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Renters Want to go Green

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You want them, the government wants you to have them...so why aren't earth-friendly homes standard in this environmentally conscious day and age?

A recent study by [Rent.com](#) shows that 86 percent of renters prefer "eco-friendly living" and more than half are willing to cough up the cash to do so. The study also reports that two out of every five renters were willing to pay an additional \$100 in rent per month to be kind to the

environment while 13 percent were willing to fork over more than that. The problem is green of another kind. 66 percent of renters reported that the one thing standing between themselves and living green is money.

"It's also about making a connection between the environment and our health," says Leslie Mann, former chair of the Sierra Club's legislative action committee. "It's very worth it to me to have cleaner indoor quality for my family and to reduce their exposure to harmful toxins. I can't put a price on that." Mann adds that living green doesn't necessarily mean ponying up for solar panels and rain water filters. For \$100 to \$200, renters can reduce their environmental impact by switching to eco-friendly home products, recycling, choosing compact fluorescent bulbs over regular ones and trading old appliances in for Energy Star-certified ones. Don Ferrier, a Fort Worth, Texas-based sustainable builder and recipient of the National Association of Home Builder's Green Builder Advocate of the Year award, says that renters willing to give a little time to fixing up their homes can significantly reduce their carbon footprint for little to no cash.

"Spending a weekend sealing leaky ducts can be a simple measure with huge benefits to reduce energy consumption," he says. "They can also plant a tree to keep the hot sun out in the summer."

One obstacle to achieving the green dream could simply be misconceptions about what exactly constitutes an environmentally-friendly home. Rent.com reports that when asked to think of a green apartment, more than half of all respondents envision solar panels, one in five picture a pad with a modern interior design and 14 percent imagine a plant-filled paradise.

"An eco-home can mean anything from a home with a few green features or designed to be more environmentally sensitive all the way to a zero-net energy home, which would be a home that is self sustained and does not require outside energy sources," says Cheryl O'Connor, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Home Builders Association of Northern California. "Terms like eco-home and green home are thrown around casually and unfortunately create some confusion about the actual definitions."

The only way to tell if a home is truly environmentally efficient is to check the building's code. Homes that have achieved accreditation through the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program or Build It Green's [Greenpoint project](#) come with a green rating that can help renters determine their home's environmental footprint.

The good news, adds O'Connor, is that renters will have more options in energy efficient homes in the future. While certain cities like San Francisco mandate that all [new homes](#) need to include green features, federal tax credits that reward consumers for purchasing energy efficient appliances will help provide incentive to those building in areas without green requirements. While renters have significantly less control over major structural home features like heating systems and insulation than their home-owning counterparts, they can reduce their environmental footprint by choosing buildings with green certification, within walking or biking range of work or school and investing a little in basic home upgrades.

It's not easy being green, but it's definitely worthwhile.

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