

# How to ... go green at home while renting

We can think of quite a few crummy things about renting: battling crowds of other renters on your precious Saturday mornings; grovelling to estate agents and landlords; sprucing up characterless backyards; and tackling bathrooms with too much character.

But the main bummer about renting is most definitely not being able to do what you want with the place that you live in. And this certainly applies to those of us with green-living aspirations.



But a lease doesn't need spell green doom. Even though the law doesn't allow renters to make any permanent changes to their property without the permission of the landlord, there are heaps of things renters can do to live green.

## Here are some of the basics:

- \* **Be energy efficient.** Purchase the highest percentage certified GreenPower you can afford.
- \* **Switch all your globes** (where possible) to energy-efficient LED light bulbs. You could replace them with standard compact fluorescents when you move. If you're moving in someplace with lights that you can't replace, consider a "mood" lighting option: use strategically placed lamps whose bulbs can be updated and save the ceiling lights for the occasions when you really need them.
- \* **Blackout curtains** (thick curtains that block all light) are also a great idea for any windows on your property – they'll keep you warmer in winter and keep the hot stuff out in summer. Brilliant for hangovers too. They're easy to make, or just scour the op-shops and you'll be sure to find them. Just make sure you keep any blinds or other coverings you remove so you can swap them back before you leave.
- \* **Plant a veggie garden in pots!** We've had great success with things like carrots, broccoli, eggplants, lettuce, spring onions, tomatoes and even potatoes in pots in our little yard. And don't forget the herbs! They'll grow indoors and out.
- \* **Invest in a worm farm.** So a compost bin is pretty much a permanent fixture but worm bins can be moved around. If you're in a flat, go for a Bokashi Bin. They are small, effective and won't pong out your kitchen.
- \* **Single-flush loos** are a huge water waster, but can easily be converted for greater water-efficiency. Check your local hardware store for gadgets that will change the toilet's mechanism to reduce flush time. The less DIY-inclined can simply place filled 600 ml plastic bottles or a brick in the toilet cistern

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to save water flushed. If it's yellow let it mellow if it's brown flush it down (with a half flush).

\* **Plastic tubs in the shower and the sink** are good for watering the garden; though maybe keep away from the veggies. If you've got more than what your own garden needs, why not help out the often overlooked street trees?

\* **While you might not be able to install new showerheads**, you can pick up flow restrictors or tap aerators for around a dollar from your local hardware store.

\* **You probably can't replace your conventional hot water heater**, but you can make it more energy efficient by insulating it effectively. Why not wrap outlet pipes in an old towel held in place with tape, or if you can afford it, buy an insulating wrap for between \$60 and \$100 (check your local hardware).

\* **Green your appliances:** when your own appliances need replacing, opt for a greener replacement. Also, make sure your current working appliances are running smoothly: check the seals on your fridge and oven, and make sure heaters and air-cons are running smoothly.

\* **Upon moving into a new joint**, there is always the temptation to acquire new furnishings to suit the look of the place. Resist where you can, or try simple, more eco versions of updating: experiment with new cushions, or mood lighting, or homemade curtains. Check out the local opp shops too.

\* **Anytime anything in your house needs replacing**, ask your landlord to consider a greener option. Likewise, if you've been living in your house for a long time, don't be afraid to ask your landlord about some long-term solutions such as solar-hot water or rainwater tanks. You would offer some of your own time or cash to make the deal sweeter for them; as with everything though, just make sure you get their permission in writing in case there's a problem later.

## Other links:

Green Renters

<http://www.greenrenters.org/>

How to live green while renting (G Magazine)

<http://www.gmagazine.com.au/features/1070/how-live-green-a-rental-home?page=0%2C0>

The Victorian Green Renters' Guide: Sustainable Living Tips for Renters

<http://www.environmentvictoria.org.au/rentersguide>



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