

# ESSENCE

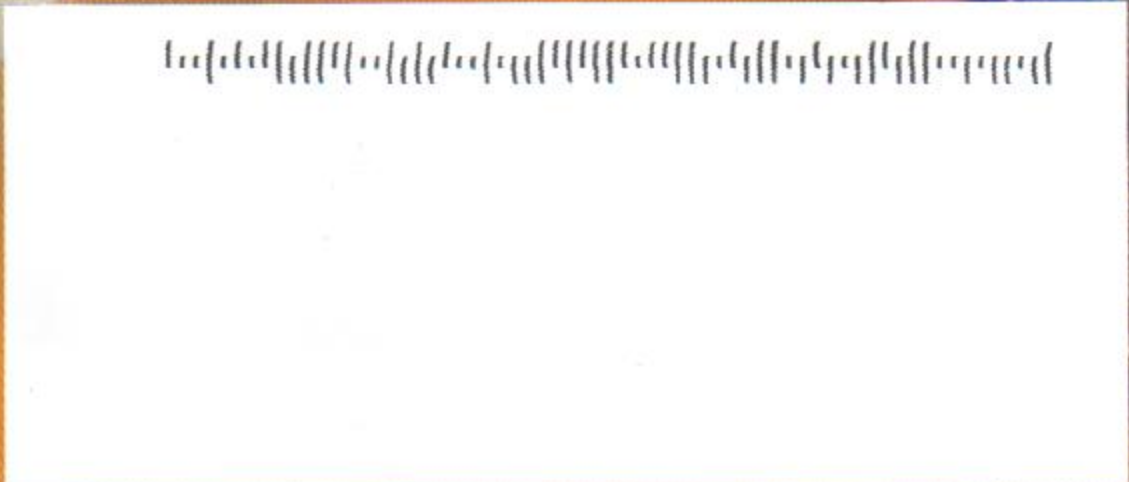
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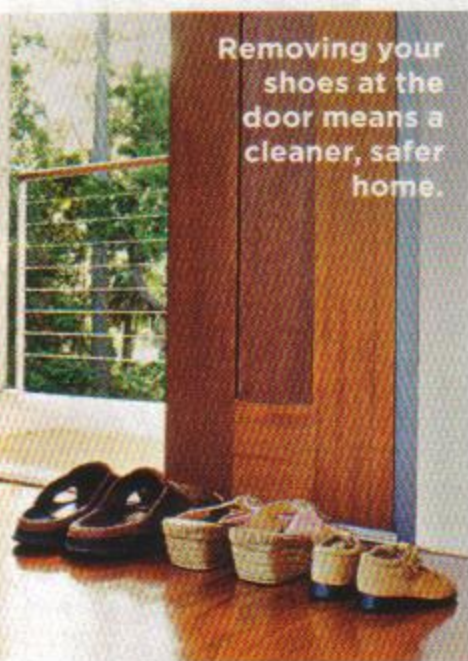
# Greening House

Protect your health—and save some cash—with these home tips from eco-friendly design expert Robin Wilson

BY AMBER J. ADAMS

## 1 Leave shoes at the door.

Ditch your kicks when you enter your home—and ask everyone else to do the same—to prevent bringing pesticides, bacteria and toxic chemicals into your living space. Experts say that everything from coal tar (a carcinogenic substance found in black driveways) to lead (which may be in soil and can damage your nervous system) can be tracked into homes via shoes.



Removing your shoes at the door means a cleaner, safer home.

## 2 Close the toilet lid.

Your bathroom battle shouldn't be just about keeping the seat down, but making sure the lid's closed as well. If you leave the lid open when you flush, a fine

mist of water is sprayed several feet from your toilet, exposing you to bacteria. "The area around your toilet could have a higher level of E. coli than you can imagine," says Robin Wilson, CEO of Robin Wilson Home, a residential and commercial interior design, consulting and licensing firm. And consider replacing your old toilet with an EPA-labeled WaterSense model, which uses 20 percent less than the amount of water older toilets do and can save you nearly \$100 on your utility bill each year.

## 3 Hang a nylon shower liner.

Vinyl shower liners release toxins such as phthalates that have been linked to liver cancer and birth defects.

## 4 Convert your pillow.

"We don't see dust mites, but they're the reason your pillow weighs more six months after you buy it," explains Wilson. By using a hypoallergenic pillow or pillow cover, you limit exposure to dust mites that



## LITE BRITE

Corkscrew-shaped CFL bulbs can leech mercury into landfills. Try energy-saving LED bulbs instead and dispose of CFLs at a hazardous waste site.

can cause allergic reactions and asthma attacks. Whether you lay your head on poly fill, down or a hypoallergenic brand, wash your pillow every three months as instructed and the cover weekly in hot water. Ditching your old pillow? Don't toss it in the trash. Wash it, dry it, and donate it to an animal shelter.



## 5 Try carpet tiles.

With wall-to-wall carpeting, one stain could be a disaster that has you sending that rug to a landfill. With carpet tiles, you can simply lift the soiled tile and replace it or pop it in the washing machine. And some manufacturers, such as InterfaceFLOR (interfaceflor.com) and Shaw (shawfloors.com), offer take-back programs that recycle tiles when you're finished with them.

## 6 Upgrade your thermostat.

Invest in a programmable thermostat that turns itself on when you're home and off when you're away.

"You can achieve a steady temperature in your house based on your schedule," says Wilson. Added bonus? Saving up to \$180 a year on your

energy bill. Try the 7-Day Universal Programmable Thermostat by Honeywell (\$80, lowes.com).

## 7 Remodel with a conscience.

Use health- and eco-friendly materials for your renovation. Select countertops made of sustainable or recycled materials such as old tubs and bottles that have been crushed up rather than thrown out. Call your local home supply store or go online to find earth-friendly brands, like Eco by Cosentino (ecoby-cosentino.com), near you.