

## What Have You Done for Conservation Lately?

What have I done for conservation lately, what have I done for conservation lately? That's where I found myself pondering the topic and then realized I really didn't fully understand what conservation was. After researching for a little while I learned that conservation is the prevention of wasteful use of a natural resource. Okay, wait what is a natural resource? After researching again I discovered that a natural resource is a resource that exists without any action from humankind. Okay, now I understand so the topic is asking what have I, as a human on this planet done to prevent the wasteful use of resources such as water, land, etc.... got it.

Hmmm, well when I was brainstorming ideas the first thought that came to my head was water use showers. My family always complains that I take incredibly long showers, when really, I only take 40 minutes (pause). Alright fine I take lone showers and by doing that I use a lot of hot water. The average American shower uses roughly 17 gallons of water and lasts about 8 minutes. So, my 40-minute shower would use almost 60 gallons of water. It takes approximately 0.134 kilowatt hours to heat each gallon so that 60-gallon shower just used 8.04 kilowatt's, that roughly the energy needed to run a 100-watt light bulb for 80 hours. It does use a lot of both water and electricity to take a long shower. So, by taking shorter showers I'm conserving energy, "see conservation isn't so hard after all" my dad told me, well hunting in his duck blind is his happy place the shower is mine, but for conservation I will try my hardest to take shorter showers. So by taking shorter showers I'm practicing conservation of water and electricity, what other ways go I do that.

According to an article in Greener Living here are some great ways we can all practice conservation of water and electricity in our homes.

- Turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth
- Only wash full loads of laundry
- Harvest rainwater and use to water your house plants and garden.
- Install water efficient appliances and showerheads
- Unplug chargers when not in use
- Close window shades when it hot and sunny
- Replace old lightbulbs with LED's
- Turn lights off when you leave the house (I think my whole family needs a lesson on that one)

Those things seem simple enough and will probably even save our family some money, that's a win-win for us and planet earth. Those are a few simple ways to practice conservation of water and electricity but what other conservation measures can I practice?

As I was brainstorming I looked out my window, bang the light bulb went off (in my head that is). Trees, beautiful trees. We have rows of trees planted around our farmstead; they really do a great job of stopping the wind and snow. In fact according to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, a well-designed shelterbelt can cut winter heating bills by 10 to 25 percent. Of course, the huge hackberry that towers over our house provides lots of great shade in the summer and that helps cut our electric use for air conditioning. So by helping my family plant trees around our farmyard I'm not only practicing conservation but I'm spending time with my family and being outside. What other ways can I practice conservation while being outside?

As I continued brainstorming My eye scanned our garden, there must be something I can do in there? My research leads me to another USDA publication entitled "Backyard Conservation". One of the fact sheets talks about composting. More reading reveals you can turn your organic waste such as grass clippings, leaves, twigs, vegetable and fruit scrapes and even shredded paper into humus (hu-mis) or what's more commonly known as compost. By composting you can raise the organic matter of the soil causing it to be more healthy. So by composting things that would normally be thrown in the trash or burned I can actually use to increase the organic matter content of our garden. Not only making the soil healthier but helps my family grow better vegetables, another win-win.

It appears we can all practice conservation in and around our homes and make our world more sustainable for future generations.