

Resolutions FOR THE New Year

Story by **Betsy S. Franz**
Photography by **Dave Potter**

Start with small, eco-friendly changes around your own home

The problem with many New Year's resolutions is they are too hard to keep. Instead of setting small, reasonable goals, like losing five pounds, people resolve to lose 25 or 50. Instead of resolving to save a few more dollars each month, they decide on thousands by the end of the year. The goals are often so difficult that people give up before they really get started.

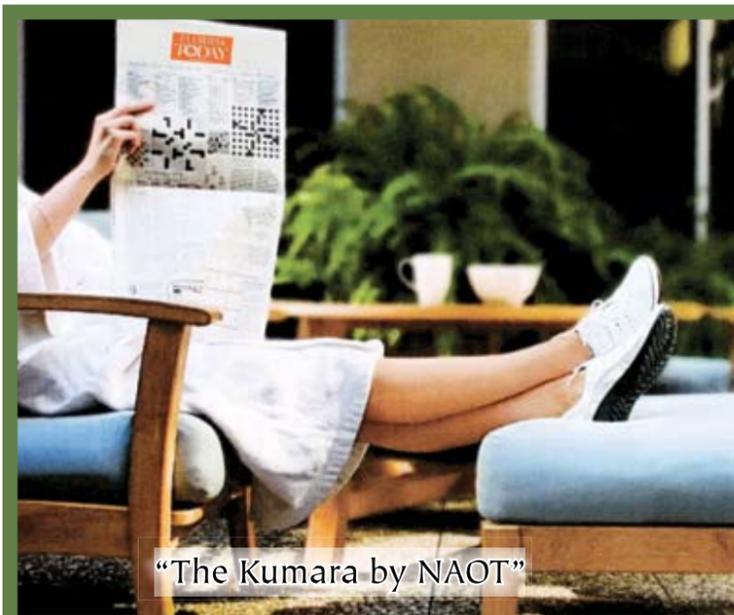
But with environmentally friendly resolutions, even the small steps can make a big difference, not only to the planet but often to your pocketbook, as well.



Lifestyle Homes' new SunSmartSM St. Croix model, which is equipped with a whole-house solar system, can save thousands of dollars a year in electric bills.



Above: A programmable thermostat can automatically adjust your air-conditioner or heat up or down a few degrees when you are away from home for awhile. For each degree you adjust your thermostat up or down, you can save about 5 percent in energy costs, says Winifred Perkins of Florida Power and Light.



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If you are looking for eco-friendly resolutions to add to your yearly goals, here is a list of options to help you choose the steps that are right for you, your level of commitment and your budget.

Energy Savings – Whole-house solar systems, like those included in Lifestyle Homes, new SunSmartSM St. Croix model, can make a home zero energy, saving thousands of dollars on electric bills each year. But if you want to make changes to your existing home, saving energy is as easy as flipping a switch or turning a dial. More dramatic changes can be made by keeping energy in mind for any new purchases or home improvements you have planned for the New Year.

Simple, free or low cost: “Save about 5 percent on your air-conditioning and heating costs for each degree you adjust your thermostat up or down,” suggested Winifred Perkins, manager of environmental relations for Florida Power and Light. “FPL recommends that homeowners set temperatures of 78 degrees in the summer and 68 degrees in the winter, and turn the thermostat up

Above: Jake Luhn, director of sales and marketing for Lifestyle Homes, says owners of existing homes can improve energy efficiency by sealing and insulating the home’s shell – its outer walls, ceiling, windows and doors.

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Above: Finding and fixing leaky faucets and turning off the faucet while brushing your teeth are simple ways to save water at home. Right: Choosing a low-flow showerhead for a bathroom remodel can result in an annual water savings of 30 percent.

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or down an additional five degrees when you are going to be away from home for more than five hours.” Programmable thermostats (starting at \$39.98 at Home Depot) will do all the adjusting for you.

Moderate – Jake Luhn, director of sales and marketing for Lifestyle Homes, suggested “tightening up” existing homes to reap energy savings. “Sealing and insulating the “envelope” or “shell” of a home – its outer walls, ceiling, windows and doors – is often the most cost effective way to improve energy efficiency of an existing home and is also a needed first step in case you do want to convert to solar in the future.” Luhn said. Figures from the U.S. Department of Energy estimate savings of up to 20 percent on heating and cooling costs (or up to 10 percent on their total annual energy bill) by sealing and insulating.

Major – When it comes time to purchase new appliances, Energy Star-rated appliances are good choices for the planet and for your pocketbook. Typical energy cost savings range from \$35 to \$200 a year, depending on the type and age of the





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Above: To reduce indoor air pollution, regularly change air-conditioning and heating system filters. Left: Be careful when applying chemicals in your yard, such as fertilizers, as rain can wash these materials into storm drains and then into rivers, lakes and wetlands. Permeable surfaces, such as pavers let water run into the ground instead of into storm drains.

appliance that your replace. And of course, if a new home is in your plans for the future, choosing a builder with experience in energy efficiency or green home standards will allow you to reap environmentally friendly, money-saving benefits for years to come.

Conserving Water – According to Ed Garland, communication specialist for the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD): “Lawn and landscape irrigation account for more than 50 percent of all residential water use in our area. However, finding and fixing leaks and not running faucets are often overlooked as easy steps to save water.”

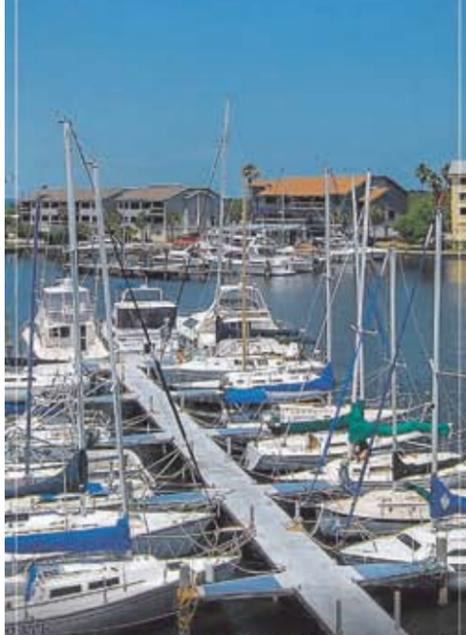
Simple free or low cost: Turning off the faucet while brushing your teeth can save around 20 to 30 gallons of water per week per person. For a family of four, this can add up to over 6,000 gallons a year. Leaky faucets and toilets, which often go unnoticed, can also waste huge amounts of water.

Moderate – If you are planning a kitchen or bathroom update, choosing low-flow toilets, shower heads or on-demand water heaters can save water and money. Harry Prosser, operations manager of Aqua-Draulics Plumbing Supply in Rockledge, supplied these statistics: “A customer who replaces an inefficient 3.5 gallon-per-flush (gpf) toilet to a newer 1.6 gpf model is likely to save almost 11,000 gallons of water per year. If they opt for the latest water-saving toilets that use only 1.28 gpf, they can realize an additional 20 percent water savings over the 1.6 gpf model. Current showerheads typically use 2.5gpm, but by changing to a 1.75 gpm model, a customer can realize an annual water savings of 30 percent. Change out the lavatory faucets to efficient 1.5 gpf models, and a 32 percent water savings can be achieved over most current models.”

Major – Rethink your landscape. “Watering wisely outside the home saves water and promotes healthier lawns



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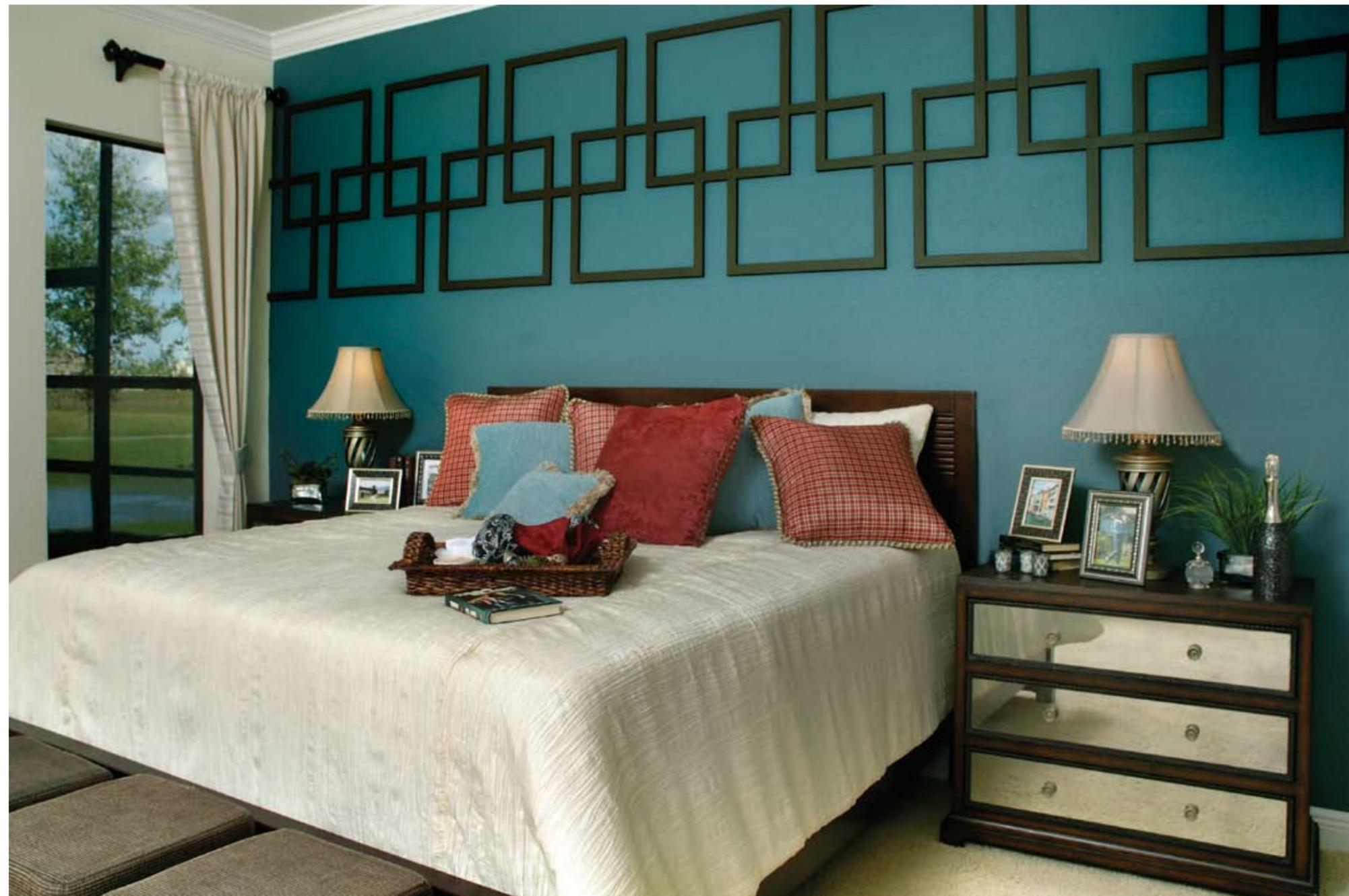
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Left: When redecorating your home, choose products with a low content of volatile organic compounds (VOC). Paint, flooring and window treatments can affect a home's indoor air quality.

and landscapes," Garland, of SJRWMD, said. "Overwatering a lawn can promote weeds and insect pests, as well as weakened grass roots. You can save water by irrigating lawns and landscapes only when they need it, by properly maintaining your irrigation system and by landscaping with plants and grasses that require minimal water."

Protecting water – In Florida, protecting water quality is as important – and as easy – as conserving water. Everything that goes into the groundwater around your home, such as fertilizers and pesticides, has the potential of finding its way into our waterways, but there are simple changes that can go a long way in keeping our water supplies clean.

Simple, free or low cost: Be aware of what substances are used or created in your yard and make sure that they don't find their way into storm drains. This means keeping trash,

dog waste, motor oil, etc. off streets, sidewalks, yards and walkways.

Moderate: Be careful with chemicals in your landscape. All of the chemicals such as fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides that are used in landscapes can get picked up by rain and misdirected sprinkler heads and get washed out into the storm-water lines, where they can find their way to rivers, lakes, wetlands, coastal waters and even underground sources of drinking water. This type of pollution is called nonpoint source pollution and is one of the major contributors to degradation of Florida's waterways.

Major: Install a paver driveway. Permeable surfaces, such as paver driveways, allow rain water to run into the ground on your property, rather than finding its way into storm drains. This helps cut down on nonpoint source pollution and also

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Air purification systems installed by your heating and cooling contractor can effectively remove bacteria, pollen, animal dander and other pollutants.

helps reduce flooding during times of heavy rains.

Clean air/indoors – The EPA has named indoor air pollution as one of the top five environmental risks to public health. The EPA also reports that indoor air can be up to 100 times more polluted than the air outside.

Simple and low cost or free: Vacuum cleaners, central heaters and air conditioners have filters to trap dust and other pollutants in the air. Make sure to change or clean the filters regularly, following the instructions on the package.

Moderate: When it is time to redecorate or remodel, choose products with low volatile organic compounds content. Everything from paint to flooring and window treatments can affect the indoor air quality of a home.

Major: Install a whole home air purification system. Air purification systems installed by your heating and cooling contractor can effectively remove bacteria, pollen, animal dander and other pollutants as small as 0.01 microns – that’s 18,000 times smaller than the head of a pin.

As you can see, when it comes to resolutions for the New Year, there are many green options. Choose the ones that are right for you to make a positive change for the future of Brevard.

Since we began featuring green topics in Spaces Magazine in September 2008, we have covered topics as diverse as green-certified new home construction, environmentally friendly choices in window treatments, flooring and landscapes, and green commuting options. We are anxious to share more eco-friendly topics with you and are looking for topics that you would find useful. Please feel free to suggest topics by sending an e-mail to skindred@floridatoday.com with a subject heading of Green Topics. ■



Solar panels are one facet of the whole-house solar system featured in Lifestyle Homes’ SunSmartSM St. Croix model.

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