



GREEN HOME AND GARDEN TIP #7

BY GREEN HOME AND GARDEN COMMITTEE,
Texas Master Naturalist

The TCEQ (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) has initiated a "Take Care of Texas" campaign designed to involve all Texans in lifestyle and habit changes that will save the individuals a little money and at the same time help improve air and water quality, conserve water and energy, and reduce waste. We will be republishing their tips over the next few months: **Around the House** (this month), **Out and About**, **In the Yard**, **In the Kitchen**, and **In the Bathroom**. You can find more tips and information by visiting <http://www.takecareoftexas.org/do-your-part-en/>

Around the House

Turn Off the Lights

Lighting accounts for 20% of a household's annual electricity bill. By turning off lights when not needed, you can reduce your energy consumption and help reduce air emissions. Not using four 60-watt incandescent light bulbs for two hours a day can save you about \$15 a year.

Annual Savings: \$15

Adjust Your Thermostat

Using a programmable air-conditioning thermostat or simply adjusting your thermostat during overnight hours or when no one is at home can reduce your cooling and heating costs. To reduce energy consumption, set the thermostat at 78 degrees or higher in the summer, and at 68 degrees or lower in the winter.

When used properly, a programmable thermostat with four temperature settings can reduce energy consumption by 10%, saving the average household up to \$150 per year in energy costs. If all Texas households reduced their energy consumption by using a programmable thermostat, Texans could collectively save over \$1 billion annually while reducing energy consumption and air emissions.

Annual Savings: \$150

Use Compact Fluorescent Lights

[Compact fluorescent lightbulbs](#) use 67% less energy than incandescent bulbs and can last up to 10 times longer, with an average lifespan of 6,000 hours per bulb. Replacing the incandescent bulbs in your five most frequently used light fixtures with compact fluorescent can save you more than \$60 a year in electricity. If every Texas household replaced one light with a compact fluorescent, we could reduce nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions by 897 tons statewide.

Annual Savings: \$60

Upgrade Your Home Cooling and Heating System

In Texas, cooling and heating accounts for about 45% of annual home energy expenses. By using a properly sized Energy Star cooling and heating system, you can reduce your home energy consumption by 8% and help improve air quality. Collectively, we could reduce energy consumption throughout Texas by more than 16 billion kWh if all Texas households replaced their heating and cooling systems with Energy Star HVAC systems.

Annual Savings: \$120

Weatherize Your House

Using proper insulation in your home and sealing off air leaks will help maintain a comfortable indoor temperature, while reducing energy consumption and saving money. Weatherizing by using caulk and weather-stripping for seams, cracks, and openings to the outside of your home, can save you 10% on your energy bill. Properly insulating your home, in addition to weatherizing, can reduce heating and cooling costs up to 30%.

Annual Savings: \$500

The Texas Master Naturalists is a group of informed volunteers who are interested in learning about and educating others about the area of Texas where we live and with preserving our natural heritage. We are co-sponsored by the Texas Cooperative Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife. For more information about our group, log on to <http://gcmn.tamu.edu> or www.coastalprairie.org.

The Green Home and Garden Workshop is an ongoing project co-sponsored by the Gulf Coast chapter and the Coastal Prairie chapter of Texas Master Naturalists. Our mission is to interest and inform people about safe and eco-friendly ways to garden and maintain their homes. We have a workshop event once a year. The next workshop will be held on February 16, 2008.