



Top Tips for Energy Efficient Homes & Gardens



Inspired by the recent **SMART Homes & Gardens workshop in Dalwallinu on the 19th May**, here are some easy and practical top tips in becoming more energy efficient around the home.

- ◆ Buy **energy efficient globes** - they last approx 8 times longer than conventional incandescent globes, don't waste energy as heat and can now be recycled effectively
- ◆ **Cool** your house in **summer** and keep it **warm** in **winter** without excessive use of air conditioning units - keep the sun out in summer with use of shade sails, solar pergolas, plants, awnings or even an old sheet ! But of course let the sun in during the winter months to warm the house. The magic temperature to maintain is **24°C**.
- ◆ **Insulate** your roof and walls to stop heat escaping in the winter and to keep heat out in the summer. Generous government rebates are available to help through the **Sustainable Energy Development Office (SEDO)** - www.sedo.energy.wa.gov.au - also, insulate your water pipes with lagging - saves energy and with energy prices set to increase by 100% over the next two years, then every saving helps.
- ◆ Check that **thermostat** ! If you are having a shower and need to use the cold tap then your thermostat is set too high. It shouldn't be set above **60°C** or **50°C** for instantaneous systems.
- ◆ **Renewable energy** - solar energy infrastructure grants are available through the government - take advantage of them now and heat your water and generate electricity for cents ! Also, domestic wind turbines are cheaper and easier to install now than ever.
- ◆ **Refrigeration** - takes 16% of average WA energy bill. Don't position near heat source ie oven, window, don't overload the fridge making it work harder and use more energy. Check the seals - insert a piece of paper and close door - can you pull it out ? If so maybe it's time to replace the seal. What about the spare/beer fridge in the shed ? Does it need to be on 365 days of the year.
- ◆ **Mulch**, mulch, mulch - but don't get confused by mulches and soil conditioners. Best mulches are wood chip and gravel that allow water to infiltrate and also retains moisture. Also, subsurface irrigation systems are most efficient - check out rebates for this too.
- ◆ **Green waste** is not rubbish - stop sending it to landfill ! You're throwing away good nutrients so either compost or mulch and then apply straight round your plants for the best fertiliser possible.
- ◆ **Wind** drying out the garden is a major problem. Install windbreaks but remember solid structures do not make good windbreaks ie walls, fences. Trees like sheoaks make perfect windbreaks as they diffuse the incoming wind well - sheoaks protect up to 6 times their height ie 3m tree protects up to 18m of land.
- ◆ Take advantage of the different **microclimates** around your house for growing different plants - check labels in the nursery to know what conditions plants prefer. Also, did you know that most plant labels are made in the eastern states and don't accurately represent the Mid West's climate. A plant that states 'Full Sun' would not particularly appreciate the full sun here !!
- ◆ Line hanging baskets with **bubblewrap** to stop them drying out, plus use water retaining gel crystals in baskets and pots to help lock in moisture.



Remember simple changes will save your wallet and the environment