

# The House of the Lifted Lorax

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

— Dr. Seuss

## Vital statistics:

**Size:** 950 sq. ft.

**Year built:** 1986

**Power source:** Grid-tied 1.5 kW solar system consisting of nine Sharp photovoltaic panels and a 2,100-watt Sunny Boy inverter

**Average daily production (summer):** 7.2 kWh

**Average daily production (fall):** Just under 6 kWh

**Amount of last power bill:** \$39 for two months’ worth of usage

## Special sustainability features:

**Compact fluorescent lightbulbs in all fixtures** – Probably the fastest and most cost-effective way to reduce your environmental footprint and shrink your power bills. We’ve been using CFLs for seven years and can’t say enough good things about them. Our favorite sources: Harvest Solar Energy and Best Hardware.

**Power strips to eliminate phantom loads** – Appliances with clocks, speakers, or remote controls draw a small amount of power even when they are turned off. To eliminate this drain – called a “phantom load” – simply plug the appliances into a power strip and shut it off when they are not in use.

**Energystar appliances** – When it’s time for new appliances, look for Energystars. Also, think about the size and type of appliance that best meets your needs. Two decisions we made, both of which made a huge impact on our power consumption: buying a 12-cubic-foot refrigerator and replacing our old, poorly insulated electric water heater with a gas model this spring. We usually buy Kenmore products, as they tend to be good quality, reasonably priced, and very efficient.

**Radiant barrier** – Proper insulation and a radiant barrier in the attic can make a dramatic difference in your energy consumption.

**Solar attic fan** – We bought ours from Harvest Solar Energy. The fan costs nothing to run, and it really helps keep the a/c bills down.

**Windows** – We upgraded to Energystars to reduce the amount of heat lost around the windows. We had the work done in two phases, as funds became available. Window World did the installation. They were quick and professional about it, and we are very happy with the results.

**Roof** – The roof needed to be replaced when we bought the house, so we asked the seller to pick up the tab as a condition of purchase. We were given a choice of colors and specifically requested light-colored shingles to help reflect heat during the summer.

**Exterior walls** – When we bought the house, it was dark brown with dark green trim. We painted it white with brown trim this summer to reflect heat.

**Solar motion sensor lights** – We replaced a steady-burning security light on the deck with a pair of solar LED motion sensors that light the deck and the corner of the garage. We purchased them from Real Goods for about \$75 apiece.

**Solar accent lights** – These are everywhere now, and they work very well. Prices vary; we got a set of four for about \$70 at Home Depot.

**Low-flow plumbing fixtures** – Our faucets have low-flow aerators, and our toilet and showerhead are both low-flow models. We also installed a PUR water filter on the kitchen tap to reduce our use of bottled water, which generates a tremendous amount of waste.

**Recycling** – We recycle everything the city will pick up. We are also big supporters of Goodwill (both as donors and as shoppers).

**Precycling** – We try to buy products with minimal packaging when possible. We have a set of four reusable shopping bags (including two made from old T-shirts), which we use when we buy groceries, and we installed a PUR water filter on our kitchen sink to reduce our reliance on bottled water.

**Organic garden** – We grow a lot of our own food in the summertime. A flock of six hens in a backyard “chicken tractor” (portable henhouse) help with weed control, fertilizer, and reduction of kitchen waste while supplying us with eggs for breakfast. Any kitchen waste the chickens can’t or won’t eat goes into the compost pile. We also keep a colony of honeybees in a hive behind the garage to pollinate our garden and provide us with honey. While these steps do not affect our power bills, we feel they are important steps toward sustainability. They are also very satisfying pursuits. Fresh, homegrown food is a wonderful luxury, and there’s nothing quite like seeing the look on a friend’s face when he realizes the jar of honey, box of eggs, or bouquet of colorful zinnias you just handed him came from your own backyard.

**Thank you for your interest in sustainability!** We hope you enjoyed your tour. You can follow our adventures in environmental efficiency online through two Web sites: The House of the Lifted Lorax (<http://liftedlorax.wordpress.com>) and the award-winning Red Fork State of Mind (<http://redforkhippie.wordpress.com>), formerly known as Red Fork Hippie Chick.

