-efficient appliances), WaterSense (water-saving plumbing fixtures), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) for sustainable wood products, or USDA Organic for foods. These labels take the guesswork out of shopping green.
- **Buy quality, buy less.** Opt for well-made, durable items that you truly need. High-quality products might cost a bit more upfront but won't need replacing as often, which means less waste (and often savings in the long run). For instance, a sturdy reusable coffee tumbler or water bottle can last years, replacing dozens of disposable cups or bottles.
- **Support sustainable and local products.** Whenever possible, choose products with recycled content or those that come with minimal packaging. Also consider buying from local farmers and businesses. You'll reduce the carbon footprint from shipping and support our community at the same time.
- **Avoid toxic chemicals.** From herbicides & fertilizers to food additives, less is more. When products contain toxic ingredients there is no safe end-of-life for them. Avoid the worst-in-class "red list" chemicals

Quick stat: If every household picked a WaterSense showerhead, we could save billions of gallons of water nationwide! Sustainable choices do add up.

For a greener, healthier environment, you can look for these trustworthy green labels on products:

Sustainable Mobility

How you choose to get around can make a big difference for the environment, your health, and your wallet. Small changes in daily travel habits can lower pollution, save money on fuel, and contribute to a healthier lifestyle. Here are some tips:

- **Walk or bike when you can.** Walking and biking are zero-emission ways to get where you need to go. They also help you stay active. Our Alakea office makes this easier, with bike storage and showers on site. Alakea's Walk Score of 99 (out of 100) means the building is considered a "walker's paradise" because of its location near shops, restaurants, and other destinations.
- **Use public transit.** Choosing the bus or rail reduces the number of cars on the road, cuts traffic, and lowers emissions. The Alakea building is within 0.2 miles of a dozen convenient bus lines, offering a great opportunity to leave the car at home.
- **Carpool or ride-share.** Sharing rides with others means fewer vehicles on the road, which saves fuel and reduces pollution.
- **Consider going electric.** If you are shopping for a new car, bike, or scooter, electric options produce fewer emissions and can cost less to operate and maintain over time.

Did you know? The average U.S. passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 metric tons of CO_2 per year (EPA). Choosing to walk, bike, or take transit even once in a while helps cut down on those emissions and supports a healthier environment.

Further Resources

For more tips and information on living sustainably at home, check out these resources:

- **Hawaiian Electric's Save Energy And Money page** details utility rebates you may qualify for.
- **Hawaiian Electric Energy Saving Toolkit** – Energy tips for your home and landscape, "101 Ways to Save"
- **EPA WaterSense** – Tips and products to help you save water at home.
- **ENERGY STAR** – Guidance on energy-efficient appliances, lighting, and home upgrades.
- **LEED for Residential** – Learn how homes can be designed or remodeled for sustainability and healthier living.
- **EPA Safer Choice** – Find safer cleaning and household products for your home.