

All that glitters isn't green

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Green is the new gold. In recent years going green has become the battle cry for many Americans. In fact ad agency [Venables Bell and Partners](#) conducted a study of 500 Americans in April of last year, that study concluded "More than half of Americans said they would pay more for a product if they knew it was better for the environment and surprisingly, a third said they would pay for a green tax on products."

The collective environmental consciousness of America has grown so much that various industries have taken notice and are now jumping on the band wagon and offering "green" alternatives to their products. It should come as no surprise then, that markets have become inundated with products with labels touting terms such as "environmentally safe", "recyclable", "biodegradable", "organic", "sustainable" and "natural."

Environmentally conscious consumers are forced to try to choose the best products for their needs. The problem is that many of the so called green labels are extremely vague or even misleading. This has been given the moniker of "greenwashing". Greenwashing is a term describing the deceptive use of or green marketing in order to promote a misleading perception that a company's policies or products/services are environmentally friendly.

This practice has gotten so out of hand that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have collaborated and established specifications to ensure product labeling does not make environmental claims that deceive consumers. On October 6 of last year the FTC proposed [revisions](#) to the existing "Green Guides" that were established in 1992 to help companies ensure that their environmental claims were accurate and validated.

In an article by [USA TODAY](#) it was stated that the environmental authorities, product experts and green watchdog groups were asked for their advice about how to differentiate the varying shades of green. The tips included:

- Look for third-party endorsements from eco-focused advocacy groups such as Green Seal
- Check online consumer reviews of product claims and efficacy
- Be leery of products carrying label warnings such as "caution" or "poison"
- Don't assume that the word "natural" or nature images are signs that something is environmentally friendly.

You can also do your own research. Smartphones and educational apps may help navigate the maze of confusion.

[GoodGuide](#) has a barcode scanning app that allows users to pull up health and environmental ratings on thousands of products.

You can find more helpful information at the following Terrachoice website located at sinsofgreenwashing.org