



If it's green, we've got it!

GLOSSARY

www.fieldsofgreendirectory.com

The first step to understanding green, is understanding the terminology. Our Green Words Glossary has over 100 words for you to review and become familiar with. We will be adding to these periodically. Be sure to check back to keep current!

A

Acid rain – rain with increased acidity due to absorption of airborne pollutants such as CO₂ and sulphur dioxide.

Air pollution – contaminants or substances in the air that interfere with human health or produce other harmful environmental effect.

Alternative energy – energy from uncommon sources such as wind power, hydro or solar energy. These sources are considered cleaner and more environmentally friendly. Not fossil fuels.

Alternative fuels – not fossil fuels. Different sources of fuel for transportation such as electricity, natural gas or bio fuels.

Ambient air quality – the condition of the air in the surrounding environment.

B

Bakeout – a process used to remove volatile organic compounds (VOC) from a building by operating the HVAC system at elevated temperatures using 100% outside air after all the furniture and finishes have been installed.

Bamboo – a fast growing, eco friendly and easily replenished plant that is used to make everything from clothing to flooring.

Biodegradable – the ability of a material to decompose through natural processes and eventually be reabsorbed by the natural environment.

Biodiesel – fuel obtained from biomass that is adequate for use in diesel type internal combustion motors.

Bioenergy – renewable energy produced from organic matter.

Biofuels – fuels made from biomass.

Biogas – a combustible gas derived from decomposing biological waste. Usually consisting of 50 to 60 percent methane.

Biomass – renewable energy source derived from organic matter such as wood, agricultural waste and other living cell matter.

Bioremediation – the use of natural biological processes (microbes, bacteria, plants etc.) to break down contaminants and restore contaminated land back to productive use.

Black water – water containing human or animal waste from toilets or urinals. Black water contains pathogens and must be neutralized before the water can safely be reused. Typically, after neutralization, it is reused for non-potable uses such as flushing or irrigation.

Building envelope – elements that enclose a building (walls, windows, roofs, skylights, insulation, vapor barriers, siding etc.) The building envelope is a thermal barrier between the indoor and outdoor environment and is a key factor in the sustainability of a building.

C

Carbon dioxide – CO₂, is a colorless odorless gas found naturally in the Earth's atmosphere. It is one of the gases of the greenhouse effect that in excessive amounts contributes to global warming.

Carbon footprint – a measure of your impact on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases are produced.

Carbon neutral – a scenario where the net discharge of carbon dioxide is zero. Carbon neutrality can be achieved by planting enough trees so that the CO₂ emissions would be offset by the CO₂ absorption by the plants. Carbon neutral is also referred to as “net zero carbon”.

Carbon rationing – limiting the amount of carbon you use each year. Carbon rationing action groups (crag) help you reduce your carbon footprint.

Carbon sink – carbon dioxide is naturally absorbed by things such as the ocean, forests and peat bogs. These are called carbon sinks.

Chlorofluorocarbons – CFC's are man-made chemical compounds containing carbon, chlorine, fluorine and sometimes hydrogen. The chlorine in CFC's damages the ozone layer.

Composting – a process whereby organic wastes including food and paper, decompose naturally forming a product that is rich in minerals and ideal for gardening and farming as a soil conditioner.

Conflict-Free diamonds – diamonds produced without the involvement of violence, human right violations or environmental degradation. The Conflict-Free diamond Council examines the entire supply chain, from the mine to consumer, before certifying that a diamond is conflict free.

Conservation – preserving and renewing human and natural resources.

Cork – elastic tough outer tissue of the cork oak, used in the past primarily for bottle stoppers and fishing floats, is presently used for everything from flooring to jewelry and clothing. It is fully recyclable.

D

Daylighting – the use of natural light to supplement or replace artificial lighting.

Deforestation – the process of removing trees from the land. Trees help absorb CO₂. Therefore, deforestation contributes to 20% of global carbon emissions according to the Forestry Commissions.

Desalination – the process of removing salt from the sea and other salt water. It is a way of increasing the water supply for humans and farm animals.

E

Eco-efficiency – an environmental qualification system that is used to identify the products and services that respect the environment.

Eco-friendly – also referred to as environmentally friendly, refers to goods and services that inflict minimal harm on the environment.

Ecological Footprint – the area of land and water needed to produce the resources to entirely sustain a human population and absorb its waste products with prevailing technology.

Ecology – the defense and preservation of the environment.

Embodied energy – total energy used to create a product, including the energy used in mining or harvesting, processing, fabricating and transporting the product.

Energy efficiency – saving in the consumption of energy while maintaining the same performance.

Energy source – natural elements capable of providing energy

Environment – all living matter and organisms that make up the biosphere (the part of the world in which life can exist).

F

Fossil fuels – coal, oil and natural gas. A fuel that has been made by the decomposition of fossilized plants and animals. Currently these are the main source of energy worldwide. They are contaminating and non-renewable.

FSC wood – The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) helps to make sure that wood products come from sustainable forests. When you see the FSC label, you can be sure that the wood product you are buying has come from a forest that is responsibly managed, with respect for wildlife and the people who live there.

G

Geothermal energy – heat that comes from the earth's interior.

Global warming – an increase in the average temperature of the earth, attributed to the burning of fossil fuels.

Green – the adjective that describes people, behaviors, products, policies, processes, places, movements or ideas that promote, protect, restore or minimize damage to the environment.

Green design – a design, usually architectural, conforming to environmentally sound principles of building and material and energy use.

Green power – electricity generated from renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, biomass, geothermal or hydroelectric.

Greenhouse effect – the process that raises temperatures of air in the lower atmosphere. Heat gets trapped by greenhouse gases such as, carbon dioxide, chlorofluorocarbons and the ozone. This is global warming.

Greywater – waste water that does not contain sewage or fecal contamination and can be used for irrigation and flushing after filtration. Sources are showers, sinks and washers etc.

H

Hemp – one of the most versatile fibers available. Hemp can be found in books, paper products, bags, pet supplies, face creams and flour.

Hydroelectric energy – electric energy produced by moving water.

I

Indoor air quality – indoor air that contains no known contaminants at harmful levels and with which a substantial majority of people exposed to the air do not express dissatisfaction.

Insolation – the amount of sunlight (direct, diffuse and reflected) reaching an area exposed to the sky.

J

K

Kyoto protocol – an agreement reached in 1997 by industrial nations around the world to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

L

Landfill – area where waste is dumped and eventually covered with dirt and topsoil.

LEED – an acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. LEED is a point-based rating system developed by the US Green Building Council that evaluates the environmental performance from a “whole building” perspective over its life cycle, providing a definitive standard for what constitutes a green building according to six categories.

Life cycle assessment – method developed to assess a product’s full environmental costs, from raw material to final disposal.

Light pollution – environmental pollution due to the effects of excessive artificial light.

Low-e glass – (low emissivity) glass has an invisible thin-film metallic or oxide coating which allows the passage of short-wave solar energy into a building but prevents long wave energy produced by heating systems and lighting from escaping outside.

Low emission vehicles – cars etc. that emit little pollution compared to conventional engines.

M

N

Natural – anything found in nature or derived directly from plants, animals or minerals. Natural products do not contain any man-made synthetic ingredients. On food, “natural” or “all natural” labels are not dependable because of inadequate federal standards. The USDA will approve a product as natural if it does not contain artificial ingredients, coloring or heavy processing. Natural does not mean organic.

Natural dyes – come from natural sources. These are different from man-made dyes that often use toxic, non-natural sources and ingredients.

Net-Zero – requiring no additional energy input from outside sources.

Nitrogen Oxides – by-products of combustion processes. NO_x , commonly found in automobile exhaust, is a greenhouse gas and an ingredient in acid rain and smog.

Non-renewable energy resources – energy resources that cannot be replenished by natural processes and are therefore depleted through use. Examples are coal, oil, natural gas and uranium.

O

Offsetting – process of reducing carbon emissions. One example would be traveling by air and then planting a tree to compensate for the emissions.

Oil – fossil fuel used in the production of gasoline and other products such as plastic.

Organic – molecules made up of two or more atoms of carbon.

Organic fabrics and textiles – plant or animal fibers such as cotton, wool, hemp, cashmere, silk, jute, soy and bamboo that have been produced according to the USDA standards. This does not, however, guarantee that these products are free of synthetic chemicals bleaches or dyes. The Organic Trade Association certifies finished textiles and garments in the United States.

Organic meat, poultry, dairy, eggs and other livestock products – livestock that has been fed organic feed throughout their lives beginning in the last trimester of gestation before their birth. They are free of synthetic hormones, antibiotics and chemicals. No genetic engineering is allowed. Their living environment must promote their health and well being as well as protect the surrounding air, land and water ways It must meet the USDA standards and be certified by a third party accredited inspector.

Organic produce – fruits, vegetables and grains etc. produced without the use of synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. Farming techniques must protect the surrounding air, land and water. Produce must meet USDA standards and be inspected by an accredited third party.

Octo-lacto vegetarian – a diet that contains no meat, seafood or poultry, yet allows animal derived ingredients such as eggs, dairy products or honey etc.

Ozone – is a greenhouse gas found in the atmosphere. In the upper layer or stratosphere, it forms a protective layer shielding the earth from ultraviolet radiation. In the lower layer or troposphere, however, it is a pollutant and an ingredient of smog.

P

Photovoltaic panels – solar panels that convert sunlight into energy. Power is produced when sunlight hits the semiconductors and creates an electric current.

Plastic – man-made and highly durable product made mainly of petroleum.

Plastic bags –used primarily as a carry-all for groceries, they last a very long time in our landfills even when exposed to the sun. They can be dangerous to sea animals if they make their way to our oceans or seas.

Post consumer waste – waste collected after the consumer has used and disposed of it.

Q

R

Rainwater harvesting – the collection, storage and reuse of rainwater.

Reclaimed – materials destined for our landfills that were salvaged and refurbished as a new product.

Recycling – the collection, sorting and reprocessing of discarded materials into new, usable raw materials.

Reduce – using less of a product to avoid waste, recycling and reusing.

Regeneration – renewal of land sites or habitats that have become unfit for human, animal or plant life.

Renewable energy – alternative energy sources such as wind, solar or water etc. that can produce infinite amounts of energy without being used up.

Renewable materials – can be replenished quickly so that they are not permanently depleted. Materials include algae, grasses and some fast growing trees.

Reuse – extending the lifetime of a product by using it again an indefinite number of times before sending it to be recycled if possible.

S

Solar collector – a device used to absorb heat from the sun.

Solar energy – energy from the sun.

Sustainability – living a lifestyle that meets our needs yet exercises responsible use and care of our natural resources and environment so as not to cause permanent damage or depletion that would affect future generations.

Synthetic – not natural. Produced artificially through chemical processes.

T

Tidal power – energy produced by harnessing the vertical movement of sea-tides through submerged turbines.

Turbine – a device that transforms energy into electricity.

U

“USDA organic” label – contains at least 95% organic ingredients. The other 5% can be non-organic or synthetic as long as it is on the approved national list.

“USDA made with organic ingredients” label – contains at least 70% organic ingredients. The other 30% must be on the approved national list.

“USDA 100% organic” label – contains only organic ingredients.

V

Vegan lifestyle – a lifestyle that avoids products containing animal products or by-products or that involved testing on animals. Vegans do not buy products such as clothing, accessories, cosmetics or cleaning products made with leather, wool, cashmere, silk, suede, fur, animal fats, or any other animal derived ingredient.

Vermicomposting – the process whereby worms feed on decomposing materials usually in a compost pile or garden and leave droppings to produce a mineral rich soil.

Volatile organic compounds (VOC) – organic compounds that evaporate at room temperatures and are often hazardous to human health. Many materials used in the construction of new homes such as carpets, paint, solvents and even furniture emit VOC's.

W

WEEE – Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment, broken or unwanted electronic gadgets such as mobile phones or computers.

X

Y

Z