

You get your money's worth from compact fluorescent bulbs

By James Dulley/Sensible Home

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Q. The price of compact fluorescent bulbs has come down and I am ready to try them. Do they really save as much as is advertised? Which ones provide the best light quality and how do I dispose of old ones?

A. Compact fluorescent lights do save as much electricity, and therefore money on your utility bills, as advertised.

In the typical home, lighting with standard incandescent bulbs accounts for about 20 percent of your energy usage.

Not too many years ago, the cost of a compact fluorescent light, was about \$20. Even at that high price, using them made economic sense. Now with the cost of only a couple of dollars or less, switching to compact fluorescent lights is a no-brainer. Along with the lower cost, the quality of the light from compact fluorescent lights has improved. I actually prefer the light quality to incandescent bulbs.

A compact fluorescent light uses about one-quarter as much electricity as an incandescent bulb to produce the same amount of light. Keep in mind, wattage of any light bulb refers to how much electricity it uses, not how much light it produces. The light output is measured in lumens and should be listed on the packaging. Compact fluorescent lights also last about 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs.

Most compact fluorescent lights contain about 4.0 (milligrams) of mercury and some new designs have only 1.5 milligrams. The majority of lead released into the air is from burning coal to produce electricity. Using a 13-watt compact fluorescent light instead of a 60-watt incandescent bulb saves enough electricity over its life to reduce mercury emission from burning coal in the electric power plant by 4.5 milligrams.

Even considering the above fact, when a compact fluorescent light needs to be replaced, it is wise to dispose of it properly so the mercury is not released. Contact your local waste collection service for a compact fluorescent light dropoff location. Also, visit these web sites for more disposal information - www.earth911.org and www.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/wastetypes/universal/lamps/index.htm.

The quality of the light from a light bulb is called its color rendition index. This refers to how closely colors of objects under the artificial light match their appearance under natural sunlight. A color rendition index of 100 means it matches the sun. Compared to natural sunlight, the light quality of typical incandescent bulbs is a yellowish color.

We have become used to this yellowish light, so most of the compact fluorescent lights are designed to produce the same type of light. This may be a color rendition index in the 84 range. Many of the newer compact fluorescent lights have a color rendition index above 90 for more true colors, and in my opinion, a more pleasant light. As I have gotten older and my eyesight has gotten worse, I find it easier to read under this high-color rendition index light. These are often called "full-spectrum" or "daylight" compact fluorescent lights.

Q.I think my fireplace could benefit from installing glass doors. How are glass doors installed on a masonry fireplace?

A. An open masonry fireplace almost always loses more heat than it produces, so you should definitely install glass doors. Get good-quality ones which seal well and allow you to adjust and control the inlet air.

Most glass fireplace doors are mounted to the brick or stone around the fireplace opening. It is not a difficult job to do yourself and it does not require a licensed expert. You will need special drill bits for the masonry.

"James Dulley's column, which appeared weekly in our newspaper for many years, will now appear monthly, on the final Friday of the month. Send inquiries to James Dulley, Staten Island Advance, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit www.dulley.com.

Let there be light

The following companies offer compact fluorescent lights:

American Environmental Products
800- 339-9572
<http://www.sunalite.com/>

Full Spectrum Solutions
888- 574-7014
www.fullspectrumolutions.com

Maxlite
800- 555-5629
www.maxlite.com

Ott-Lite Technology
800-842-8848
www.ott-lite.com

Lumiram
800-354-1044
www.lumiram.com



Photo Courtesy of Full Spectrum Solutions

This 24-watt, full-spectrum CFL bulb has the equivalent light output of a 100-watt incandescent bulb.