

# GREEN HOME CERTIFICATION



**Get Green Home Certified!** Use this checklist to take action, reducing the environmental impact of your home and your contributions to the climate crisis, while deepening your understanding of environmental justice. Certify your space with your roommate, family, or on your own. You don't have to complete every practice to get certified, but see how many improvements you can make. In no time, you'll be on your way to saving money, brightening your physical space, and fostering positive well-being at home.

## OFFICE + LIVING ROOM

- Reduce your energy bills by investing in energy efficient electronics and appliances. When purchasing electronics, look for [ENERGY STAR® Certified products](#) like laptops, TVs, space heaters, or even air purifiers.
- Explore [smart power strips](#) as tools for reducing power usage, especially where multiple items are plugged in such as in your entertainment center or office.
- Avoid printing by choosing digital documents when possible. If you need to print, use scrap, FSC® certified, or recycled content paper.
- Opt for electronic billing and [reduce the amount of junk mail](#) you receive.
- Donate used items and properly recycle items you are unable to donate, including electronics.
- Buy used books or use your local library when looking for new reading materials.

## CLEANING + LAUNDRY

- Green your cleaning! Look for Green Seal® certified products or make your own cleaning supplies.
- Choose made-to-last, non-synthetic clothing. Most synthetic clothing (polyester, nylon, acrylic) is made out of plastic which sheds in the washing machine, delivering microplastics into our waterways.
- Commit to following [sustainable laundry practices](#)—wash your clothing only when needed, do full loads, use a drying rack, and wash with cold water when possible.
- Use rags to clean instead of disposable wipes or paper towels. You can even make rags out of old clothing.

## BATHROOM

- Install sustainable plumbing fixtures like faucet aerators and low flow shower heads. If you have low flow aerators installed, [clean them](#) to keep them working properly.
- Convert your toilet into a [low flush toilet](#) or flush it with grey water using the bucket-flush method—collect water in a bucket in your shower while you wait for it to warm up.
- Reduce the time the water runs! Try taking ten minute showers and turning off the tap while you brush your teeth.
- Opt for toiletries with less packaging and make sure the packaging is recyclable. Choose bar soap over body wash, buy toiletries in bulk, or explore DIY hair and skincare recipes.
- Purchase Green Seal certified or recycled content toilet paper.

## KITCHEN + DINING

- Cut back on the amount of takeout you order each week. If you get takeout, make sure to request no napkins, cutlery, etc. to reduce waste.
- Reduce food waste through mindful portioning and eating. Serve yourself a portion and spend 20 minutes enjoying your meal. [Use this guide](#) to learn more about mindful eating and potential practices you can incorporate.
- Purchase sustainably and ethically farmed or fished proteins. Ask questions to understand the product origin and look for sustainable certifications.
- Explore composting services or make your own backyard compost pile or vermicomposting for leftover food scraps.
- Make a plan before you head to the grocery store. Planning your meals in advance allows you to purchase only what you need and prevent food waste.
- Invest in good food storage containers for leftovers and pantry items. Look for non-plastic storage options like glass. If you use plastic, [use heat wisely](#).
- Build a better plate for your health and the planet with vegetable-focused meals. Introducing more plants into your diet can reduce your contribution to climate change.
- Invest in bulk products and avoid single-serve items when possible.
- Check your local city guidelines on what can and cannot be recycled (find resources for households within [Chicago here](#) and [Evanston here](#)). If you do not have a recycling cart, request one through your local Streets and Sanitation (or equivalent city office). [Review what can be recycled on the Northwestern campuses](#).

## OUTDOOR SPACE

- Get outside and garden! Use your balcony or backyard to grow vegetables or build a pollinator garden. Check out [small space gardening practices](#) for ideas to maximize your outdoor space.
- Explore and use [green landscaping practices](#) for your plants, yard, and trees.
- [Properly care for your trees](#) —make sure you are watering, pruning, and mulching correctly to ensure healthy trees.
- Invest in solar powered or LED outdoor lighting.
- Trade out your gas-powered equipment for manual or electric versions.

## THROUGHOUT YOUR HOME AND BEYOND

- Take a look at how your space is lit. Increase your use of task lighting and use energy efficient light bulbs. Reduce your electricity use by keeping blinds up during the day to provide natural light.
- Inspect your windows to make sure they are well sealed and aren't letting air into your home.
- Integrate greenery into your space. Indoor plants and nature have been shown to [improve your mood and well-being](#).
- Program or adjust your thermostat to save energy. [Use this guide](#) to explore easy changes to save up to 10% a year on heating and cooling.
- Become a better analog friend. Reduce screen time by opting for screen-free activities with your family, friends, or roommates. Reinvest your time in a new or forgotten hobby—take a walk, call a loved one, read a book, play a board game, etc.
- There are many rebates you can use to make sustainable upgrades to your home. Look into local, federal, and utility rebates. Check out the [sustainNU Energy Savings Guide](#) for some resources to get you started.
- Take advantage of [Health and Wellness programs offered through Human Resources](#) and the [Student Affairs Wellness Program](#). Human health is intertwined with the health of our planet – the wellness of individuals is integral to fostering sustainable communities. Sign up for the [YourLife Wellness Mailing List](#) to receive regular updates on current wellbeing programs.
- Review [environmental justice](#) and [anti-racism resources](#). There are unequal exposures to environmental risks and disparate access to environmental benefits that occur along racial and economic lines. These discrepancies harm our communities and neighbors. Stay up to date on environmental justice work in the greater Chicago area by following the Chicago Environmental Justice Network on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).
- Learn about the Indigenous People native to the land you live and work on. Indigenous People are the original stewards of North America, and Indigenous People today are leaders in the movement towards just sustainability through activism, research, and the sharing of traditional ecological knowledge. We encourage you to educate yourself and your family about the original stewards of the land we currently live and work on via Northwestern's [Land Acknowledgment Resources](#), [the Sand Creek Massacre resources](#), and the [native-land map](#) by Native Land Digital.

## FINISHED?

Complete the Green Home Certification Survey to receive your Green Home Certificate. Visit: [bit.ly/GreenHomeSurvey](https://bit.ly/GreenHomeSurvey)

*We hope you continue these practices after you receive certification. Reducing your footprint is a process so don't be frustrated about the things you couldn't accomplish. Keep the things you can't do now in mind for the future.*

Share your experiences with us on social media with  
**#NUGreenHome!**



**@sustainNU**