



JUMPSTART[™]
NATURE

Everyone's Guide to Helping Our Planet

Here's a list we all need! Each item in here will help the planet. Not only that, each will either save you money, improve your health, or save you time!

Browse the list and pick a couple actions that you think you can stick to, and get started! Some actions might require you to form a new habit. There are many great suggestions for establishing new habits - many backed by science and research. For example, habit stacking, which means identifying a habit you already do and then stacking your new behavior on top of it.

Jumpstart pro tip: we place reusable items such as sporks, reusable bottles/cups, and produce bags in a reusable bag, then hang it on the door handle so we'll remember to grab it when we leave the house.

Depending on your circumstances and where you live, some of the suggestions below may or may not pertain to you. As with all lists, use what you can and *get creative* about how to institute other ideas in the future. Throw out the all-or-nothing mindset and just get started!

Keep coming back to this list. Form new habits or check off other actions, then challenge yourself to add new ones! Be sure to share your progress with us on social media using #JumpstartHabits and by all means, please help us add to the list. After all, sharing is caring. And, we can all learn from one another and celebrate helping the planet at the same time.

Sustainable Eating

At home or out and about, here are some easy ideas for eco-conscious eating and grocery shopping:

- Keep a reusable spork on hand, and decline plastic utensils.
- Carry a reusable straw with you and refuse plastic ones.



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- When possible, order locally sourced or in-season items.
- Buy produce (fruits/vegetables) that is grown locally and is in-season.
- When produce is about to go out of season, buy extra and freeze it.
- Repurpose leftovers rather than throwing good food out.
- Pick day(s) of the week to go meatless. Hey, we're not telling you to go vegan, but rather just reduce meat consumption, because it is healthier, cheaper, and better for the planet.
- Reduce "single use" food items, such as yogurt and bags of chips. Buy in bulk and store in reusable containers.
- Buy the organic options of the [Dirty Dozen](#). Some produce absorbs much more pesticides than others, which are demonstrably bad for our health. Buy organic strawberries, spinach, kale, peaches, and the other 8.
- Use a reusable water container and a reusable coffee cup.
- Leave reusable shopping bags in your car and use them for shopping.
- Purchase reusable produce bags so that you do not need to use plastic bags at the store. Store your produce bags with your reusable shopping bags so you don't forget them.
- Put sandwiches in reusable containers or wrap in wax paper, rather than use plastic sandwich bags.
- Choose coffee that has Smithsonian's bird-safe label.
- Use unbleached coffee filters.
- Avoid all styrofoam...it releases CFCs as it breaks down.
- Use cloth napkins rather than disposable paper ones, it's easier than you think. Tip: cloth napkins can often be used for several meals in a row. Keep a basket of colorful napkins on the counter, for quick access.

Lawn and Garden

Getting outside and digging in the soil is some of the best therapy and exercise one can do for free. It's even better when you know that you're doing good for the planet too. Try a few of these ideas:

- Add some native plants to your landscape. Did you know that birds depend on insects, and most insects require native plants? Whether you have lots of space or just a few potted plants, this [native plant finder](#) will help you get started.
- Reduce or eliminate pesticide use. Most of the time predatory wasps, birds, ladybugs, lacewings, and others will take care of potentially harmful insect outbreaks. Also, there is no such thing as a single-species pesticide, they all impact multiple (or in some cases, every) species. This [resource](#) can help you find some safer choices.



- Reduce or eliminate herbicide use. Like pesticides, these chemicals have an impact much larger than is obvious, and they often end up in our water supplies. Learn more about these [harmful chemicals](#) here.
- Reduce or eliminate fungicide use. Fungi are critical parts of the soil systems that deliver nutrients to plants. Trees and plants that get fungal infections are usually already diseased or have been mishandled.
- Reduce or eliminate synthetic fertilizers. Synthetic fertilizers increase soil acid, degrade soil ecosystems that are important for plants, are usually over-applied and make their way into streams and lakes causing harmful algal blooms. The use of fertilizers creates an endless cycle of applying more and more.
- Reduce the area of your lawn or turfgrass. Most lawns are not native, require excessive chemical use, and are monocultures that do not support pollinators and other critical components to our food web.
- Clean your bird feeders and bird baths frequently.
- Keep cats indoors and/or create "catios" to keep your furry friend happy and wildlife safe.
- Make your windows bird safe using some [ideas outlined here](#).
- Leave a pile of sticks or logs in a corner of your yard for wildlife habitat.
- If you have a feeder, place it far away or very close to your house to prevent window strikes.
- Compost. It's easy to get started with this [beginners guide](#).
- [Leave the leaves](#). That's it, let the leaves remain and you will save time, save landfill space, allow nutrients to go back into the soil, and provide habitat for all types of wildlife.
- Allow dead snags and large branches to remain in place as long as it is safe to do so. These provide food and shelter for many animals.
- If you must use a leaf blower, choose an electric one and urge your neighbors to invest in them too. Pollution from garden equipment is a [bigger problem](#) than most people are aware.
- Do not prune twigs until late spring. Anything with a pithy or hollow center provides shelter and foraging space for woodpeckers and other animals.

Household Habits and Energy Saving

No matter where you live, many of these ideas can be added into your abode and you'll often save time and money in the process.

- Use a yellow "bug light" for outdoor lighting. These are less attractive to insects.
- Put your outdoor lights on motion sensors which will save you money and are better for wildlife as well as home security.



- Install a programmable thermostat at home.
- Replace your furnace filter and clean your outdoor AC unit regularly.
- Turn off lights when you leave a room and/or install motion sensors.
- Reduce use of environmentally harmful cleaning products and replace with non-toxic options or use baking soda and vinegar
- Purchase laundry detergent and dish soaps with [no harmful chemicals or microplastics](#).
- Refuse products with microplastics, many of which are not disclosed on the labels, check your [products here](#).
- Properly dispose of prescription drugs. Here is a [how to resource](#).
- Take leftover or used paint to proper collection sites. [This website](#) helps you locate a paint drop-off site. Search your local agencies for how your community handles paint disposal.
- Take leftover or used pesticides to a proper collection site. If you don't know where, try an internet search for household hazardous waste and use this [link for more information](#).
- Take dead batteries to proper collection sites. Again, a quick internet search for battery disposal will result in options for proper disposal sites near you. Some businesses such as Home Depot will accept rechargeable batteries.
- Take old electronics to a verified recycler or collection site.
- Recycle old light bulbs at a proper collection site. Some counties, and even some Home Depot stores have collection bins.
- Don't purchase aerosol products since they still [release harmful byproducts](#).
- Eliminate hidden toxics in your home like permanent press fabrics, oven cleaners, air fresheners, moth balls and permanent ink markers. All contain harmful chemicals and all have non-toxic alternatives.
- Unplug electronics when not in use for lengthy periods.
- Use sleep mode on your computers to automatically shutdown when not in use (or better still, turn it off). Check out [this article on zombie power](#).

Waste Reduction

Our planet is choking on plastic and lots of other trash too. For a quick reminder of the 3R's, check out our [April newsletter](#) discussing these and more.

- Stop junk mail using the [links here](#).
- Keep rags on hand to clean rather than paper towels.
- Recycle glass and aluminum.
- Precycle, which means buy items in bulk if you can, purchase things in recycled packaging, etc.
- Keep trash and chemicals out of toilets and drains.
- Recycle paper, plastic, and food items.



- Begin with Refuse, then Reduce - Reuse - Recycle.
- When buying items, ask yourself if you want or need this? Another thought to consider is "would I buy this again if it got lost or stolen?"
- Use your library! Many libraries also lend computers and other items that might surprise you.
- Buy in bulk (if you *need* a lot of something). Product-to-packaging ratio is usually better when buying in bulk.
- Re-use or skip gift wrap. Not only is this wasteful, but many wrapping papers and decorating products are made with plastic.

Community Building and Outdoor Activities

Doing good on your own is important and we applaud you for getting started. Sharing your time, efforts, knowledge, tips, and tricks with others could be the beginning of something bigger.

- Join a public cleanup project.
- [Leave no trace](#), everywhere you go.
- Advocate for better climate and environment protections whether it be around the dinner table, at a gathering, or in front of your local elected officials.
- Share eco-related posts on social media. Doing so helps normalize discussing environmental issues.
- Join a local conservation group.
- Volunteer to pull invasive plants in your community. We recommend you find an organized event such as through your local parks and recreation groups. Please don't just go out and start pulling.
- Pick up trash left behind on trails, parks, beaches or elsewhere whenever you can.
- Share native plants, seeds, and/or cuttings, with your friends and community.
- Take kids, friends, and family on a fun outdoor activity. Make it engaging and show them a cool nature thing.
- Talk to friends, family, community members about wildlife-friendly legislation to support.
- Be a walking billboard. Wear conservation-related messaging on your shirts.
- Spend money with, or invest in wildlife or climate friendly businesses. Vote with your dollars, whether it be who to buy products from, who to invest in, or who to donate to.
- It might be time to "break up" with your bank as most [larger banks are funding](#) some of the worst contributors of the climate crisis. Search here for [FDIC-certified climate safe banks](#).



- Donate to a local conservation or environmental organization.
- Adopt feral cats and keep them indoors or in an enclosure.
- Install bird boxes and bat boxes to provide missing nesting/roosting habitat.
- Write pro-conservation letters to the editor and leave comments on government pages. Encourage your family and friends to do the same.
- Continuously work on improving your climate and sustainability communication. That is, meet people where they are. Avoid sounding like a lecturer when you disagree, seek understanding and build from there.
- Plant a tree - at home, a park, or join a restoration effort.
- Consider how all of these ideas might apply to your workplace, school, or place of worship. And begin to put them into regular use in those places.

Transportation Choices

Becoming hermits won't make us happy even though it might help the environment. Instead, try some of these:

- Keep your car tuned up.
- Don't let your car idle unnecessarily.
- Carpool.
- Keep your tires properly inflated. This saves wear and tear as well as fuel economy.
- Combine your errands to save driving trips.
- Fly only when necessary.
- Try using public transportation - you might be surprised by the amount of productivity you gain. Don't be laser focused on the number of minutes. Public transport provides other benefits, such as less stress, a chance to take a nap, help the environment, save parking costs, catch up with friends, read the news, and/or get other work done.
- Walk or ride a bike whenever possible for local errands.

Water Saving

Earth is 71% water and humans are 60% water. We all need it, so every drop counts.

- Use low flow aerators on your faucets and showerheads.
- Turn your water heater down to 120-125 degrees.
- Install a graywater tank. Check your local water agencies for possible rebate offers.
- Get your car washed at a car wash to keep soap out of water sources. Most car washes also recycle their water.



- Opt for a cold water cycle to wash laundry. It cleans just as well and many detergents are optimized for cooler water.
- Take shorter and cooler showers.
- Don't let the faucet run when doing dishes.
- Turn off water when brushing teeth or shaving.
- Outdoor watering wisdom suggests it is better to water for more minutes, but less frequently to help establish deeper root systems
- Install an automated irrigation system with a weather sensor.

Miscellaneous

When it comes to helping the planet, the list keeps going and here a few more we just had to include:

- Follow conservation organizations and conservationists on social media and share their posts.
- Ask your local nurseries and big box stores to carry local native plants.
- And, ask them to avoid stocking plants treated with systemics or neonicotinoids.
- Learn about the native wildlife and plants in your local area. Join a nature walk, a bioblitz, volunteer at a native plant nursery, or join a bird walk. Also, you might enjoy downloading the free apps called [Seek](#) or [iNaturalist](#) which will help you learn about the flora and fauna around you.
- Do not buy products containing ivory, tortoiseshell, coral, reptile skins, cat pelts, or other endangered animals or plants.
- Say no to helium balloons and never release them.
- Stay on trails. Don't create your own or cut switchbacks.
- Consider becoming a certified naturalist or master gardener in your state.
- Clean up after your pet and properly dispose of their waste. The [ecological impact of pet waste](#) is bigger than you think and picking up is just a nice thing to do anyway.

