

2008 has certainly kicked off as a 'green year' and following from Earth Day and community clean-up day we thought we'd put together some suggestions for organizing your home a little 'greener'.....

As we never tire of saying, an organized home is the way to a happier and healthier family life, a more environmentally responsible life and a more motivated you at the end of it. When our home is organized we remove an enormous amount of stress from our day to day lives, enabling us to concentrate on others areas important to us, which are often over looked because we simply can't find the motivation when there appears to be so much to do.

In an organized home we have a place for everything and everything has a place, thereby reducing clutter and increasing a sense of organized well being. OK, we're not all perfect and sometimes it takes a small amount of effort to maintain, and maybe a quick blitz once every couple of months, but on the whole you will reap the rewards from a weekend of hard work for months to come. And an important by product of a well organized home is your impact on the environment, whether a conscious decision has been made to include energy and environmental efficiency you will notice that it simply happens anyway.

As professional organizers we adhere strongly to the principles of re-use, reduce and re-cycle. By creating recycling stations all around the house to encourage this, the use of biodegradable products and environment friendly cleaning products, space for keeping currently unused but good quality items and making use of existing items and not replacing for sheer aesthetic purposes. Recycling is often just considered to be tins and paper etc but we also consider donating or consigning unwanted items, responsibly disposing of items such as unwanted machinery, paint and toxics and encouraging responsible practices once the home is organized. Craigslist, Kijijii and Freecycle are all great ways to get rid of unwanted and unusable items. And don't forget we are almost (weather permitting) in Garage Sale season...

Here are some tips which can help in ensuring your home and the way you use your home leaves a smaller footprint.

1. Start in the basement or main storage area. This is a place that despite best intentions often gets lost along the way. A well organized space reduces waste, encourages recycling and ensures you re-use items you already possess. Use inexpensive shelving from a DIY store and totes from Wal-Mart.

2. The garage is another important area for your home and an organized garage can be a pleasure to use, and it plays an important role in the energy efficiency of your home. Insulating and dry walling a garage is reasonably simply to do and provides not only greater energy efficiency in your home, but increases the temperature of your garage so you have less need to idle your vehicle in the winter, and also provides an excellent backdrop on which to organize the space and create a recycling station.

3. Adapt a portion of your pantry for a mini recycling station and clear out all those chemicals from under the sink. Calgary has some great home grown organic cleaning products, we like www.smallplanet.ca Use this new space to start composting.

4. Organize your laundry room, and consider adding a hang dryer. Ikea have a convenient and affordable laundry system to compliment even the smallest laundry/mud room. Work out an efficient system so you avoid those half loads, it'll be good for your wallet too.

5. The playroom or bonus room can be organized to encourage children to learn recycling skills. Unwanted toys can be donated and craft stations can incorporate a recycling box, even if it is a Disney one. Contact the local shelters, often toys are well received here.

6. The city doesn't currently offer plastic recycling, but you can still organize your bathroom cupboards and make space for a mini recycling box for shampoo bottles and toilet role tubes. Residential Recycling will collect these plastics for a small annual fee.

7. A huge area of wastage occurs in the home office, or den. As well as the obvious need for a recycling box in this room, remember to take unwanted or old electrical/computer items to recycle, there is one at Curry Barracks and Staples will also take the items. Consider contacting your service providers for online statements, most banks and utilities now offer this service. And invest in a power bar that has an on/off switch so you can organize your wires for switching off to save power overnight.

8. Further general organizing of the home can also lend itself to a green theme, consider how you can achieve the following:

- a) Consider your key working areas, for example your desk and your reading chair - are these close to a source of natural light?
- b) Soft furnishings can now be considered energy efficient. If using window dressings to finish a room, consider the new energy efficient drapes which are more and more widely available.
- c) If you are redecorating make sure the paint you use is low in VOC's
- d) Consider using furniture and decoration that isn't mass produced and synthetic, hardwood floors from sustainable forests.
- e) If you have blinds, use them. Closed blinds in the summer will cool the house, open blinds let light into the house. Simple but effective. Similarly if you have tile or hardwood, use a rug or carpet to create warmth rather than increasing the heating.
- f) An organized house makes it easier to clean. A clean house improves the efficiency of your furnace as dust can inhibit the air flow.
- g) Ensure furniture, window coverings and carpets aren't covering any heating vents or cold air return vents.

And of course if you need help then we are only a phone call away, call us 403.475.0875 or visit our website www.somebodyelsestime.com for a free consultation.