

Green-Friendly Summer Living

BY E.R. LECLAIR

Most of us are fairly adept when it comes to implementing eco-friendly practices in our everyday lives – around the house, at work, at school and in our daily commutes. But it's sometimes easy to slip up in the summertime when you and your family are away from familiar surroundings, perhaps on vacation. With that in mind, we've partnered with Cascades, which has long made a commitment to eco-friendly paper and packaging products, to bring you a slew of tips that will carry you through the holidays – whether you're at the cottage, on a camping trip, enjoying a picnic in a park or just hanging around the backyard. Here's to staying green this summer!

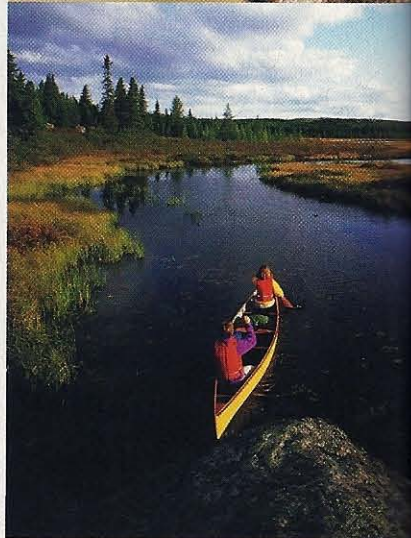
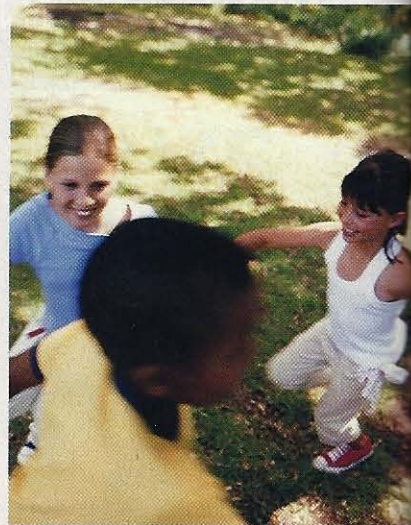
SUMMER HOUSE RULES

1. Consider getting a home-energy audit to check the energy efficiency of your residence or cottage.
2. Seal all of the air leaks around the windows, plumbing fixtures, ducts and electrical wiring.
3. Tune up your air conditioner; one that needs cleaning will just use more energy when it's operating.
4. Use an attic fan to circulate the air in your home or cottage.
5. Unplug all home appliances before heading away on vacation.
6. Install a rain barrel and ask whoever is watering your plants to use it judiciously.

7. Close blinds, shades and drapes during the hottest part of the day.
8. Don't haul your old fridge up to the cottage. Older models can use four times the electricity of newer ones.

ECO-FRIENDLY PICNICS AND CAMPING MEALS

- Say goodbye to nonbiodegradable Styrofoam cups and plates, which just add to the landfill problem.
- Bring along plates and cutlery from home, or pick up 100 per cent biodegradable supplies. Opt for plates made from recycled paper. (Note: Disposable dishes, tablecloths, drinking containers and other picnic debris made from nonrenewable petroleum-based products can release contaminants into the environment.)





- Reusable cloth napkins are fine, as are 100 per cent recycled paper napkins, which can be composted.
- Avoid purchasing bottles of water, especially if they're made from nonrenewable materials and have been shipped over long distances. Consider using a collapsible water bag (once it's empty, you'll have a lighter load to haul) or fill your own reusable water bottle. Bisphenol-A-free reusable bottles are popular with hikers, as they're good for hot and cold drinks.
- Cut back on food packaging. Transfer goods into reusable containers before you leave home to avoid bringing along excess material. (If you feel a product has

unnecessary packaging, write to the manufacturer!) Place salads and sandwiches in reusable containers to avoid using plastic wrap.

- When grocery shopping before a picnic, camping trip or cottage stay, keep in mind the four Ns: natural (no pesticides and as little processing as possible), naked (minimal or no packaging), nutritious (your health always matters) and now (buy in-season produce).

- At the end of your outing, pack the trash and divvy up the recyclable and compostable waste.

- Leave nothing in the wilderness setting but your footprints, and take nothing home but pleasant memories. Translation: You can admire the wildflowers, but please don't pick them. Many plants are endangered

and don't fare well when plucked out of their natural habitats.

- If your picnic destination is nearby, hop on your bike, or hike part of the way. It's good for your health and the environment. Tip: Carpooling is fuel-efficient – and fun.

HEALTHY, ECO-FRIENDLY SUMMER EATING

Experts recommend buying locally grown, in-season food whenever you can. Consider shopping at roadside stands and visiting farms en route to your cottage or camping destination. If local or organic produce isn't available and you hit the grocery store, it's helpful to know which fruits and vegetables contain the least amounts of pesticides: onions, »

avocados, sweet corn, pineapples, mangoes, asparagus, sweet peas, kiwifruit, cabbages, eggplants, papayas, watermelons, broccoli, tomatoes and sweet potatoes.

GREEN-FRIENDLY COTTAGE CLEANING

Elbow grease is the second-most crucial ingredient when it comes to cottage cleaning. First, of course, are the materials you're using to clean that cottage, whether it's a short-term rental or a family property. Always look for EcoLogo certification, which means the item is approved by the Environmental Choice program. For a list of green-friendly products and manufacturers, visit environmentalchoice.com. Manufacturers whose products comply with EcoLogo save legions of trees with household paper products that are made with 100 per cent recycled fibres – and they use up to 80 per cent less water than many other companies. For eco-friendly cleaning tips, visit simplegreenaction.ca.

And if you've ever needed a reason to purchase recycled products instead of those made from virgin fibres, listen up: If you use one roll of Cascades Enviro 100% Recycled Fibre Paper Towel each month, instead of nonrecycled material, you save 105 kilowatts per hour of energy, 3.63 kilograms of greenhouse gas, and more than 1,300 litres of water over 10 years. According to the calculator on the Simple Green Action website (simplegreenaction.ca; search for "environmental calculator"), that translates into 1,755 hours of incandescent lighting, 132 hours of toaster use, 13 showers, 135 teeth brushings and 2,691 bottles of water.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Problem: Clogged drain at the cottage. **Solution:** Mix ½ cup (125 mL) baking soda with ½ cup



(125 mL) vinegar and pour down the drain. Cover drain for an hour or so, then flush with water.

Problem: Ants, ants, ants. **Solution:** Sprinkle baking soda below the sink, near pipe openings and at the base of windows. That will help keep out ants and other uninvited guests looking for a free meal.

Problem: Stove-top fire! **Solution:** Keep a container of baking soda nearby when cooking at the cottage; it's excellent for quickly dousing small flames.

TOILET TRAINING

When stocking up on recycled toilet paper for a camping weekend or cottage break, keep your eyes peeled for these key phrases on the packaging: "unbleached," "processed chlorine-free" or "totally chlorine-free." Greenpeace (greenpeace.org) has compiled a Recycled Tissue and Toilet Paper Guide listing brand names and manufacturers.

FUN AT THE COTTAGE

Yes, there's electricity at the cottage, but leave the TV at home. Consider activities such as canoeing, kayaking and swimming, which don't add to noise or water pollution.

GOING FISHING?

Check with the Ministry of Natural Resources for fishing guidelines (for example, what species and sizes of catch are allowed). Don't forget to get your fishing license, and ask about catch-and-release programs. Use lead-free sinkers and biodegradable fishing lines. ■

AT THE COTTAGE: TRIED & TRUE TIPS

We asked a few cottage lovers for their eco-friendly suggestions.

"I add ¼ cup (75 mL) tea tree oil to a bucket of water and pour it into a recycled spray bottle to disinfect the cottage each spring. It helps get rid of odours – without filling the place with nasty chemicals."

– C.B., Haliburton, Ont.

"I tackle the windows at our cottage with my mother's concoction of 3 cups water (750 mL), ½ cup (75 mL) vinegar and ½ to 1 tsp (2 to 5 mL) liquid soap. The latter helps avoid unsightly streaking. Shake it up in a spray bottle, spray it on and wipe down."

– K.H., Waterton, Alta.

"For those hard to clean, really ugly messes and stains on counters, floors and other surfaces that require scouring, I start by scrubbing with a bristle brush, which I dip into a homemade solution of one part liquid soap and one part baking soda."

– J.D., Charlesvoix, Que.