

Simple Ways
to Save
the Planet

it's
easy being
green

Mark Mann



IT'S EASY BEING GREEN

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Summersdale Publishers Ltd
46 West Street
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1RP
UK

www.summersdale.com

Printed and bound in Great Britain

ISBN: 1-84024-576-X

ISBN 13: 978-1-84024-576-9

Contents

Introduction

Making a change.....	5
Green principles.....	9
Being green means.....	11
Notes & explanations.....	14
Key energy facts.....	16

Section 1: Green Home

1. Energy.....	21
2. Water.....	28
3. Chemicals.....	34
4. Building & renovation.....	39
5. Garden.....	45

Section 2: Green Living

6. Waste.....	51
7. Food.....	58
8. Transport.....	64

9. Work.....	71
10. Body.....	76
11. Parenting.....	81
12. Shopping.....	87
13. Holidays.....	92
14. Money.....	96
15. ... and more.....	99

Section 3: Green World

16. Wildlife & conservation.....	107
17. Social change.....	111

Section 4: Resources

Useful resources.....	115
Natural living basics.....	120

Introduction

'The people in denial now are the equivalent of the Flat Earth Society. Humankind is in a race for life against global warming'

UK Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks (2006)

'Be the change you wish to see in the world'

Mahatma Gandhi

Making a change



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This book provides a short introduction to what 'being green' means, and identifies the key steps that make the most difference for the least effort and cost. Do these easy things first and worry about the hard stuff later.



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Our excessive use of natural resources – fuelled by population increases and a relentless pursuit of economic growth and material possessions – is causing alarming damage to the environment.

Human activity, such as burning fossil fuels, is causing a build-up of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, which trap heat and cause global warming. Scientists tell us that if we don't reduce these greenhouse emissions by 60–90 per cent in the next few years, starting immediately, temperatures will rise with catastrophic consequences – including melting icecaps raising sea levels (which will flood coastal regions and displace billions of people) and more drought, hurricanes and storms.



That's not the only problem. We're close to wiping out much of the planet's marine life. We're destroying rainforests and other wild ecosystems, which is decimating the planet's wildlife and biodiversity. We're turning vast tracts of fertile land into desert by over-farming. We're polluting our waters, soil and air with chemicals that are toxic to plants, animals and ourselves.

In short, if we don't change – quickly – the future looks grim.

But we *can* change. There *is* hope. Awareness of the problems is growing. Millions of people are becoming green, and there's a stream of exciting new green technologies and ideas. And you can be a part of this change, by reducing your own ecological footprint and



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helping persuade others of the urgent need for change.

The impact of your actions goes further than you think. You may inspire other people to make their own changes. Buying green helps green businesses grow so they can reach more people. And politicians, retailers and manufacturers are all watching closely, trying to gauge the demand for greener products and policies.

Of course, a small book like this is only a starting point, so throughout the book and in Section 4: Resources I've listed useful organisations, books and websites that provide lots more information.



Signs of crisis

Since 1961, humanity's ecological footprint has tripled while 30 per cent of earth's wildlife and natural ecosystems have been lost.

Far from falling, annual global greenhouse emissions have risen 28 per cent since 1990 – and are still rising.

20 per cent of the world's population, mainly in Europe and north America, consume 80 per cent of its natural resources.

The average Briton generates as much CO₂ in eight days as the average Zambian does in a year.

The world's population rose from two billion in 1930 to six billion in 2000 and is predicted to reach nine billion by 2050.

Green principles

Some underlying principles run through this book; grasp them and you're well on your way to being green.



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1 Live with less: most environmental problems are ultimately due to our voracious demand for new things. Making all those new cars, gadgets, clothes and so on eats up raw materials and energy. Instead, learn to reduce, reuse, recycle – in that order. Reducing – living with less – is the best and simplest solution. Where you can't do without, reuse things by repairing, adapting, swapping, borrowing, buying second-hand, etc. And if you can't reuse something, recycle it – that way, no new raw materials have to be grown or extracted. Don't forget to buy recycled products to complete the recycling loop.

2 Reduce energy, water, chemicals, waste: being green means using less fossil-fuel energy, water and chemicals and creating less waste.



3 Green alternatives: something is green if it is natural, reusable, renewable, locally-produced, energy/water-efficient and non-polluting. Of course, often you have to use your judgement to make choices (such as between imported organic and local non-organic food – or perhaps you could find an alternative that is both local and organic).

Being green means...

Saving money: a few things, such as organic products, do cost more. But buying less, reusing more, buying second-hand and saving energy will still leave you better off.

Being healthier: consuming fewer chemicals and less meat; walking, cycling and getting more fresh air reduce the risk of heart and



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respiratory disease, diabetes, cancer, asthma and allergies. Time spent in nature reduces stress, a major cause of illness in modern society.

Creating new habits: it takes three weeks to create a habit. After that you'll stop even noticing you're being green.

Doing what you can: even if you only do the 'green thing' half the time, that's far better than doing nothing.

Learning to love nature: until we start to value nature for itself – and not simply because of how it affects us – we'll keep creating environmental problems.

Being happy with less: far from being a sacrifice, this can be liberating – stepping off



the consumer treadmill makes life simpler, cheaper and less stressful.

Focusing on what you *can* do, not despairing about what you *can't*: global problems may seem overwhelming but the best place to start is by taking responsibility for your own actions (see Ch.17 Social Change).

Opportunities: intellectually, socially, even spiritually, being green can open up a whole new world.



Ecological footprint

Your ecological footprint is an estimate of the land needed to provide the food, energy and natural resources you use. The average UK citizen's ecological footprint is 5.45 hectares. To support the world's population sustainably (that is, using natural resources no faster than they can regenerate) each person's footprint needs to be 1.9 hectares or less.



Notes & explanations

Key to symbols: each tip is preceded by a box, which you can tick like this to target it.

Money-saving tips: a £ symbol indicates that a tip will save you money, including repaying any initial costs within a few years.

CO₂: carbon dioxide.

Organic: grown without using chemicals.

Web addresses: I've omitted the www from web addresses, and if the organisation's name is the same as its web address, I've simply given the web address. Websites contain further contact details.

Where to buy: if there is no specific website link given, you will find most items by looking in



the online stores or directories listed in Section 4: Resources.

Carbon offsetting: you pay a company a fee based on an estimate of how much CO₂ your holiday, car, home, wedding, etc., has produced. The company spends this money planting trees (to absorb CO₂) or on other energy-saving projects to absorb or save an equivalent amount of CO₂. The result is to cancel out your emissions, making you 'carbon neutral'. Try to reduce your own greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible, before offsetting the rest.

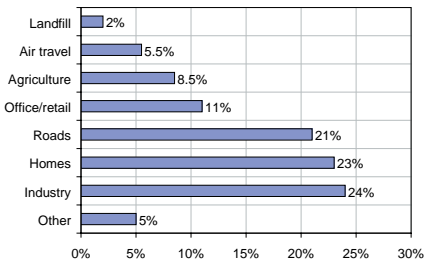
Green electricity: when you subscribe to a green electricity scheme, your energy supplier agrees to source an amount of electricity from renewable sources equal to the amount of electricity you use.



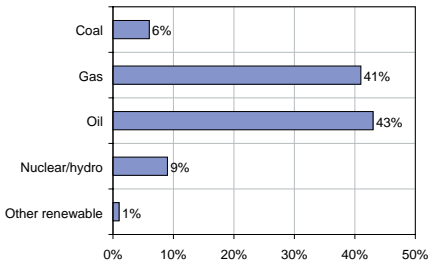
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Key energy facts

UK greenhouse gas emissions:

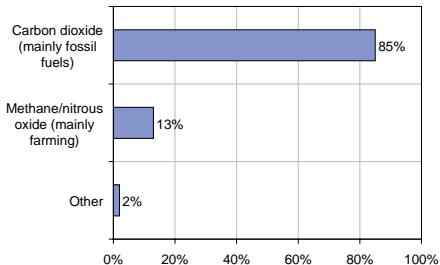


UK energy sources:

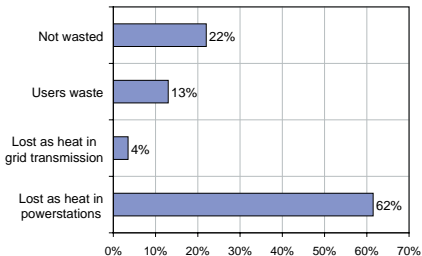




UK greenhouse gases:



Wasted electricity:





Being green: key steps

1 Energy: Insulate your home. Fit energy-saving light bulbs and a water-saving showerhead. Turn appliances off at the wall when not in use. Install solar hot water where suitable. Take shorter showers. Turn central heating down 1–2°C.

2 Water: Get a water-saving showerhead, dishwasher, washing machine and taps. Take shorter showers. Get a dual-flush toilet or fit a water-saving device to your cistern. Fix leaking pipes and dripping taps. Use plugs in sinks.

3 Chemicals: Use natural cleaning, bodycare and pest control. Switch to organic gardening.



- 4 Waste:** Compost kitchen scraps. 'Reduce, reuse, recycle' to minimise waste.
- 5 Food:** Buy locally-grown and organic food. Eat less meat. Avoid overfished fish.
- 6 Transport:** Drive less.
- 7 Shopping:** Buy less. Buy second-hand and recycled items.
- 8 Holidays:** Fly less.
- 9 Money:** Switch to ethical banking and investments.
- 10 Change society:** Vote green. Join a green organisation.



Green principles

- 1 'Reduce, reuse, recycle' (buy/use less)
- 2 Cut back on = energy, water, chemicals and waste
- 3 Sustainable alternatives = natural, efficient, reusable, renewable, local and non-polluting

Global warming: key steps

- Insulation
- Short/water-saving showers
- Energy-saving lights
- Solar hot water
- Drive/fly less
- Buy local
- Eat less meat

Section 1:

Green Home

Chapter 1

Energy

In a nutshell

For most of us, our homes – along with driving, flying and probably eating meat – are our biggest contributions to global warming. The flipside of that, of course, is this is one



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of the areas where we can make the most difference. Heating and hot water account for the lion's share (84 per cent) of domestic energy, so these are the key areas to target, but you can also make some easy CO₂ savings by fitting energy-saving light bulbs and not leaving appliances on standby.



Fast facts

Homes account for a quarter of the UK's greenhouse gases.

The average UK home is responsible for six tonnes of CO₂ per year, more than the average car.

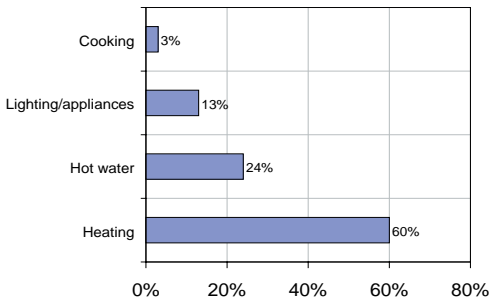
Domestic electricity consumption rose 47 per cent between 1995 and 2005.

The average household spends around £900 on gas and electricity every year.

Four million Britons suffer 'fuel poverty', spending more than 10 per cent of their income on energy.



Home energy use



KEY STEPS

1 Insulation: insulate your loft and wall cavities. Lag your boiler. Fit draft excluders to doors/windows. (£)

2 Heating controls: fit thermostatic valves to each radiator so you can turn off those in rooms you're not using, then shut doors and just heat rooms you are using.



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Turn heating down (17–19°C is comfortable) and wear warm clothes instead – it can cut heating bills by 10 per cent. Set central heating to go off at night, when you go to work and when you go on holiday. (£)

3 Hot water: take short showers (not baths). Fit a water-saving showerhead. Ensure electric boilers have a timer to heat water only when needed. (£)

4 Lighting: fit energy-saving light bulbs. Turn lights off when you leave the room. Maximising light output from each bulb means you can light your home using fewer lights so clean lampshades and light bulbs, as dirt can cut light by 50 per cent. Silver reflector strips behind light bulbs will also help increase effective light output. (£)



5 Appliances: turn appliances off at the wall. Standby mode can use almost as much energy as leaving things on and can account for 10 per cent of your electricity bill. (£)

6 Washing clothes: use cold water or wash at 30–40°C. Dry them on a line or airer instead of in a tumble dryer. (£)

7 Energy: sign up for green electricity or carbon offset your home energy use (see Section 4: Resources).

Want to do more?

Cooking: microwaves, slow-cookers, pressure-cookers and stir-frying on gas stoves are all energy-efficient methods of cooking. Steam vegetables with minimal water and the lid on, and don't overfill



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kettles. Choose a fan-assisted oven and make sure the oven door seals. (£)

Fridge: check door seals, defrost regularly and dust condensing coils to improve efficiency. When buying a new fridge, choose an energy-efficient one (energy-plus.org). A SavaPlug (savawatt.com) cuts energy use in older fridges by 20 per cent. (£)

Windows: shade with awnings, shutters or trees to help keep your home cool in summer without air-conditioning. (£)

Consider a wood-pellet or woodchip stove heater: wood from a sustainable source is a clean, renewable, carbon-neutral fuel (logpile.co.uk). Grants are available from lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk.



Resources

Websites: Energy Saving Trust (est.co.uk);
National Energy Foundation (nef.org.uk);
Centre for Alternative Technology (cat.org.uk)

Books: *The Which? Guide to the Energy-saving Home* (Ruth Turner); *Energy: Use Less, Save More* (Jon Clift & Amanda Cuthbert)



More ways to save on heating

Use extra blankets and hot water bottles.

Put silver reflector strips behind radiators on external walls.

Avoid bar/fan heaters except in small rooms for short bursts.

Heavy curtains retain heat in winter and keep it out in summer. Make sure curtains don't cover radiators.

Insulate under floorboards.

Double-glaze windows.

Chapter 2

Water

In a nutshell

The world is running short of water, and that includes the UK. But there are easy water savings to be had in all the main areas of domestic water use – showers, toilets, gardens and washing clothes and dishes.



Fast facts

Britons use 150 litres of water each a day; the average person in a developing country uses 10 litres of water a day – equal to one flush of a non-dual flush toilet.

The UK, with a large population but few large rivers or lakes, has less fresh water per person than Australia.

Only about 0.01 per cent of the earth's water is easily-accessible fresh water in lakes or rivers.



KEY STEPS

1 Showers: take shorter showers (not baths) and fit a water-efficient showerhead. These are inexpensive and most shops selling showers will stock them. (£)

2 Toilets: if your toilet isn't dual-flush, you can reduce the amount of water it uses for each flush by putting a full water bottle in the cistern so it holds less water. A simple device called a toilet hippo (hippo-the-watersaver.co.uk) works in a similar way. Don't use a brick as it can crumble and block your system. Don't flush the toilet every time you pee.

3 Dishes: if you wash dishes by hand, use the plug and don't wash/rinse with running water. If you use a dishwasher, scrape plates first instead of rinsing them, only run full loads



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and buy a water-efficient machine. These use as little as 15 litres, while older models can use 90 litres.

4 Washing machine: only run full loads. When replacing it, buy a water-efficient one. Don't wash clothes that aren't really dirty: hanging for an hour on a clothes line will air out stale smells.

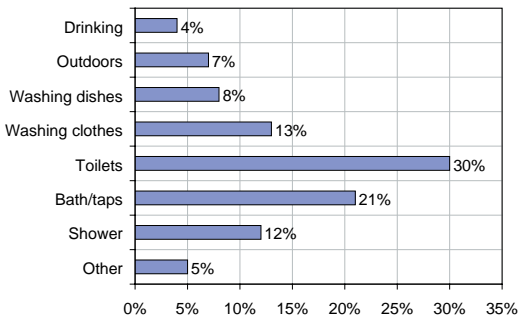
5 Be water-wise: turn off taps while cleaning teeth, put the plug in when washing hands, etc.

6 Fix dripping taps and leaking pipes: 16 per cent of water in homes is lost through leaks.

7 Use greywater: see box, below.



Home water use



Want to do more?

Pee in your garden – it provides nitrogen for plants!

Once or twice a week, wash with a flannel instead of having a shower.



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- If you have a swimming pool, get a cover to reduce evaporation.
- Wash your car with a sponge, not a hose, and become a waterwise gardener (see Ch.5 Garden).
- Install a water-butt or rainwater tank to use rainwater falling on your roof in your toilets, washing machine and garden (freewateruk.co.uk).
- Install composting toilets (see Ch.4 Building & renovation).

Resources

Websites: waterwise.org.uk

Books: *Water: Use Less, Save More* (Jon Clift & Amanda Cuthbert)



Divert greywater into your garden

Dishwasher/washing machine: connect a hose to the outflow and let it drain into the garden, or (get a plumber to) fit a simple greywater diverting device.

Bathroom: use containers to collect water from your shower or bath, or the initial cold water in washbasins, then empty it into your garden. Or get a low-cost siphon pump (droughtbuster.co.uk). You can also pour it into the toilet bowl to flush your toilet.

Kitchen: wash vegetables in a bowl, then empty water onto plants/garden. Empty dirty dishwasher into the garden. For health reasons use greywater immediately, don't use it on food or seedlings and don't let it pool on the surface of your lawn. And make sure you use natural, phosphate-free cleaning products (see Ch.3 Chemicals).

Chapter 3

Chemicals

In a nutshell

Since World War Two there's been a huge increase in chemicals in everyday life – in fabrics, plastics, carpets, clothes, detergents, insect sprays, and so on. This everyday chemical cocktail has been linked to health problems, including cancers, allergies, birth defects and more. Toxic chemicals also find their way into our soil and waterways (for instance, from landfill sites or detergents washed down our drains) with harmful environmental effects. The good news, however, is that you can easily and cheaply



replace most chemical cleaners and sprays with all-natural brands or natural homemade alternatives.



Fast facts

Since 1945 about 75,000 synthetic cleaning chemicals have been invented.

Most of us now have about 400 synthetic chemicals in our blood.

Indoor air quality is typically five times worse than outdoors.

The average UK family spends more than £1,000 a year on cleaning products.

KEY STEPS

- 1 Clean without chemicals:** buy chemical-free brands (see Resources, below). Invest in microfibre cloths and mops: they



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clean tiles, kitchen tops, floors, etc. without detergent and good-quality ones will last for years. Make your own natural cleaners (see Books, below and Section 4: Natural living).

2 Use natural pest control: buy chemical-free brands (see Resources, below). Make your own natural pest repellents (see Section 4: Natural living basics).

3 Bedroom: we spend a third of our lives asleep. It's a vital time for our bodies and minds to heal and recharge, so create a healthy, chemical-free bedroom by painting bedroom walls with natural paints (see Ch.4 Building & renovation) and buying organic cotton bedding.

4 Air fresheners: use natural pot-pourri, fresh air, essential oils or scented



candles. Indoor plants absorb toxins and improve air quality. Natural cleaners and pest repellents will make your home smell great anyway.

5 Go organic: see Ch.5 Garden and Ch.7 Food.

Want to do more?

Avoid dry-cleaning. It leaves chemicals on your clothes.

Avoid furniture made from plywood/MDF, which contains formaldehyde, or furniture and furnishings treated with brominated flame retardants (IKEA doesn't use them).



Resources

Natural cleaning ranges: Ecover; Earth Friendly; ClearSpring; Bio-D (available from the online stores in Section 4: Resources)

Books: *Clean House, Clean Planet* (Karen Logan); *Natural Stain Remover: Clean Your Home Without Harmful Chemicals* (Angela Martin)

Chapter 4

Building & renovation

In a nutshell

Building a new home, or renovating, is the perfect time to build in features that will reduce your energy and water usage (and bills) and your exposure to chemicals for years to come. You might simply add a few green features, such as better insulation, or you could go the whole hog and create your dream self-sufficient eco-home. Energy-efficiency, in particular, will also add to your home's resale value, with energy prices likely to soar in future.



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Fast facts

Every year 2.5 billion bricks are destroyed in the UK and half a million tonnes of usable timber goes into landfill.


The Energy Saving Trust says microgeneration (generating electricity in homes/locally) could provide 40 per cent of the UK's electricity.

KEY STEPS

1 Install solar hot water: if your home is suitable (with an area of south-facing roof) then solar hot water can provide 70 per cent of your hot water. Grants are available from lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk. (£)

2 Get an ultra-efficient condensing boiler: (see boilers.org.uk). (£)



3 Get advice on using passive solar design, insulation and skylights: good design reduces the need for heating, lighting and air-conditioning by making best use of natural light, heat and shade. (see Resources, below) 

4 Install composting toilets: instead of using precious drinking water to flush waste into the sewage system, composting toilets have a fan to extract moisture and odours, allowing solid matter to break down into useful compost for your garden. And no, they don't smell! In a sane world, every new home would have them. (cat.org.uk; lowimpact.org)

5 Use natural paints and varnishes: standard paints contain petrochemicals



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that emit harmful toxins. (auroorganic.co.uk; livos.de; nutshellpaints.com)

6 Use sustainable timber: choose Forest Stewardship Council-certified (fsc-uk.org), or see Friends of the Earth's Good Wood Guide (foe.org.uk).

7 Use salvaged materials: discarded building materials make up the bulk of landfill. (salvo.co.uk) (£)

8 Avoid nylon carpets: nylon is a petrochemical product. Instead, choose 100 per cent wool with natural fibre backing and no brominated flame retardant. All carpets provide a home for allergy-causing dustmite, so consider alternatives such as tiles, sustainably-sourced timber, bamboo or cork.



Want to do more?

- See if your home is suited for solar panels or a wind turbine. Grants are available from lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk and energy companies such as good-energy.co.uk will buy any surplus energy you generate (micropower.co.uk; est.org.uk).
- Consider eco-friendly building materials, such as mud-brick, rammed earth or strawbale.
- Paint interior walls in light colours to reduce the need for lighting.

Resources

Websites: Association of Environmentally Conscious Builders (aecb.net); Centre for Alternative Technology (cat.org.uk);



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greenbuilder.co.uk; greenspec.co.uk; hockertonhousingproject.org.uk; Low impact Living Initiative (lowimpact.org); newbuilder.co.uk; theyellowhouse.org.uk

Building supplies: constructionresources.com; ecomerchant.co.uk; greenbuildingstore.co.uk; greenshop.co.uk

Books: *EcoHouse 2* (Sue Roaf); *The Energy Saving House* (Thierry Salomon & Stephane Badel); *Green Building Bible* (ed Keith Hall); *The Green Self-Build Book* (Jon Broome)

Chapter 5

Garden

In a nutshell

A garden can be a wonderful sanctuary from the stresses of modern life, a place to unwind and watch the everyday miracles of nature unfold. Make your garden a truly green space by encouraging wildlife, minimising water use, avoiding chemicals and growing some food.



Fast facts

Britons spend £60 million a year on home/garden herbicides and insecticides.

Garden sprinklers can use as much water in an hour as a family of four uses in a day



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KEY STEPS

1 Go organic: buy a book on organic gardening to cut out chemicals (see Resources, below).

2 Compost: all kitchen scraps except cooked food and meat, plus garden cuttings and paper. All you need is a pile in your garden and something to cover it. A worm farm (wigglywiggles.co.uk) and two other composting systems, the Bokashi bin (livingsoil.co.uk) and GreenCone (greencone.com), can also take meat and cooked food. (homecomposting.org.uk; compost.org.uk).

3 Go wild: create a wildlife area, fenced off from pets with a pond for frogs, birds and dragonflies, birdbath/house, bat box and squirrel feeder. Let grass grow in the



summer to provide habitat for moths. Plant native wildflowers and trees, preserving biodiversity by choosing threatened species. (englishplants.co.uk; wildaboutgardens.org; wildlife-gardening.org.uk).

4 Grow food: to eliminate packaging and food miles (see Ch.7 Food). Good choices for novice gardeners include tomatoes, garlic, carrots, rocket, rosemary, parsley, mint, basil and bay. (£)

5 Be waterwise: see page 49.



No garden?

Grow herbs in a window box (*Window-box Allotment* Penelope Bennett), rent an allotment (*Allotment Gardening* Susan Berger) or see if there's a community garden near you (farmgarden.org.uk).



Want to do more?

- Avoid peat fertiliser, which comes from threatened peat bogs. Worm farms produce great liquid fertiliser.
- Share garden tools with neighbours.
- Look for second-hand garden furniture, and salvaged paving and timber for decking.
- Plant hedges instead of fencing.
- Don't use patio heaters – if you're cold, put on warmer clothes or go inside.



Waterwise gardening

Choose drought-resistant plants and lawn.

In dry spells, don't cut lawns.

Only water plants when they start to wilt to encourage deeper root systems.

Established plants only need watering from July to September, if at all. Otherwise rainfall is sufficient.

Mulch (covering soil with compost, straw, etc.) reduces evaporation. Watering plants near dawn or dusk also reduces evaporation.

Use greywater (Ch.2 Water).

Capture rain from your roof in a water butt.

Use a watering can, not a hose.

Design driveways and patios so rain runs into your garden, not down the drain.

Resources

Websites: gardenadvice.co.uk; gardenorganic.org; organicgarden.org.uk; permaculture.org.



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uk; Plants for a Future (pfaf.org/). The Royal Horticultural Society's website (rhs.org.uk) has a good advice section. The Royal Society for Protection of Birds website (rspb.org.uk) has a guide to creating wildlife gardens. The Natural History Museum website (nhm.ac.uk) has a database of UK native plants by postcode.

Books: *HDRA Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening* (ed Anna Kruger); *Organic Gardening* (Geoff Hamilton); *The Small Ecological Garden* (Sue Stickland); *Creating a Wildlife Friendly Garden* (Sharon Amos & Miranda Smith); *How to Make a Wildlife Garden* (Chris Baines)

Section 2:

Green Living

Chapter 6

Waste

In a nutshell

We have become a throwaway society, contaminating the environment with our junk while using up more energy and natural resources to replace the things we throw out. Yet simply composting and using council



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recycling services and bottle-banks can eliminate three-quarters of your rubbish.



Fast facts

Britons throw away 600 kg of rubbish per person each year – three times more than 20 years ago.

Methane from decomposing waste in landfill produces about 3 per cent of the UK's greenhouse emissions.

Half of dumped electrical goods still work or need only minor repairs.

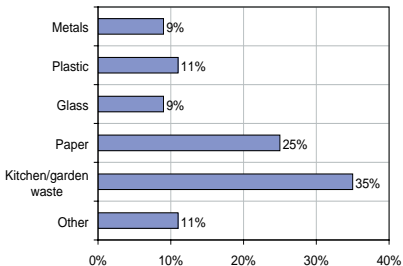
In the UK, 74 per cent of rubbish goes to landfill, 8 per cent is incinerated and only 18 per cent composted/recycled.

In Holland 65 per cent is composted or recycled.

Half of household waste is packaging.



Household rubbish



KEY STEPS

1 Reduce: the best way to avoid waste is to buy less stuff in the first place (see Ch.12 Shopping). (£)

2 Reuse: keep plastic bags and takeaway containers, cut up old clothes as cleaning rags, etc. (£)

3 Recycle: use your recycling bin and bottle banks. Pass things on to family and



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friends. Give them away to charity shops, jumble sales or on freecycle.org. Sell them at car boot sales, in local classified adverts, loot.com or ebay.com.

4 Compost: more than half of household waste, including kitchen scraps and paper, can be composted (see Ch.5 Garden). If you have no garden, get a Bokashi bin (livingsoil.co.uk). Use the fertiliser for window-box plants or give it to a friend with a garden.

5 Reduce packaging: (see Ch.12 Shopping).



No butts

Globally, more than 7.2 billion cigarette butts are discarded each year, each containing up to 4,000 chemicals. Put butts in a film canister to dispose of at home. (Better still, give up smoking!)



Want to do more?

- Use cloth nappies (see Ch.11 Parenting). (£)
- Reduce paper waste: read newspapers online, give magazines to doctors' waiting rooms, exchange books at second-hand bookstores or greenmetropolis.com, etc. (£)
- Steam-clean carpets and get furniture reupholstered rather than throwing them out.
- Use handkerchiefs and napkins instead of paper tissues and serviettes.
- Avoid junk mail: put a *No Junk Mail* sticker on your letterbox, tell the Post Office (0845 7905 950) you don't want unaddressed leaflets and remove yourself from direct mailing lists at mpsonline.org.uk.



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If you often buy takeaway food/drinks, carry a small day-pack with reusable cup, container and cutlery and ask vendors to use them instead of disposable containers and cups. Carry a reusable water bottle for tap water instead of buying bottled water or soft drinks. (£)

Recycle computers (see Ch.9 Work) and mobile phones (at Oxfam stores or see fonebak.com).

Support Friends of the Earth's recycling campaign (foe.org.uk).

Use rechargeable batteries. (£)

Use biodegradable bin-liners.



How to recycle just about anything

To recycle items your kerbside collection service won't take, see letsrecycle.com, recycle-more.co.uk, recyclenow.com, wasteconnect.co.uk or try anyjunk.co.uk (London only); the Community Recycling Network (crn.org.uk/search.php) or the Furniture Re-Use Network (frn.org.uk).

Resources

Websites: wasteonline.org.uk

Books: *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!: An easy household Guide* (Nicky Scott)

Chapter 7

Food

In a nutshell

Food is a key issue. Farming accounts for a quarter of greenhouse emissions and 70 per cent of human water consumption; it takes up a third of the earth's land (replacing wild ecosystems) and uses huge amounts of toxic chemicals in pesticides and fertilisers. Overfarming and modern 'factory farming' methods strip nutrients out of the soil, often turning it into desert.

But these problems could be alleviated if we ate more organic food (to reduce chemicals), more locally-grown food (to reduce CO₂



emissions from transporting food) and less meat (which is a very inefficient way to feed people). Eating less meat and processed food will save you money, which you can spend on buying organic.



Fast facts

Agriculture accounts for 8.5 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gases (about half is methane from cattle).

More than 400 chemical pesticides are routinely used in UK farming.

90 per cent of all large fish have been wiped out in the past 50 years.

It takes 7 kg of grain and up to 100,000 litres of water to produce just 1 kg of beef.

Britons spent £1.6 billion on organic food in 2005 – 15 times more than 1995.

In 2001, the UK imported 240,000 tonnes of pork – and exported 195,000 tonnes.



KEY STEPS

1 Buy certified organic food: that is, food grown without chemicals. Find local organic box schemes and organic suppliers at whyorganic.org, organicfood.co.uk, alotoforganics.co.uk, organicliving.ukf.net or theecologist.co.uk.

2 Buy locally-grown food: a typical supermarket item travels 1,000 km to the shelf, and transporting food ('food miles') accounts for a quarter of the UK's road freight and 2–3 per cent of its greenhouse emissions.

3 Eat less meat and dairy: 70 per cent of the world's arable land (80 per cent in Britain), is used to rear livestock. In many cases, that land could yield up to a hundred times more food if used to grow vegetables, allowing



more wilderness to survive. Cattle also produce large amounts of the greenhouse gases methane and nitrous oxide. If you do eat meat and dairy, buy organic – the animals are reared humanely and aren't fed hormones or antibiotics. £

4 Avoid overfished fish: three-quarters of commercial fish species face extinction. Sustainable choices include herring, kippers, pilchards, sardines, sprats, wild trout, whitebait, anchovies, farmed carp and bass, white bass, pacific cod and Dover sole (fishonline.org).

5 Don't waste food: Britons throw away a quarter of the food they buy. Instead, buy and cook only what you need, turn leftovers into fried rice, soup, etc. £



Want to do more?

- Join an organic wine club (vinceremos.co.uk; vintageroots.co.uk).
- Grow some food (see Ch.5 Garden).
- Reduce packaging (see Ch.12 Shopping).
- Buy food from farmers' markets (farmersmarkets.net).
- Campaign against genetically modified (GM) food: most environmentalists feel altering the DNA of plants/animals is too risky and could have catastrophic side effects (greenpeace.org.uk; foe.org.uk).



Resources

Organisations: sustainweb.org; soilassociation.org.uk; Pesticide Action Network (pan-uk.org); Vegetarian Society (vegsoc.org); Vegetarian & Vegan Foundation (vegetarian.org.uk); vegansociety.com

Books: *Cooking Outside the Box: The Abel and Cole Seasonal, Organic Cookbook* (Keith Abel)



Organic certification

To be sure you're buying organic, check for organic certification on the label. In the UK, the main certifying agencies (with their European Certifying Authority code numbers) are Organic Farmers and Growers (OFG; UK2), Scottish Organic Producers Association (SOPA; UK3), Organic Food Federation (OFF; UK4), Soil Association (SA; UK5), Demeter (BDAA; UK6) and Irish Organic Farmers & Growers Association (IOFGA; UK7).

Chapter 8

Transport

In a nutshell

Walk, cycle, share rides, join a car club and use trains and buses instead of driving. Even with a few taxi rides thrown in, not owning a car can save you money too – it costs about £5,000 a year to run a reasonably new car. If you must drive, choose an efficient car (consider an electric one) and learn fuel-efficient driving.

KEY STEPS

1 Don't drive to work: 85 per cent of journeys to and from work have only one person in the car. Instead, commute by



public transport, car pool with colleagues or neighbours, cycle or get a scooter (try an electric one: scotelectric.co.uk; powabyke.com; electricbikesdirect.co.uk). See if you can work from home some days. If you must drive, offset your car's carbon emissions (*Section 4: Resources*).

2 Reduce short car trips: half of car journeys are less than two miles, but car engines are less efficient over the first few miles until they warm up. Combine errands, walk, cycle – or roller-skate (citiskate.co.uk). Shop locally or online. Put a basket on your bike for local shopping.

3 Make your next car smaller and more fuel-efficient: (vcacarfueldata.org.uk). Or go electric (see box, below). ₤



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4 Learn fuel-efficient driving: it can cut fuel consumption by a third. Reduce cruising speeds by 10–20mph. Keep your car serviced and your tyres correctly inflated. Anticipate traffic changes to brake and accelerate smoothly. Shut windows and remove your roof rack to improve aerodynamics. Remove baggage to lighten the car. Turn the engine off if you're stationary for more than a minute. Try to avoid stop/start rush-hour traffic. Try not to use heating (wear a jumper). (£)

5 Support campaigns for better public transport and cycle networks.

6 Don't drive the kids to school: the school run makes up a fifth of morning-peak traffic. Instead, send your children to a local school so they can walk or cycle. Or propose



your school starts a walking bus (see the *Walking School Bus* leaflet on foe.org.uk). (£)



Fast facts

Road travel emits a quarter of the UK's greenhouse gases. Two-thirds of that is from cars.

Traffic has risen 75 per cent since 1980.

A third of urban land is road or car parks.

Trains and buses use about seven times less fuel per person than cars.

Want to do more?

Join the Environmental Transport Association (eta.co.uk), a national breakdown service that lobbies for sustainable transport.

Liftshare or join a car club, which allows members to book use of a car when they need it. (carplus.org.uk). (£)



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- Recycle motor oil (oilbankline.org.uk; 0800 663 366).
- Buy retreaded tyres and products made from recycled tyres – 40 million tyres a year are discarded in the UK. You can also use old tyres to make kids' swings, plant beds, etc.
- Learn to make biodiesel from cooking oil – see lowimpact.org and veggiepower.org.uk.
- Convert your car to run on LPG (liquefied petroleum gas), also known as AutoGas: it emits 15 per cent less CO₂, and less nitrous oxide, than petrol (boostlpg.co.uk; lpg-vehicles.co.uk).
- Buy an electric hybrid car, such as a Toyota Prius or Honda Insight, which produce half the CO₂ emissions of a normal car.



Go electric

Electric cars create a third of the CO₂ of petrol cars – none if recharged with renewable electricity. They can travel up to 600 miles for the cost of a gallon of petrol, and about 40 miles between charges (enough for most people's everyday use), and can then be plugged in to a wall socket and recharged overnight. For suppliers, see: Alternative Vehicles Technology (avt.uk.com); evuk.co.uk; goinggreen.co.uk; drivelectric.com.

Resources

Campaigns: livingstreets.org.uk; slower-speeds.org.uk; sustrans.org.uk; transport2000.org.uk

Websites: ctc.org.uk; greencarsite.co.uk; roadrage.org.uk; whycycle.co.uk



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Killer on the road:

Road accidents kill 3,000 people a year in the UK and more than a million worldwide. In the last century, it's estimated more people have died on roads than in wars, while traffic-related pollution may have killed three times more.

Chapter 9

Work

In a nutshell

Reducing energy, water and business travel is good for a company's bottom line as well as the environment, while less chemicals mean a healthier workplace. You might also think about whether your company can develop more eco-friendly products or services – business opportunities are emerging as the demand for green alternatives grows.



Fast facts

Offices and shops account for 10 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gases.



KEY STEPS

1 Reduce car/air travel: commute and go to meetings by public transport, cycling or car pooling. Use e-mail and tele-conferencing to reduce business travel. Work from home once or twice a week. Make your company fleet greener (est.org.uk/fleet). Replace company cars with public transport season-tickets. Install showers for cyclists. (£)

2 Reuse and recycle paper: use both sides and only print if necessary. Buy recycled paper. Recycle paper. Reuse jiffy bags and envelopes. (£)

3 Use less lighting: fit energy-saving bulbs; reduce lighting in low-traffic areas; install skylights; fit reflector strips behind lights to



increase their effectiveness, and sensors to turn off lights at night. (£)

4 Turn it off: don't leave computers, copiers, lights etc. on when you leave the office. (£)

5 Turn down air-conditioning or heating: reduce both by 1–2°C. (£)

6 Get your firm to switch to a green electricity scheme or carbon offset your workplace energy use (see Section 4: Resources).

Want to do more?

Refill/recycle printer and photocopier toner cartridges (tonertopup.co.uk). (£)



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- Save water with dual-flush toilets, aerating push-button taps and a waterless urinal (eco-cube.co.uk; aquafree.com). (£)
- Use recycled toilet paper and towel rolls instead of paper towels.
- Ask your cleaners to use natural cleaning products.
- Ask the canteen to use real crockery and cutlery, even if you take food back to your desk, and use real cups for coffee/tea.
- Buy tea/coffee that is organic (and ideally, fair trade – see Ch.17 Social Change).
- Buy second-hand office furniture (£) and recycle your own old office furniture (green-works.co.uk). Donate old PCs to charity or schools (weedirectory.com).



- Use an ethical bank and ask for ethical investment options in the company pension scheme (see Ch.14 Money).
- Use the stairs. Lifts can use 5–15 per cent of office electricity.
- Use laptops. They can use 90 per cent less energy than desktop PCs.
- Use shredded paper or biodegradable loosefill (greenlightproducts.co.uk) for padding parcels.

Resources

Organisations: carbontrust.co.uk; envirowise.gov.uk; The National Centre for Business and Sustainability (thencbs.co.uk)

Chapter 10

Body

In a nutshell

Most of us buy far more clothes and cosmetics than we need. These contain chemicals that are bad for us and the environment and, like anything else, it takes energy and resources to make, package and transport them. Buy fewer new clothes and switch to natural bodycare.



Fast facts

More than 1,000 chemicals are used in bodycare products.

Britons spend £60 billion on personal care and use five billion bodycare items a year, including three billion sanitary products – most of which are flushed down the toilet.



KEY STEPS

1 Buy fewer new clothes: buy second-hand, learn to sew to repair clothes, swap with friends, invest in quality that will last, dye faded white clothes to give them a new lease of life, get shoes resoled, etc. (£)

2 Buy organic cotton or hemp clothes: cotton uses 10% of pesticides and a quarter of insecticides worldwide (wearorganic.org; thehempshop.co.uk).

3 Use fewer cosmetics: healthy skin comes from exercise, fresh air, eating well, getting enough sleep and good fluid intake. Many cosmetics are even counter-productive, blocking your body's natural cleansing mechanisms.



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4 Switch to natural bodycare: use all-natural brands (see Resources, below) or make your own natural bodycare recipes (see Books, below and Section 4: Natural living basics).

5 Use unbleached organic cotton tampons: or reusable menstrual products. (natracare.com; mooncup.co.uk; menses.co.uk).

Want to do more?

Buy razors with replaceable blades and toothbrushes with replaceable heads.

Use recycled toilet paper.

Give unwanted clothes to second-hand shops (see Ch.6 Waste).



- Buy fair trade clothes (peopletree.co.uk).
- Grow your own natural remedies: such as aloe vera for bites/burns and peppermint or rosemary tea for headaches (Plants for a Future; pfaf.org). A naturopath can advise on chemical-free treatment for many conditions (naturopathy.org.uk).

Resources

Websites: Women's Environment Network (wen.org.uk); beautybible.com

Books: *The Ultimate Natural Beauty Guide* (Josephine Fairley & Annie Hanson); *Recipes for Natural Beauty* (Neal's Yard Remedies); *Natural Beauty at Home* (Janice Cox); *Natural Beauty Basics* (Dorie Byers); *Natural Beauty*



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Recipe Book (Gill Farrer-Halls); *Natural Beauty Treatments* (Charmaine Yabsley)

Natural bodycare ranges: Ecover; Faith in Nature; Green People; Natural Bodycare (available from the online stores below or in Section 4: Resources)

Online natural bodycare stores: absolutelypure.com; beautynaturals.com; mariposa.co.uk; thinknatural.com



Check the label

For a product to be termed 'natural' it only need contain 1 per cent of a natural ingredient.

Chapter 11

Parenting

In a nutshell

Being a parent is not easy but, with just a little thought, being a 'green parent' isn't much harder. Look on it as a double opportunity – you can reduce your own environmental impact *and* your children's. And you can help shape the future by teaching your children eco-aware habits that will stay with them for life.

KEY STEPS

1 Use cloth nappies: modern fitted cloth nappies are as easy to use as disposables, and cheaper too (£) or a similar price if you



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use a nappy wash service. For outings or nights, you can use eco-disposables such as Moltex or Bambo Nature. Soak soiled nappies in bicarbonate of soda before washing. (National Association of Nappy Services (changeanappy.co.uk); The Nappy Line: 01983 401959)

2 Breastfeed: it avoids the bottles, sterilisation equipment and packaging of powdered milk, and it's better for your baby. It can take a few weeks to master; seek support before giving up. (laleche.org.uk) (£)

3 Cut out chemicals: children's developing immune systems are more susceptible to toxins (see Ch.3 Chemicals; Ch.7 Food; Ch.10 Body). You'll also remove the



risk of curious toddlers poisoning themselves by swallowing chemical cleaners.

4 Buy fewer new toys, clothes, strollers, cots, etc: swap with friends or buy second-hand (see Ch.12 Shopping) – most kids' stuff is outgrown rather than worn out. Hand down your own hand-me-downs, or give them to charity. (£)

5 Nurture a nature lover: help your kids grow some plants. Get some chickens and a worm farm. Visit the local city farm (farmgarden.org.uk). Explore Britain's wildlife together (see Ch.16 Wildlife & conservation).

6 Walk/cycle/car pool to school: (see Ch.8 Transport).



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Fast facts

Britons use more than three billion disposable nappies each year – 4 per cent of household waste. They can take 500 years to break down in landfill.

80 per cent of new toys are made from non-biodegradable plastic.

Children cycling to school: UK 1 per cent, Denmark 60 per cent.

Every year, 10,000 children in the UK are treated for chemical poisoning after swallowing household cleaners, bleaches, etc.

Want to do more?

- Use rechargeable batteries for toys (or avoid battery-powered toys). ₤
- Buy fewer plastic toys – and avoid PVC.
- Exchange toys at a toy library (natll.org.uk). ₤



- Puree organic vegetables and stewed fruit instead of buying commercial baby food. (£)
- Use flannels or cut old clothing into strips as washable nappy wipes. (£)
- Keep a box of old cards, buttons, wrapping paper, etc. for crafts.
- Treat nits naturally (nits.net; nittygritty.co.uk).
- Join the Woodcraft Folk (woodcraft.org.uk).

Resources

Organisations: Women's Environment Network (wen.org.uk); eco-schools.org.uk;



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Young People's Trust for the Environment
(yptenc.org.uk)

Online stores: greenbaby.co.uk; spiritofnature.co.uk

Magazines: thegreenparent.co.uk



Counter pester power

Make 'reduce, reuse, recycle' a family adventure, such as tracking down great second-hand gear in markets, or spending time teaching kids how to fix bikes.

Chapter 12

Shopping

In a nutshell

It's a simple equation: the less new things we buy, the better for the environment. If we're honest with ourselves we could all live just as happily with a lot less stuff – often it's just a case of getting out of the buying habit.

KEY STEPS

1 Don't buy it: do you really need it? If so, can you borrow, hire/rent or share it, or get it from a library, or adapt something you've already got? For instance, you could set up a



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tool-sharing scheme with neighbours. If you must buy it, then...

2 Avoid disposable products: invest in long-lasting quality instead.

3 Think local: shop locally to reduce your travel, and buy locally-produced goods to reduce freight transport.

4 Buy from green retailers: it helps them grow (Section 4: Resources).

5 Buy recycled products: to complete the recycling loop.

6 Buy second-hand: from charity shops, local classifieds, car-boot/jumble sales, preloved.co.uk, loot.com, ebay.com, police auctions (bumblebeeauctions.co.uk), etc.



7 Try to avoid supermarkets: they use their buying power to drive down prices, forcing suppliers to use cheaper but environmentally-harmful methods, and put local stores out of business, making it harder for people to shop locally. If you do use them, write to them or talk to store managers about reducing packaging, stocking organic lines, etc.

8 Reduce packaging: avoid overpackaged items and processed food; use reusable bags instead of plastic bags; put fruit and veg loose into your shopping trolley; shop in stores that let you refill or bring your own containers; buy bulk sizes; buy products in packaging you know you can recycle; download music instead of buying CDs.



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Fast facts

The equivalent of 30 kg of energy, raw materials and packaging is used to make every 1 kg of products we buy.

Freight creates a third of CO₂ emissions from road transport – about 8 per cent of the UK's total emissions.

UK customers spent more than £29 billion on ethical products in 2005.

UK supermarkets give out 17.5 billion plastic bags a year. When IKEA introduced a 5p charge for plastic bags in June 2006 their use fell 95 per cent.

Want to do more?

Shop online: a delivery-round or mail-order involves less transport than every customer driving to a shop.

Can you get it for free? Look on freecycle.org or in skips; you'll be amazed what you can find.



Resources

Websites: gooshing.co.uk; freecycle.org

Books: *The Rough Guide to Ethical Shopping* (Duncan Clark); *The Good Shopping Guide* (Charlotte Mulvey); *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets* (Joanna Blythman); *Not on the Label: What Really Goes into the Food on Your Plate* (Felicity Lawrence)

Magazines: ethicalconsumer.org



Don't be a fashion victim.

Fashion is a marketing device to persuade you to buy things you don't need.

Chapter 13

Holidays

In a nutshell

Another simple equation: the less we fly, the better for the environment. In fact, flying may be the single most harmful thing you can do to the planet, undoing all your other good work.



Fast facts

Flying generates 5.5 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gases, but the effect of emitting CO₂ at altitude is 2.7 times worse than ground-level emissions.

The global warming impact of one return flight from London to New York is equivalent to three times a person's entire annual sustainable CO₂ emissions (chooseclimate.org).



KEY STEPS

1 Don't fly: holiday nearer home and travel by train (seat61.com) instead. The UK is full of culture, natural beauty, history and festivals (visitbritain.com; nationalparks.gov.uk). Or explore Europe on an InterRail pass (raileurope.co.uk) – now for all ages. If you must fly, carbon offset your journey (see *Section 4: Resources*).

2 Find eco-sensitive operators who work with local communities: tourism in poor countries often excludes or exploits local communities while damaging the environment (responsibletravel.com).

3 Take a hike: wilderness begins where the road ends, so get away from towns and traffic and experience nature. Try to pick trips accessible by public transport.



Want to do more?

Look for ski companies offering trips to the Alps by train or coach instead of flying.

Ask hotels not to change linen and towels every day; laundry uses 40 per cent of hotels' energy and water.

Don't buy souvenirs/gifts made from coral, ivory, tropical hardwood or endangered animals.

Resources

Organisations: tourismconcern.org.uk

Websites: organicplacestostay.com;
cycleholidays.co.uk; ramblers.org.uk



Books: *Green Places to Stay* (ed Richard Hammond); *The Ethical Travel Guide* (Polly Pattullo); *Eco-Centres & Courses* (Terena Plowright)



Green holiday ideas

Volunteer to work on a conservation project (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers; bctv.com).

Stay (and work) on an organic farm (Willing Workers on Organic Farms; wwof.org.uk).

Go to the Big Green Gathering – Europe's largest eco-festival (big-green-gathering.com).

Learn a green living skill on an eco-course at the Centre for Alternative Technology (cat.org.uk); EdenProject.com; Low Impact Living Initiative (lowimpact.org); themagdalenproject.org.uk or schumachercollege.org.uk

Chapter 14

Money

In a nutshell

Ensure your savings, shares and pension funds aren't funding environmentally or socially harmful activities by investing ethically. It's the same as normal saving and investments, except for who the banks and funds lend your money to. Studies suggest ethical investments perform as well as or above average.

KEY STEPS

- 1 Switch to an ethically-aware bank:** such as the co-operativebank.co.uk, Ecology Building Society (ecology.co.uk), Nationwide



Building Society (nationwide.co.uk) or triodos.co.uk.

2 Make your pensions and investments ethical: the Ethical Investment Association (ethicalinvestment.org.uk) and the Ethical Investment Research Service (eiris.org) list financial advisors specialising in ethical investments.



Fast facts

More than £11.6 billion is invested in ethical banks or funds in the UK.

Want to do more?

Support (or set up) shareholder campaigns to encourage firms you invest in to become greener.



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Choose green insurers such as naturesave.co.uk (home/travel) or the Environmental Transport Association (eta.org.uk; car).

Chapter 15

... and more

In a nutshell

You can apply green principles to all aspects of life. For example...

Christmas

- Buy fair trade presents or gifts from an online eco-store (see Section 4: Resources) or give something non-material such as a massage voucher or football/theatre ticket. Or give your time – how about a babysitting or decorating ‘voucher’?
- Cook an organic, locally-sourced Christmas feast.



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- Reuse decorations and tie presents with ribbon not sticky tape so wrapping paper can be reused.
- Buy charity cards and recycle them or e-mail an online e-card.
- Give unwanted toys to charity shops, freecycle.org or samaritanspurse.org.

Flowers

- Each year Britons spend £1.35 billion on flowers, 80 per cent of which are imported and grown with toxic chemicals. Buy organic flowers (tofc.co.uk), grow your own or give something else.

Funerals

- Burial in a biodegradable coffin is best; cremation releases toxic chemicals.



- Leave something to a green organisation in your will.
- Naturaldeath.co.uk

Green spaces

- Support the Pesticide Action Network (pan-uk.org) campaign to reduce chemical use in parks.
- Suggest your golf course becomes wildlife-friendly (english-nature.org.uk or foc-uk.com).
- Volunteer to work on a local conservation or urban regeneration project (groundwork.org.uk).

Outdoor activities

- Get walking (ramblers.org.uk), but choose routes accessible by public transport.



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- When fishing, observe minimum size and seasonal restrictions, and don't take threatened species.
- Keep motors out of the wild: get your thrills mountain-biking, climbing, kayaking, etc.

Parties

- Use compostable paper plates or real crockery.
- Use biodegradable balloons (talking-balloons.co.uk) not helium.
- Serve organic/vegetarian food.
- Ask your local pub if you can buy beer in a returnable keg instead of buying cans.



Pets

- Feed your dog or cat less meat (vegsoc.org/info; veggiepets.com). The UK's eight million cats eat almost 300 million tins of cat food a year and the typical UK cat eats more protein than a person in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Buy bulk dried food instead of cans to reduce waste or cook your own pet food (see *Natural Nutrition for Dogs and Cats*; Kymmythy Schulze).
- Put a bell around your cat's neck or keep it indoors at night – the nation's cats kill 55 million birds a year.
- Scoop up dog poop and use biodegradable cat litter (available from veggiepets.com).



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- Consider a smaller dog, or a herbivore pet such as a mouse, guinea pig or rabbit.
- Instead of owning a pet, volunteer at a wildlife rescue centre (animalrescuers.co.uk; britishwildlifehelpline.com).
- Avoid exotic pets such as tortoises or parrots, which may have been collected illegally and transported under cruel conditions.

Retirement

- Use your time and experience to help a local green group – it can be good for your social life too.
- Keep active with organic gardening, cycling, walking (ramblers.org.uk) and urban regeneration (groundwork.org.uk).



Weddings

- Hire your wedding dress, or buy a second-hand one (it's probably only been worn once!)
- Send e-mail invitations.
- Organise car pooling for guests.
- Serve organic, local food and wine.
- Use biodegradable confetti.
- Have a green wedding list at an online eco-store (see Section 4: Resources).
- Hire a green wedding planner (greenweddings.org.uk).
- See Flowers, above.
- Carbon offset your guests' travel CO₂ emissions (see Section 4: Resources).



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- Honeymoon nearer home (by train) and spend travel savings on extra luxury.
- Plan an eco-friendly wedding (eco-wedding.com).

Section 3:

Green World

Chapter 16

Wildlife & conservation

In a nutshell

Biodiversity – the staggering variety of life forms on the planet – is the earth's real wealth, but human activity is triggering a vast wave of extinction. Ultimately we must learn to use less land and natural resources so there is still



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space for wildlife to flourish. In the meantime, however, supporting conservation projects will help ensure this biodiversity still exists when the world comes to its senses.



Fast facts

Worldwide, species are becoming extinct at 1,000 times the normal rate.

Since 1945 the UK has lost a third of ancient woodland, 96 per cent of peat bogs, 80 per cent of grasslands and 95 per cent of wildflower meadows.

KEY STEPS

- 1 Support a wildlife charity:** the Wildlife and Countryside Link website (wcl.org.uk) has a list of organisations.

- 2 Plant a tree:** (treecouncil.org.uk).



- 3 Support campaigns to save rainforests:** (rainforestfoundationuk.org; rainforestconcern.org).

Want to do more?

- Buy organic food: organic farms support 50 per cent more wildlife than conventional farms.
- Buy dolphin-friendly fish (Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society: wdcs.org).
- Go on a conservation holiday (see Ch.13 Holidays).
- Create a wildlife-friendly garden: gardens can be havens for wildlife displaced by modern farming (see Ch.5 Garden).
- Adopt an endangered animal through WWF (wwf.org.uk).



Resources

Organisations: Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (cpre.org.uk); nationaltrust.org.uk; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (rspb.org.uk); seawatchfoundation.org.uk; wildlifetrusts.org; woodland-trust.org.uk

Websites: whentowatchwildlife.org;
wildaboutbritain.co.uk; wildfile.co.uk;
wildlifeonline.me.uk

Magazines: bbcwildlifemagazine.com

Chapter 17

Social change

In a nutshell

We won't save the planet unless we persuade other people – and governments – to act too. Lend your voice to the groundswell of public opinion demanding decisive action on global warming and the environment.



Fast facts

The UK Government spends £32 billion a year on defence – and less than £100 million on renewable energy research.



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KEY STEPS

- 1 Support a green organisation:** such as Friends of the Earth, WWF or Greenpeace.
- 2 Vote green:** vote for politicians you think will put the environment first.
- 3 Think globally, act locally:** join a local green group, project or campaign.
- 4 Support a better deal for the world's poor:** poverty can force people to harm the environment to survive and means they need more children to support themselves in sickness and old age, fuelling population growth. Join social justice campaigns such as tradejusticemovement.org.uk or World Development Movement; wdm.org.uk and help farmers in developing nations escape



from poverty by buying fairtrade products such as coffee or chocolate (Fairtrade Foundation; fairtrade.org.uk).

Want to do more?

Write to stores and companies and tell them their environmental policies matter to you as a customer.

Propose green initiatives at your children's school.

Discuss environmental issues with family, friends or work colleagues.

Support indigenous and tribal cultures – they contain thousands of years of knowledge about living sustainably with nature (survival-international.org).



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- Meet like-minded people at greendrinks.org.
- Explore local community-building networks, such as local exchange trading systems (letslinkuk.org) or time banks (timebanks.co.uk).



Learn from the past

It may be a fading memory, but World War Two showed that – with public support and real leadership – it is possible to quickly reshape our whole economy and society to tackle a crisis.

Section 4:

Resources

Useful resources

Online green directories: search these directories for suppliers or more information on anything mentioned in this book: ethical-junction.org; getethical.com; greenchoices.org; greendirectory.net; greenguideonline.com; green-links.co.uk; greenphase.com; organicliving.ukf.net



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Online green stores: these stores sell most items mentioned in this book: alotofshopping.co.uk; Centre for Alternative Technology (cat.org.uk); ecotopia.com; ethicalsuperstore.com; greenerliving.co.uk; greenwarehouse.co.uk; naturalcollection.com; nigelsecostore.com; spiritofnature.co.uk; greenshop.co.uk; thenaturalstore.co.uk.

See the online green directories (above) for more stores.

UK Government: environment-agency.gov.uk

Green organisations: Friends of the Earth (foe.org.uk); greenpeace.org.uk; wwf.org.uk; greenparty.org.uk



Carbon offsets: carbonneutral.com; climatecare.org; equiclimat (ebico.co.uk); global-cool.com; puretrust.org.uk; the-change-trust.com

Even if you don't offset, these websites have interesting calculators that estimate how much CO₂ you use.

Green electricity: greenelectricity.org; good-energy.co.uk

Other interesting websites: <http://Environment.guardian.co.uk>; greenelectric.co.uk; greenfacts.org; oneworld.net; selfsufficientish.com; treehugger.com; whatyoucando.co.uk; wikipedia.org; [z-net \(zmag.org\)](http://z-net(zmag.org))



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Magazines: theecologist.org; resurgence.org; greenfutures.org.uk; *New Internationalist* (newint.org)

Books

Green tips: *Save Cash and Save the Planet* (Baird & Smith); *Go M.A.D 2! Go Make a Difference* (Think Publishing in association with *The Ecologist*); *The Rough Guide to Ethical Living* (Duncan Clark)

Climate change: *The Rough Guide to Climate Change* (Robert Henson); *Heat: How to Stop the Planet Burning* (George Monbiot); *The Weather Makers* (Tim Flannery); *The Last Generation* (Fred Pearce)



General: *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (James Lovelock); *Sacred Balance* (David Suzuki); *The Little Earth Book* (James Bruges)

These and other green books are available from: green-shopping.co.uk; Friends of the Earth (foe.org.uk); Low Impact Living Initiative (lowimpact.org), greenbooks.co.uk and amazon.co.uk.

Natural living basics

Ingredients

Basics: bicarbonate of soda, washing soda crystals, pure soap, borax, white vinegar, lemon, salt, aloe vera. You can buy bicarbonate of soda and washing soda in bulk from dri-pak.co.uk. Their website has good cleaning tips.

Optional: eucalyptus oil, tea tree oil, lavender oil, olive oil, linseed oil, peppermint oil.



Cleaning

Surfaces (kitchen tops, tiles): wipe regularly with microfibre cloths. Once a week clean surfaces with vinegar or eucalyptus oil in warm water. Once a month use grated pure soap in warm water with a capful of white vinegar or a squeeze of lemon. Add a couple of drops of eucalyptus or tea tree oil as disinfectant; lavender for fragrance.

Baths/sinks: wipe with washing soda.

Windows: add vinegar to warm water and wipe, or spray vinegar with a plant-mister. Dry with old newspaper.

Mould: rub with lemon.



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Toilets: squirt/spray with vinegar or lemon. Leave for an hour or two then scrub off. Borax will deodorise the bowl.

Kettles: add some vinegar or lemon juice for a couple of hours to remove limescale, then rinse.

Pots, pans, ovens: to lift grease and clean burnt pans, soak overnight with a paste of bicarbonate of soda and water.

Smells: bicarbonate of soda deodorises fridges and cupboards.

Drains: pour in some bicarbonate of soda and wash through with warm water.

Carpet spills: cover spill with bicarbonate of soda, leave to dry then vacuum.



- Clothes stains:** spray with vinegar and scrub.
- Wooden furniture and stainless steel:** polish with olive or linseed oil.
- Laundry powder:** mix a cup of grated pure soap with a half-cup each of washing soda, salt, borax and bicarbonate of soda and shake; 1–2 teaspoons a load. Vinegar in the rinse cycle acts as a fabric softener.
- Dishwashing powder:** every two or three loads, use bicarbonate of soda or a 50/50 mix of borax/washing soda instead.

Bodycare

- Body:** wash with pure soap.



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Face: soak some oatmeal in water, strain and use water to wash your face.

Hair: wash with pure soap. Rinse once or twice a week with half a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar in a cup of water. Aloe vera (cut a leaf and squeeze out the gel) makes a good hair gel. Soak hair in diluted apple cider vinegar to treat dandruff.

Teeth: clean with bicarbonate of soda and a drop of peppermint oil mixed into a paste with water.

Hands: a drop of eucalyptus oil removes grease. Spray with vinegar to keep hands soft.

Deodoriser: bicarbonate of soda or white vinegar under armpits, bicarbonate of soda in shoes.



- Moisturiser:** almond or apricot oil, or spray your face with filtered water in a plant-misting bottle.
- Exfoliate:** gently rub in a paste of bicarbonate of soda (good for acne) and raw honey before showering.
- Lipbalm:** beeswax.
- Athlete's foot:** tea tree oil or a vinegar/warm water footbath.
- Insect bites:** rub with aloe vera, vinegar, or tea tree or eucalyptus oil.
- Mosquito repellent:** add a few drops of lavender oil to the final rinse of clothes or mix with vegetable oil for a body rub.
- Shaving:** a splash of apple cider vinegar after shaving prevents rashes.



Pest Control

Ants: wash surfaces with vinegar. Sprinkle chilli powder, salt or peppermint as a barrier.

Cockroaches: leave a sugar-borax mix in trays under furniture, fridges, etc. Spray cupboards with a vanilla essence/water mix or scatter bay leaves. Make a trap from half a glass of beer with the inside walls greased. (Caution: borax is poisonous.)

Flies: use fly-screens and swatters. Add peppermint to pot-pourri.

Mice: scatter mint. Use mouse traps.

Mosquitoes: citronella candles. Plant sweet basil. Avoid stagnant water in the garden.

section 4: resources



- Moths:** sachets of lavender, cloves, mint and/or rosemary in wardrobes. Camphor wood balls. Cedarwood oil.

- Spiders:** ignore them – they eat flies, mosquitoes and other insects.

- Weevils/silverfish:** put bay leaves in bags of rice and flour.

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