



## Australian House And Garden

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### The green house HIGH FIVE!

Things move quickly in the world of sustainable living, but the benefits of staying across the changes are great. Sarah Pickette lists five simple ways to green your home.

#### 1 INSTALL A SOLAR BATTERY

Australian homeowners have embraced solar power in a big way. And now we're tantalisingly close to seeing household battery systems being installed as a matter of course, allowing households to store energy captured from rooftop photovoltaic panels and keep electricity costs down. Solar consultancy SunWiz predicts that, this year, thousands of Australian households will install a battery to complement their panels, as prices begin to drop and the reality of the end of solar tariffs bites. "We've reached the tipping point," says Emlyn Keane, chief executive officer of Evergen, which sells and manages intelligent home-energy systems. "Everyone's concern with batteries has been

the payback time. At this point, based on today's electricity prices, our system could potentially pay for itself in six years."

*TIP Want to know whether a solar battery is economically feasible at your place? Enter your details into the Alternative Technology Association's Sunulator, a free tool that can calculate this for you. Go to [ata.org.au/ata-research/sunulator](http://ata.org.au/ata-research/sunulator).*

#### 2 BE MINDFUL ABOUT MEALS

Food waste is a massive problem. Federal Government figures released in April reveal that Australian households throw out 20 per cent of the food they purchase, which essentially

means one in every five bags of food bought might as well be put straight in the bin. The government is developing a National Food Waste Strategy aimed at cutting Australia's residential and industrial food waste by 50 per cent by 2030. Change is afoot at the household level, too. A study of 1200 NSW residents revealed that in 2015, 97 per cent of respondents had at least one strategy for avoiding food waste. Food being left too long in the fridge or freezer was the main reason cited for food being thrown out (16 per cent), followed by family members not finishing their meal (12 per cent).

*TIP Meal planning is an easy way to ensure you're not buying more food than necessary. Make the process easier*

Kitchen project by Greener. Main photograph by Nick Morrissey.



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## ADVICE H&G

by using an app such as MealBoard, which combines meal planning with functions to manage your recipes, grocery lists and pantry. Priced at \$6 from the App Store.

**3 RECYCLE YOUR ELECTRONICS** In 2011, the Federal Government brought in legislation to help reduce electronic waste and boost its recycling. "The National Television & Computer Recycling Scheme has been very effective," says Brad Gray, former head of campaigns for Planet Ark. "More than 130,000 tonnes of TV and computer e-waste has been collected and recycled so far." This keeps hazardous materials out of landfill and permits valuable resources contained in electronic waste to be reused. The Australian Bureau of Statistics calculates that if 75 per cent of the 1.5 million televisions discarded annually were recycled, there would be potential savings of 23,000 tonnes of CO2 equivalents, 520 megalitres of water, 400,000 gigajoules of energy and 160,000 cubic metres of landfill space.

*TIP For years, Planet Ark has collected and recycled printer cartridges. Ever wondered where they end up? Many go on to become eWood, a durable, timber-look plastic that's made into planks and raised garden beds. See ewood.com.au.*

**4 LIGHT YOUR HOME RIGHT** Leaps and bounds in LED technology have reduced the amount of energy it takes to light your home. If you don't already use LEDs, now is the time to ask yourself why. Today's LEDs use about 85 per cent less energy than halogen lights (because they generate far less heat) and last longer to boot. "The lifespan will depend on the brand you buy, but you can expect an LED globe to work for between 25,000 and 50,000 hours, whereas a halogen bulb might give you between 1000 and 5000 hours," says Denise Hammond, product knowledge

specialist at Beacon Lighting. They're also about 30 per cent more efficient than the ubiquitous compact fluorescent lightbulb.

*TIP Make the process of changing the lights in your home simple with the help of the Light Bulb Saver app (free from the App Store and Google Play). It will calculate how much money you could save by replacing your current lights with energy-efficient alternatives, and has advice on creating lighting solutions for specific rooms.*

**5 EMBRACE SUSTAINABLE TIMBER** Environmental activism in Australia was born with the anti-forestry campaigns of the 1970s and, as a result, there is a lingering perception that cutting down trees is bad. "That's not the whole picture," says Druce Davey, owner of Brisbane-based kitchen and bathroom design studio Greener and an ambassador for the Forest Stewardship Council. Trees capture carbon and store it even after they are harvested. In addition, the production and processing of timber for use in homes requires far less energy than the amount that goes into manufacturing alternative building materials. "The key thing is to ensure the timber you buy is 'chain of custody' certified," says Davey. "That means you can trust that it's come from a responsible forestry operation and hasn't been substituted in the process of presenting it to you for purchase. It also means that everyone who touches it – from the forest to the showroom – is certified and audited to ensure they're compliant." Beyond the carbon-capture benefits, timber is a joy to use and live with, he adds. "It's real, it's warm, it's healthy, it ages beautifully and it tells a story."

*TIP Timber is an environmentally friendly material, but make sure you do it justice by treating with an equally eco finish. "I recommend a natural wax/oil emulsion to condition and protect," says Druce Davey. H&G*



## TASK MASTERS

Green your clean with these non-toxic household products. **FROM TOP** Orange & Thyme Multipurpose Cleaner spray (500ml), \$7, Ecostore; [ecostore.com.au](http://ecostore.com.au). All Natural Multipurpose Bathroom Cleaner spray (500ml), \$11, Koala Eco (formerly Koala Co); [koala.eco](http://koala.eco). Organic Floor Cleaner Concentrate (500ml), \$8.90, Resparkle; [resparkle.com.au](http://resparkle.com.au). Clean Conscience Lemon Myrtle Multipurpose Spray (500ml), \$12, Biome Eco Stores; [biome.com.au](http://biome.com.au).