



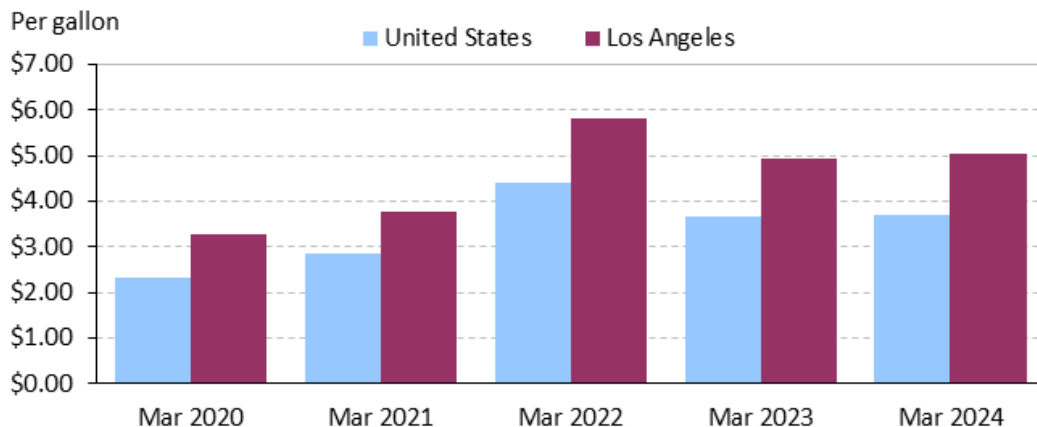
Energy Blog

May Showers bring Summer Heat – How do you keep your home cool while saving on your energy bill? (Page 1 of 3)

This week’s blog is written by Briana Ancona, CAP OC’s Climate Corps Fellow. They are a recent UC Berkeley graduate with interests in sustainable agriculture, local food systems and environmental health and justice.

It’s no surprise to Southern California residents that prices have gone up; From food to utilities, the cost of living in California is about 30% higher on average than the rest of the country. Those who have a significant energy burden (amount of monthly income spent on energy related costs) are right to worry when summer time come around. On average, “[p]rices paid by Los Angeles area consumers for electricity exceeded the U.S. average by 44.0 percent or more in the month of March,”(2024).

Chart 1. Average prices for gasoline, the United States and Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA, 2020–24 (as of March)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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Those in energy-inefficient housing are likely to see a spike in their monthly energy bills come this summer due to more energy used on to keep buildings cold. Increases in energy usage put strain on power grids, causing the price to soar and consumers to pay higher bills on average.

Low-income communities and those living in older housing are likely to shoulder the brunt of these energy costs as their housing has not been retrofitted to be energy efficient. Households with people living in them who are considered a sensitive population (persons under the age of 5 years or older than 60) are also likely to experience an increase in their energy costs due to needing to keep the house cool or power life-saving medical equipment. Despite all this, low-income communities are underinvested in by energy efficiency programs.

To combat high energy bills this summer, consider the following:

1. Enrolling in energy cost savings programs

Contact your local service provider to inquire about energy savings programs or low-income. Utility companies like SoCal Edison have various cost saving programs available for its customers, like the [Summer Discount Plan](#) or the [Smart Energy Program](#), both of which are aimed to reduce energy usage during peak hours (4 to 9 pm).

2. Plan ahead to reduce energy consumption during peak hours

Many Californians are enrolled in what is called a Time-of-Use electricity rate plan, meaning that electricity rates vary on time of day, season, and type of day (weekday/weekend/holiday). By planning and running energy-intensive appliances during off-peak hours (times of the day buildings use less energy) and reducing the amount of energy used during peak hours (4 to 9 pm), you can avoid excessive increases in energy-related costs. San Diego Community Power has a [guide](#) on energy efficiency tips that can help you save on your energy bill.

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3. Invest in long-term solutions that will reduce energy bills

Several programs are available to low-income and disadvantaged communities to retrofit their living spaces to be energy-efficient and cost-effective. Community Action Partnership of Orange County is one of these organizations that offers a Home Weatherization program free of cost to qualifying households.

Weatherization is the process of making permanent home upgrades that will make the living space more energy-efficient and comfortable. From replacing energy-intensive appliances (like an old furnace or refrigerator) to modifying doors to have weatherstripping, preventing drafts from entering the home or allowing cool air to escape. By investing in a term solution to reducing energy consumption, households that choose to weatherize their home see a substantial decrease in their utility bills. For more information on CAP OC's Weatherization program, contact energy@capoc.org or call at 714-839-6199.

Sources:

- (1) [Average Energy Prices, Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim – March 2024](#)
- (2) [Summer Discount Plan](#)
- (3) [Smart Energy Program](#)
- (4) [Energy Saving Tips](#)
- (5) [Time Matters – Frequently Asked Questions](#)



Energy Blog



Saving Water this Summer – 3 Ways to Reduce Your Water Consumption (Page 1 of 3)

This week's blog is written by Briana Ancona, CAP OC's Climate Corps Fellow. They are a recent UC Berkeley graduate with interests in sustainable agriculture, local food systems and environmental health and justice.

California is no stranger to droughts. The last major drought that occurred in California lasted from 2012, when Governor Jerry Brown declared a drought state of emergency, to 2016, when drought restrictions were lifted. Despite water restrictions being lessened, the state of California is still concerned with conserving water and promoting smart water usage amongst its residents. Aside from a history of drought, climate change has exacerbated the issue, meaning that summers are getting hotter and the weather is becoming more extreme. To avoid high water bill costs this summer, focus on limiting water usage to essentials.

Avoid using water to water your lawns this summer. According to the University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources division, “[l]awns, which have been especially singled out as water-wasting culprits, are estimated to use about 40% to 60% of landscape irrigation in California, or just 3.5% to 5% of total statewide water use. Overall, landscape irrigation is estimated to account for about 50% of annual residential water consumption statewide,”(2024).

Rather than completely replacing your current turf grass with drought-tolerant

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plants, such as succulents or California native plants, consider cultivating a mixed-use area that incorporates plants with low water needs.

California is offering a Turf Replacement Program through your local water agency where qualifying turf replacement projects can receive an incentive (Turf Replacement). Contact your local water provider to see if you can qualify for incentives. If you choose to keep your lawn, consider upgrading the sprinkler system to one that utilizes high-efficiency rotating sprinkler nozzles and a weather-based irrigation controller. Both of these upgrades not only work to use water efficiently but can be cost-effective as they can reduce your monthly average water costs. And they qualify for rebates. Check out SoCal Water\$mart to see if you're eligible to claim a rebate.

You can also upgrade in-home appliances to water-efficient ones, such as installing a thermostatic shower valve or a faucet aerator. Thermostatic shower valves allow you to pre-set water temperature, ensuring that the water won't surpass your desired temperature settings while still allowing manual adjustments to the water temperature in the shower. Pre-selecting a water temperature also conserves water, making it a cost-effective switch. These valves automatically reduce or shut off water flow once the desired temperature has been reached if you are not ready to enter the shower. This significantly reduces the amount of water used during showers, which is reflected in your monthly water bill.

Faucet aerators are screens that are attached to the end of the spout, where water flows. The holes in the screen effectively break up the water stream, adding air to the water as it flows. This reduces the amount of water used and controls water flow. A faucet aerator can significantly reduce the amount of water used during daily activities, like hand washing and washing dishes, resulting in cost savings.

Keep an eye out for WaterSense labeled products. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "WaterSense labeled products are backed by independent, third-party certification and meet EPA's specifications for water efficiency and

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performance,” (EPA). Opting to invest in products with WaterSense labels can result in exceptional savings on your monthly water bill.

Lastly, consider collecting rainwater if you have space and/or permission from the owner. Contrary to popular belief, it is not illegal to capture rainwater in California. In 2012, Governor Jerry Brown passed the Rainwater Caption Act, which allowed residential, commercial, and governmental landowners to install a rainwater collection system. Harvesting and storing rainwater can be incredibly beneficial, especially during the summertime when residential lawns require more water due to excessive heat.

Using rainwater to water your lawn or garden is a great way to save on water usage and can be beneficial for your plants as rainwater is unchlorinated (not treated with chlorine). Many public water treatment systems add chlorine to their water supply to disinfect it. The level of chlorine is safe for human consumption but can severely affect the health of plants. Excessive chlorine in water can damage plants' root systems and kill beneficial microorganisms in the soil. Watering with rainwater can preserve the health of your garden and as mentioned, save on costs.

Sources:

- (1) [Drought, Water Conservation, Landscape Water Use - Some Perspective](#)
- (2) [Turf Replacement](#)
- (3) [WaterSense Products](#)
- (4) [California Drought](#)
- (5) [Water Disinfection with Chlorine and Chloramine](#)
- (6) [Hydroponic Dechlorination for Stronger, Healthier Plants](#)



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Solar for All - \$7 Billion to provide Disadvantaged Communities Solar (Page 1 of 3)

This week's blog is written by Briana Ancona, CAP OC's Climate Corps Fellow. They are a recent UC Berkeley graduate with interests in sustainable agriculture, local food systems and environmental health and justice.

On April 22nd, the Biden-Harris Administration announced 60 selected organizations and agencies that will receive \$7 billion dollars in grant awards. Solar for All was a grant competition born out of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The IRA granted the EPA a \$27 billion greenhouse gas reduction fund, allowing for the EPA to launch the Solar for All initiative. Of the 60 applicants, the California Infrastructure Economic Development Bank (Ibank) will receive nearly \$250 million to provide California residents with solar.

California's Solar for All (CA-S4A) program will bring together a coalition of agencies and partners to address energy inequity amongst solar energy access. While solar has been around for decades and reduces homeowner costs on electricity, it has not been accessible for low-income communities, often out of their price range. This is where energy equity comes into play.

According to the White House, the Inflation Reduction Act is one of the largest investments made into the American economy in an effort to tackle climate change (2023). This act seeks to advance clean energy access amongst Americans and

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promote environmental equity. The Solar for All program addresses those inequities amongst Californians, making clean energy accessible to disadvantaged communities who have been left behind in California's mission to decarbonize. Senator Alex Padilla was quoted saying “California has long been a national leader in solar power production and storage, but for too long, the benefits of residential solar have been limited to high-income households and new developments. [...] [t]his significant investment in California’s Solar for All project will slash energy costs for low-income communities, create good-paying jobs, and build toward California and the nation’s ambitious renewable energy goals” (2024).

The Solar for All program will allow California to “add at least 247 megawatts of solar and 425 megawatt-hours of associated storage in low-income and disadvantaged communities,” doubling the amount of solar energy low-income households have access to (2024). This will also result in significant cost savings for participating households.

Disadvantaged communities have been overburdened by pollution and are victims of infrastructure underinvestment, lacking access to renewable energy infrastructure, making it incredibly difficult for communities to transition towards clean energy. In addition, households in these communities often have a large energy burden, meaning that a significant portion of their monthly income is spent on energy-related costs.

Per the EPA’s news release, “[t]he Solar for All program advances President Biden’s Justice40 Initiative, which set the goal that 40% of the overall benefits of specific federal climate, clean energy, affordable and sustainable housing, and other investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution. All the funds awarded through the Solar for All program will be invested in low-income and disadvantaged communities,” (Momoh, 2024).

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The California Solar for All program is taking steps toward addressing energy inequities across the state. This historic investment in underserved populations will greatly benefit low-income and disadvantaged communities, alleviating their energy burden while addressing environmental & energy equity.

Sources:

- (1) [Inflation Reduction Act Guidebook](#)
- (2) [Padilla Secures Nearly \\$250 Million for California Residential Solar Projects in Low-Income Communities](#)
- (3) [Biden-Harris Administration Announces Nearly \\$250 Million to Deliver Residential Solar, Lowering Energy Costs and Advancing Environmental Justice Across California](#)
- (4) [Solar for All](#)
- (5) [Biden-Harris Administration Announces \\$7 Billion Solar for All Grants to Deliver Residential Solar, Saving Low-Income Americans \\$350 Million Annually and Advancing Environmental Justice Across America](#)
- (6) [Solar energy development gets boost from EPA](#)



Energy Blog

Healthy Living: Growing Food or Purchasing at a Supermarket (Page 1 of 3)

This week's blog is written by Briana Ancona, CAP OC's Climate Corps Fellow. They are a recent UC Berkeley graduate with interests in sustainable agriculture, local food systems and environmental health and justice.

The average consumer purchases their produce from a traditional supermarket according to a survey published by Statista (Shahbandeh, 2022). While there is nothing inherently wrong with shopping for your produce at a supermarket, have you ever stopped and considered the nutritional value of the product you are purchasing?

In the United States, most commercial and packaged food products are required to have a nutritional label disclosing the nutritional value of the product. This label gives consumers the ability to make informed decisions on what foods they purchase as they can assess the nutritional value of a product based on its label. But what about foods that are exempt from nutritional labels? How can you, as a consumer, make an informed decision on the produce you are buying and ensure that they provide adequate nutritional value?

While there is no low-cost way to test for nutritional value in produce at home, several studies have shown that produce grown from conventional farms has seen a decline in nutritional value since the 50s. According to the book *Breeding for Fruit Quality*, biochemist Donald Davis found that there were notable declines in five

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nutrients across various fruits like tomatoes and squash (yes, tomatoes and squash are technically fruits) (Davis, 2011). Organic produce has been shown to "provide significantly greater levels of vitamin C, iron, magnesium, and phosphorus than non-organic varieties of the same foods," (Crinnion).

Programs like CalFresh's Market Match program have been making purchasing organic produce more accessible to low-income individuals as the program "matches customers' CalFresh nutrition assistance benefits at farmers' markets and other farm-direct sites," (Making Fresh Affordable).

Another way you can ensure you and your family are eating healthy, nutrient-rich foods is to grow them yourself. Growing crops in containers is one of the easiest ways to add fresh produce to your diet. From strawberries to tomatoes to spring salad mix, you can grow a variety of foods with very little space. You can even grow these crops indoors! Container gardens are very cost-effective and can be as high or low maintenance as you want them to be. Reclaimed materials like a basket or an old wooden grate make great options for planters. If you are unsure of where to start, [check out this guide](#) from the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Department.

When selecting what crops you want to grow, think about your daily diet. What foods do you eat the most and what foods can you grow in a container? While you may not be able to grow a banana tree on your balcony in a 5-gallon bucket, you can grow various herbs or berries in a five-gallon container. If you opt for Roma tomatoes when doing your weekly grocery shopping, try growing them at home but also consider growing another variety. Diversity in your diet is important since you provide your body with a range of nutrients.

Supermarkets are a necessity for many, especially those who are low-income and cannot afford to purchase organic produce. Container gardening offers a solution to those who cannot afford to shop organic, improving access to fresh produce and reducing food costs. They are also a great way to understand how food grows and

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the time and effort it takes to produce a fruit or vegetable. Growing your own produce is not only rewarding but also beneficial for your health. Check out these other [guides](#) on container gardening to see how you can get started on your growing journey.

Sources:

- (1) [Where consumers are buying fresh produce in the U.S. in 2020, by channel](#)
- (2) [Is food really better from the farm gate than supermarket shelf?](#)
- (3) [Impact of Breeding and Yield on Fruit, Vegetable, and Grain Nutrient Content](#)
- (4) [Organic foods contain higher levels of certain nutrients, lower levels of pesticides, and may provide health benefits for the consumer](#)
- (5) [Market Match](#)
- (6) [Getting Started with Container Gardening](#)
- (7) [General Gardening](#)



Energy Blog

May is Asthma Awareness Month – Learn about CAP OC’s Asthma Remediation Program (Page 1 of 3)

This week’s blog is written by Briana Ancona, CAP OC’s Climate Corps Fellow. They are a recent UC Berkeley graduate with interests in sustainable agriculture, local food systems and environmental health and justice.

As Asthma Awareness Month comes to an end, CAP OC’s Energy & Environmental Services Department wanted to share some insightful information on Asthma and how our Asthma Remediation services can help reduce asthma triggers in the home.

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic condition that causes inflammation and narrowing of airways in the lungs. This causes breathing issues, including shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, tightness and/or pain in the chest. Anybody can develop asthma at any age as no one is born with asthma. Children may be born with a genetic susceptibility for asthma and develop it as they grow older.

Asthma can be triggered by various things, from changes in the weather to high levels of pollen to bad air quality to dust and mold spores. Asthma can also be caused by respiratory infections and illnesses and worsened by pollution, exercise, and other airway irritants. There is no cure for asthma, but it can be managed through proper treatment and avoiding triggers. In Orange County, 14.2% of the population have been diagnosed with asthma as of 2020 per the California

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Department of Public Health - [Asthma Profiles](#). Nearly 7% of those children ages 5 to 17 have been diagnosed and have had an asthma attack or episode in the last 12 months.

As mentioned, outdoor air pollution can worsen asthma symptoms. Certain air pollutants, known as criteria, air pollutants, are known to affect human health. Small, aerosolized particles, known as volatile organic compounds, are small enough to enter airways and irritate the lungs. These particles typically come from combustion-related activities, such as car exhaust or gas stoves, and tend to be more concentrated in indoor spaces. That is why all households need to be properly ventilated and free of infiltration.

To learn more about Asthma Awareness Month and the illness, check out the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) webpage for Asthma Awareness Month. There are various educational resources on Asthma, including a one-page flyer that can be seen [here](#). The American Lung Association is also a great resource for information on asthma. Not only do they offer resources on lung health & disease, but they also offer resources on clean air and quitting smoking. [Check out this article](#) explaining how vaping is bad for indoor air quality. Lastly, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America page on Asthma Awareness month has a great [fact sheet on asthma-related statistics](#).

How can CAP OC help?

CAP OC provides two services to qualifying Orange County residents to make minor permanent home modifications to homes. These are done through our Asthma Remediation and Home Weatherization Services.

CAP OC’s Asthma Remediation Service provides physical modifications to a home environment to ensure health, welfare, and safety. This enables the individual with asthma to function in their home environment and prevent severe asthma episodes. The modifications improve indoor air quality by removing asthma triggers from the home. Minimizing dust, dander, and other common allergens from the home helps

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those with asthma manage their symptoms effectively.

CAP OC also offers a Home Weatherization service that helps income-qualified customers receive no-cost home improvements to save energy. This can include weatherstripping doors to reduce drafts in the home, replacing a major home appliance with an energy-efficient one, and swapping light bulbs for energy-efficient LEDs. The great part about weathering your home is that it can improve ventilation, reduce the amount of still air and dust settling, and improve indoor air quality. This is great for those with asthma or other chronic lung diseases as it can reduce the amount of indoor air pollutants that can irritate their airways.

To find out if you are eligible for our services call us at 714-839-6199 or email us at energy@capoc.org.

Sources:

- <https://aafa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/aafa-asthma-facts-and-figures.pdf>
- <https://www.epa.gov/asthma/asthma-awareness-month>
- <https://aafa.org/get-involved/asthma-and-allergy-awareness-month/>
- <https://www.lung.org/clean-air/indoor-air/protecting-from-air-pollution/source-control>