

Top 10 Smart Home Gadgets P.50

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THE BIG IDEA

Pay people to turn off the lights.

THE INNOVATORS: CURTIS TONGUE & MATT DUESTERBERG, OHMCONNECT

The truth is, it's hard to motivate people to save energy. Curtis Tongue and Matt Duesterberg have a solution—bribe people. Their San Francisco-based app, Ohmconnect, works like this: It sends its users notifications when they're pulling power from a dirty and expensive power plant (usually during peak hours). In response, users turn off a few lights to reduce the load on the plant—an action Ohmconnect is happy to pay for—and pocket the cash. "What it does, at a fundamental level, is turn homes into virtual power plants," says Tongue.

THE INNOVATOR: NATE DOWNEY, PERMADESIGN

Santa Fe permaculture landscape designer Nate Downey knows the drill: Do a rain dance for weeks, then rejoice as it falls before cursing the flooding and erosion it causes. "My thought has always been, How can we turn that erosion problem into a rainwater-harvesting solution?" he says. He found the answer in an unlikely place: the roof. We asked him to tell us more.

Why should we pay attention to more than permeable paving in the landscape?

THE BIG IDEA

Minimalism is good for the soul.

THE INNOVATORS: JOSHUA FIELDS MILLBURN & RYAN NICODEMUS, THE MINIMALISTS

In the pursuit of paring down, it doesn't get more dramatic than Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus. The former telecom workers, friends since fifth grade, have purged their belongings and lifestyle to the bare minimum, and share their strategies with more than 4 million followers on their website (*theminimalists.com*). One of the more extreme activities they suggest? Pack everything you own into boxes as if you're moving, unpack only what you need over the next 21 days, then donate everything else. But for the duo, being minimalists isn't just about lightening your carbon footprint; it's also about personal well-being, says Millburn. "They go hand in hand," he says. "Life feels calmer with less stuff around you." And if visions of empty bookshelves, barren closets, and zero fun are dancing through your mind, let Millburn put them to rest: This is about making room for more, he says. More time, more hobbies, more experiences.

THE BIG IDEA

Roofs can solve our water problem.



I'm all about the impermeable surfaces: roofs, patios, and driveways. But especially roofs—they're so clean! And rain comes off of them with such force. It's such a resource waiting to be captured. No matter where you live in the West, there's a rainy season. It might be winter in the dry-summer Mediterranean sections, or monsoons in the Southwest, but everyone's got a roof.

What are you doing to spread the roof gospel?

I have a Roofwater Calculator on

my website (*permaDesign.com*) that allows you to type in your address and see how much rain comes down from your roof in an average year. It's a way to make this resource real, and really wake people up.

How do people turn their roofs into water-harvesting machines?

There are different ways. It can be an active system with a cistern and pump. Or it can be a passive one—having a downspout that leads into a trench.

I fill the trench with any type of porous rock, essentially creating an underground sponge that stores water. Traditionally, pumice is used. But I prefer a more sustainable material called Growstone (*growstone.com*), a product made from recycled glass, developed in Santa Fe and manufactured in Albuquerque.

Are all roofs created equal?

Pitched metal roofs are better than flat tar-and-gravel ones. But really, there are not a lot of bad roofs out there.