

5 Strategies for Going- Green in the Bathroom



The bathroom is where we begin and end each day. From conserving water to improving our health, the bathroom is the smallest and easiest space in our home to *Go-Green!*

- #1. Lighting:** *Egads*, too much eye shadow? Missed whiskers? We want to see ourselves in the bathroom as others see us outside or at work. Fluorescent lighting buzzed, flickered and cast us with a greenish tint. The new generation of fluorescents are much better, with dimmable ballasts, accurate color representation, cool white and full spectrum colors. Look at www.lampsplus.com for some great designs.
- #2. Add a Fan:** *Yech*, stop spraying toxic air fresheners! A vent fan helps to remove airborne irritants and moisture to keep the bathroom a healthy environment. Look for versions that are quiet and use less than one sone (a sone is the unit of measure for the level of sound put out). To be truly effective, a vent fan should be left on for at least 20 minutes after a shower. Of course, open up that window if you have one also!
- #3. Listen, Do You Hear that *Sucking Sound?*:** That's the sound of so much water needlessly going down the drain! Did you know that showering represents approximately 17% of residential indoor water use in the US? Sink faucets account for 15% and toilets have the lead at a whopping nearly 30%? When replacing fixtures, look for EPA **WaterSense Labeled** faucets and toilets. Your water bill could be reduced by about 1/3, and you could lower your energy bill for heating all that water, too! Not replacing fixtures this year? For low-cost but big-bang solutions, add an inexpensive low-flow faucet aerator to your sink faucet (\$5 - \$25 per faucet); a Tank-Bank for the toilet tank (\$1.75 - \$2.50 per toilet); and a Shower Converter (\$25 - \$30).
- #4. Seal the Deal:** You're much better off caulking and sealing around your tub, shower base, drop-in sinks and toilet than cleaning up the mess that results when water penetrates the barrier. Mold and mildew love to grow in those drippy little environments! Invest about \$15 at the hardware store for "*low or no VOC*" caulking (volatile organic compounds that emit a breathable gas) and visit www.ehow.com for detailed instructions on how to seal wall and tub joints and replace tile caulk.
- #5. Sustainable Materials:** There are many other ways to convert your bathroom into a green-oasis of good health and energy savings: towels and shower curtains made from bamboo; shampoo and soap from bars instead of plastic bottles; and of course, non-toxic cleaners. And for those making costlier investments, tankless hot water heaters and reclaimed fixtures, recycled glass tiles and flooring – all good ways to green-up the most essential room in the house.