

Spring gardening
for greener living

Protecting the planet is a goal for millions of people across the globe. And that's a good thing, as the planet is increasingly in need of help.

Behaviors few people may give a second thought to can dramatically impact the planet in a negative way. For example, according to World-watch Institute, 100 billion plastic bags are thrown away each year, less than 1 percent find their way into recycling bins. The end result of that waste is the deaths of around 1 billion birds and mammals each year due to the ingestion of plastic.

If that information elicits deep emotions, perhaps this is the year to embrace a more eco-friendly lifestyle. Recycling and reusing is a good place to start, but there are other ways to embrace green-living practices in everyday life.

- Plan a spring garden. Explore the possibilities of a vegetable garden and planting some fruit trees. Growing your own food can reduce reliance on commercially imported food products. Plus, the plants and other greenery will contribute to the environment in a positive way, by providing animal habitats and filtering the air.

- Rely on fresh air and natural light. To cool or even warm up a home, use outdoor air rather than turning on the HVAC system the moment you feel uncomfortable. Natural sunlight coming through windows can warm up a space and illuminate it adequately.

- Reduce reliance on motor vehicles. The organization TreeHugger says currently there are around 700 million cars on the road, producing 900 million tons of carbon dioxide each year. Bicycling or walking to the store or school, and carpooling to work can help reduce these emissions.

- Use natural cleaning ingredients. Vinegar, baking soda and citrus oils can be used to clean and deodorize, reducing reliance on harmful cleaning chemicals.

- Opt for paperless whenever possible. Reduce paper waste by signing up for paperless billing and receipts. Try paying bills electronically, which will cut down on the number of paper bills and envelopes that end up in the trash.

- Conduct a home energy audit. Find out if your home is hemorrhaging energy and money by conducting a home energy audit. A professional energy audit will check for water and air leaks, HVAC system efficiency, insulation levels, window quality, and much more.

Many people resolve to live more eco-friendly lifestyles at the dawn of a new year, and such resolutions can produce positive results for years to come.

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