

The return of the clothes line: get a hang up this spring!

The old-fashioned clothes line of our grandmother's time may be due for a revival. The power blackouts of the past few summers have many Canadians thinking outside the box: in fact, they're thinking outside... period. A clothes line is a terrific contribution to energy savings – since the dryer is one of the most energy-hungry appliances in your home. Besides, it seems a little foolish to pay for heat and wind when we can get it free... just outside the door.

• **The best things in life are free.** A clothes line is a terrific contribution to energy savings – since the dryer is one of the most energy-hungry appliances in your home. Besides, why pay for heat and wind in a box... when we can get it free just outside the door? You'll be startled how fast your items dry; on sunny windy days the first bits of laundry may be dry by the time you get the last items on the line – long before they would have been finished in the dryer. Sheets are especially quick-drying, with a lovely crisp texture!

• **A long season.** The first warm days of spring – whether or not there's snow on the ground – you can start enjoying your clothes line. When the snow flies, most homeowners bring in the clothes pegs for the season. Our grandmothers, of course, often used the clothes line year-round!

• **No ironing.** It's true: if you hang items carefully, you can fold them straight off the line. Voila... freshly pressed laundry in your basket! Sheets can be folded in thirds right on the line – making them easier to get them neatly in the basket. Some people prefer to give their towels a 5-minute tumble in the dryer to restore fluffiness; others love the rough spa texture of a line-dried cotton towel!

• **Miraculous cleaning power of the sun.** Our grandmothers knew how to deal with stains: use the powerful bleaching effect of the sun. Many stains will fade or

disappear – including unsightly yellowing that often plagues your white items. And nothing beats the incomparable clean scent of sun-dried laundry. For maximum drying benefit, align your clothesline on a north-south axis if possible.

• **"Airing out".** Clotheslines are perfect for airing out duvets, quilts, tablecloths, and of course wool blankets and clothing. Sometimes items that have been in storage will just require a good dose of the cleaning effects of sun and wind to restore their freshness. And wool-eating moths hate sunlight and wind – the reason why there is a long tradition of hanging our winter blankets, rugs and clothing out for a good airing and brushing before storing away for the season.

• **The right stuff.** Make sure your line is installed as sturdily as possible. If you're lucky you will be able to string your line between two strong trees. Alternately, you can sink at least one post into concrete – attaching the other strong hook to your house (or a second post). Synthetic lines are strong and readily available. Measure carefully before you go shopping, and be sure to get the necessary hardware and pulleys for installation. While you're at it, pick up a few line separators, and lots of clothespins. Another clever trick: if your set-up allows, pick up an inexpensive letter-style mail box to keep your clothespins in. The box will keep your clothes pins dry and organized, and the newspaper hooks will each hold a line separator (those little two-wheel devices) – right where they're handy.

• **Enjoy the view.** Your clothes line will have you outdoors a little more; enjoy the look of fresh laundry snapping in the wind. Live in an area where clothes lines are frowned on? Remember that beauty is in the eye of the beholder; consider beginning a conversation about how your community can walk a little more lightly on the planet – while discovering the retro joys of the old-fashioned clothes line.



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