

Eco Tips 2023



Ideas for
Greening your Life

Recognizing what we do already

If you were alive in the 1950s you will remember life before oil became cheap. Perhaps you remember:

- wearing lots of clothes indoors in the winter, heating the front room only at weekends, ice on the inside of the windows
- having only a few, good quality garments, darning them, turning frayed shirt collars and cuffs.
- washing day- feeding clothes by hand into the heavy wringer
- buying small quantities of food at a time, seasonal, fresh, never wasting any.
- walking, cycling, using the bus for most journeys. An annual holiday in England, travelling there by train.
- libraries and the weekly cinema as main sources of entertainment.

You may have retained a lot of good habits which many of us now need to learn anew. Of course, we relish greater comfort, labour saving machines and variety of experience. The downside is road congestion, pollution, crowded airports, stressful commutes to work and still working long hours to fund our lifestyle. Above all, we have climate change.

Look at how we live



There is a useful book called ‘How Bad Are Bananas? The carbon footprint of everything’ by Mike Berners-Lee. It is very readable, and he makes this point:

Very few of us are squeaky clean in carbon terms. You don’t have to become so overnight, but most of us do need to make serious changes over the next few years. It’s important to keep moving in the right direction and enjoy the process of cutting carbon out of our lives. Don’t beat yourself up, but don’t let yourself off the hook either.

What more can we do?

I hope there is much that is useful and interesting in this booklet. It does not claim to tell you everything about leading a greener life. For example, I have not included at all the very large area of transport’s cost to the environment. I have omitted some things that I think are now very well-known by most people. I have included some internet resources if you have the time and inclination to learn more. I am grateful to Eco Sutton and other local Eco churches for some of the material.



What to buy

Try **Ethical Superstore** www.ethicalsuperstore.com for anything or any of the following:

Buy your toothpaste in a recycled aluminium tube
<https://wakencare.com/>.

Wash your hair with a shampoo bar. Try **Groom**,
www.groom.com/how-to-have-a-plastic-free-shower/.

Eco-friendly toothbrushes and electric tooth heads can be bought and returned for recycling at Holland and Barrett.

Bamboo kitchen roll, washing products, re-useable lids etc.

Lakeland

Toilet rolls: eco-friendly are made from bamboo or from recycled paper. Cheeky Panda came top in a Good Housekeeping survey.
<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/uk/product-reviews/house-garden/g36876680/best-eco-toilet-roll>

Splosh <https://splosh.com> has a wide range of eco-friendly washing and other cleaning products.

What food?

Aim for food that is locally sourced, organically grown, animal friendly and fairly traded. Try to cut down on meat and dairy. Of protein sources, the environmental impact is Beef >Lamb> chicken > dairy > lentils >nuts.

Which environment friendly milk?

All non-dairy milks are much better for the environment than cow's milk, but which is best? Greenhouse gas emission and water usage are factors, as well as taste, price etc. Oat milk eg, Oatly scores highly on most criteria. See

www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/environment-and-conservation/2022/12/is-your-favourite-plant-based-milk-good-for-the-planet

Clothes

Buy less – don't buy anything unless you are sure you will wear it at least 30 times.

Choose eco-friendly fabrics like wool, bamboo, hemp and viscose if possible. Cotton is not very eco- friendly because of the water used in manufacture. For a great guide to fabrics go to

<https://www.vettacapsule.com/blogs/blog/your-guide-to-eco-friendly-fabrics>

Microfibres. Every time we wash clothes which are made from artificial fabrics (that's over 60% of clothes) tiny microfibres are washed into the wastewater system and many eventually end up in the oceans and their wildlife.

Don't wash garments unless you really need to. Wash fleece fabrics as little as possible and consider washing them inside a pillowcase or a specially designed washing bag.

www.uk.buymeonce.com/guppy-friend-washing-bag (also available from Lakeland). More info about microfibres at www.stopmicrowaste.com.

Try to fill your washer- a full load keeps the shedding of microfibres to a minimum. Use the Eco programme. Instead of washing powders/liquids try detergent sheets eg. Earthbreeze earthbreeze.co.uk/products/earthbreeze-ecosheets-laundry-detergent or a laundry egg which works with biodegradable pellets, from Lakeland or see www.ecoegg.com/product/laundry-egg

Avoid the tumble dryer and hang your clothes outside if you possibly can. if you can. Sunlight is good for clothes -it bleaches beautifully and has an anti-bacterial effect. UV light kills the bacteria that may survive a cool wash.

Ladies – check out www.earthwisegirls.co.uk for many reusable period products and eco friendly bodycare.

Babies

It's never too late to change your baby to reusable nappies; it doesn't matter if you're on your first child, second child or your fifth child you'll save money, save waste, save landfill.

Normal disposable nappies when thrown away then last for centuries and leach plastics into the earth.

Washable nappies, often made from bamboo, are a lot easier to use than most people think. There are many different designs out there, often with a cheap flushable liner, all will save you money over disposables. www.thenappylady.co.uk has more information.

Naty disposable nappies biodegrade in less than 2 months, are available from Sainsburys and Boots.

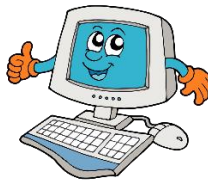


Gardening

The Royal Horticultural Society have tips on their website.

www.rhs.org.uk/gardening-for-the-environment

They have also produced a book: How to Garden the Low Carbon Way- the steps you can take to help combat climate change.



In the home office

Don't leave your devices on standby. Screensavers do not save electricity. If you want a break and don't want to turn off your computer, use the sleep or hibernate functions which use very little energy and mean you don't have to log in again.

Make sure all lights are turned off at the end of the day.

Use recycled paper and use both sides of the paper - set your computer default to print duplex (double sided).

Switch your search engine to **Ecosia**. www.ecosia.org. The more you search, the more trees they plant.

Buying a new mobile phone? Try a fairphone at www.fairphone.com



Celebrating

Avoid wrapping paper and cards with glitter and foil and don't use too much Sellotape- it makes paper harder to recycle.

Glitter. Avoid plastic glitter, which contains a form of micro plastic. When washed off it gets into our waterways and into marine life. Biodegradable glitter is available from www.festivalglitter.co.uk or www.joliebeauty.co.uk.

More information about glitter alternatives

<http://moralfibres.co.uk/eco-friendly-alternatives-to-glitter/>

Balloons. Most helium filled balloons contain a lot of plastic as do the ribbons and weights. We need Helium for more important things like MRI scanners, fibre optics, welding, cooling nuclear reactors, cryogenics, lasers, and breathing ventilators for infants. Balloons which escape or are released into the sky can be harmful to animals and sea creatures as well as adding to litter.

Choose eco-friendly party supplies. See www.littlecherry.co.uk for compostable bio-plastic cups & straws, recycled paper napkins, biodegradable balloons, cotton bunting, recycled paper children's party bags, wooden children's party bag fillers.

Reducing your gas use for heating- save money

Boiler/ Heat source

Set the large knob on the front of your boiler at 60 degrees C, which is hot enough to kill any legionella disease in the pipes. There is no need to set it any higher for most installations. Have your boiler maintained every year. Any gas boiler over 15 years old could be replaced for a more efficient boiler, saving you money.

Consider a Defra exempt wood stove, as all of Birmingham is a smokeless zone. Get it fitted by a HETAS Engineer otherwise it does not comply with Building Regulations.

Air source heat pumps are available. Make sure it is sized to meet your maximum winter heat and hot water requirements. From April 2022, a £5000 grant is available based on circumstances.

Ground source heat pumps are a high capital cost, and have a long payback period, and may not be suitable for every location.

Night storage heaters on a lower Economy Seven tariff. The modern heaters are more efficient than the old bulky ones coupled with a good thermostat/controller .

Infrared radiators - Two types, hard-wired or plug-in can reduce your gas consumption eg at <https://bit.ly/3Dn3Mf2>

You can charge these with solar panels and the big battery, then have it available during peak times.

Controller / Main Thermostat

Put this in the room you are in the most. Set at 19 degrees C for all rooms being used such as kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms, (bathrooms 21 degrees C).

Turning down your thermostat by 1 degree will save you approximately 10% of your gas bill and done in stages will be hardly noticeable.

Check that the on/off settings on your heating controller are still relevant for your lifestyle.

Time your heating to turn off an hour before you leave the house, and to come on an hour before you arrive back. Modern programmable optimising thermostats will do this for you.

Consider internet connected controls such as Nest, Wiser, Hive.

Radiators

Fitting thermostatic radiator valves (TRV) could save you £50 per valve per year. Turn the TRV to the frost setting in any room you are not using.

Suspend sheets of foil from the brackets of your radiator to reflect the heat away from external walls and into the room. Approximate saving per radiator £20 per year.

When installing radiators put them on internal walls. If the top of the radiator is cold, bleed the air out with a radiator key. Check every month.

Ensure the system is properly balanced to save energy.

Windows

Consider upgrading double glazing that's over 15 years old. Modern double glazing is very efficient. The payback period will be approximately 8 years.

Make or have made thermal linings for your curtains. Buy them for the largest curtains first. Once the sun has gone off the windows of a room close the curtains.

Draughtproof all doors and windows, renew any mastic that has come away on the outside of the windows.

House insulation

Loft - The recommended thickness of loft insulation around and above the ceiling joists is 11 inches or 275 mm. This will come above the ceiling joists.

Cavity walls If you have a cavity wall, get some quotes for having it filled. This will make you more comfortable in the winter and cooler in the summer. Payback 12 years.

Visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk for more tips and information.

energy
saving
trust





Recycling is the last resort.

Of the slogan **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**, try to do the first two as much as possible.

Don't 'wishcycle'. If you are unsure whether something can be recycled, put it in the general waste. This is subject to a further sorting before it ends up in landfill. For interest, you can find out what happens to your waste here. www.biffa.co.uk/about-us/waste-journeys/recycling-facilities

You can make the recycling easier to sort by following these rules:

DON'T crush bottles and cans.

DON'T take off labels and lids.

Follow the tennis ball rule Gather and scrunch aluminium foil into a ball no smaller than tennis ball.

Can your council recycle Tetrapaks? Birmingham: only at recycling centre, Walsall: Yes, Lichfield: only at recycling centre, not from kerbside.

Black plastic? Yes, no problem.

Pizza boxes? Yes, grease is fine for your compost heap. Remove and put the rest of the box card with your paper.

Lids- keep plastic ones on the bottle, remove metal ones and put in tin can recycling.

Where to take items for recycling

Specsavers and Boots Opticians collect contact lenses, lens packaging and glasses for recycling.

Boots cosmetic recycling scheme takes mascara, lipstick, makeup palettes, travel miniatures, the tops from soap, shower gel or other dispensers, toothpaste tubes. The Body Shop takes most of these too.

Superdrug can recycle medicine blister packs but our nearest store for collection is Erdington and they can get overwhelmed.

Rymans recycle pens, ink and toner cartridges.

Dobbies garden centre recycle plastic plant pots. Also, all their compost is non-peat based.

Supermarkets- most of them now recycle soft plastics along with carrier bags. Eg bread, rice, cereal bags, sweet and biscuit wrappers, crisp packets, peelable film lids, multipack film wrap, pouches used for sauce, microwaveable food, pet food etc. Clothing bags, bubble wrap magazine wrappers.

If you are not sure, look it up.

Recycle Now allows you to enter your postcode and an item to show where it can be recycled www.recyclenow.com/

For anything with a plug, cable or battery look up www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk/

www.terracycle.com has latest information on 'unrecyclable' items.

***You may never know what results come of your actions,
but if you do nothing, there will be no results.***

Mahatma Gandhi

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