



GOING GREEN
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WAYS TO LOWER ENERGY COSTS AND CARBON FOOTPRINT

We've often been asked if greening one's home saves money and helps to save the world. Home is where the heart is, but it's also where we consume most of our energy. In fact, in the U.S., our homes are the single biggest contributor to energy consumption and carbon emissions. They typically cost more than twice as much to power than our cars (\$2,000/year for a car and \$5,000/year for a home). That's not to say that buying a new fuel-efficient car isn't going to help. But if you really want to reduce your carbon footprint and prevent the money being siphoned out of your bank account, taking a good hard look at your house is a smart place to start.

The good news is that there are some excellent solutions on the market today, with proven technologies and great financial incentives. In fact, given the great strides that have been made in solar and geothermal technologies, it is now possible to realize the dream of living in a home that requires no ongoing energy cost and produces no carbon footprint! You can actually eliminate your heating, cooling and electric bill by combining these two technologies.

With solar power, you can eliminate your electric bill and its associated contribution to global warming. Without it, the average homeowner is causing approximately 25,000 pounds of CO₂ to enter the atmosphere every year, along with sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxide, mercury, and other pollutants. Long Island already has some of the highest electric rates in the country and these rates are likely to keep rising quickly as they are closely tied to rising fossil fuel prices.

One green way to cut your heating and cooling costs is

to install a geothermal system. Basically, the system works by tapping into the stable 55 degree temperature of the ground water under your home. This relatively cool water is then easily used to cool a house through the use of forced air in the summer and can convert the 55 degree water into warmer air through a heat pump in the cold months. On its own, the geothermal system can cut your heating and cooling bills in half. And the energy a geothermal system needs can come from your solar power system, thereby making the home "zero energy."

Solar and geothermal systems are not suitable for all homes and the systems require a significant investment up front. So you need to have your home evaluated. And for those homeowners not ready to take such a big step, there are a host of smaller, very cost-effective improvements you can make in the home. Get an energy audit, replace those charming old windows that rattle in the slightest breeze, change your light bulbs to the long-lasting energy efficient ones, put insulating strips along those drafty old doors and install a new energy efficient pool pump.

So you see, you can reduce your carbon footprint and save money at the same time. Don't let anyone tell you this is not possible, or that it doesn't make financial sense.

Here, in the Going Green Column, we'll dig into greater detail on all the different ways to conserve energy and reduce your carbon footprint. Each column will cover a different green solution, including solar, geothermal, wind and pool heating choices. ●