

Shopping

What you can do today

Make one change or buy one less item today! Refill your empty water bottle with tap water and put that in your bag along with a carrier bag - that's two items on the list ticked off already.

Some things you can do right now!

Always carry a bag with you so you can say no to plastic. Made from polyethylene, they are an environmental enemy!

Buy or source recycled products. The most commonly recycled product is paper, but the market is growing. Buying second hand saves resources in many ways, including materials, production, transportation and your money. The same goes for products made from recycled materials.

www.recycledproducts.org.uk

Recycle unwanted items by donating them to charity shops or recycling organisations.

www.charityshops.org.uk/recycling/html

www.freecycle.org

Drink tap water rather than bottled, which is an incredibly large consumer of resources and producer of emissions.

Buy local, seasonal produce as much as possible. Out of season produce will have been imported, which is environmentally costly. Visit farmers markets, farm shops and local independent stores.

Food for thought

A recent report suggested that a typical British Sunday roast, made with imported ingredients would have seen its food constituents travel 81,000km - the equivalent to two journeys around the earth - with a total cost of 3,700 grams of CO₂. On the other hand, had the beef, potatoes and vegetables all been produced within a 30 mile radius, the carbon cost would have been a mere 58 grams of CO₂.

Buy Planet Positive or products with another accredited mark. 'Green' can mean all sorts of things. You need to check credentials but generally items need to have been fairly traded or grown in more sustainable, less intensive and invasive ways.

Buying local, organic produce is great, but it's doubtful that organic produce that has travelled a long distance is better for the planet. Local, seasonal, non-organic food may be a better option and is likely to be fresher and more nutritious.

<http://www.farmersmarkets.net>

Packaging. People tend to assume paper is better than plastic as it is recyclable and degradable. However, paper is also heavier and bulkier to ship and takes more energy to produce. The best packaging choice is the one that has the least total impact over its life but it's not easy to find this information. The best thing to do is use recycled paper and/or plastic and try to avoid packaging when possible.

Within the year...

Solar powered products – including mobile phones, torches and radios – require no wiring and work with daylight, even on cloudy days.

www.selectsolar.co.uk

Buy eco-friendly/'green' products when replacing worn out or broken items. The same applies to gifts and children's toys.

Buy reusable and long-life items. Many items, from electricals to cosmetics, carry a label or symbol with a number. The higher the number, the longer the product is expected to last.

Before you buy a new item, might you be able to buy it second hand from somewhere like ebay? Or how about freecycle, where you might pick it up for nothing?

www.ebay.co.uk

Clothing – and how it's made. Huge amounts of water, fertilisers, pesticides and fuel are used in cotton growing and manufacture. Its production also uses vast areas of land that could be used to grow food. Equally, the manufacture of synthetic fibres leans heavily on resources.

The best options are:

- Organic cotton
- Wool
- Recycled clothing

Within the next five years...

Check energy efficiency ratings on any new goods you are buying, such as:

- Fridge freezer

Cost saving per year: £30

CO2 saving per year: 142kg CO2

- Refrigerator

Cost saving per year: £13

CO2 saving per year: 45kg CO2

- Washing machine

Cost saving per year: £11

CO2 saving per year: 45kg

- Dishwasher

Cost saving per year: £23

CO2 saving per year: 90kg

A++ is the best energy efficiency rating. Also look out for the Energy Saving Trust's recommended label. A-rated items may be more expensive to buy, but they should pay back the difference through lower running costs.

Look out for an 'auto-off' feature on items such as televisions, music systems, DVDs and irons, which switch themselves off when not in use.

Buy recycled furniture as well as flooring and building supplies.

www.frn.org.uk

www.ebay.co.uk

Think about:

Becoming vegetarian. Producing meat is a highly energy intensive process and is responsible for 21% of the carbon emissions attributed to human activity. Or consider changing the type of meat you eat. Production of poultry and fish is less intensive and buying locally sourced, organic meat is also a better option.