



Celebrate Earth Day All Year Long

On Earth Day and every day, we are bombarded with messages about green living. We are told we must change what we buy, eat, use, drive and build. We feel constant media pressure to reduce our carbon footprint.

As a result, most of us are beginning to make changes to benefit the earth, now and for future generations. As an interior redesigner, I am proud to work in a field that is based on the original eco-friendly concept of reduce, recycle and reuse: my favorite part of doing a one-day home makeover is using a client's existing furnishings, art and accessories in different combinations, in other rooms or in new ways.

Let's discuss some steps which contribute to a greener world. You can reduce your gasoline consumption by walking or biking more, and by minimizing your use of lawnmowers and leaf blowers. Plastic waste can be reduced by limiting your dependence on plastic water bottles and wrap, for example. Reduce energy needs by insulating your home, unplugging re-chargers and turning off computers and other technology when not in use, changing your light bulbs to compact fluorescents, and eventually upgrading your appliances to the most efficient models.

Recycle newspapers, magazines, and all paper products, as well as plastic and glass containers. You will be rewarded with a small redemption fee when beverage containers are dropped off at your local recycling center, or you can arrange for paper, plastic and glass to be picked up curbside. All it takes is a commitment to make recycling a part of your everyday routine.

Before you throw things away, ask yourself what can be re-used. Wrapping paper, bows, ribbons and grocery bags can all be used again, so make a habit of storing them neatly for easy access. Even greeting cards can be re-used: if I like the artwork (especially the clever scrap booking styles), I will cut out the design to be re-used later as a gift tag, or to embellish a blank card. And sometimes there is no better gift than one that has been re-gifted: if you don't like it, someone else most certainly will.

Building green may include using paint, flooring and other products that are healthy for us, as well as our environment. Paint, carpet and other materials can emit potentially harmful particles into our living spaces, so new eco-friendly products are becoming available. We are also seeing a trend of using sustainable materials, like bamboo or cork, which are quick growing and less invasively removed from their natural environment.

The biggest, most important impact we can make is to reconsider our attitudes about spending, acquiring and using all that we do. Simply choosing to live with less is the essence of Earth Day. As we learn more about how our actions affect the earth and our options, we will choose to make changes, one step at a time.

Take a moment to appreciate all the earth offers us, and do what you can to take care of it.

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