

# got green?

And 10 other brand-curdling clichés of green marketing

got milk?



got ice?

got sand?



got health care?

got hair?  
beauty & nail salon

got pig?



got dirt?



got muscle?



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I have a love/hate relationship with the ["got milk?"](#) campaign. Don't get me wrong. It's brilliant branding and marketing; an iconic movement around a basic product. As an advertiser, what more can you ask for? The campaign sours for me with every hackneyed use of the tagline. Such a ubiquitously copy-catted call-to-action curdles the original brand with every use. I love the irony of the last one. So to make sure your "green" brand is sustainable, here are 10 clichés to avoid.



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**Rule #1:** Resist the urge to put the word “Green” in the name of your company or product. Really, there’s only one organization that should have “Green” in their name. They’ve owned the brand in public perception since 1970. And they’re vigorous about protecting it. Let’s be honest, you probably don’t really have the cojones to back it up to their level anyway.



Rule #2: Green leafy logos are in their autumn. They're so prevalent, they actually camouflage your brand. Don't believe me? [Google green logo](#), and tell me which one stands out from the forest of forgettable designs.





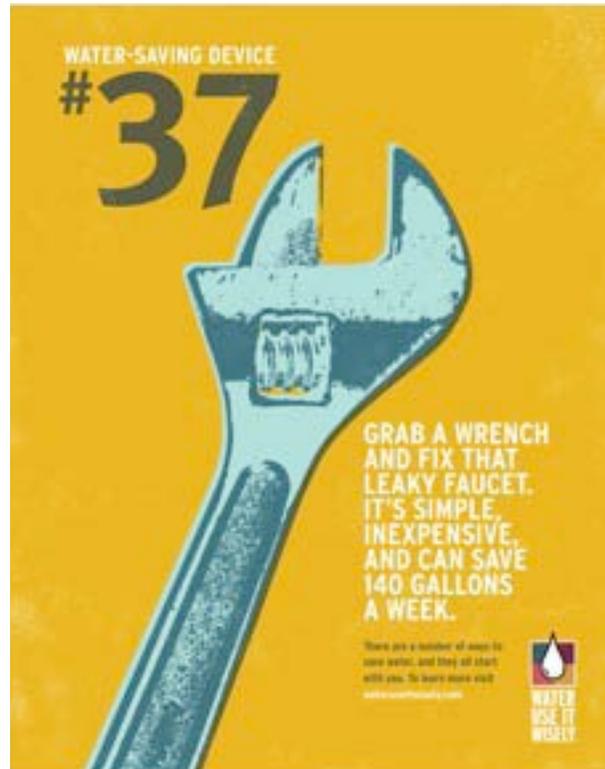
**We turn your water use into a water source.**

Here in Arizona, providing water begins with protecting it. That's why, as the state's fastest growing private water utility, we're so committed to water reclamation and reuse. By cleaning and treating the water that goes down your drain, we make it useful again for things like irrigating neighborhood parks, schools, and golf courses. And that makes every drop go a lot farther. Because even in the Desert Southwest, there's more than enough water for all of us, as long as we all become smarter about conserving it. [gwersources.com](http://gwersources.com)



**GLOBAL WATER**  
RELIABLE • RENEWABLE • REUSABLE

**Rule #3:** The recycling logo is boring unless presented in an inventive way. It was designed by an architect, feels like an engineering symbol and is synonymous with recycling. It's a given in our life, and therefore not very disruptive or impactful unless applied in a surprising and thoughtful way, as in this [Global Water ad](#).



Rule #4: We get it. We live on planet Earth. You're saving planet Earth. You don't need planet Earth in your advertising. None of the above ads use planet Earth. It's redundant.



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**Rule #5:** Consumers are smart. They know that being “Green” is a good thing. It’s like smoke-free restaurants. They’re expected. So don’t tell us how green you are. Show us.

**CASH MONEY**  
 Sow a richer lifestyle by putting down some roots.

You'd be amazed what a few well-placed plants and trees will do for your home, your health and your neighborhood. Try putting some new life in the ground where you live, and experience the beauty and value it brings to everything around it.

**PLANT SOMETHING**  
 plant-something.org

### Fruits of a Lush Landscape

**Growth Investments**  
 By adding quality, low-maintenance landscaping to your home, you can boost its resale value by up to 10%.

**Local Color**  
 One of the most important factors in neighborhood desirability is the abundance of trees and well-landscaped grounds.

**Shady Deal**  
 Carefully positioned plants and trees can cut as much as 20% off a household's energy consumption for cooling and heating.

**Greener is Cleaner**  
 One tree can remove 20 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually, equating 13,000 miles of car emissions.

**Arizona Garden Centers »**  
 Find your nearest location and plant selections.

**Desert Friendly Plants »**  
 Find a low water use plant that works for you.

Brought to you by: [Arizona Nursery Association](#) | [Questions? info@azna.org](#) | Arizona Nursery Association

[BringBackBlue.org](#)  
 A CLEAN AIR INITIATIVE

WHAT IS PARTICULATE MATTER?    HOW DOES IT AFFECT ME?    WHAT IS BEING DONE?    WHAT CAN I DO?    LEARN ABOUT OZONE

## DON'T USE LEAF BLOWERS AND HELP BRING BACK BLUE SKIES

Learn more ways you can fight particulate pollution

The brown cloud that hangs over Phoenix on many winter days is made up of several pollutants, including particulate matter. The good news is that there are many easy things that you can do to help. Find out more by exploring this website, and be sure to [Take the Pledge to Bring Back Blue Skies](#).

- Contact
- Report a Violation
- Subscribe to Newsletter

**PERSONAL ACTION PLAN**  
 You can take action today to help reduce the brown cloud. [Take the Pledge](#)

**AIR QUALITY FORECAST**  
 Arizona Department of Environmental Quality publishes forecasts and advisories for the Phoenix area. [Visit ADEQ website](#). (Opens in a new window.)

**NO WOOD BURNING RESTRICTIONS**  
[Click here](#) for more information on fireplace restrictions.

©2007 ParkCo

Rule #6: Fresh green grass and crisp blue skies are important for our neighborhoods, but they don't have to inhabit your website unless you're a solar-powered lawn service. Click here for a [showcase](#) of nature-inspired sites.



butyl acetate, ethyl acetate, nitrocellulose, acetyl tributyl citrate, glycols copolymer, isopropyl alcohol, stearalkonium hectorite, adipic acid/fumatic acid/phthalic acid/tricyclodecane dimethanol copolymer, citric acid and colors, which may contain: D&C Red #6 Barium Lake, D&C Red #7 Calcium Lake, etc.

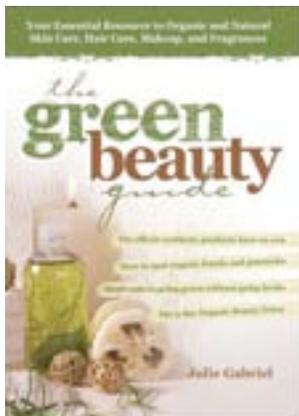
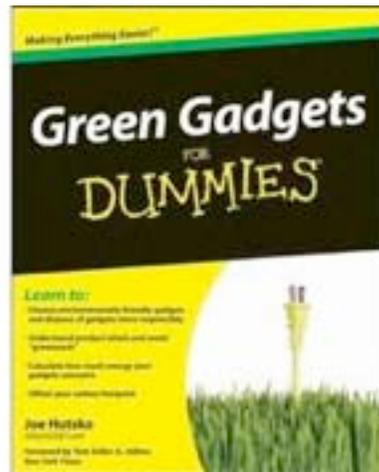
**Rule #7:** Anyone can get all puffed out about being "All Natural." But if you don't mean it, don't use it. You're wrecking it for products that are actually "All Natural."





BANK GREEN

SmartSource  
green  
Your Source for Saving Green™



Green Coal  
Technologies



Rule #8: If you've ever said, "We're a green (insert company, product or service here)" then you've committed "Green fogging," which is a term I just made up about diminishing the view of your really important brand attributes by trying to appear concerned about the planet.



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**Rule #9:** Kids and daisies in your ads and on your website are cute, but they don't sell product. Great products that are affordable, convenient and healthy for you and the planet are what sell. And yes, the name Green Works goes against Rule #8. But like Greenpeace, Clorox was one of the first to market in their category with cleaning products that kick ass, so they've earned the honor of owning that brand space.



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**Rule #10:** Hand-drawn typefaces, (especially my nemesis, Papyrus,) that try to express "being organic," work with organic consumables, but really nothing else. So if you're Cozy Chamomile tea, you might be able to get away with it. But if you're recycling tires, probably not.



**Extra credit:** Other trite visuals to avoid include anything remotely environmental in cupped hands, lightbulbs, clouds, a globe in a water drop, and just about everything related to carbon offsetting. The latter is a term for engineers, and most consumers, even the really smart ones, don't know what you're talking about.

# got gang green?

If you answer “yes” to three or more of the following symptoms, you may be suffering from “Gang Green,” the brand-curdling condition of clichéd anonymity that leads to something worse than death: Irrelevance.

	Yes	No	Help!
1. Are the people charged with managing your green brand thinking originally?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Have you put the word “green” in your name, and if so, do you have the cojones of Greenpeace to back it up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Has your logo sprouted a leaf?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you use the recycling logo as a crutch to prop up uninspired messages?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Have you put mother Earth in an ad?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Does your website look like the eco-equivalent of the Stepford Wives with green grass, blue skies and clouds?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you use the term “All natural” to excite your inner hippie?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Be honest, have you committed any degree of “Green Fogging” lately?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Have you adopted children and pretty flowers as your core visuals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Have you ever even considered using the font Papyrus?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Has any sort of environmental image showed up in cupped hands in your creative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Do you rely heavily on the color green and its expected cousins, blue and brown?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Has a globe ever appeared in a water drop, even when you’re daydreaming?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Has a sapling ever emerged from a non-sequitur image like gold coins or a pile of coal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Have you ever used “Green” in a sentence referring to both saving money AND the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Have you ever talked about carbon anything at a cocktail party, church gathering or during sex?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Is a lightbulb an illuminating metaphor to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Does the fear of “sameness” haunt you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For help, subscribe to my [“Sustainable Storytelling”](#) blog, or call 1-602-682-0620. A friend is closer than you think.