

Contents at a Glance

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: Green Living</i>	7
Chapter 1: The World’s Gone Green!.....	9
Chapter 2: Reducing, Reusing, and Recycling.....	25
Chapter 3: Making Great Green Diet Decisions.....	45
Chapter 4: Setting Your Kids on the Path to a Green Lifestyle.....	65
Chapter 5: Keeping Your Home Healthy.....	77
<i>Part II: Energy Efficiency</i>	89
Chapter 1: Taking Stock of Your Energy Efficiency and Use.....	91
Chapter 2: Sealing and Insulating Your Home.....	111
Chapter 3: Maximizing Your Heating and Air-Conditioning System.....	127
Chapter 4: Lighting Your Home More Efficiently.....	141
Chapter 5: Increasing Your Water Efficiency.....	153
Chapter 6: Taking Control of Appliances and Electronics.....	167
Chapter 7: Controlling Solar Exposure for Light and Heat.....	185
<i>Part III: Green Cleaning</i>	197
Chapter 1: Bringing “Green” to “Clean” for a Healthier Home.....	199
Chapter 2: Building an Arsenal of Green Cleaning Tools.....	221
Chapter 3: Mixing Up Your Own Green Cleaning Solutions.....	233
Chapter 4: Making Green Work of Laundry.....	251
Chapter 5: Bringing Kitchens and Baths to a Green-Clean Sheen.....	259
Chapter 6: Working Outside In for a Clean and Green Home.....	277
<i>Part IV: Green Remodeling</i>	293
Chapter 1: Thinking Sustainability When You Remodel.....	295
Chapter 2: Thinking about Building Materials in New Ways.....	311
Chapter 3: Green Finish and Construction Materials.....	329
Chapter 4: Exploring Options for Heating and Cooling Systems.....	353

<i>Part V: Sustainable Landscaping</i>	367
Chapter 1: Pursuing a Smart, Sustainable Landscape.....	369
Chapter 2: Making Sustainable Decisions for Your Landscape Design.....	383
Chapter 3: Hardscaping: Beauty and Function from Patios, Walls, and More	399
Chapter 4: Selecting Plants for a Sustainable Landscape.....	419
Chapter 5: Finding Greener Ways to Work Around (or with) Lawns	443
<i>Part VI: Organic Gardening</i>	455
Chapter 1: Sowing the Seeds of Organic Gardening.....	457
Chapter 2: Improving Your Soil and Feeding Your Plants Organically.....	465
Chapter 3: Controlling Weeds, Pests, and Disease.....	487
Chapter 4: Raising Organic Vegetables and Herbs.....	521
Chapter 5: Finding Organic Success with Fruit.....	553
<i>Part VII: Solar Power</i>	581
Chapter 1: Soaking Up the Pluses and Minuses of Solar Power.....	583
Chapter 2: Preparing for a Switch to Solar	593
Chapter 3: Jumping In to Small Projects with Big Results.....	611
Chapter 4: Financing Your Solar Investments.....	623
<i>Index</i>	639

Table of Contents

.....

<i>Introduction</i>	1
About This Book.....	1
Conventions Used in This Book.....	2
What You're Not to Read.....	2
Foolish Assumptions.....	2
How This Book Is Organized.....	3
Book I: Green Living.....	3
Book II: Energy Efficiency.....	3
Book III: Green Cleaning.....	3
Book IV: Green Remodeling.....	4
Book V: Sustainable Landscaping.....	4
Book VI: Organic Gardening.....	4
Book VII: Solar Power.....	4
Icons Used in This Book.....	5
Where to Go from Here.....	5

Book 1: Green Living..... **7**

Chapter 1: The World's Gone Green! **9**

Understanding the Impact of Your Choices.....	9
Climate change: A sign of changing times.....	11
Mother Nature and the law of supply and demand.....	11
Pondering pollution's impact.....	12
Making the Move toward a Sustainable Lifestyle.....	12
Changing what you can as you can.....	13
Adopting the four primary green strategies.....	13
Taking those first small steps.....	14
Turning green choices into habits around your home.....	15
Shopping greenly and ethically.....	16
Finding Chemicals Where You'd Rather Not.....	16
In the air.....	16
In foods.....	18
In products.....	19
Taking Care of the Community Outside Your Door.....	20
Looking Forward: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally.....	22

Chapter 2: Reducing, Reusing, and Recycling **25**

Cutting Back Consumption and Aiming for Zero Waste.....	26
Buy less.....	26
Be mindful of packaging.....	26



Lengthening the Life of Your Possessions	28
Reusing and repurposing.....	29
Recycling.....	30
Turning Your Garbage into Someone Else’s Gold	35
Deciding what others may want	35
Giving away your goods.....	36
Cashing in on unwanted items.....	38
Disposing of Electronic Goods.....	40
Leveling the cellphone mountain	40
Getting rid of computers.....	41
Dealing with old televisions.....	42
Disposing of an older vehicle	42
Chapter 3: Making Great Green Diet Decisions	45
The Big Question: Is Vegetarianism Essential for Green Living?.....	46
Choosing Your Food Source Wisely	47
Your best bet: Buying locally	47
Finding Fairtrade food.....	50
Growing your own — at home or in a community garden	51
Getting a Grip on Organic.....	52
Avoiding chemicals and unnecessary medicines	53
Letting nature govern production: Say no to genetic modification!.....	54
Freedom rules for organic livestock.....	58
Fishing for sustainable varieties	58
Reading Labels to Apply Green Ideals	60
Finding food with good nutritional value and ethical production...	60
Looking for organic and more on labels	61
Failsafe ways to buy locally when labels are unclear	63
Chapter 4: Setting Your Kids on the Path to a Green Lifestyle.	65
Greening Your Baby	65
Equipping the green nursery.....	66
Choosing cloth versus disposable diapers.....	68
Instilling Green Values at Home.....	70
Starting kids young with green behaviors and activities.....	70
Finding green toys	72
Involving children in green choices	73
Staying Green through the School Year	74
Walking or biking to school.....	74
Setting up a carpool.....	75
Stocking up on green school supplies.....	75
Chapter 5: Keeping Your Home Healthy	77
Getting Started with General Guidelines	77
Avoiding Some of the Worst Offenders	78
Fighting off formaldehyde.....	78
Vanquishing Volatile Organic Compounds.....	79
Eschewing asbestos.....	82

Burning Up with Combustion Products..... 83
 Beating Back Natural Hazards 84
 Slipping through the cracks: Radon 84
 Operating in secret: Biological agents 85
 Finding Easy Decluttering Tips to Improve Your Home’s Health..... 87

Book II: Energy Efficiency..... 89

Chapter 1: Taking Stock of Your Energy Efficiency and Use 91

Getting a Handle on Your Energy Usage..... 91
 Focusing on your own home sweet home 92
 Other things to think about 95
 Figuring Out What You Spend..... 96
 Collecting the data..... 96
 Plotting the details, month by month 98
 Keeping Up with the Joneses: A Real-Life Scenario..... 99
 Calculating Your Own Carbon Footprint 103
 Auditing Your Home to Find Areas for Improvement 104
 Grunting it out: The inspection..... 105
 Hiring professional auditors..... 108

Chapter 2: Sealing and Insulating Your Home 111

Finding Leaks 111
 Looking for cracks in your home 112
 Performing a pressure test to find air leaks 112
 Finding attic air leaks 114
 Fixing the Leaks You Find..... 116
 Weatherstripping 116
 Expandable foam sealant 117
 Caulking your way to Nirvana 118
 Inspecting and Repairing HVAC Ducts..... 119
 Insulating Your Home 120
 Types of insulation 120
 Checking and fixing your home’s insulation 122
 Tips for applying insulation..... 123
 Working with Windows 125

Chapter 3: Maximizing Your Heating and Air-Conditioning System. 127

Understanding Human Comfort..... 127
 Getting air moving 128
 Helping or hindering: Humidity 129
 Capitalizing on the chimney effect 130
 Going for the greenhouse effect..... 131
 Making more small changes for even bigger benefits 131

Solving Some of the Most Common Inefficiency Problems.....	133
Restoring air flow.....	133
Repositioning the thermostat.....	134
When Your HVAC's on the Blink.....	135
What to check before you call a repairman.....	135
Symptoms that call for a pro.....	136
Buying a New System or Supplementing the One You Have.....	137
Hiring an HVAC Contractor.....	138
Getting and comparing bids.....	138
Sealing the deal.....	139
Working with a contractor after the job begins.....	140
Chapter 4: Lighting Your Home More Efficiently	141
Picking the Right Light: Your Options.....	141
Natural light.....	142
Old-fashioned incandescent bulbs.....	143
Halogen bulbs.....	143
Flickering fluorescent bulbs.....	144
Light-emitting diodes.....	145
Calculating How Much You Can Save.....	147
Using Clever Switches to Reduce Your Bill.....	149
Motion detectors.....	149
Dimmer switches.....	150
Whole-house lighting controllers.....	151
Chapter 5: Increasing Your Water Efficiency	153
Drinking to Your Health.....	153
Wading through a flood of choices:	
Tap, well, bottled, and purified.....	154
Getting the goods on suspicious water.....	156
Purifying your drinking water.....	157
Directing the Flow of Traffic with Faucets.....	159
Leaks: Money and energy down the drain.....	159
A few more tips for using water wisely.....	161
Savings in Showers and Baths.....	161
Wasting Water in the Toilet.....	162
What to do when your toilet runs.....	163
Updated toilet designs.....	163
Watering Your Landscaping.....	164
Considering lawn alternatives.....	164
Picking the right sprinkler and watering at the right time.....	165
Chapter 6: Taking Control of Appliances and Electronics	167
Looking at Typical Appliance Consumption Numbers.....	167
Analyzing Appliance Consumption in Your Home.....	169

Keeping Water Heaters in Check..... 171
 Paying attention to pipes 171
 Staying on top of maintenance..... 171
 Finding more ways to save 172
 Considering a solar or tankless water heater 173
 Washing and Drying without the Crying..... 174
 Running hot or cold: Changing water temperature..... 174
 Adjusting load size, water level, and cycle..... 175
 Saving drying costs..... 175
 Keeping Your Cool with Refrigerators 177
 It's what's on the inside that counts 177
 Close the door! 178
 One refrigerator or two? 178
 Lessening the Load on Your Dishwasher 178
 Using less hot water 179
 Changing the way you rinse and load 179
 Eating Up Power with Stoves and Microwaves..... 180
 Checking out efficient ovens 180
 Altering your cooking techniques 180
 Enjoying the Fine Life with TVs and Computers 181
 Buying New Appliances 182

Chapter 7: Controlling Solar Exposure for Light and Heat 185

Lighting Your Home with Sunshine..... 185
 Planting a tree 186
 Making natural light more effective..... 186
 Installing skylights 187
 Opting for solar tubes 187
 Heating Your Home with Sunlight — or Not 188
 Installing blinds and sunscreens 189
 Covering your windows with exterior awnings 192
 Installing outdoor window blinds..... 192
 Putting up radiant barriers..... 193
 Cutting out summer sunlight with overhangs..... 193
 Garnering Sunlight with Greenhouses and Sunrooms..... 194
 Deciding between the different types of solar rooms..... 194
 Building a solar room yourself..... 195

***Book III: Green Cleaning*..... 197**

Chapter 1: Bringing “Green” to “Clean” for a Healthier Home 199

Waking Up to a New Awareness 199
 Ramping up to a greener clean 200
 Finding benefits close to home 200
 Looking into greener practices 201
 Formulating a new green clean 202

Warning: Disinfecting May Be Hazardous to the Planet	203
Outing indoor pollution	203
Breathing easier with greener cleaning	204
Getting into Hot Water	204
Throwing money down the drain	205
Heating up the debate	205
Reducing the water pressure	206
Is Your Home Making You Sick?	206
Factors in poor indoor air quality	207
Dander and dust mites and mold — oh, my!	208
Chasing down chemical contaminants	209
Home Safe Home: Green Solutions to the Rescue	212
Counting the Cost of Cleaning Green	212
Shopping for green cleaners	213
Considering your time investment	213
Reducing the Need to Clean	214
Leaving your shoes at the door	214
Wear it again, Sam	215
Preventive maintenance	215
Tidy up as you go	216
A Lean-and-Mean Plan for Getting the House Clean	217
A practical sequence	217
A surefire spring cleaning strategy	218
Seeking Professional Help	219

Chapter 2: Building an Arsenal of Green Cleaning Tools 221

Greening Your Cleaning Closet	221
Tackling dirty jobs: Cleaning cloths	222
Shredding the use of paper towels	224
An absorbing issue: Sponges	225
Brushing up on other cleaning tools	226
Trashing plastic bags	228
Plugging in Green Gadgets	229
A clean sweep of vacuum cleaners	229
Heating things up: Steam cleaners	230
Sniffing Out Room Fresheners	231

Chapter 3: Mixing Up Your Own Green Cleaning Solutions 233

Beginning with the Basics: Elbow Grease and Water	234
Gathering Your Ingredients	235
Neutralizing with acids or alkalines	235
Lathering up with soaps and oils	236
Singling out two top workhorses	237
Cleaning Up with Basic Formulas	238
Do-it-all cleaners	238
Tile and vinyl floor cleaner	239
Linoleum floor cleaner	239
Window, glass, and mirror cleaner	240

Polishing Wood Furniture, Floors, and Collectibles 240
 Dust buster for collectibles 240
 Hardwood floor cleaner 241
 Wood furniture polish 241
 Rolling Out the Carpet Cleaner 241
 Keeping Food Surfaces Clean 242
 Oven and stovetop cleaners 242
 Cleaners for cookware 243
 Cleaning metals and silverware 244
 Tackling Water-Challenged Areas 244
 Battling mold, mildew, and other buildup 245
 Removing soap scum, water stains, and lime
 and mineral deposits 245
 Flushing away dirt and germs 245
 Cleaning and Unclogging Drains 246
 Drain cleaner 246
 Drain declogger 246
 A Laundry List of Solutions 246
 See spot run 247
 Freshening clothes 247
 Laundering 248
 Cleaning Up the Odds and Ends 249

Chapter 4: Making Green Work of Laundry 251

Giving Your Appliances a Break 251
 Hand-washing small loads 251
 Wash and wear (and wear and wear) 252
 Line-drying, inside and out 253
 Making Sense of Laundry Products 254
 Zeroing in on green alternatives 254
 Getting soft on laundry 254
 Material Matters 255
 Preparing clothes for the wash 255
 Removing stains 256

Chapter 5: Bringing Kitchens and Baths to a Green-Clean Sheen 259

Handling Food Properly 259
 Fighting food contamination without chemicals 260
 Keeping cutting boards germ-free 261
 Doing the Dishes 261
 The pros and cons of automatic dishwashers 261
 Doing dishes by hand 262
 Getting Down to Clean Floors 263
 Cleaning Kitchen Surfaces: From Sink to Stove and Beyond 264
 Scrubbing (gently) the sink 264
 Attending to faucets, drains, and disposals 265
 Bringing on the counter revolution 265
 Hot tips for cleaning stoves 266

The Ins and Outs of Refrigerator Cleaning	267
A cleaning tip to reduce your utility bill	267
Purging and cleaning the fridge	267
Keeping Small Appliances Clean.....	268
Getting Wise to Preemptive Practices in Bathrooms.....	269
Diving into the no-flush policy debate	269
Spending 20 seconds on your hands	269
Running the fan	270
Cleaning the Bath from Top to Bottom.....	271
Choosing safe, effective cleaning formulas	271
Gathering the best cleaning tools.....	271
Taking a look at the mirror.....	272
Bringing sparkle to the sink.....	272
Rubbing the tub and scouring the shower	273
Toilet talk.....	274
Getting to the bottom of floor cleaning.....	275

Chapter 6: Working Outside In for a Clean and Green Home 277

Making a Green Entrance.....	277
Crossing the energy threshold: Doors	278
Putting out the welcome mat	278
Rolling Out the Green Carpet.....	279
Calling pests and pets on the carpet.....	279
Cleaning and caring for carpeting.....	280
Upholstery: The Great Furniture Coverup	282
Zen and the Art of Dusting	282
Walking the labyrinth of dusting.....	282
Attending to the details.....	283
Keeping electronics dust-free.....	284
A Green Well-Lighted Space: Windows	285
Enjoying the view: Keeping windows clean.....	285
Choosing and cleaning drapes and blinds.....	285
Cleaning the Fireplace: Ashes to Ashes.....	286
Ensuring a Degree of Comfort.....	287
Greening Your Bedding.....	288
A firm understanding of mattress care	288
Pillow talk.....	289
Converting to green sheets.....	290
Covering bedspread basics	291

Book IV: Green Remodeling..... 293

Chapter 1: Thinking Sustainability When You Remodel 295

Deciding Whether to Remodel.....	295
Recognizing the benefits of remodeling.....	296
Sorting comfort from structural issues.....	297

Planning Your Remodel 298
 Considering all things financial 298
 Eyeing green remodeling projects 299
 Remodeling Room by Room 302
 Kitchens 302
 Bathrooms 303
 Bedrooms 304
 Nurseries 306
 Surviving Your Remodel 308
 Living in the house during construction 308
 Health risks: Handling surprises as they come 309

Chapter 2: Thinking about Building Materials in New Ways 311

Looking at Life Cycle 311
 Recognizing What Goes Into and Comes Out of Material Production ... 312
 Talking to Manufacturers about Materials 313
 Where did this material come from? 314
 What are the byproducts of the manufacturing process? 315
 How is the material delivered and installed? 315
 How is the material maintained and operated? 316
 How healthy are the materials? 316
 What do you do with the materials
 when you're done with them? 316
 Putting Standard Materials to the Life Cycle Test 317
 Concrete 317
 Wood 318
 Glass 319
 Steel 319
 Brick 320
 Drywall 321
 Vinyl 322
 Looking to Trusted Green Certification Programs
 When Shopping for Materials 323
 Setting Priorities and Goals for Your Home 324
 Remodeling an Old Home with Green Materials 326
 Salvaging the wood 326
 Being aware of asbestos 327
 Looking out for lead paint 327

Chapter 3: Green Finish and Construction Materials 329

Identifying the Dangers in Traditional Finishes 329
 Volatile organic compounds 330
 Formaldehyde 331
 Hidden Materials: What's Behind the Walls 331
 Insulation 331
 Sheathing 332
 Caulks and adhesives 333
 Stains and sealers 334

Constructing and Covering Your Walls	334
Paints and coatings.....	334
Earthen plaster.....	335
Wall coverings.....	335
Drywall	336
Wood paneling and cabinetry	336
Wall base and trim	336
Choosing Greener Floor Finishes	337
Wood flooring.....	337
Carpeting.....	338
Cork	340
Vinyl tile	340
Linoleum	340
Concrete.....	341
Earthen floors.....	341
Checking Out the Options for Countertops	342
Granite and stone.....	342
Terrazzo	343
Paper resin.....	343
Concrete.....	344
Solid surfacing.....	344
Plastic laminate.....	345
Countertop refacing.....	345
Running Down Other Finishes	345
Ceramic tile.....	346
Glass	346
Metal.....	347
Resins and plastics	347
Finding Ecofriendly Furnishings	347
Furniture	348
Draperies and fabrics	348
Examining Exterior Finishes and Trim.....	349
Siding.....	349
Decking.....	350
Roofing	351
Remodeling: Bringing Old Materials to Life	352

Chapter 4: Exploring Options for Heating and Cooling Systems . . . 353

Examining Forced-Air Systems for Heating and Cooling	353
Finding Energy-Efficient Heating Systems	354
Electric baseboard heat	354
Gas room heaters.....	355
Solar thermal water heater.....	355
Radiant heat.....	355
Ground source heat pumps (geothermal).....	357
Fireplaces.....	358

Cooling Options for the Hottest Months 359
 Air conditioners 360
 Ceiling fans..... 361
 Whole-house fans..... 361
 Solar attic fans..... 361
 Using Nonmechanical Methods to Keep Your Home Comfortable..... 361
 Insulation 362
 Thermal mass 362
 Passive cooling..... 363
 Ventilation 364
 Earth berms 364
 Passive solar 364
 Active solar 365

Book V: Sustainable Landscaping 367

Chapter 1: Pursuing a Smart, Sustainable Landscape 369

Getting Up to Speed on Sustainability 370
 What the heck is sustainable landscaping anyway? 370
 Why sustainable landscaping matters to the environment 372
 What’s in it for you 373
 Doing Your Part: What It Takes to Make a Sustainable Landscape 374
 Taking the time to do it right 374
 Getting buff: Your sustainable DIY fitness course..... 375
 Skills that lower your bills 375
 Setting a budget 375
 Scheduling your project..... 376
 Planning and Design: The Key to a Sustainable Landscape..... 377
 Getting to know the site and your needs 377
 Developing a design..... 378
 Starting with Simple, Sustainable Projects..... 378
 Axing your overgrown plants 379
 Getting rid of the weaklings..... 379
 Dumping your chemical arsenal 379
 Trading your power tools for hand tools 380
 Mulching 380
 Growing food 380

Chapter 2: Making Sustainable Decisions for Your Landscape Design 383

Maximizing Materials, Minimizing Waste 383
 Building material inputs: Turning so-called trash
 into landscaping treasure 384
 Maintenance inputs: Planning ahead to reduce
 the need for upkeep 387
 Generating few (or no) outputs 390

Reconsidering Your Sources	392
Building Your Sustainable Landscape: Concepts for Design	393
Unity	393
Balance	394
Repetition.....	394
Contrast and variety.....	394
Scale.....	394
Shape	395
Line	395
Focal points and vantage points	395
Form.....	396
Texture.....	396
Color	396

Chapter 3: Hardscaping: Beauty and Function

from Patios, Walls, and More 399

Preparing Your Site	400
First, make a mess: Demolition	400
Locate utilities	400
Earthwork: Grading and drainage.....	401
Control weeds the safe way.....	401
Trim the trees.....	402
Using Sustainable Hardscape Features to Build an Outdoor Room.....	403
Coming home: Entry space.....	403
Keeping the cars happy: Parking	404
Living and entertaining space	405
Dining areas	406
Recreation and sports	406
Work spaces	407
Floors: Patios and Decks.....	407
Safe, sustainable surfaces	408
Considering maintenance	410
Choosing between a patio and a deck.....	410
Walls: Free-Standing and Retaining	411
Creating privacy with walls and fences	411
Adding walls and fences for security and safety	411
Using walls for retaining slopes	412
Ceilings: Topping Off Your Room	412
Living ceilings: trees.....	413
Constructed ceilings.....	414
Making a living ecoroof.....	414
Creating Paths and Steps.....	415
Considering Water Features.....	416
Elements of landscape water features	417
Working with and around natural water features	417
Pumping, filtering, and other mechanical considerations.....	418
Caring for your water feature.....	418

Chapter 4: Selecting Plants for a Sustainable Landscape 419

Choosing Perfect Plants..... 420
 Size does matter: Give them room to grow 420
 Choosing healthy plants: What to look for
 when shopping for plants 421
 Select problem-free varieties..... 421
 Native plants versus exotic plants 422
 Avoiding invasive plants 424
 Getting to the Root of a Tree’s Purpose and Placement 424
 Making Trees Happen 425
 Bigger is not always better 426
 Finding a healthy specimen..... 426
 Caring for established trees 428
 Tree care myths 428
 Shrubs in the Sustainable Landscape 429
 What shrubs can do for you 429
 Buying quality shrubs 430
 Enhancing Your Landscape’s Sustainability with Smaller Plants 430
 Perennials 431
 Annuals and biennials 432
 Bulbs and bulb-like plants 434
 Ground covers..... 435
 Ornamental grasses 436
 Walking a vine line 439
 Succulents and cacti..... 440

**Chapter 5: Finding Greener Ways to Work
 Around (or with) Lawns. 443**

What’s So Bad about Lawns, Anyway? 443
 Finding some good news about lawns 445
 Does a truly sustainable lawn exist? 446
 Minimizing the Negative Impact of the Lawn..... 446
 Reducing lawn size 446
 Changing to a low-maintenance variety..... 447
 Improving water management 447
 Grasscycling 448
 Using a reel mower 448
 Exploring Lawn Alternatives 448
 The meadow idea..... 449
 Walk-on ground covers 450
 Making use of mulch..... 450
 What about artificial turf? (Yecch!) 451
 Reducing Your Lawn’s Environmental Impact..... 451
 Smart mowing means good growing 451
 Lawn watering secrets 452
 Fertilizing the sustainable way..... 453
 Aeration and dethatching 453
 Dealing with weeds..... 453
 Working with a lawn-care company 454

Book VI: Organic Gardening 455**Chapter 1: Sowing the Seeds of Organic Gardening 457**

Tuning in to Organic Methods	457
Working with nature's cycles	458
Gardening for the future	459
Organic doesn't always equal nontoxic	459
Going Organic for Land's Sake	460
Erosion	460
Wildlife and habitat	460
Pollution	461
Disease	462
Strategies for Organic Gardening	462

Chapter 2: Improving Your Soil and Feeding Your Plants Organically 465

Getting to Know Your Soil	465
Identifying soil type	466
Evaluating drainage	467
Finding soil pH and nutrient content	468
Organic Matter: The Soul of Soil	469
Dung ho!	470
Green manure	471
Compost: The prince of organic matter	472
Composting: Turning Waste into Garden Gold	473
Good additions for great compost	476
Poison for compost piles	476
Getting ratios right	477
Keeping your pile happy	478
Addressing Plants' Nutrient Needs	479
The big three nutrients	479
Secondary nutrients	480
Micronutrients	481
Considering Sources of Organic Fertilizers	481
Plant-based fertilizers	482
Animal-based fertilizers	483
Rock on with mineral-based fertilizers	484

Chapter 3: Controlling Weeds, Pests, and Disease 487

Winning the Weed Wars	487
Mulch	488
Solarization	490
Cover cropping	491
Flaming	492
Cultivating	492
Organic herbicides	493

Managing Pests	494
Deciding whether to control the pest or let it be	495
Making the garden less inviting to pests	495
Encouraging beneficial insects and other predators	497
Practicing good outdoor housekeeping	503
Outwitting Critters	504
Running Down Pesticide Types	507
Dust to dust	508
Watching the soaps and other oily characters	508
Getting small with microbes	509
Becoming botanically correct	511
Using pesticides safely	512
Addressing Common Plant Problems	514
Recognizing dastardly diseases	514
Preventing problems	518
Understanding disease-control methods	519

Chapter 4: Raising Organic Vegetables and Herbs 521

Planning Your Vegetable Garden	521
Finding a place to grow	522
Preparing the soil	522
Designing your vegetable garden	523
Planting the right seed at the right time	525
Growing Veggies 101	527
Sowing seeds	527
Starting plants with a hearty meal	527
Battling weeds	528
Keeping plants well-watered	529
Vegetables from Allium to Zucchini	529
Alliums: Onions, shallots, garlic, and leeks	529
Asparagus	531
Cole crops: Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and company	532
Eggplant	533
Leafy greens: Lettuce, Swiss chard, spinach, and friends	534
Legumes: Peas and beans	535
Peppers	536
Root crops: Carrots, beets, and radishes	537
Potatoes	538
Sweet corn	539
Tomatoes	540
Vining crops: Cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, and melons	542
Growing and Using Herbs	544
Planting Popular Herbs	546
Basil	546
Chamomile	547
Chives	547
Coriander and cilantro	548

Dill.....	548
Fennel.....	549
Lavender.....	549
Mint.....	550
Oregano.....	550
Parsley.....	551
Rosemary.....	551
Sage.....	552
Thyme.....	552

Chapter 5: Finding Organic Success with Fruit 553

Finding Your Zone.....	554
Discovering Berry Patch Basics.....	554
Controlling weeds.....	555
Buying plants.....	556
Presenting Popular Small Fruits.....	557
Beautiful blueberry.....	557
Ramblin' brambles.....	558
Going ape for grapes.....	561
Sublime strawberries.....	563
Choosing and Caring for Fruit Trees.....	564
Size does matter.....	565
Sex and the single tree.....	566
Feeling the chill factor.....	566
Budding genius.....	567
Planting for success.....	568
Pruning fruit trees and shrubs.....	569
Picking Temperate-Climate Trees and Shrubs.....	571
Apples.....	572
European and Asian pears.....	572
Sweet and sour cherries.....	573
Peaches and nectarines.....	574
European and Asian apricots.....	576
Plums.....	576
Growing Warm-Climate Fruit Trees.....	577
Citrus.....	577
Figs.....	579
Persimmon.....	579

Book VII: Solar Power 581

Chapter 1: Soaking Up the Pluses and Minuses of Solar Power . . 583

Looking for Sustainable Energy.....	584
Understanding Why Solar Is King.....	584
Reaping financial rewards.....	585
Erasing your carbon footprint.....	586

Enjoying solar’s unlimited supply 588
 Exercising your legal rights to sunlight 588
 Appreciating solar energy’s versatility 588
 Acknowledging the Dents in the Crown..... 589
 Initial costs and falling prices 589
 Reliability and timing 589
 Red tape and aesthetically minded neighbors..... 590
 Effort and upkeep..... 590
 Small to Supergiant: Choosing Your Level of Commitment 591
 Small- to mid-sized projects 591
 Large projects 592
 Designing a solar home from scratch..... 592

Chapter 2: Preparing for a Switch to Solar 593

Using Sunlight Converted into Heat 593
 Keeping the heat where you want it..... 594
 Converting sunlight into electricity: Photovoltaic cells 595
 Evaluating Your Solar Potential 596
 Analyzing Solar Investments 598
 Calculating net costs 598
 Figuring out monthly savings 600
 Figuring payback..... 601
 Analyzing risk 601
 Accounting for the intangibles..... 602
 Examining Real-Life Scenarios 603
 Supplementing an existing water heater with solar 603
 Putting money in a bank or stock market..... 604
 Accounting for pollution..... 604
 Reaping rewards of rising energy costs..... 605
 Thinking about tiered rate structures..... 605
 Appreciating a solar home’s increase in value 606
 Financing solar investments with a home equity loan..... 606
 Replacing broken water heaters 607
 Diving in to swimming pool solar heaters 607
 Blowing hot air 608
 Working with solar in your home office..... 608
 Investing in a full-scale PV system..... 609
 Installing both a water heater and PV..... 610

Chapter 3: Jumping In to Small Projects with Big Results. 611

Installing Sunscreens for Summer 611
 Getting framed..... 612
 Creating a manual screen retractor..... 613
 Securing Your Home 615
 Hosing down your problems 615
 Blasting the bad guys with light..... 615

Engaging in Small Power Projects	616
Battery power: Charging up your life	616
Small-scale PV systems: Using just a modest amount of power ...	617
Working with RV appliances	617
Going Off-Grid on a Piece-by-Piece Basis.....	618
Making your reading lamp go off-grid	618
Installing solar light tubes (tubular skylights).....	619
Using tabletop solar fans	620
Purifying Your Drinking Water.....	621

Chapter 4: Financing Your Solar Investments 623

Exploring the Different Types of Subsidies	623
Rebates.....	624
Tax credits	626
No property tax increases	626
Net metering.....	627
Incentives for home-operated businesses.....	627
Tax-deductible home equity loans	628
Researching All the Subsidy Options.....	628
Financing through Loans	629
Borrowing money the old-fashioned way	629
Exploring home energy ratings	630
Pursuing energy-efficient mortgages.....	631
Thinking about other mortgage options.....	631
Considering Alternative Financing	631
Leasing solar equipment.....	632
Buying an energy-producing plot of land	632
Considering the Best Overall Investments	633
Nurturing Mother Nature with landscaping	633
Installing PV systems to offset the most carbon pollution	634
Harnessing the sun to heat your water.....	634
Lighting your yard all night long.....	635
Redecorating for functionality and appearance	635
Putting up overhangs to make your home more comfortable.....	636
Increasing your living space.....	636
Banishing hot air with a solar attic fan	637
Using a solar swimming pool heater or cover	637