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TREB: How to celebrate Earth Day and live green every day as a homeowner

By Mark McLean

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TREB President Mark McLean

April 22 is Earth Day! As a homeowner, there are plenty of ways you can celebrate, and the tips below represent a few great ways to live green every day. They may also make you feel better

about your environmental footprint and they may even save you money.

Plant a tree and garden smart

There are some great events around the GTA that allow you to plant trees in public parks in honour of Earth Day, but planting a tree in your own backyard could also be a great way to give back to the planet. Each year, the City of Toronto plants over 100,000 trees on public land, but the greatest availability of land to plant on is private property. According to Every Tree Counts, in order to achieve the city's goal of 40 per cent tree cover, we need to work together.

When maintaining your garden, it's worth considering keeping a rain barrel near your downspout to collect water for gardening, plant drought-tolerant plants in your garden to reduce watering, and avoid synthetic chemical pesticides.

Reduce, reuse, recycle ... and compost!

Clean out your closet by hosting a clothes swap party, or donate any unwanted clothes to a local charity, not only does this contribute to your green living, but also helps someone in need, a charitable act leaves everyone feeling great. Have clothes you want to keep? Make sure you wash them in a full load of laundry to prevent water waste, and hang them to dry whenever possible.

Did you know you can also recycle or donate your unwanted electronics? Recycling these items may prevent millions of pounds of chemicals and heavy metals from reaching the earth and our water supply.

Regardless of what room you're cleaning, it's a good idea to make composting and recycling a regular habit. You may want to consult the City of Toronto or your local municipality for a free recycling guide.

Conserve water and electricity

Turning off your faucet when you're brushing your teeth, and fixing leaky faucets and toilets may seem like small gestures, but can have a great impact. It's estimated that a dripping faucet or leaky toilet can waste hundreds of litres of water a day. Another water conservation tip? Install a low-flow showerhead and faucet aerators to prevent water waste.

Use less electricity – turn off lights and electronics when they're not in use. You may also want to consider investing in a home energy audit. Doing so could end up paying long-term dividends, as it might save you up to 30 per cent on your utility bill.

Shop and eat "green"

Visit a farmer's market. You're likely to get the freshest produce possible and you'll be supporting the local economy, it is great when you can buy local and eat organic wherever possible. An

added bonus? Your food won't have to travel thousands of miles and expend fossil fuels and carbon emissions to get to your table.

Also, it's helpful to be mindful of food waste, only buy what you can feasibly consume before a product goes bad. Don't forget to take reusable shopping bags with you wherever you go to keep plastic out of our landfills.

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