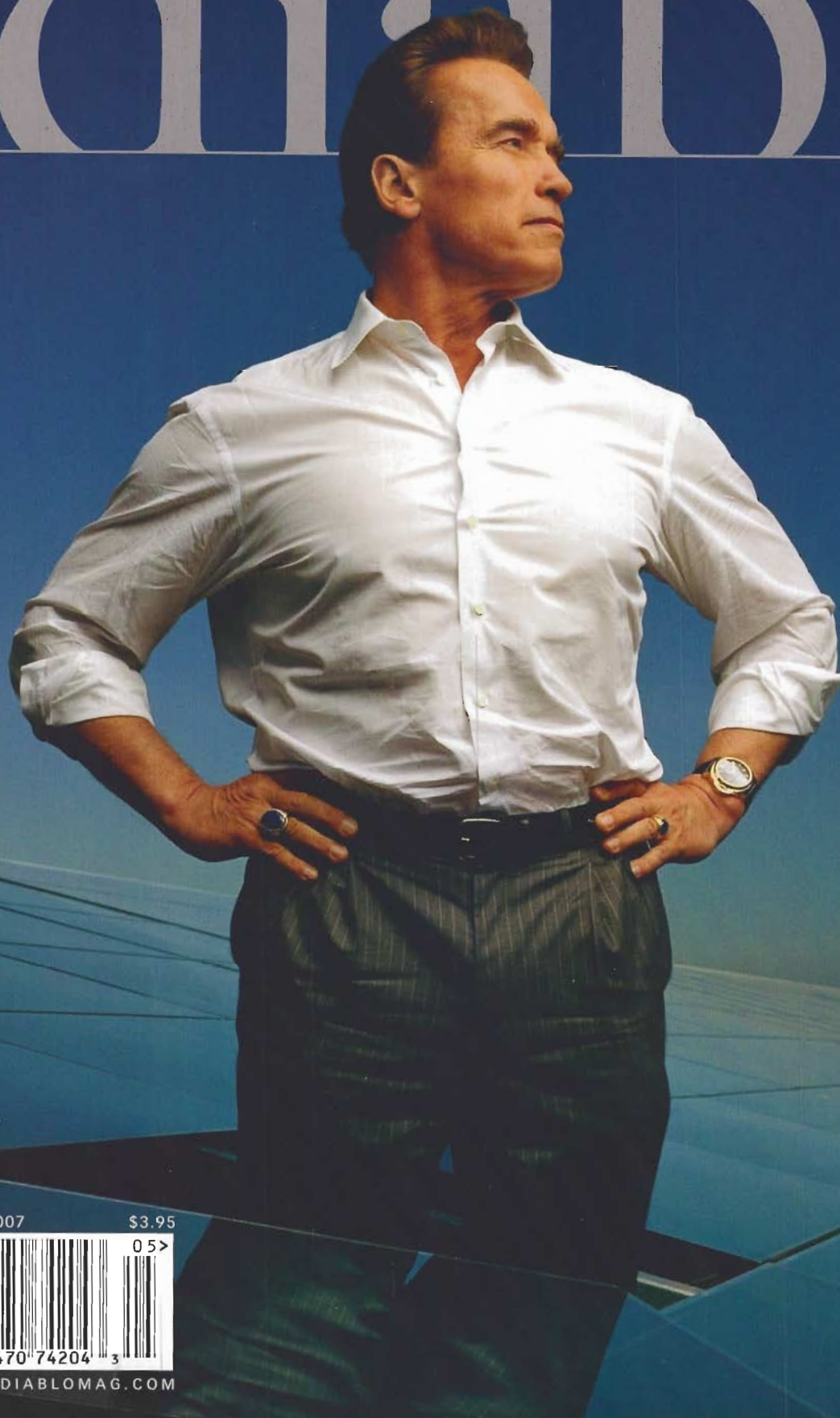


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It's Easy Being Green

50 TIPS TO HELP YOU SAVE A FEW BUCKS—NOT TO MENTION THE PLANET

» **Take PG&E's free online Home Energy Analyzer Survey.**

Answer 14 questions about your home and appliances, and learn easy ways to lower your monthly bill. PG&E offers rebates on energy-efficient appliances and sponsors the ClimateSmart program, which allows you to pay an average of \$4.31 more a month, depending on your energy usage, to fund new environmental projects that offset the carbon dioxide you generate. Visit www.pge.com for information.

» **Buy Energy Star appliances.**

According to PG&E, appliances sporting the blue Energy Star label use 10 to 50 percent less energy and water than standard models. Visit www.energystar.gov for information.

» **Know your rebates.**

East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) gave out \$955,200 in rebates last year alone. The company also offers free on-site water surveys—a surveyor will check for leaks and determine the efficiency of your showerheads, faucets, and toilets. One dripping hot-water faucet can waste 2–3 gallons of water a day. Free showerheads and faucet aerators are provided if your fixtures aren't up to par. EBMUD's new low-flow showerheads use less than 2.5 gallons per minute, saving an average household about 3,500 gallons of water per person a year. Visit www.ebmud.com for information.

» **Build it green.**

Thinking of remodeling your home? First port of call should be Berkeley nonprofit Build It Green, a superb resource for green architects, contractors, and homeowners. Visit www.builditgreen.org for information.

» **Eat local produce.**

On average, food travels 1,500 miles to get to your plate. Eating local seasonal produce cuts carbon emissions, packaging, and trash. This month, instead of eating an apple, savor locally grown, just-picked apricots, peaches, and cherries. Contra Costa has 20 farmers markets; visit www.cccfm.org to find your nearest market and to download a chart showing what's in season. Visit www.pcfma.com for Alameda County markets.

» **Take an eco-picnic.**

Forget plastic and polystyrene picnicware. Opt for paper cups and plates or, better still, buy biodegradable tableware made from potato and cornstarch by Excellent Packaging & Supply, a Richmond wholesale company. Available online at www.greenearthofficesupply.com.

» **Ski green.**

Tahoe's Heavenly ski resort has purchased 16 million kilowatt hours of wind energy, installed low-flow fixtures to conserve water, diverted 482 tons of waste from landfills, and raised funds for Lake Tahoe national forests. Other resorts that are going green include Alpine

Meadows, Sierra-at-Tahoe, and Homewood Mountain Resort. Visit www.skiareacitizens.com for information.

» **Get some recycled reading glasses.**

Made by San Raphael's ICU Eyewear, these colorful glasses are not preworn but are made of recycled plastic. They are available at San Ramon and Walnut Creek Whole Foods stores.

» **Recycle old VCRs, cameras, laptops, and phones.**

San Ramon's recycling center welcomes all kinds of electronics, from keyboards to stereos, whether they're working or not. All profits go toward fighting breast cancer. The center is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Visit www.recycleforbreastcancer.org for information.

» **Junk the beast in the garage.**

If it was built before 1993, the refrigerator in your garage uses twice as much energy as an Energy Star model. Replacing it will save you \$63 a year. PG&E will give you a \$35 cash rebate when you hand it over. Visit www.pge.com for information.

» **Kill bugs with ... bugs.**

Got aphids? Get ladybugs. Or, better still, praying mantises. They work much more responsibly than pesticides, gobbling up a host of unwanted critters, including aphids. Eggs hatch into May and June and are available in boxes at nurseries such as Navlet's in Pleasant Hill.

» **Buy organic clothes and sheets.**

According to the Organic Trade Association, 25 percent of the world's insecticides are sprayed on cotton fields. Organic clothing is available at Whole Foods in San Ramon and Walnut Creek, while organic sheets and towels can be found at Pottery Barn and Bed Bath & Beyond.

» **Use cloth shopping bags.**

Sustainable Moraga, a citizen environmental group, sells reusable cloth grocery bags for \$2 at the town's Safeway and Ace Hardware. Also look for them at stores such as Lunardi's, Whole Foods, and Trader Joe's.

» **Get composting.**

Put all organic food waste (except meat and dairy) in a household compost bin. In three to four months, you'll have nutritional compost for your garden. Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority sells the Smith & Hawken Biostack bin for half price (\$45). It also offers free composting workshops. Visit www.wastediversion.org.

» **Give your lawnmower a break.**

Replace some or all of your lawn with bunchgrass, a native grower that needs mowing no more than twice a year and requires much less water than a conventional lawn.

» **Pass it on.**

Don't know what to do with your old sofa, fax machine,