



# Green Living Myth Busters

*Think you know everything about green living? Think again. Below are some common green living myths and the truths behind the tales.*

**Myth: Climate change won't affect Chicago.**

**Truth:** Since 1980, Chicago's average temperature has increased approximately 2.6 degrees. Our current trajectory poses risks to our economy and health. The most obvious change to come could be hotter summers and more frequent and intense heat waves. Hot days could feel even hotter because of higher humidity. More heat waves will mean more heat-related illness and deterioration in the quality of air we breathe. Heavy rains and snow could become more frequent in winter and spring. Chicago's native ecosystems could change, too. Chicago's plant hardiness zone has already shifted to that of central Illinois in 1990. If left unchecked, climate changes could make our plant hardiness zone equivalent to that of northern Alabama by the end of the century.

**Myth: All greenhouse gases occur naturally.**

**Truth:** Some greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide occur naturally and are emitted into the atmosphere through natural processes and human activities. Other greenhouse gases (e.g., fluorinated gases) are created and emitted solely through human activities.

**Myth: It doesn't matter how much we conserve because unchecked population growth is going to destroy the Earth's resources anyway.**

**Truth:** According to the UN, the Earth's population is expected to level off between 9 and 11 billion around 2050. With fears of uncontrolled population growth abating, we still need to figure out how to sustainably support 2.3 to 4.3 billion more people on our planet.

**Myth: Outdoor air quality is worse than indoor air quality.**

**Truth:** The EPA estimates that pollutant levels can be 2-5 times higher *indoors* than outdoors. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, the problem is compounded by lack of natural ventilation, and the fact that the average American spends 85 - 95% of their time indoors.

**Myth: Using water does not waste energy.**

**Truth:** When using water, consider how it is transported to you. Energy is expended in processing and pumping the water, as well as heating. Running hot tap water for five minutes is equivalent to burning a 60-watt light bulb for 14 hours!

**Myth: CFLs are bad because they contain mercury.**

**Truth:** Compact fluorescent light bulbs do contain mercury--but the small amount is sealed in glass tubing, and is not released when the bulb is turned on. The amount of mercury in CFLs would fit on the tip of a ballpoint pen, and it would take 100 CFLs to equal the amount of mercury in older thermometers. Coal-burning power plants are the largest human-caused source of mercury emissions to the air in the US, accounting for over 40 percent of all domestic human-caused mercury emissions. Energy-wise, CFLs save 75% more energy than regular bulbs. Cleanup of broken CFLs does require a certain amount of precaution. You can find a comprehensive guide to cleaning broken CFLs at the Energy Star™ website.

Sources: Fresh Squeeze, Green Myths - [www.afreshsqueeze.com/chicago/articles/top-10-green-myths-part-1](http://www.afreshsqueeze.com/chicago/articles/top-10-green-myths-part-1)  
Chicago Climate Action Plan - [www.chicagoclimateaction.org](http://www.chicagoclimateaction.org)



## Green Living Tips and Resources

*Living a green lifestyle is easy, and it's good for you and the planet. Here are some easy green living tips that make a difference.*

### Water

- ❖ Cut **2 minutes** off your shower time.
- ❖ Use a **low flow** shower head.
- ❖ **Turn off water** while brushing, shaving, and washing dishes.
- ❖ Fix **leaky** faucets.
- ❖ Install a **rain barrel** to reduce basement flooding and reuse rainwater to nourish your plants.

### Waste

- ❖ **Think** before you throw – how can it be used again? Get creative.
- ❖ If you can't reuse the item, see if it can be **recycled**.
- ❖ Use **reusable** bags, water bottles, mugs, and containers.
- ❖ **Compost** your food scraps and yard waste.
- ❖ Opt for using and sending documents **electronically** instead of printing.
- ❖ If printing, try to **reuse** single-sided paper or print **double-sided**.

### Energy

- ❖ Buy **local** products that have not traveled long distances to get to you.
- ❖ Use **CFL** light bulbs.
- ❖ Adjust your thermostat by **two degrees**.
- ❖ Invest in **Energy Star™** products.
- ❖ Launder clothes in **cold water**.
- ❖ Use a **powerstrip** to cut wasted energy use.

### Air

- ❖ Use **biking, walking, or public transit** for transportation.
- ❖ If driving, **avoid vehicular idling** and try **carpooling**.
- ❖ Use **green cleaners** that are less harmful to indoor air quality.



### ***What resources are available in Chicago?***

- ❖ The **Chicago Conservation Corps** leads a volunteer environmental training program for Chicago residents as well as a student environmental clubs program for Chicago Public School teachers and students. Learn more, including information about C3 partner organizations and volunteer opportunities, on the C3 website: [www.chicagoconservationcorps.org](http://www.chicagoconservationcorps.org) or call 311.
- ❖ The **City of Chicago Department of Environment's** website hosts a lot of information on Chicago-based initiatives that engage and educate residents on environmental issues including climate change, city-wide recycling, and stormwater management. There is also information about the **Chicago Center for Green Technology**, the most comprehensive green design and educational resource in the Midwest. To learn more, visit [www.cityofchicago.org/Environment](http://www.cityofchicago.org/Environment) or call 311.
- ❖ The **Chicago Climate Action Plan** details steps for organizations of all kinds and suggests actions for every individual. As new technologies and options emerge, actions may change. The goal, however, remains the same: achieve an 80 percent reduction below its 1990 greenhouse gas emissions level by the year 2050 in order to do our part to avoid the worst global impacts of climate change. For more information, visit [www.chicagoclimateaction.org](http://www.chicagoclimateaction.org) or call 311.