

David Suzuki inspires people to reduce energy consumption; Green Living Show

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I just became the 310,908th person to sign up for David Suzuki's Nature Challenge (davidsuzuki.org). After hearing the conservation icon speak at Toronto's first ever Green Living Show, I was inspired. Mr. Suzuki has identified the 10 most effective ways to make a positive change, and by signing up for the challenge, I have agreed to incorporate at least three of them into my own lifestyle. His goal is to get one million people to join the challenge. "I want to create sustainability within a generation," Mr. Suzuki says. And of course, if he can get one million people to say living green is important to them, well, that sends a powerful message to government.

Reducing energy consumption in the home is an easy place to start. It can be as simple as changing the time of day you wash clothes and do the dishes. "Limit high-energy appliance use early in the morning and in the early evening," says Mazyar Mortazavi, a principal at TAS Designbuild. "When the demand goes up, it has a doubling effect on the power grid." Limiting consumption to off hours can also save you money. Energy is more expensive during peak hours.

Here are the three nature commandments I've agreed to follow in my home and some tips I picked up at the Green Living Show to start my environmental makeover.

REDUCE HOME ENERGY BY 10%

I had my home efficiency tested by Green\$aver (greensaver.org) and made steps to reduce energy loss such as caulking windows and other drafty areas. Or check out EnWise Power Solutions (enwisepower.com), a new company that not only tests the efficiency of your home but actually seals up the leaks from basement walls to the ceiling. "For \$2,000 to \$2,500, you can have an audit and energy report done, plus have most of the leakage problems solved," says Rob Dies, a sales associate with EnWise. Heating and cooling our homes accounts for roughly 44% of the energy we use at home. Reducing leaks and drafts drastically reduces your home's overall energy costs.

CHOOSE AN ENERGY EFFICIENT HOME AND APPLIANCES

"Look to see if your builder or developer is a member

of a green building council," says Mr. Mortazavi. TAS Designbuild recently completed the M5V Condominiums at King and Spadina. The building is among the first in Toronto to be eligible for LEED certification by meeting numerous criteria for sustainability. The M5V building recycles rainwater to use in the toilets and to water the plants on the terraces. Small details such as six-foot-deep terraces act as a shading device in the summer to limit air conditioning use. The building also uses heat recovery ventilators (HRV) to bring fresh air directly into condos. "Traditionally in condos the air is directed to the halls and then to the apartments," says Mr. Mortazavi. HRVs save energy but they also improve air quality. "You don't get food smells from other people's apartments with this ventilation system."

Although these are largescale changes, many energy saving TAS Designbuild ideas can be used in anyone's home. Maximize natural day lighting by inserting sky lights and other energy-efficient windows. Use compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs or light-emitting diodes (LED) instead of traditional bulbs. "Motion sensors also make a big difference," says Mr. Mortazavi. Use them outside and in rooms that aren't used often so you don't walk out and forget to turn off the lights. Also look at the quality of finishes. All paints, stains, adhesives and carpets should be low VOC. Lastly, choose energy efficient appliances. "Look for the Energy Star in everything you buy," says Mr. Mortazavi.

STOP USING PESTICIDES

You can start indoors by using environmentally safe cleaning products. Universal Stone (available at Jolanta Interiors, 2368 Bloor St. W.) is a multi-purpose all-natural cleaning product that will cover most of your at-home cleaning needs. It has only six natural ingredients and is free of chemicals and acids. Eco Mist (ecomistsolutions.com) is another all-natural line of cleaning products made with corn, tree sap, coconut extract, sugar cane and water. The six-product line cleans just about everything in your home.

To eliminate pesticides outdoors, try Woop organic soil booster (shop@evergreen.ca) which relies on worm poop to naturally rejuvenate the soil. And Wildflower farm's Eco-lawn (wildflowerfarm.com) is

a low maintenance lawn that requires no fertilizers or chemicals and minimal watering.