

The VGF Report

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Get Green This Winter

It has been an interesting time to live, and I am not saying that entirely in a good way. I believe that we can all wake up now and realize that the bottom can drop out on our world if we keep going in the same direction.

It has often been said that the definition of insanity is repeating the same steps over and over all the while expecting different results.

If we expect our future to get any better, we need to change our actions now. Finding alternative fuels, finding ways to conserve, finding incentives to offer others to conserve are the important issues of today. We've watched gas prices go sky high because of the inherent issues concerning our oil situation. We've watched grocery bills increase because of the impact other forces have had on our food supply. We've literally watched foreclosures take a leap because of all these other things added together.

We are at a time where it is finally possible for us to see what can happen when we don't pay attention to our consumption. Even though for years there were so called "experts" who were telling us that our earth could sustain our rate of growth, there were other experts who were trying to tell us that it couldn't. Who do we listen to when there are two sides who disagree on such extremes?

Well, we don't need to rely on experts to tell us what could happen. We can see it for ourselves. Take a look around. Take a look at your own situation. If you've maintained a budget and kept good records, you should be able to see the changes that have taken place and you know that it is time to make some changes for yourself.

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I've done some research and I have a list of ideas that you can put into place this winter. Some of them are just common sense. If you keep track of your own situation, you will be able to save yourself some money and care about your surroundings so that you can leave your own green footprint for future generations to appreciate.

Recycling

What happened to recycling? I remember years ago when recycling was huge. Paper, plastics, glass, metals and everything else you could think of recycling was all the rage through the 80s and part of the 90s. While people still do recycle, it's not as huge now as it was then. Recycle everything you possibly can and you can get money back for it if you know where to go.

Place all your metal cans in their own trash bag. But, that's not the only metal you can recycle. When you get aluminum from food deliveries, you should keep it for recycling rather than throw it away from the trash person to take on Tuesday morning. If you have a car no one will buy and it's just sitting there turning into rust, the wheels and the body will return some money if you know where to take them. Just pay attention to the trash you are throwing away and you'll start to see things for yourself.

We put plenty of plastic in the trash every week, especially plastic bags that we get from the grocery store. Some people have invested in reusable grocery bags and have decided to recycle all the plastic bags they used to collect each week when they made their grocery store run.

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Everything made of paper can be recycled and made into paper again. Your children could very well be writing on paper that you used once years ago. If we could keep recycling paper, we could really cut down on the amount of new paper we would be required to make yearly.

Buy rechargeable batteries for everything that uses batteries in your home. It's far better to make the initial investment and spend a little more money one time than it is to keep replenishing a never ending supply. Follow the proper rechargeable instructions and your batteries will last as long as they possibly can.

Give your old stuff to the poor. In fact, I've even seen some very rich people shopping in the Goodwill and that's perfectly fine with me. I do it. At least, one person's trash becomes another person's treasure and that's what recycling is all about. Nothing goes to waste.

Before you buy anything new, try to find something that you can recycle yourself. At one time, it was a growing trend. I'm not sure why people don't do it more often, especially after I've learned of some very blessed individuals making money that way.

Have you ever thought of just filling your water bottles up in the sink or at a water fountain rather than throwing them away and buying new? I have several water bottles that I rotate throughout the day. I keep them full and in the refrigerator so that I always have a cold bottle of water when I need.

Learning new ways to conserve and recycle the resources we use will be very helpful in the future. I've watched people tear houses down and conserve the materials. But then, I've watched people tear houses down and throw the materials away. I know some people are thinking that there's too much work involved sometimes in recycling. But, it's worth it.

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Conserve Energy

This winter when you are heating your home, put your thermostat on 68 degrees and leave it. Put extra clothes on if you are cold. Place extra blankets on your bed. When you have your temperature set at 68 degrees, it's not cold. You won't be able to see your breath. But, it's not hot either. So, wear some sweat clothes around the house with socks on your feet. Sleep with an extra blanket and enjoy a good night's sleep knowing that you have conserved as much energy as possible to heat your home.

Window and door foam sealant is an efficient way to seal the gaps that exist from wear and tear on old windows and doors. Lock the heat inside and keep cold air outside of your home. You just may not need to wear sweats all winter.

Observe the obvious energy saving techniques. Turn lights off when you leave a room. Default to lesser lighting when you can. Turn appliances off when they are no longer in use. Keep the refrigerator door closed. Use energy saving settings on appliances that have them, like the dryer. It will dry your clothes, but stop when they are dry rather than keep going long past that point.

Rather than drive every time you get a whim to go to the store, plan all your trips before you make any at all. Know what you have to do that day and plan your trips so that you make a very conservative round trip before you park the car at home. Zipping across town to pay the electric bill and then coming back to buy some groceries only to go back across town to make the car payment is not ideal. If you have to zip across town, that's different. Think of all the things you can do along the way. Get them done. Make one run.

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Ask people you work with if you can split transportation costs. Carpooling saves you in more ways than one. Everyone pitches in for the gas and only one car gets wear and tear per week. Plus in most major cities, there is a carpool lane that lightens the highway traffic burden a bit. More people carpooling will only serve to lighten highway traffic burdens all around.

But, there are plenty of people across the nation that live within a few miles or even blocks of the place they work. Investing in a bike or running shoes will cut down considerably not only on paying for gas, but the maintenance costs throughout the year. You'll have far less new tires to purchase. Oil changes are few and far between. Complete tune-ups are needed less frequently as well. How can you lose?

That merely scratches the surface. Run searches on Google for "Going Green" or "Recycling" and "Conserving Energy" to learn the many ways that you can save money this winter. The greatest thing about going green is the fact that there are mutual benefits. You save money and you protect the environment.

There are people who have their homes completely remodeled so that they have solar energy and everything is recyclable. Their cars run on electric and they plug into an outlet at night. They use gel fuel to heat their homes because everything else pollutes the environment. This is how fanatical you can be and it is worth it to adopt some of these measures if you can afford them. Because if it's one thing I've learned about investing into "Going Green" is that it pays back entirely. Every dollar you spend now comes back to you and then you are set to keep saving money for the rest of your life. It's something worth considering, especially in this day and age with the very near and frightening future we face.