

# 10 easy ways to **GREEN** your **HOME**

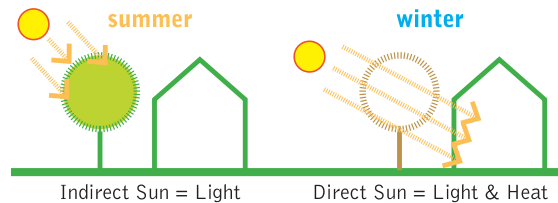
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## no. **01** Get Made in the Shade

The best way to stay cool in Summer is to block the sun -- but not the light!

Trees are shady (but in a good way). In the Summer their leafy branches block direct sun, but come Winter, sun pours through their naked limbs, warming our spaces. Need proof? Follow your cat for the sunbeam nearest you.



Awnings or operable shutters also shade direct sun, but do not obstruct your view. Think of them as parasols for your house.

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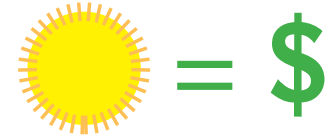
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## no. **02** 0 Solar Mio!

Richmond is blessed with good sun all year. But it's not just the flower beds that benefit, though.

Take a solar hot water heater for example. They use the sun to generate hot water, enough to augment or replace your hot water heater. Why waste energy and savings heating up a big ol' water tank when the sun can do it for you?



If you're really into Hot Stuff, see what photovoltaics (PVs, or solar panels, to regular folks) can do for your electricity bill. New slimmer profiles mount discreetly on your roof and can offset or eliminate electrical demands. Imagine sending energy back to the grid (and getting a rebate on the energy you use). Invite the neighbors over for a "Come Watch Our Electric Meter Run Backward" Party!

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## no. 03 Green Light = Good

Eureka! Here's an idea -- try these lights!

Switch over to compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs). These aren't your father's fluorescent bulbs -- their color and performance match up to the incandescent bulbs he knew. Plus, they last 8-15x longer than traditional bulbs, pay themselves off in six months, and then they keep saving you money throughout their life (see <http://www.energystar.gov>)! Edison, eat your heart out!

Tired of tripping over your stepping stones at night? Consider solar powered landscape lighting -- low in light levels, easy to install, and perfect for the begonias who still need their night light.

Sunlight is the least expensive -- and most pleasant -- light of all. Smart day lighting can reduce the need for any electric lighting at all. Correctly positioning windows will brighten your room, and your day!

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## no. 04 Go Native!

Landscape using native species -- they are hardier, require less water, and attract cute neighbors -- butterflies, birds, and the new botanist down the block (hel-lo, there).

Because native varieties evolved to flourish in these parts, say good bye to fertilizer. And all the time at the garden store. And fussing with the wheelbarrow. And the aching back...

Replace impervious surfaces with porous ones, like grass pavers, or one of a number of types of mosses (your feet will love you).

Smart-scaping minimizes runoff into the James River, a very shallow, and therefore fragile, waterway. Enjoy your new yard and make the Chesapeake Bay healthier (and your crab cakes crabbier).

<http://www.dcr.virginia.gov>  
<http://www.vnps.org>

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## no. 05 Save Water (and Cash!)

Tired of literally flushing money down the commode? Try dual flush toilets, which use water based on the task at hand -- less water for No. 1, more for No.2, but always less than standard toilets. Your toilet water consumption could drop more than 50%!

Until then, fill up a half gallon jug and place it in your toilet tank -- this minimizes the amount you flush each time -- and there's plenty of water left to do the job!

Install low-flow faucets and shower heads -- some municipalities give them away for free. Or, install aerators -- they keep your faucet output feeling strong, despite reducing the actual volume!

Augment these ideas with hot-water on demand supplies -- why bother keeping an entire tank of water hot, when you can just heat it when you need it? It's a tankless job, but someone's got to do it.

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## no. 06 Be a Draft Dodger

Just like mom used to say, “zip up your jacket, or you’ll get pneumonia,” drafts in your house lead to inefficiency and higher bills.

Improve your weatherstripping. Just a 1/32” crack (the thickness of your fingernail) around your door is like having a baseball-sized hole in the wall! Windows & doors are the big sources of thermal inefficiency. If replacing your windows is out of the question, look to seal any cracks around them.

A lot of our older homes have poor or no insulation. Check the attic and, if you do not have a conditioned crawl space or basement, under the floor. Before filling walls with batts or blown insulation, spray a layer of foam first (it seals AND insulates).

Feeling itchy just thinking about the pink stuff? There are loads of new insulation technologies, from cellulose to soybean-based non-toxic foams to recycled blue-jeans!

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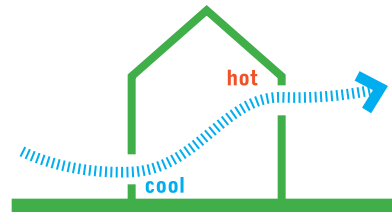
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## no. 07 Chill Out

Nothing says “Southern Living” like sleeping porches. They are great models for chilling out.

Welcome breezes into the house and you keep cool and minimize air conditioning (and the harmful refrigerants used in cooling).

Pair low windows across from high windows and you’ll naturally bring in cool air and exhaust the hot stuff -- creating an automatic breeze!



Install ceiling fans in indoor and outdoor spaces -- they’ll keep you refreshed -- and they’ll discourage mosquitoes, too!

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## no. 08 Green = Red, White & Blue

Build local! Take advantage of locally harvested, manufactured, and mined materials. A five-hundred mile radius is a good rule of thumb; for Richmond, that includes an area south to Atlanta, north to Boston, and west to Cincinnati.

Many exotic woods come from abroad and/ or are endangered. Additionally, regulations and standards for responsible harvesting may be non-existent or difficult to enforce in other countries. Look for FSC-certified woods from our region.

Try local varieties of stone -- talk to your supplier and learn which quarries are in our region. Substitute ceramic with porcelain tile -- it is stronger and it’s made here in the USA.

Building local promotes materials that minimize transport (and lessen our dependence on gasoline), and it supports local businesses and economies -- what could be more American than that?

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## no. 09 You Are What You Build

Know what goes into the harvest & manufacture of your building products. Your home is more than just shelter -- it represents us and contributes to our health and well-being.

Use FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified products -- these are harvested responsibly and sustainably. Embrace materials that don't use harmful processes and adhesives. Remember that smell from high-school biology class -- urea-formaldehyde? It is in many plywoods -- choose products free of it. How about trying some recycled paper + resin counter tops? If it's good enough for a certain ubiquitous coffeeshop empire, then...

Paints & stains typically contain VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds), dangerous pollutants which linger in high concentrations in interior environments, increasing serious health risks for your family. Choose zero VOC paints instead! To paraphrase the Rolling Stones, "Paint It, Green."

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## no. 10 Tax Day is Green Day

Your home is a huge investment. Investing in green strategies and technologies pays ecologically and financially. It's like the Warren Buffet of home improvement.

Green technologies pay for themselves -- but best of all, they keep paying you once the initial investment is recovered -- they keep saving you money, year after year after year...



Need more? How about paying fewer taxes? The IRS offers tax credits for certain green technologies (see <http://energytaxincentives.org>). From now on, April 15th sounds a lot better, doesn't it?.

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about **roberto ventura design studio**

Roberto Ventura, LEED AP, has practiced and taught sustainable design for almost a decade in Richmond and North Carolina on a variety of projects, from single family residences to healthcare to adaptive re-use. He has worked on a number of design teams which have earned awards from AIA (American Institute of Architects) Richmond and the James River Green Building Council. His work has been published and exhibited nationally via the HOME House Project sponsored by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art.

In addition to practicing design, he has also taught interior architecture at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and Virginia Commonwealth University, and he has lectured at The University of Oulu, in Finland.

He volunteers at the Virginia Center for Architecture and Habitat for Humanity, and he has been a juror for Virginia Society AIA awards. He earned a Master of Architecture from Miami University.

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