

Cold Weather Sustainability

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The cold weather and shorter days, while making us bundle up and stay inside more often, does not mean that our environmental goals need to be swept aside. There are several ways that you can live more environmentally friendly during the Fall and Winter months.

A properly winterized house can help you lower your energy usage and costs. The addition of insulation, caulking, and weatherstripping can drastically cut your bills. Insulation should be installed behind electric outlets and switch plate covers. Also, make sure that windows are caulked and weatherstripped. Don't forget to check exterior doors for air leaks. This can be tested by placing a piece of paper between the door and the frame and shutting it. If you can pull the paper out without tearing it, you need to weatherstrip around the door. Seal off unused rooms that do not have thermostats by shutting doors and closing off the floor or wall registers and return vents. Seal ductwork and make sure that attics, crawl spaces, floors, and roofs are also well insulated.

Installing a programmable thermostat can also help with your bills. The longer your house remains at a lower temperature, the more in heating costs will be saved. For every 5°F you set back your thermostat, 5 to 15% is saved in costs depending on how long the temperature is lowered. The recommended winter setting is 68°F while you are at home and 55°F when you are away. Most programmable thermostats can also be timed to wake and sleep temperatures as well. So, if you take the time to program your thermostat correctly, you will not be cold when you wake in the morning.

One of the easiest and, perhaps, least noticed energy losses are from dirty filters. Dirty filters can increase energy usage through restricted airflow. Make sure to check them regularly and replace them as needed.

Additionally, pay close attention to your water heater. If necessary, drain hot water from your water heater to eliminate sediment that can interfere with the heater's long term use. Of course, you may also save money by taking shorter showers and reducing the hot water temperature in your water heater. It is suggested that the water heater should be set at 120 degrees, unless the manufacturer indicates a higher temperature. Install low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators to reduce the amount of hot water used.

Other ways to be more sustainable in the fall and winter is to, of course, continue to recycle. In Henderson County, all metal cans, glass bottles, plastic bottles, and paper is recyclable (with the exception of waxy paper or paper with food waste). The Stoney Mountain Recycling Center also has the added bonus of a bag for bag program. A bag of residential garbage may be brought in free of charge with equal or more amounts of recycling. Other recyclable items include used cooking oil, motor oil, antifreeze, metal appliances, batteries, and electronics. As a way of celebrating fall recycling, America Recycles Day is being held November 15th at the Stoney Mountain Recycling. Forty-five lucky recyclers will receive a \$25 gift certificate from Harris Teeter.

Finally, do not forget, even though it may be getting cold, there are still local vegetables. Eating locally, in many cases, is more sustainable than buying food from miles away, wasting valuable fuel and resources. Buying local also helps to maintain the Henderson County farming economy. Winter squash, potatoes, beets, and winter greens are still available. All year long proteins such as local meat, cheese, and eggs can still be obtained. Please note that the Curb Market and the Hendersonville Tailgate Market are still operating. Pick up your winter squash and a loaf of fresh made bread to complement your holiday meals. For more information on local foods, you may download the Appalachian Sustainable Agricultural Project's (ASAP) monthly seasonable calendar at <http://www.asapconnections.org/seasonalproduce.pdf>.

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