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12th annual tour of solar homes set for Sunday

By [Laura Snider \(Contact\)](#)
 Saturday, September 29, 2007

Pete Chandler is inviting the community into his north Boulder home on Sunday to "kick the solar tires."

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There's nothing about his 1957 ranch-style home that looks especially cutting-edge — except for the solar panels glittering on the roof.

But don't be fooled. Last month, the Chandlers used less electricity than they produced, feeding the excess back to the grid.

Sunday, Boulderites can tour Chandler's house and 12 other Earth-friendly homes that span the spectrum from newly built eco-palaces — with the latest bells and whistles — to remodeled mountain cabins built a century ago, all part of the 12th annual tour of solar homes.

"It's being part of the community —opening your own home and sharing what you've done," Chandler said. "If people leave with a little inspiration, that's great."

Over the past decade, the solar home tour, organized by the Center for ReSource Conservation, has expanded its scope to reach far beyond solar. Houses on this year's tour offer a wide range of energy efficiencies that

Sunday's solar tourists can check out.

"We selected a variety of different homes — remodels, big homes, small homes," said Amy Ellsworth, the center's energy division director. "Our goal is to try and help the community to make more-sustainable choices."

Chandler, who works as a green building consultant, has hooked up an on-demand hot water system, added more insulation — and bought some chickens for the backyard.

"The green thing goes beyond the four walls," he said. "It's how you integrate into the whole environment."

If you go

What: The Boulder Tour of Solar and Green Built Homes

When: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday

Where: Register and pick up a map between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the Center for ReSource Conservation, 1702 Walnut St., Boulder

Cost: \$20 per car group and \$10 per bike group

More info:
www.conservationcenter.org

See a video tour of a solar-powered home. www.dailycamera.com

Across town, John Meyer's neo-Victorian house is also on the tour. The "vintage" solar house has bulky solar thermal panels from the 1980s sitting next to sleek, skinny, photovoltaic panels installed relatively recently, both almost entirely hidden from view.

Many of the solar panels from the solar boom of the 1980s have fallen into disrepair, Meyer said, but he keeps his going with some tender loving care — and a new gadget that keeps the squirrels from chewing the wires.

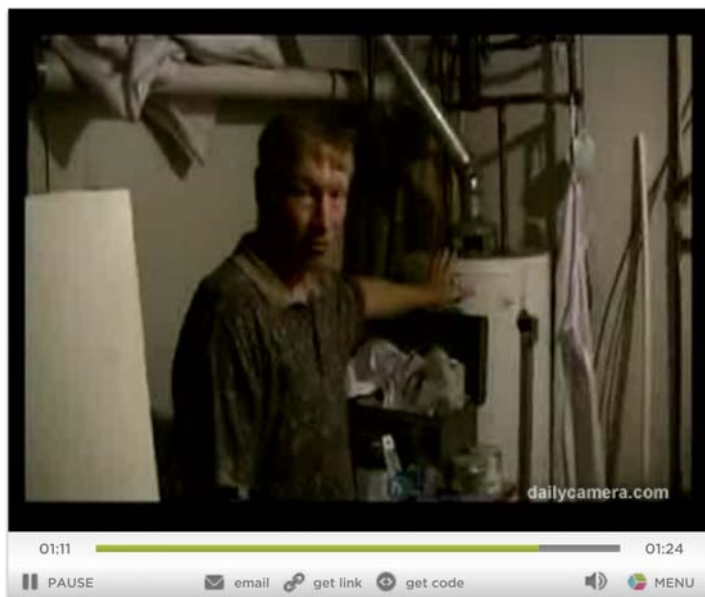
By hanging their clothes outside to dry, making sure the lights are cut off and using sun-warmed water for showers — among other things — Meyer and his wife have cut their energy use by 66 percent in the winter and by more than 80 percent in the summer.

"There's so many things you can do that have nothing to do with solar," Meyer said.

Meyer said he traces his interest in the environment back to the first Earth Day in the early 1970s. He remembers hearing talks about something called "the greenhouse effect."

"We've let an entire generation go by, and we're still just talking about it," he said.

Contact Camera Staff Writer Laura Snider at 303-473-1327 or sniderl@dailycamera.com.



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Comments

Posted by EnlightenedProf on September 29, 2007 at 7:36 a.m. (Suggest removal)
Solar water heaters are fantastic - VERY efficient and cost effective in areas with a lot of sun. Currently solar panels for electricity are so expensive that using them is roughly equivalent to volunteering to pay \$30 per gallon for gas - you can buy electricity from the power company for 10 times less. Of course positioning the home so that the windows collect solar heat in the winter and not in the summer is always recommended where possible.

Posted by blacksho89 on September 29, 2007 at 9:33 a.m. (Suggest removal)
PV (photovoltaic) cells take 10 times the amount of electricity to manufacture that they will ever produce in their lifespan. They are NOT environmentally friendly unless used for power in remote areas where power lines would have to be strung long distances. Therefore, if you can sell electricity back to the grid, by definition PV is a bad idea. It is also "welfare for the rich", as tax breaks help pay for the arrays, and as they (pv arrays) are so expensive, only the wealthy can afford them in the first place. Solar water heaters, passive solar, insulation, and just using less are all good ideas.

Posted by tomlpant on September 30, 2007 at 8:17 a.m. (Suggest removal)
Solar PV is one of the best investments you can make on your home. It holds its value for 25 years, and increases the value of the home by anywhere from 100%-200% the cost of the system. As a bonus it produces clean energy for you and becomes even more valuable as rates rise. The Solar Home Tour is one of the best events of the year. I wouldn't miss it.

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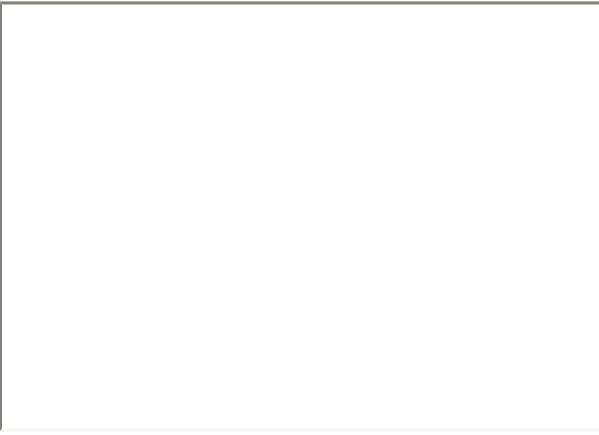
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