



Greening Your Home and Landscape

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Living WELL

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The Dreaded Chores!

By Karen DeBord

Whether it is taking out the trash, feeding the dog, watering the plants, or making a bed, learning to do chores correctly seems painful. When children are old enough to walk, they are old enough to start taking responsibility. Determining appropriate chores and making them fun is key!

- **2- to 3-year-olds** – Pick up toys and put them in toy box, dump small trash cans.
- **4- to 6-year-olds** – Make bed, wipe up spills, feed pets, water low-level plants, weed garden.
- **7- to 10-year-olds** – Put dishes in dishwasher, unload (most of) the dishwasher, fold clothes, take trash to the curb, help wash the car.

As children grow, they can handle more detailed jobs. Young children generally want to help and are interested in “big people” activities. They love to sweep and vacuum, set the table, and put clothes into the washer. However, retaining a list of “to do’s” in their head is unlikely.

It helps to make a chore chart. Cut out magazine pictures related to their chores. Write the chore on the chart beside its picture. List the days of the week across the top and two to three chores down the side. Hang a pencil on the chart and before you know it, they will be checking the chart to show that they picked up their toys and brushed their teeth without being reminded!

Positive praise helps. Have fun by working with them, singing, playing children’s music, and modeling good chore completion to reinforce the task and make it fun.

Karen DeBord is an Extension specialist in the Department of Family and Human Development at Virginia Tech.



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Home Weatherization and Energy Conservation

By Twandra Lomax-Brown



As warmer months approach, it is important to focus on how you can save energy and make your home comfortable during the summer. There are numerous reasons to weatherize your home — one being to reduce utility costs. Following are a few helpful hints for the home-weatherization process.

1	2	3
Seal all openings (electrical outlets, gaps in framing, windows, etc.) in the shell of your home with caulking, mastic, spray foam, or weather stripping. This allows your air conditioning to cool the house properly.	Install storm windows or use plastic household window tinting kits that can be purchased at hardware stores.	Close the damper when your fireplace is not in use. If there is no damper, cover the opening with a snug-fitting cover.
4	5	
Save money by conserving electricity. Turn off lights and unplug any items that use energy when not in use, such as coffeemakers with clocks, phone chargers, etc. Opt for devices with built-in energy-saving features. Switch to compact fluorescent bulbs or LED lighting. If possible, hang just-washed clothes to dry; fewer items in the dryer shorten drying time and electric use.	Save on water bills by turning off the water while brushing your teeth or washing dishes. Take shorter showers. Wash full loads of clothes, washing in cold water when possible, and always rinse in cold water. Repair any dripping faucets, especially if they are dripping hot water.	

Proper weatherization can ensure a cool environment in the summer. This can also reduce the cost of bills and the demand on the energy resources.

Twandra Lomax-Brown is a family and consumer sciences Extension agent in Richmond.

Greening Your Home and Landscape

By Adam Downing



Many ways to “green up” your home require expensive modifications such as solar panels, insulation, and energy-efficient appliances. All good stuff, but what can you do when the budget is tight?

Let’s start with your home. The first two of the classic three R’s — reduce, reuse, and recycle — are environmentally and economically important. Let’s consider zip-closed bags, for example. Do you simply throw these away or do you wash and reuse? It is not always popular to reuse, yet how many of us have received a gift we don’t need? Practice a little “R and R.”

Another easy action is to bump the thermostat down a degree lower than normal in winter and up a degree or two in summer. Our ancestors survived with little climate control; your body will adjust as well. The less energy you use, the less has to be produced, which reduces pollution while saving you money.

Consider your landscape. Planting a tree on the southwest side of your home that will grow big enough to shade the house can reduce air conditioning costs by up to 30 percent. This two-for-one deal saves energy and the environment.

Another way to green up your landscape is to choose native plant species. Native plants benefit everything from butterfly populations to soil health and cost no more than non-native invasive plants. If your yard is like most, it has non-native plants like English ivy, wisteria, privet bushes, and Bradford pear trees. Remove them before they spread further. These plants are green only in color, not in function.

For more information on these topics, a variety of Virginia Cooperative Extension publications are available online or from your local Extension office. Search for “energy,” “tree planting,” and “invasive” at www.pubs.ext.vt.edu.

Adam Downing is a senior agricultural and natural resources Extension agent serving Madison County.



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Welcome to Living Well

This issue of Living Well comes to you from the Family and Consumer Sciences Program of Virginia Cooperative Extension. It includes articles on keeping your spending in check, raising responsible children, greening your home on a tight budget, and home weatherization tips for warmer weather. We hope this information will help you and yours "live well."

If you have comments or suggestions about this newsletter, you can reach us at 540-231-9347, at livingwell@vt.edu, or by writing to: Editor, 115 Hutcheson Hall (0908), Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061. We would love to hear from you.

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Quick Tips to Save \$\$\$



By Glenn Sturm

Have you struggled making ends meet? Here are a few cost-cutting tips that may be new to you.

- **The way you drive can be costly.** This is true even if you never get in an accident or get a ticket. Studies by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency show that your car requires much more fuel when you accelerate forcefully. Also, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates that each 5 mph you drive faster than 60 mph is about the same as paying an additional \$0.21 per gallon for gas.
- **Avoid the minimum payments trap.** If you pay only the monthly minimum — 2 percent of the balance — on \$5,000 of credit card debt at an annual percentage rate (APR) of 18 percent, you would accumulate more than \$12,000 in interest charges, and it would take 38 years to pay it off! Pay as much of your monthly credit card debt as you can to avoid or reduce interest charges; pay the bill in full and on time, if you are able.
- **Plug spending leaks.** Little expenses can add up. For instance, spending \$8 eating out every workday instead of packing a lunch that costs \$2 will cost you an extra \$30,000 over 20 years!
- **Eat healthier.** You may think the fast-food value menu saves you money, but if it leads to obesity, it may cost you in the end. A 2006 study from the Centers for Disease Control showed that obese adults spend nearly \$1,500 more per year in medical costs than those at healthy weights.

Glenn Sturm is a family and consumer sciences Extension agent serving Gloucester County.



For more information, contact your local Extension office.

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