



## Environmentally *Friendly*...What does it really mean?



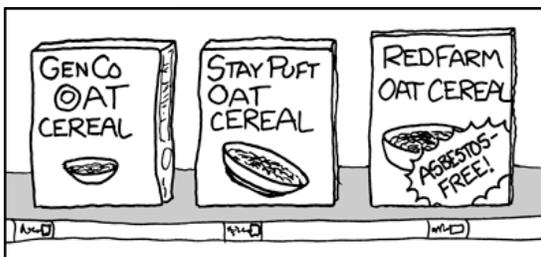
### *Slippery definitions*

Environmentally-friendly. Green. Natural. Organic. Chances are you've heard these buzzwords referring to various products and services. They aim to make you feel good about the choices you make. If your goal is to walk a little lighter on the earth, that's fine. But often, these words don't hold any weight. Instead, they are used to catch your eye and give the impression that a product's environmental impact is more benign than it really is. For example, what does it really mean when your dry cleaner touts organic cleaning? It could simply mean they use hydrocarbon solvents (what you put in your gas tank, which is, in fact, organic) instead of or in addition to traditional toxic

solvents. Just because something claims to be organic, doesn't mean it's healthy or *green*. According to the U.S. EPA, only "wet cleaning" or "CO2 cleaning" can be considered "green" since these cleaning processes don't involve chemical cleaning agents.

### *Label this, label that*

Living an environmentally-friendly lifestyle is a noble goal. The difficulty lies in seeing the forest for the trees. In the case of labels, it means seeing the hidden truth in the advertisement. For example, although CFC production was banned in the US and many other nations in 1995, many labels still boast that a product is CFC free. The moral of the story is to know your labels and understand what they mean and whether their claims have any relevance on the product you are purchasing.



I HATE WHATEVER MARKETER FIRST REALIZED YOU COULD DO THIS.

### *Making the commitment*

How far one is willing to take it to be "green" can extend to every facet of life - clothes, transportation, food, energy, construction - the list goes on. Ask yourself: Do we want our food to be raised in a sustainable manner? How about how our homes are



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built or renovated? What about our light bulbs? Toilet paper?

Interesting fact: according to Scientific American, ultra soft brands of toilet paper typically use virgin fiber treated with chlorine. Brands made from recycled post-consumer content are a more environmentally-friendly bet, but are often a coarser alternative. Are we more willing to pay more for less than soft toilet paper? It all depends on your passion and what you are willing to tradeoff.



### ***Flushing dollars***

In addition to products we purchase, what about those readily available in our homes and offices? One we all interact with several times a day is water. We brush, flush, bathe, drink, and garden with water. We cannot replace the utility of this resource, nor can we substitute. We can, however, interact with water in a more environmentally-friendly fashion. How? Low flow toilets for starters. Stop flushing your dollars! Think about installing low flow or high performance toilets that use about five gallons less water per flush

than conventional toilets. How many gallons would you save per day? If you don't want to buy a new toilet, try installing a dual flush system on your conventional toilet. These systems, which are easy to install, allow for two different flush (or water) levels depending on what needs to be flushed.

### ***A friend in need is a friend indeed***

Ultimately, how you decide to live out your environmental-friendliness is up to you. If it suits you to turn off the faucet when brushing your teeth, great. If you'd rather install a rain barrel to capture rain water from your roof, that's great, too. Both choices conserve resources and reduce wastewater. Natural resources make the world go 'round. We all *take* these resources on a daily basis, but how do we give back or conserve? Maintain a *green* frame of mind and take action.



*Please visit the websites below for more information on "green" labeling, products, and living.*

[www.epa.gov/dfe/pubs/garment/gcrg/cleanguide.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/dfe/pubs/garment/gcrg/cleanguide.pdf)  
<http://www.greenerchoices.org/>  
<http://home.howstuffworks.com/dual-flush-toilet.htm>  
<http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/>  
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