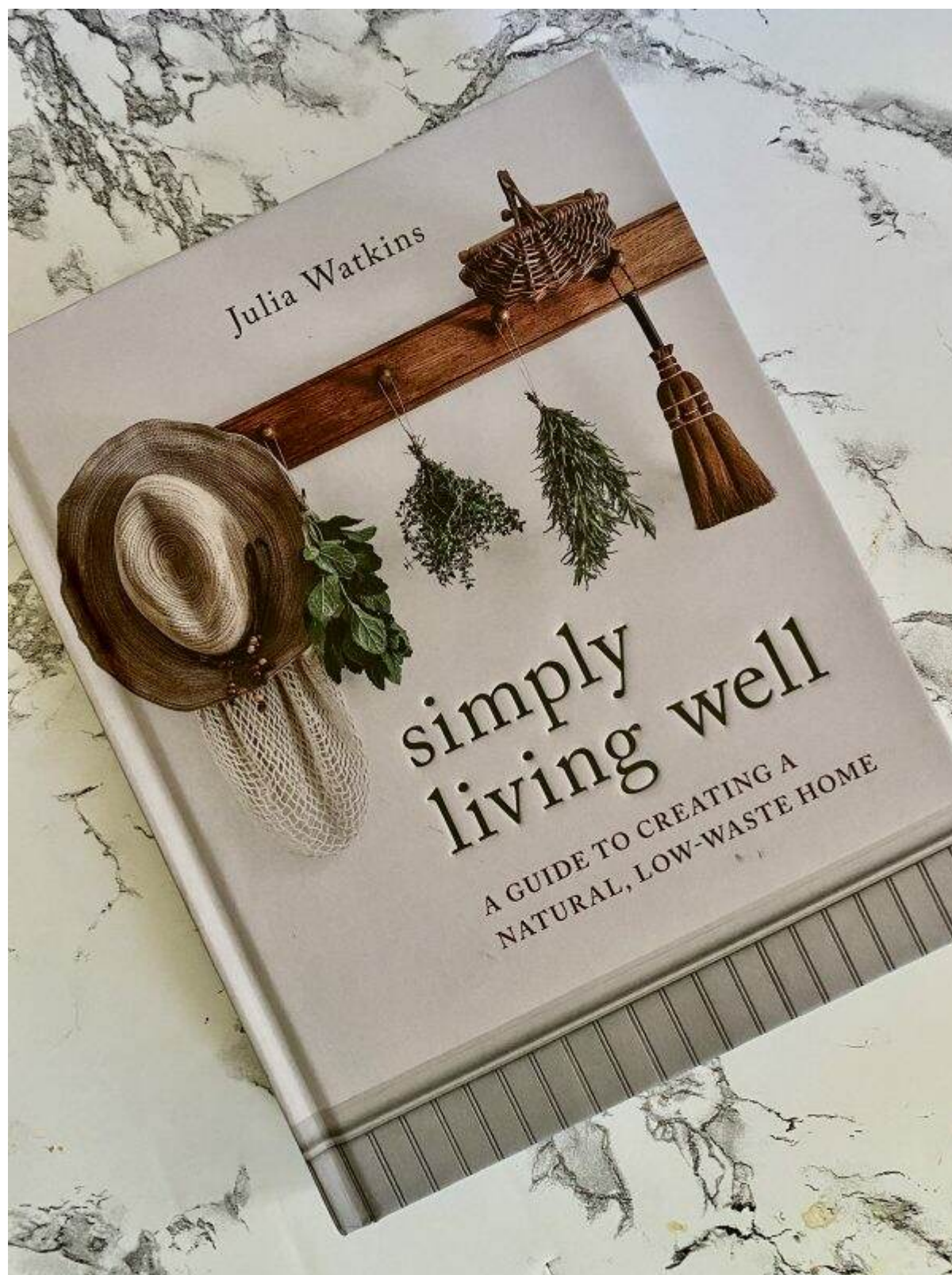


Living Simply and Efficiently



I recently purchased a new book, [*Simply Living Well*](#) by Julia Watkins. This hard cover book is a guide to creating a natural, low-waste home. The book is filled with great ideas

and recipes on how to reduce what you consume and throw away. But it got me thinking about how we live. What are we currently doing that is living efficiently and reduce what we consume and what we throw away?

Composting



About 30% of our kitchen waste is recycled through composting. I have written about this before (see post [here](#)) and put every single peel, pit, skin, eggshell and other non-cooked fruits, vegetables and flowers into the composting garbage can. Grass clippings, tree branches and other brown material is also composted here on the property. This significantly reduces our waste that goes to the City's landfill and dump.



All the luscious rich fertilized soil goes back into the yard~the garden, the orchard and all the bedding areas. Giving back to the land is very rewarding.

Recycling



The City of Phoenix has a recycling program so we separate our garbage into separate bins for pick up once a week. Cardboard boxes, paper, plastic, glass and cans are separated from the trash. In our kitchen we have 3 garbage cans~one for composting, one for trash and the other for recyclables.

Gardening and Chickens



Growing our own fruits and vegetables reduces the number of trips to the grocery store and farmers market. With the exception of summer, the garden is producing the rest of the year. And again, the leftovers go to the chickens or the compost bin. Though we do support local business, having a back up food supply is satisfying.



Our chickens provide us with the most delicious eggs. All the shells are recycled in the compost bin too.

Preserving Food



Growing up in a family of 7, my mother never wasted a thing. For example, leftover stale bread was turned into bread pudding. As a result, it's hard for me to throw good food away. I just made a big batch of mole chicken and after having it a few days in a row, I will freeze the rest in individual servings for another time. Same with the big pot of chili I just made.



Meyer Lemon Marmalade

Abundant harvests from the garden or orchard are canned and preserved for use during another season. From fruit preserves to tomato sauce, these are either canned or frozen.

Laundry



Line drying here in Phoenix, especially in the summer, is a quick and easy energy efficient task. Not only does the sun acts as a powerful disinfectant but also has natural bleaching powers. Plus nothing smells better than slipping under freshly washed sheets that are line dried! Even my children notice when their sheets have been washed and dried outside.

Coffee



I recall a time when daily and sometimes more, we would drive through Dutch Brothers and get our coffee. The staff knew us by name and their fun, upbeat vibe was a plus to our cup of Joe. Unfortunately, that coffee location closed, but I shudder to think of ALL those paper cups and plastic tops we used. Dutch Brothers had become a line item on the monthly budget.



Now we make our coffee here at home using my favorite [Nespresso](#) machine. The coffee pods get recycled through Nespresso recycling [program](#). Not only have we saved a boat load of money, but we are no longer excessively using paper cups and plastic tops.

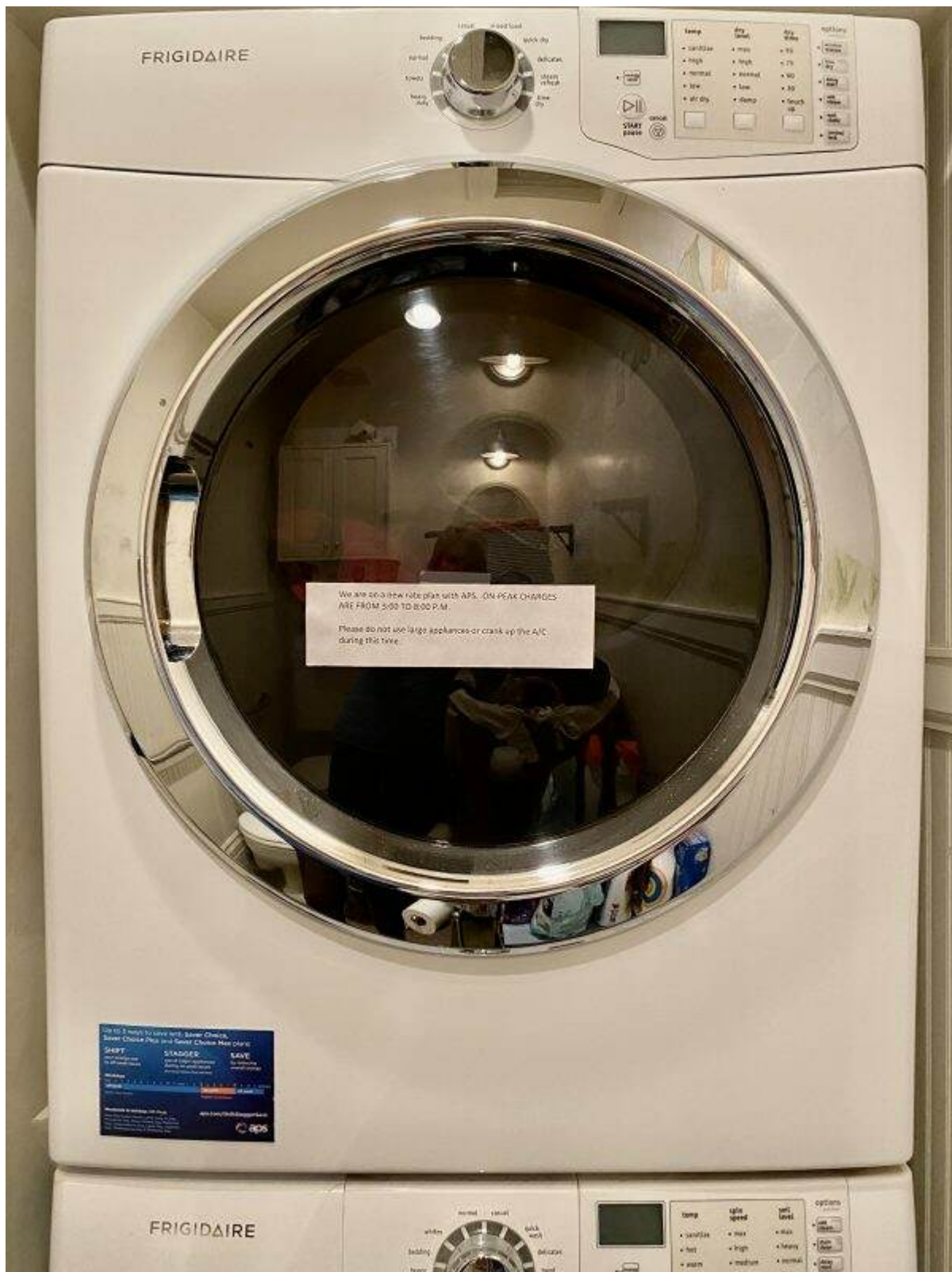
Paperwork



As I mentioned in a blog post about my kitchen, there is an industrial shredder placed next to the compost garbage container. See that post [here](#). Daily, the excessive amounts of junk mail is shredded and added to the composting bin. A good

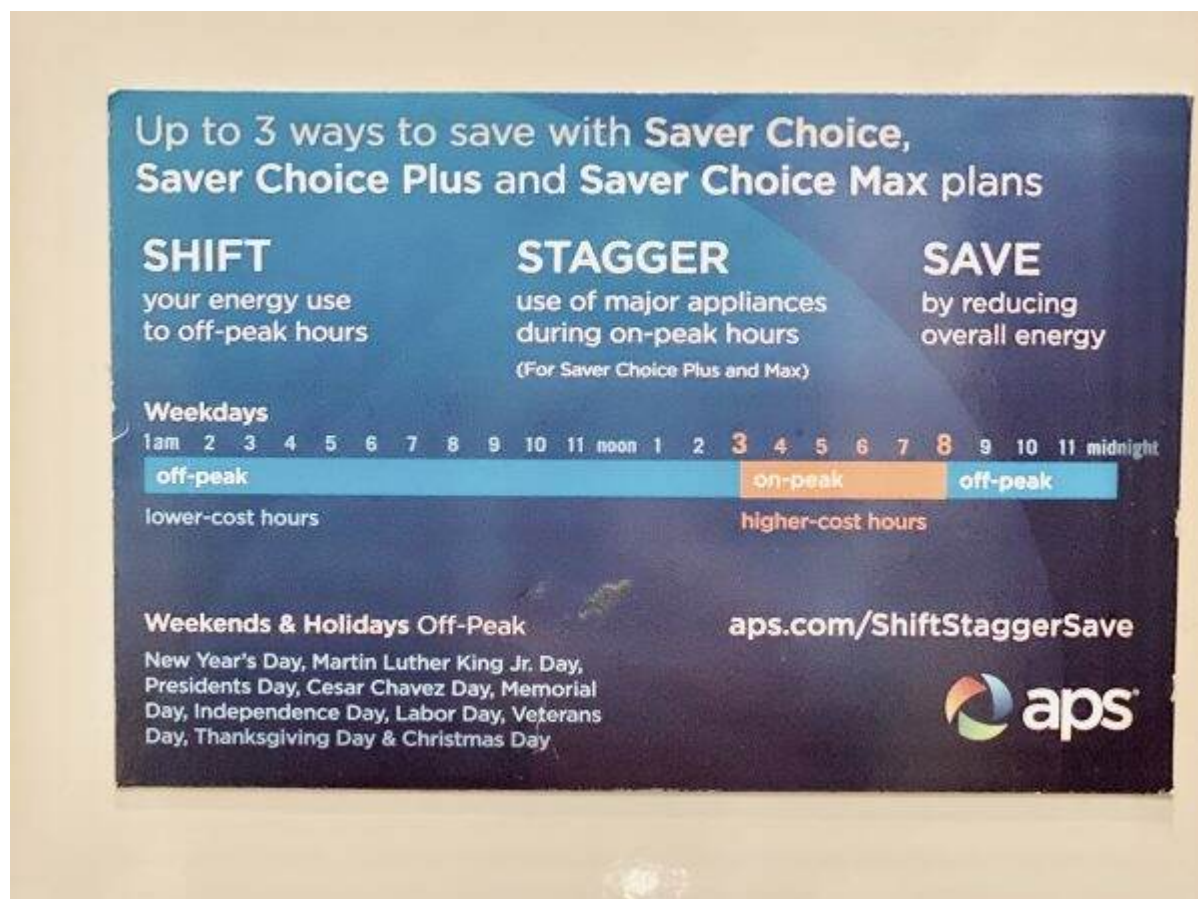
use of unwanted junk mail (and all those political flyers!)

Manage our Utilities

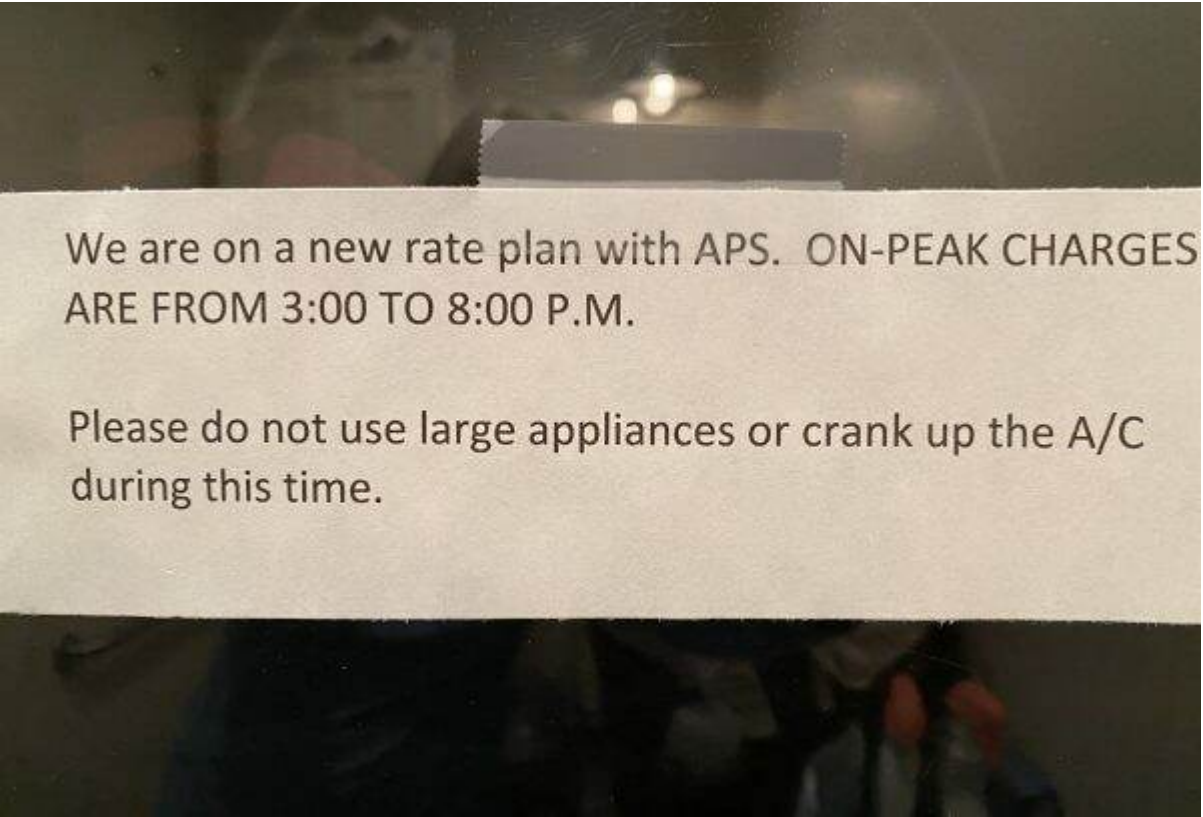


About two years ago, I was asked to give a lecture to a group of 7th and 8th grade students about the recent utility

(electric) increase that was imposed and how that rate hike affected our neighborhood. Of course, I didn't even realize we had a rate hike. So in order to provide an intelligent presentation, I got to work and did a thorough evaluation.



What I discovered is that we were not on the most efficient or advantageous utility plan. Once I understood that, then we started paying attention to our electric usage. The first month, we saved so much money. Over time, we saved even more.



We are on a new rate plan with APS. ON-PEAK CHARGES
ARE FROM 3:00 TO 8:00 P.M.

Please do not use large appliances or crank up the A/C
during this time.

Reminders I placed on the major appliances

The moral to this story is 1) understand your utility usage;
2) investigate the best plan for you and your family; 3) by
making reasonable changes you can reduce your usage and save a
lot of money.

Now, during the warmer months (trust me, air-conditioning
bills can be ridiculously expensive here), we monitor our
large appliance and air conditioning usage from 3:00 p.m. to
8:00 p.m.

Water consumption



Water here in Arizona is a precious resource. Rates go way up in June, July and August. By using flood irrigation provided locally, we are able to deep water the orchard and yard at a low annual cost. The well that we re-instituted many years ago, handles additional yard watering (see that post [here](#)).

Shopping with Reusable Bags



My car is the keeper of many reusable shopping bags. However, since COVID, no store is using them. Seems unfortunate however, I understand the need to be extra careful now. Hopefully, this too will pass.

Room for Improvement



Like with most things in life, I can certainly improve and lessen my waste. We have too many things that need to be sorted, organized and donated. That is an ongoing project that I need to jump start again. My goal is to reduce the items in each room by 50%. Lofty goal, but maybe I will start this effort after the first of the year. To see where I put Marie Kondo's organizational tips in place already, see that post [here](#).



I'd love to live in a place that doesn't require driving everywhere. Phoenix is more car-dependent than other cities, but during the cooler weather I do try to bike and walk more.



In addition, I need to assess my use of cleansers/detergents and investigate more eco-friendly cosmetics.

So what are you doing to lighten your footprint? Please share any ideas so we can all get better at this!

Happy Wednesday!

Mary

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