



The extreme temperatures of winter and summer aren't the only times of year you can reduce your energy costs. Here are a few helpful tips to lower utility bills this spring as well.

- Get your central AC system checked by a professional once a year. A system checkup done at least annually can improve your comfort and the efficiency of your AC while prolonging the life of your unit.
- Change the filters. Routinely replacing or cleaning air filters can lower your cooling system's energy consumption by up to 15 percent.
- Clean around the outdoor unit. There should be a minimum 2-foot clearance around the unit for optimal air flow. Also, consider how large your plants will grow when planting near the HVAC unit.
- Using a ceiling fan allows you to raise your thermostat as much as four degrees without sacrificing comfort.
- Install and set a programmable thermostat. It could help you save up to 10 percent on heating and cooling costs per year.
- Don't heat your home with appliances. On hot days, consider using an outdoor grill instead of your oven.
- Install energy-efficient window coverings that let natural light in and prevent solar heat gain.
- **Insulate and seal ducts.** Air loss through ducts accounts for 30 percent of a cooling system's energy consumption.

