



GREEN LIVING TOOLKIT

Quick- Reference Guide

The Green Living Toolkit is your essential guide to sustainable living on Florida's Suncoast. We break it down to show you the most effective solutions, curated especially for Sarasota and Manatee County residents. We connect you with local events and experts on energy, food, waste, water, and nature.

It's everything you need to love life and live green, all in one place.

LEARN HOW
greenlivingtoolkit.org

ENERGY



greenlivingtoolkit.org/energy-conservation

Knowledge is Power **Do a Home Energy Assessment**

Saving energy means saving money. But you can't do either without understanding how much electricity you use now, and where you're using it. A home energy assessment will help you quantify your current energy use. It can be as simple as using an online calculator linked to your FPL account, or scheduling a free in-home survey by an FPL energy expert. You can even do it yourself using a detailed step-by-step assessment kit.

Tame the Energy Hogs **Give Your Home an Energy Tune-Up**

Making your home more energy efficient is an investment, not an expense, since it pays dividends in lower electric bills. And, you can feel good about helping to slow global warming. There are many free and low-cost ways to conserve energy, while making your home safer and more comfortable. We've sifted through the options to find the easiest and most effective ways to tackle the biggest power hogs first.

Catch Some Rays **Go Solar**

Installing solar panels is a smart investment with a guaranteed return for you and the environment. Plus, we live in the Sunshine State so solar is a natural fit. Solar photovoltaic systems are becoming much more affordable. If you're not ready to go solar yet, you can still support solar in your community by donating to local non-profits so they can make the switch to solar. Helping them helps all of us reduce our reliance on fossil fuels to power our energy grid.

FOOD



greenlivingtoolkit.org/sustainable-food

Grow to Know Your Food **Grow a Food Garden**

With a little know-how and practice getting your hands dirty, you can grow fresh, nutritious produce without a trek to the supermarket. Even apartment and condo dwellers can enjoy tasty container-grown herbs and vegetables. Edible gardening can reduce your carbon footprint and improve your fitness. Grow socially by joining a community garden or grow solo with a home garden, and you'll be part of a worldwide "slow food movement" that is good for people and the planet!

Eat for the Planet **Eat Local Sustainable Food**

You don't have to go on a diet to change your diet. Making a simple commitment to eat more plant-based meals and less meat is one of the most impactful changes you can make to conserve water, energy, and natural lands. Becoming a "locavore" and supporting Suncoast farmers, grocers, and restaurants that are part of the blossoming farm-to-table movement supports our local economy, biodiversity, soil health, and food security.

No Food Left Behind **Reduce Waste, Then Compost**

On average, Americans waste about one-fifth of the food they buy, costing them \$1800 per year. In the US, food loss and waste account for 4% of greenhouse gas emissions, 14% of all freshwater use, and 24% of landfilled waste. Reduce food waste and save money with smart shopping, meal planning, and food storage. Donate edible food you can't eat, and compost food scraps to help your food waste come full cycle as natural fertilizer to grow your garden.

MORE →

WASTE



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Watch Your Waste

Reduce Single-Use Plastics

In our fast-paced society, single-use plastic is a shortcut to convenience. Especially while dining and shopping, we're offered plastic items we don't really need or will only use once for a few minutes, compared to the centuries those plastics sit in a landfill or, worse, wind up in the environment. Stop plastic pollution at its source by saying no to single-use convenience plastics and making easy swaps for durable or compostable substitutes.

Twice is Nice

Reuse, Repurpose, Restore

Reducing your trash begins with what you buy—and don't buy. Borrow items you rarely use or buy them gently used. Donate or swap used items you no longer need. Buy new products that are made to last and learn to fix and restore them when they break. Seek creative and fun ways to have more for less, while reducing natural resource use, industrial pollution from manufacturing, and our mountain of trash.

Last Dance Before the Landfill

Recycle Right

Recycling is helpful for recovering materials that can be remanufactured, but it's not the perfect endless loop the logo suggests. The effective way to reduce your trash is to first reduce, reuse, repurpose, and restore what you can, then recycle right to ensure the materials can actually be reused. We break it down to show you what goes where—what belongs in your curbside bin and what can be dropped off or mailed back.

WATER



greenlivingtoolkit.org/water-protection

Be Water-Wise

Save Water Indoors

How often do we take clean flowing tap water for granted? A seemingly unlimited supply is piped directly into our homes for less than a penny per gallon. Even Florida, the land of liquid sunshine, is facing a thirsty future with population growth. Using water wisely begins at home, with simple actions like repairing plumbing leaks, upgrading to water-saving fixtures and appliances, and adopting everyday conservation habits. Minimal up-front investments will pay immediate dividends in lower water bills.

Landscape Like a Floridian

Cut Water and Curb Pollution

Lush lawns aren't so "green" when it comes to our environment. Half of household water on average goes to irrigation. Lawn fertilizer and pesticides can seep into the groundwater we drink and hitchhike with rainfall runoff to the bays and lakes where we play, threatening to spoil the very reasons we love living here. For a sustainable landscape, follow the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program to reduce fertilizer use, replace high-maintenance turfgrass with eco-friendly plants, and curb stormwater pollution.

Make It a Block Party

Be a Catalyst for Clean Water

Water doesn't recognize property boundaries, and your water protection efforts shouldn't either. Get involved with your neighborhood association to change maintenance practices to reduce water pollution. Lead by example with a pilot project to show neighbors that healthy ponds improve aesthetics, save maintenance costs, increase property values, and bring back the birds. Community projects like planting trees and marking storm drains also help protect downstream creeks and bays.

NATURE



greenlivingtoolkit.org/nature

Discover Your Nature

Get Out and Explore

Connecting with nature can be as simple as a stroll in the park. Whether you like to walk, paddle, bike, or just sit quietly, time spent outdoors is good for our health and inspires us to be better stewards of the planet we share. Plus, you never know what you might learn! No matter how you like to roll — in a group, on your own, or with the kids — there are maps, guides, kits, and tours to help you explore parks, beaches, and nature preserves around the Suncoast.

Mindful Moments

Keep Wildlife Safe

Respecting wildlife and their homes while in the woods or on the water means protecting those cherished prime fishing spots, sunset dolphin sightings, hatching sea turtles, bird songs, and more. Taking a mindful moment to consider how your actions affect wildlife and knowing what to do (or not do) when you encounter an animal in distress helps preserve those special wildlife encounters for generations to come.

All In the Family

Support Backyard Wildlife

Our backyards are a place to relax, eat, socialize, and spend time with family. Why not offer a place for wildlife to do the same? With continued development and loss of Florida's natural areas, it's never been more important to nurture nature anywhere we can. Small tweaks that support the basic needs of wildlife, and provide peace and quiet, can transform your yard into a beautiful oasis for your family and the wildlife families that live around you.