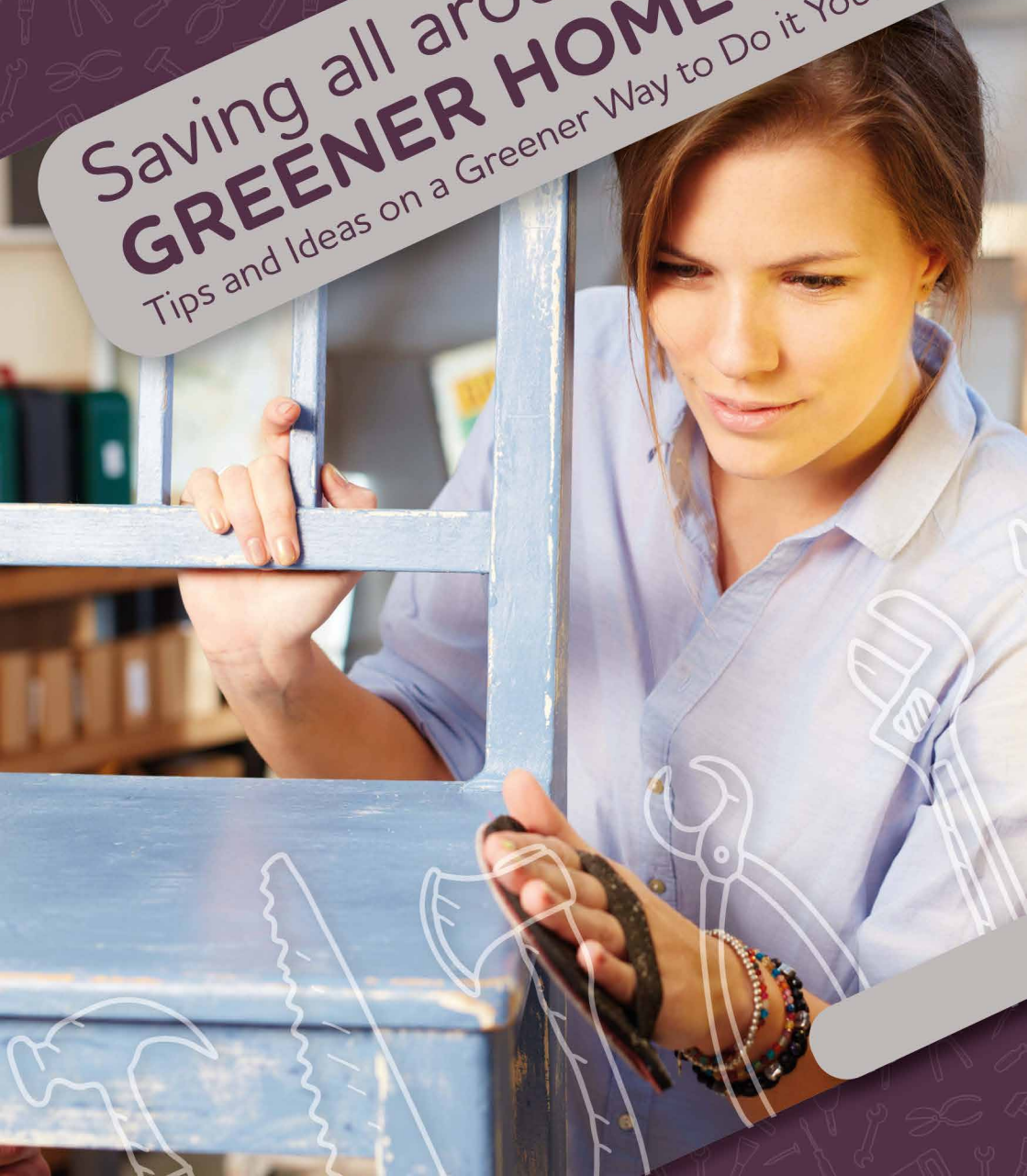


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Saving all around

GREENER HOME HINTS

Tips and Ideas on a Greener Way to Do it Yourself



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Now, more than ever, we are better informed about the impact our consumer choices have on the environment. Consumerism is a real environmental concern; natural resources are depleting rapidly, so we all need to embrace the circular economy. This means thinking before we buy and asking ourselves these questions: **Do I really need this?** Can I repair or upcycle what I have already? What will become of the item I am replacing? Can it be reused or recycled?

Decorating our homes falls into the category of consumerism. Let this guide inspire you to make greener choices about the products and services you buy and use. Greener Home Hints will give you tips and ideas on a greener way to improve and love your home.



Before you begin:

Inevitably, over time our homes, furniture and accessories become shabby and tired looking. Before you contemplate throwing things away, why not undertake an internet search to get some inspiration?

Shabby, dirty or damaged household items can be revitalised with a good clean, some paint, varnish and new textiles – often at a fraction of the price of something new.

Older furniture, even items such as kitchen cabinets are often more durable than contemporary products. With a little imagination, these can be brought right up to date.

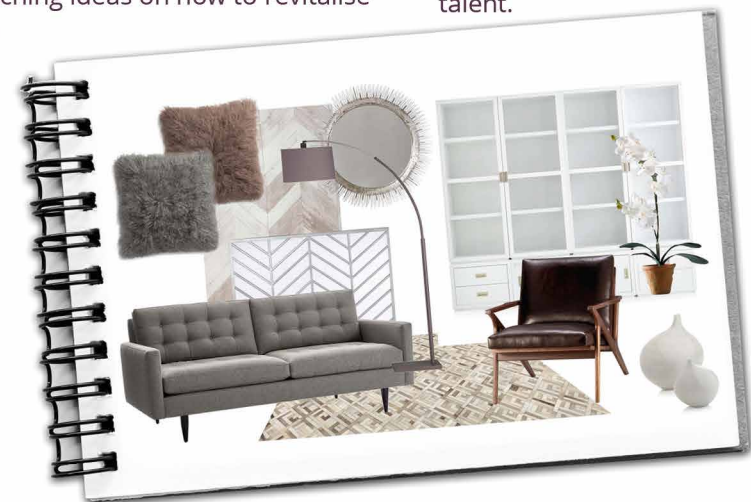
Sites such as Pinterest and Etsy are wonderful resources, as is the local library, which has dozens of decorating books, periodicals and magazines on the subject.



Planning:

The secret to stress-free DIY and decorating is to make a plan. Our top tip is to get a sketchbook and start by listing out all the items you already have. Next, spend some time researching ideas on how to revitalise these.

Allow yourself to think outside the box; create a “mood board” by cutting out ideas from magazines. Try to visualise the items you already have in a new improved setting. This approach may result in you needing to replace fewer items, saving you money, preventing waste and unleashing your creative talent.





Paint:

Paint, varnishes and stains are essential DIY products, intrinsic to all aspects of decoration.

Painting a room can transform it, instantly creating light and warmth.

Other than the colour, most of us never think about paint before we go

to buy it. Open any shed, garage or utility room cupboard and you will most likely find unused paint, much of which is harmful to the environment and human health.

Over-purchasing and storing paint is a common mistake most of us make. We may over-buy because we didn't know how to calculate the correct amount, or because we are afraid of running out - or we may want to save some for "touching up" the room later.

Here is some helpful advice worth reading **before** you go to the paint shop:

- Do your research – paint properties have changed enormously in recent years and paints are now tailored to specific areas of the home, like the kitchen or bathroom.
- The most common interior paint finishes (paint sheen) are **flat, eggshell, satin, semi-gloss, and high-gloss**. Choosing the right paint finish for your interior project depends on the look, durability, and ambiance you want. It's a costly mistake if you choose the wrong paint finish.
- Once you have decided the finish, the next stage of planning is to calculate how much paint you need. Paint cans contain information on square metre coverage but you also need to factor in the wall surface and the colour change. Covering a dark paint with a lighter shade requires more coats.
- Paint manufacturers have developed **paint calculators** to help us work out the minimum quantity of paint needed. To use a paint calculator you need to know the square meters of the space. You can calculate this by multiplying the length by the width of each wall.

Other helpful tips:

- Get to know your labels – paints contain VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) which are harmful to the environment. In recent years, there has been significant reduction in the quantity of VOCs in paints, so read the packaging carefully or ask staff to identify the products that are low VOC.
- Many paints are available as "Breathe Easy" or low odour and most people find these more comfortable to use.
- Water-based paint is much less harmful to the environment than solvent-based paints. So, if suitable for the job in hand, choose a water-based option.

Familiarise yourself with the symbols on paint cans:

If your paint tins have any of these labels - then your paint is going to be a hazardous waste.





Before you get started:

Tedious as it may seem, preparing the wall or wood surface is essential to getting the job done efficiently.

Painting over dirty surfaces will cause the paint to chip and peel off. So investing time in thoroughly cleaning and preparing the surfaces is essential.

Make life easier and prevent damage to existing floors and furniture by covering them before you paint. Use cloths (such as old duvet covers or sheets) instead of plastic to cover the furniture or floor.

Cloths can be reused repeatedly. When you are finished just roll them up and store away until your next DIY job.



At the Paint Store:

Many hardware and DIY stores host special **Paint Information Days**, and these not only provide advice on colours and trends, but are also a great opportunity to learn more about the different paint finishes and products on the market.

Like everything else in life, quality matters – choosing good quality paint for better durability will pay off over time, requiring repainting less often.

If you are unsure about the colour, do not make a costly mistake – instead, purchase a tester or match pot and try that out first.

If you use an in-store paint making service, do not overbuy – the colour can still be matched for a second batch.

Paint accessories are important too – if possible, purchase quality brushes and roller sets. If looked after properly, they are an investment and they may make the job easier to do. Cheap accessories do not last and may end up costing more in the end.

When the painting is finished:

- Wash and dry accessories before storing away;
 - Unused and unopened paint can be returned to the retailer for a refund;
 - If you intend to keep unused paint, make sure the lid is correctly fitted and store the paint cans in a cool, dry place. Storing paint in a shed or garage isn't the best location as extreme temperatures, both hot and cold, will affect the paint;
 - Empty water-based paint containers can be placed in your general waste bin. Water based paints are non-hazardous so the empty tubs are suitable for general waste disposal;
 - If there is a tiny amount of paint in the tub, you can leave the lid off
- and let the paint dry out completely before placing it in the general waste bin. Alternatively add some soil or sand to the paint tub before disposal;
- Paints that are oil based, varnishes, lacquers, spray paints and other paint-related materials, such as white spirits, are hazardous to the environment and need to be disposed of correctly. Many local authority Civic Amenity Sites accept this material. You can check the Waste Services Locator on www.mywaste.ie to find a site close to you;
 - Some local authorities, along with the Rediscovery Centre in Dublin, promote paint reuse schemes. Check with your local authority to see if they are participating in a paint reuse scheme.

Upcycling

Upcycling, also known as creative reuse, is becoming very popular. So, before you discard furniture or other household items, why not take a second look and see if they can be upcycled instead?

A quick internet search will give you lots of inspiration and if you search locally you may find creative businesses near you that are transforming furniture and

household appliances, to bring them back to life and up to date.

Alternatively, enrol in a course that will teach you the techniques of upcycling furniture, simple upholstery, decoupage and other craft techniques. Check out night classes and weekend workshops advertised in your local paper or lifestyle store.

Here is some more inspiration for reusing and upcycling:



Appliance Paint: Did you know you could buy paints to change the colour of your appliances? These paints can also be used to touch up scratched white goods. Painting a shabby white appliance in a bright colour can completely transform a utility room or kitchen.



Tile and Grout Paint: Similar to appliances you can transform old tiles by purchasing a specific tile paint. You need to prepare the tiles properly but this effort will ensure the paint goes on effectively. Painting over tiles is cheaper, quicker and creates less waste than replacing them.

Tile grout tends to get shabby quickly, purchase a grout whitener to brighten up the grout or try replacing the grout with a darker colour, which can add a contrasting and uplifting effect to existing tiles.



Simple Upholstery: By investing in a glue gun and fabric stapler, you can easily, quickly and cheaply replace stool and chair pads, pelmets and other simple upholstery tasks.



Shabby Chic and Distressed Furniture: Chalk paint and the art of “distressing” furniture is very popular. There are many online tutorials to guide you through the process. These techniques are a great way to bring old-fashioned furniture up to date. Couple these techniques with some simple upholstery to create a unique, modern look.



Soft Furnishings: Making your own blinds, curtains and cushion covers is simpler than you think and creative fabric use can give these household items an edge. For example, you can make cushion covers from old denim jeans or t-shirts. Use old curtains to make throws or as seat pad covers. Many of these items can be made with simple sewing skills along with Velcro and fabric glue.

Alternatively check out local sewing services who can help you with more complicated sewing or textile projects.



Additional Extras: It is amazing what accessories can do, adding a new trim to a pair of old curtains for example or replacing the handles on a set of drawers is often all that's needed to make you love the items you already own. Use the internet, magazines and books to recreate the looks you love.

Need additional help?

If spare time is in short supply but you would still prefer to keep what you have and just improve it, then do some research to locate refurbishment and upcyclers in your area.

Along with private businesses there are now many social enterprises that provide upholstery and upcycling services. The Community Resources Network Ireland (CRNI) is a great starting point for locating a local service www.crni.ie

Tools - Tips & Tricks

Buying tools can make DIY seem expensive especially when you are starting off. Here is some handy advice to save money and avoid mistakes:



Essential tools every household needs are a measuring tape, a hammer, a Phillips head and a flathead screwdriver. Before you buy additional items, why not see if your community or Local Men's Shed has a Tool Library where you can borrow tools for a small fee.



Get advice before you buy. Staff at your local hardware store will give you advice and even show you how to correctly use and care for your tools.



Quality – Tools are meant to last a long time, so it is always worth spending a bit more to get a quality product. This also applies to fixings such as screws. Poorer quality products are harder to work with.



If you buy it, use it – Power tool batteries left idle for long periods will eventually die and are costly to replace.



Handles often break on garden tools. Don't forget, you can purchase replacement handles at all hardware stores – or contact your local Men's Shed, as some of these offer tool repair/replacement services.



Purchasing tools online – this might save you money but be careful and do your research to ensure the tool is right for your needs.



Second-hand tools are a great way to save money, but be sure to get advice before you buy and make sure you are purchasing from a reputable source.



Create a space to organise and store your tools correctly, to prevent damage.

Repair Services



Less than fifty years ago, the repair industry was thriving in Ireland. Household products and furniture were expensive, so durability and longevity were important considerations. Mass consumerism is relatively new and, in the last twenty years, trends in home décor have changed at a rapid rate, resulting in many consumers redecorating more frequently than in previous generations.

When we think of repair nowadays, we associate it with electronics like phones and tablets or expensive items like lawnmowers and cars. The advent of cheaper goods, even large items like fridges, washing

machines and microwaves has meant that replacing is often cheaper than repair.

Repairing is good for the environment; it keeps goods in circulation for longer, which means that fewer resources are used to make new things. Using local repair services can save you money and time and it helps support the local economy.

To help you find a local repair service, log on to www.repairmystuff.ie

This repair directory aims to make it easier for consumers to avail of the many great repair services that exist across the country.

The Big Clean Up

No matter how big or small your DIY project, there is always waste afterwards. If you are unsure what materials you can recycle or dispose of after a project, check out www.mywaste.ie for further advice and guidance. Search the Waste Services Locator map on My Waste to locate your closest Civic Amenity Site.

DIY wastes that are accepted at most Civic Amenity Sites include:



Adhesives, resins, varnishes and oil based paint: These are hazardous wastes.



Rubble, slate, plaster & cement: These items are referred to as construction and demolition waste.



Untreated wood, timber off-cuts, planks or skirting boards



Power Tools: These are waste electrical equipment and can be dropped off for recycling at a Civic Amenity Site or WEEE retailer.



Mattresses: Also worth checking with your local authority to see if they offer a mattress-recycling scheme.

Wastes that can be disposed of in your general waste bin include:



Rags or clothing stained with paint



Empty water based emulsion tubs

Household items that can be donated for reuse include:



Soft furnishings and curtains



Furniture



Bric a brac, crockery, cutlery and ornaments

When to not Do It Yourself

Safety:

Personal safety is paramount. Always assess any risks before you start. You can use these questions to guide you:

Do I have the correct tools for the job?

Do I have all the necessary safety equipment?

Do I have the certified training or qualifications to complete this work safely?

If you have any doubts, then do not proceed; instead seek professional assistance.

Time:

Being time-poor is a common modern day complaint. So you may have the skills but not the time to complete the task. In such cases, weigh up the cost of hiring a professional against how much time you can devote to a project.

Continuous Learning:

Not knowing how to do something should never be an excuse not to do it and, in fact, learning new skills sparks joy for many people. Remember though it is important to do research in advance. Take the advice of professionals and do not start until you are sure you know what you are doing to avoid expensive mistakes.

Unless you are a professional, here are a few jobs you should never do yourself:



Cutting Down Trees: even removing branches is dangerous as it may require climbing, working at a distance from the ground as well as using power tools.



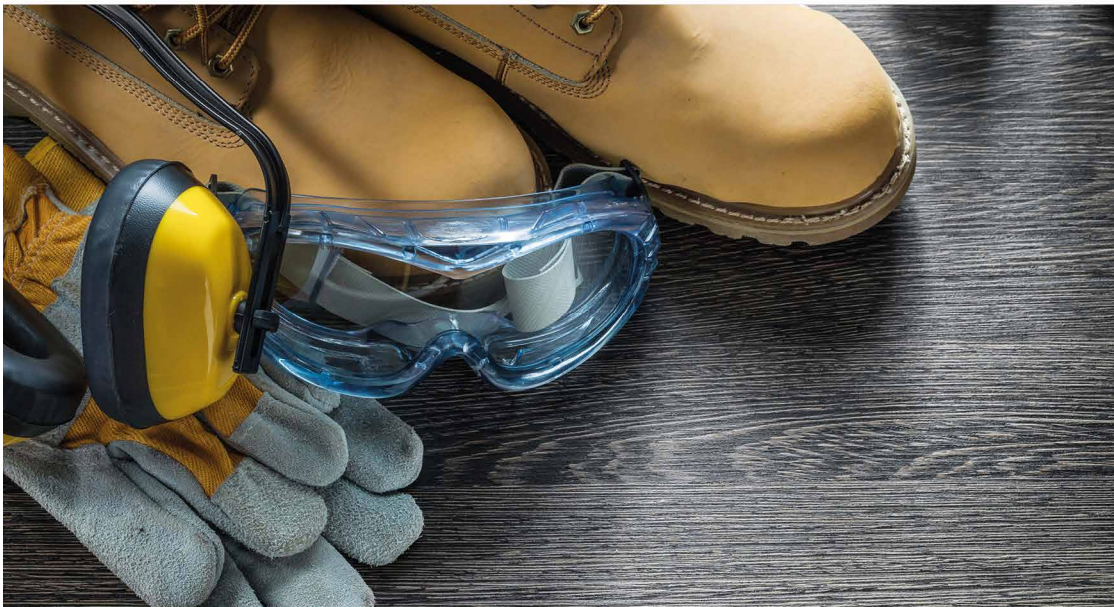
Knocking Down walls: This might seem like a simple task but behind the wall, there is usually wiring, plumbing or gas piping so this is another job for the professional.



Electrical Work: This is a no-go area and always requires a certified professional, no matter how small the job.



Roof Work: Working at height is very risky, so, if your gutters or roof need repairing or clearing, always call on a professional.



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