

With Spring comes the annual ritual of Spring cleaning. In that spirit, this “Spring Greening” checklist will help you not just clean up—but green up your space to enjoy healthy, sustainable, and money saving Spring and Summer seasons.

Energy Cleaning

- Clean your **fridge’s coils** and your clothes **dryer vent** to maximize their efficiency and cost savings. A **LintEater** tool will help.
- Monitor your electricity usage with your **PowerCost Monitor**—which tracks moment-by-moment how much electricity your entire home is using and money you’re spending—and your **Kill-A-Watt meter**—which tracks how much electricity individual plug-in items are consuming when they’re turned on and turned off. You’ll be surprised at the results. Armed with this information, make adjustments to turn things off, make new habits, and bask in the savings.
- Kill vampire loads:** keep charging cords (for cell phones, batteries, toothbrushes, etc.) unplugged whenever not in use; use a **Smart Strip** power strip to turn off electronics automatically for you (TV, cable box, DVD, VCR, game boxes, PC, monitor, etc.).
- Install occupancy sensor switches to help control the lights in playrooms and bedrooms. Still haven’t **installed CFL or LED lights** around the entire house? Now is a great time.
- Reprogram your **thermostat** for summer settings. Optimally, set it to 74-78°F when people are at home (early morning, evening) and bump it up 2-4°F when you’re asleep and when the house is usually empty. The average house will save 2% for every degree you can raise the temp. While on vacation set it higher (80°F).
- Replace your **HVAC’s air filter**. If the A/C runs regularly, you should change the filter at least every 3 months. With heavy use, change it monthly. And look for a high-quality filter, minimum MERV 8, to better filter more allergens, dust, and dirt.
- Get your air conditioning system its annual tune-up. Make sure your attic, walls, and windows are adequately insulated AND air sealed. Straw foam, rope caulk, low-VOC Titebond Weathermaster caulk, and door strips are very useful tools. An attic radiant barrier might also be helpful.
- Set your **ceiling fans to the cool setting**—so the blades go clockwise. This will help cycle cooler air up and around the room. But—like lights—you don’t need to keep fans on in empty rooms; they do the job almost immediately when turned on.
- Set up your **dehumidifier**. By sucking out much of the humid vapor, your space will feel cooler and more comfy, allowing you to run the A/C less—and modern dehumidifiers cost less to operate than A/C units (and help to control mold & mildew).
- Take every opportunity to use **passive ventilation**—open windows and screen doors to circulate air through your home. Keeping the windows open overnight allows daytime hot air to escape and lowers indoor temps ahead of the next day.
- If the downstairs of your home is cooler than upstairs, **turn on the fan on your thermostat** (not the A/C) to cycle the cooler downstairs air to the upstairs. The fan uses much less electricity than your A/C—and is probably quieter.
- On hot days, keep south and west facing windows covered with window coverings to block out the sun.

Outdoors

- Late March: lay pre-emergent **natural herbicide** (such as corn gluten) to prevent weeds from sprouting later in the Spring.
- After the Freeze season (probably mid-April): **Set up your rainbarrel** to collect rainwater from your downspouts. For irrigation when it starts to dry out, **our soaker hoses (made from recycled tires)** are designed to work with low water pressure and drizzle around your plants.
- Clean out gutters.
- Think twice about buying mulch:** how about using your compost instead? Finished compost has a mild, sweet odor, is dark-colored, easy to spread, and provides nutrition for your plants. No compost? Start a batch with our **Envirocycle Compost Bin**.
- Shrubs damaged by snow?** If they are invasive, now is a great time to remove them. Not sure if you have invasives? Send us photos and descriptions to toni@gracefullygreen.com.
- Spruce up your deck, patio and siding with a good cleaning.** Our **EBC2 All Natural Exterior Surface Cleaner** is 100% biodegradable, pineapple-based, and not hard on your plants like other cleaners.
- If you need to **refinish your deck**, our new Vermont Naturals Exterior finish or Acri-Soy protect the wood as well as its occupants and surroundings.
- Spray your yard, garden, and areas with standing water with **Mosquito Barrier** (garlic juice) to fight mosquito infestations. It really works! Depending on rain patterns, you’ll probably need to repeat this monthly through early Autumn.
- Enjoy the fruits of your **compost bin:** spread that fertile soil and compost tea to naturally grow your garden.

Cleaners

- Got ants? Stock up with some **Orange Guard** (natural orange extract) to kill the buggers.
- Clean out your pantry of “old conventional” cleaners and replace with all-natural, healthy “green” options for your all-purpose cleaning, kitchen, bath, glass, dusting spray, laundry, etc.
- Like to clean your car? Pick up some **Eco-Touch waterless car wash**.
- Check your stock of **rechargeable batteries and chargers** for the games, car trips, vacations, and pool toys. Try to ditch the disposable one-time use alkaline batteries as much as possible.
- If you’ve collected old burned-out CFLs or rechargeable batteries, don’t throw them out. **Recycle them at Amicus.**