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YOUR GREEN LIFE

2022



HOW TO CREATE
A NEW, GREENER,
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HOLDING
INTENTIONALITY
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Welcome

Alisa Gravitz, President/CEO



ALISA GRAVITZ

GREEN AMERICANS,
 As I write this note to you on the first day of fall, I wonder what the world will be like when you read these words.

My deepest hope is that the pandemic will be subsiding worldwide, and that after the Glasgow climate conference, we'll be coming together as a global community on just, inclusive solutions to the climate emergency—creating a green economy that truly works for all.

I can't see into the future, but there's one thing I know. You are the heart and soul of the green economy. With each green step you take, you help repair the world.

Social and economic justice, community and environmental health, people and the planet—here at Green America, that's what we mean when we say green. By making intentional green choices every day, you are creating a world where everyone can thrive.

What I especially love about this year's *Your Green Life* is that it's all about harnessing that intentionality. Each section reflects on the lessons learned from the past months with lots of ideas for:

- How to deepen your own green journey with meaning and joy.
- Mutual aid and activism that builds community.
- Focused energy for racial justice and more ways we can work together for a just, inclusive, green economic recovery.

Do we encourage you to switch your purchases to green businesses? *Yes!* Green companies work to restore the planet and ensure fair labor. They avoid the pollution, toxic chemicals, and sweatshops that, too often, you get with conventional companies.

Is going green only about what you buy? *No!* It's about all the choices we make every day:

Rethink consumption. Reuse, repair, hold clothing swaps, buy used, DIY, grow your own, get more energy efficient—there are so many ways to get what you need without buying new.

Use your consumer power. Buy green when you decide to make a purchase. Withhold your dollars from companies that refuse to adopt responsible practices.

Invest and bank responsibly. Use the money you save from rethinking consumption to invest in companies that deliver on social justice and environmental responsibility. And use your clout as an investor to demand that companies clean up their acts.

Get even more involved. As we each save time by rethinking consumption, we can devote more time to repairing the world.

I hope *Your Green Life* serves as your guide for all of this and more throughout the next year.

With gratitude for all you do,

Alisa Gravitz, President and CEO

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the seal are members of our Green Business Network® and have been screened by Green America for social and environmental responsibility. For more information on screening criteria, visit greenamerica.org/certified. To find and shop from businesses that have earned certification, visit GreenPages.org.





Eugene Howard & family, who used financing from Clean Energy Credit Union to put solar panels on their home. See p. 52.

The pandemic forced us into intentionality.

LET'S HARNESS THAT IN TIMES OF TRANSITION.

When my colleagues and I talk to Green America members, whether they started their green journeys last year or 30 years ago, we see a pattern: times of transition lead to new ways of thinking. And that's when people often adopt greener ways of living, by taking eco-friendly and socially just actions. When someone discovers a new food sensitivity, their research may lead them to more organic and local food. When a family welcomes a new baby, they might start to learn about toxic chemicals in their home. When local, state, or national governments are out of step with addressing climate, environment, and social justice crises, it draws people to take action and create policies that work for people and the planet.

The editorial team has dedicated this issue to those moments of transition. In this time like no other, it seems like those moments are coming faster and faster. So whatever changes you are contemplating, we hope you find lots of ideas for your own green journey as you turn these pages.

We encourage you to start where you are—if you've been getting greener over the decades, push yourself in a direction that's calling to you. If you're brand new to greening your life, follow your passions and interests—it's a journey of a lifetime, and easy to get overwhelmed if you try to take it all on in a month or even a year. We all have important choices to make.

When we vote with our dollars, it shows companies, our social circles, and even policymakers what we find important. While we cannot buy our way out

of the climate crisis or systemic injustice, our choices matter as we push corporations, governments, and other systems to be better.

We can also lift our voices together as communities to make important change in local and national policies. Even when we're not in an election year, keep up the conversation with your local politicians and regulators when you see injustice. Add your representatives' phone numbers to your contacts list and visit greenamerica.org/signup to receive our email newsletter and regular notice of Green America's powerful consumer actions.

Collaboration between individuals, families, communities, local business, corporations, and governments is necessary to make the big system changes—such as anti-racism, renewable energy, regenerative agriculture—that none of us can do alone.

The pandemic has forced us to consider how our lives could better align with our values. Are we spending our time, money, and energy to create the best version of the world? This intentionality brought many green changes, and if we hold onto that mindset, can bring many more.

In this time of tremendous change, let's harness the intentionality of transition to find greener ways of living that make our homes, communities, and the world itself safer, healthier, and more just. ✨

—Eleanor Greene, editor-in-chief



creating our new normal

The pandemic took so much away from us, but as we build our new normal, there are lessons we can learn from the pandemic to make our society more just and sustainable.

by Mary Meade

The pandemic keeps evolving and “normal” is an ever-changing process. What we can look to are the lessons learned from the pandemic to build a better normal, while still remembering and honoring what was lost.

Keeping the momentum going during the post-pandemic years will be crucial to building that better normal. These four enduring lessons are a few of our takeaways from the worst of the pandemic.

Mutual Aid

Within the first few weeks after the March 2020 lockdown, mutual aid networks blossomed throughout the country as social safety nets and systems-based support fell through. Neighbors delivered groceries and prescriptions, offered transportation, and assisted elders, the immunocompromised, and high-risk people who were safest at home. This is the spirit of mutual aid—working cooperatively to meet the needs of the community.

When unemployment peaked at 14.8% in April 2020—the highest rate observed since 1948—people helped each other meet bills through outpourings of small donations. Today, the Mutual Aid Hub website lists 895 mutual aid networks throughout the nation.

While we hope this is the only pandemic in most of our lifetimes, with more and more climate crises causing fires, floods, and migration, we know we will face more hardships in the future. With the lessons of mutual aid, we are more resilient when we face them together.

Support for Small Businesses

Small businesses across the nation closed their doors permanently due to the pandemic and 30% of small businesses say they won't survive 2021 without additional government assistance, according to a survey from the Federal Reserve. Yet small businesses are a crucial sector of the economy, creating two-thirds of net-new jobs. Unlike large companies that create their own internal infrastructure, small businesses

generally outsource skills like accounting, web design, and more, which keeps money flowing through the local economy.

It seems that people understand the importance of local and small businesses more than ever before. Just over 82% of people said they would spend more at local businesses after the pandemic, according to a study from Red Egg Marketing. And people are not necessarily doing it for ease or convenience—just over 77% of respondents do it simply to support local business. These efforts are going to be essential to rebuilding resilient communities in the years after the pandemic.

Sustained Energy for Racial Justice

An estimated 15 to 26 million people in the US participated in Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, according to the Crowd Sourcing Consortium, making it one of the largest sustained movements in American history. Immediately after George Floyd's murder in May 2020, public opinion spiked in support of Black Lives Matter, according to polling firm Civiqs.

However, that support has faded, with just under half of US adults a year later holding favorable views of the Black Lives Matter movement—down from 61% in May 2020. There has been little lasting policy reform for racial justice and small reforms from companies and communities, but not enough to move the needle. For our nation to truly have a racial justice reckoning, it is more important than ever that we sustain energy for anti-racism and racial justice efforts from our communities and legislators long after 2020.



Activists march for climate and racial justice as part of a Climate Week action in September 2020 in New York City. By Steve Sanchez Photos.

Working From Home

The mass exodus from corporate offices redefined the day-to-day of office jobs—high rises and cubicles were traded for dining tables and bedroom desks. Some US companies are even adopting a hybrid office workweek, with 13% giving up on office space entirely, according to a PwC January 2021 survey.

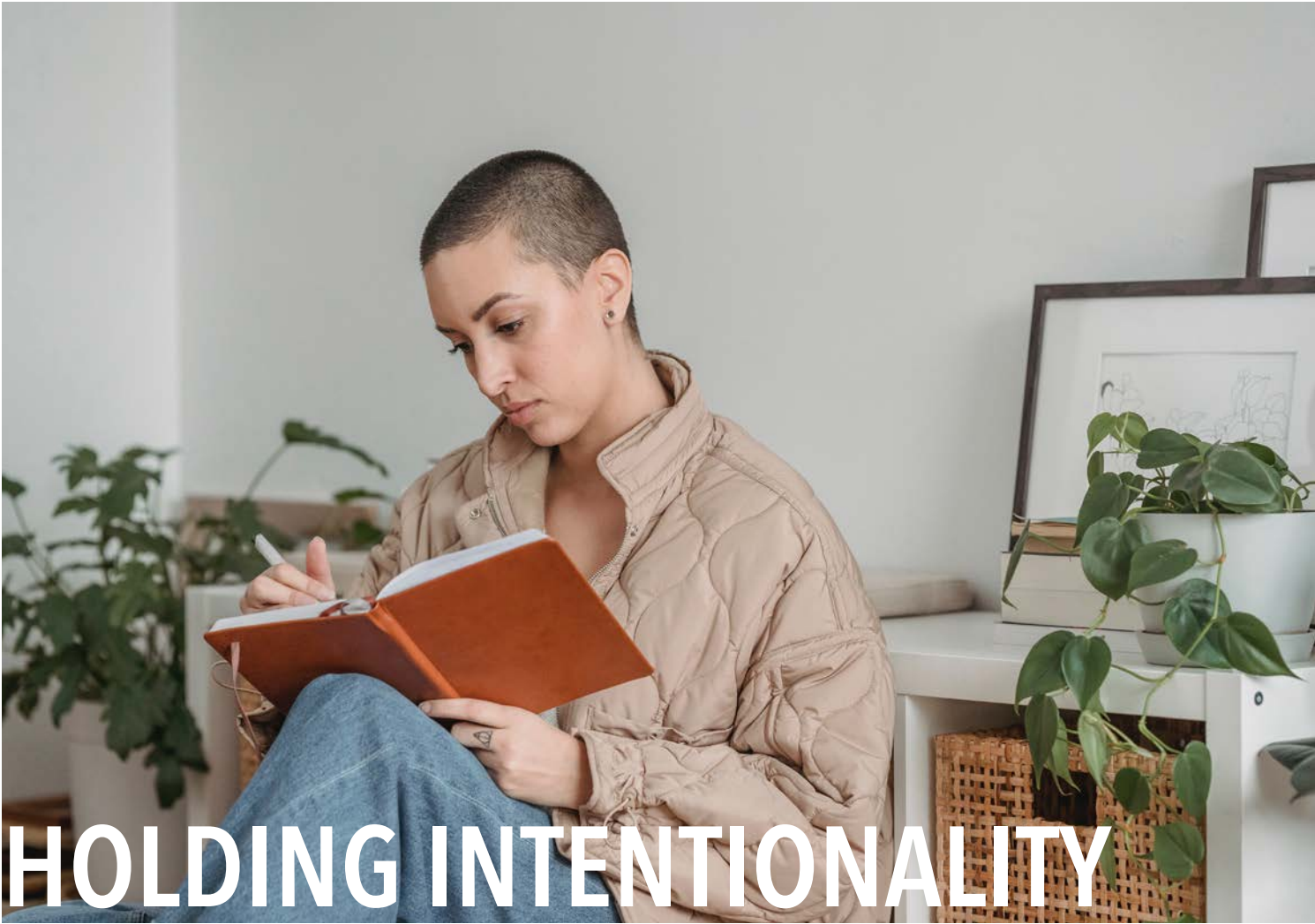
There’s a climate case for working from home, too. Road travel accounts for three quarters of greenhouse gas emissions, most of which comes from commuter vehicles with just one person in them. Working from home cuts down on this traffic and the resulting emissions. While many workers are not remote, those who can work from home and drive less contribute to the reduction of air pollution, which is a benefit to air quality and respiratory health everywhere. But for these benefits to last, companies must consider remote work a climate policy.

Companies can account for a work-from-home carbon footprint by making clean energy a workplace benefit. SkySpecs, a digital asset management company, is doing just that with Arcadia{GBN}, a clean

We can take the lessons learned from the pandemic to build a better normal, while still honoring what was lost

energy provider. For employees that make the switch to Arcadia’s 100% wind plan for their home, SkySpecs covers the extra cost on their energy bills. Other options for creating a climate-friendly work-from-home policy could be subsidizing energy-efficient appliances and providing public transit perks for company-related travels. The latter option could apply to workers who are not remote, too.

In the years after the pandemic, a hybrid workweek could bring balance to office workers’ lives and act as a small part of addressing the climate crisis.☀



HOLDING INTENTIONALITY IN A CHANGING WORLD

In the pandemic, many of us have been forced to consider how we truly want to spend our time.

The Green America team hopes to hold onto intentionality that made their lives greener.

By Emma Kriss and Eleanor Greene

In the past two years as we wait out the pandemic, many of us spent more time at home. Those of us who continued working on location were at home more during time off. For those who worked remotely, our homes became our place of work, school, entertainment, and our refuge from COVID-19. Before many of us began to work from home to help curb the virus spread, the average American spent 99 hours in traffic every year. Since the pandemic, this number has fallen to 26 hours. That's significant time back in our days.

We asked Green Americans how they used

intentionality to choose how and with whom to spend their time, including how they spend their traditional commute time. Some of them even noticed some green side effects—here's what they had to say:

Setting Boundaries.

When your work and home life blend, it's more important than ever to set boundaries. Creating hours that work for you (even if not the traditional work hours), sticking to that schedule and resisting checking emails at all hours of the day helps create balance and time to recharge. In our culture of busy,

where we're bombarded with messages telling us if we're not working all of the time, we must be lazy—setting boundaries around our work life can be freeing. Making time for rest and joyful activities without guilt became crucial to mental health in COVID times. Each time we set a boundary, it becomes easier to practice setting them elsewhere.

Time outside.

With so many entertainment venues closed, we met our friends outside more than ever before and got our exercise around the block instead of at the gym. Many Green Americans intend to continue meeting their friends and family outside for walks and bike rides, instead of meeting indoors as often as they used to.

Gardening.

Many Americans began gardening during the pandemic due to food shortages, a desire to avoid going shopping, and to simply have something to do. Thousands of new gardens were added to Green America's Climate Victory Gardens map. Growing a home garden improves your own physical and mental health; it helps capture carbon and improve the environment; and it helps reduce the carbon footprint of our food since the produce doesn't have to travel thousands of miles to reach you.

More time with close family.

Some Green Americans who were able to work from home reflected on being able to have breakfast with their partners in the morning, as well as more time in the evening to share a home-cooked meal and spend quiet time together. While we missed seeing our friends and family in-person, it was nice to spend more quality time with those with whom we live.

Less commuting stress.

Some Green Americans reflected on how stressful their commutes used to be. Late buses, packed trains, rushed mornings. Many of us experienced high stress and anxiety every day going to and from work, arriving at our destinations in a less-than-calm state. We prefer to stick to calmer, more intentional mornings post-pandemic, thank you very much.

More home-cooked meals. Less food waste.

You may recall several cooking fads from the early pandemic stages (sourdough bread and pasta chiefly among them). With restaurants closed, many of us were cooking at home a lot more than usual. Home-cooked meals are healthier for our bodies and for



Climate Victory Gardeners like Carolyn Day found peace and productivity in their gardens during the pandemic.

our wallets. We feel more connected to our food and its effects on our bodies (and minds) when we cook it ourselves. To shop as little as possible, many of us found creative ways to avoid food waste (hello, carrot top pesto), saving money and preventing methane emissions from rotting food waste. Consider starting your own compost bin if you have the space to do so—see greenamerica.org/6-compost-options.

Bonus: Cooking at home means fewer takeout containers in our waste bins, as our climate campaigns director, Beth Porter, pointed out.

Less fuel consumption.

Some were able to skip the commute—even a few days a week—and saved time and helped the planet and their wallets by consuming less fuel. If you commuted by car, that's less wear and tear on your vehicle, too. You benefit from the cost-savings, and the planet benefits from fewer emissions. ✨

What were some of the ways you were more intentional about your time during the pandemic?

Did spending time at home allow you to green different aspects of your life?

Each of the colleagues interviewed expressed that they will continue to be more intentional about their time and energy “post-pandemic.”

How will you hold intentionality?



5 WAYS TO ENGAGE IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

by Cyna Mirzai
and Anya Crittenton

After the racial unrest following the 2020 murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, many discussions began on the purpose of environmental justice. Anthony Karefa Rogers-Wright gives an instructive discourse on why this area of study is so critical to progress.

Anthony Karefa Rogers-Wright serves as the director of environmental justice for New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. As a native to New York City, Rogers-Wright grew up seeing the vast discrepancies his community navigated compared to the more affluent communities where his white peers lived. His childhood experiences catapulted Rogers-Wright to a career in environmental justice and its relation to public health and human rights when it comes to access to clean air, healthy food, and more. He previously worked at the Climate Justice Alliance, as well as a policy advisor for various candidates for elected office.

Green America’s Cyna Mirzai spoke to Rogers-Wright about environmental justice, which isn’t an ingredient, but “its own drink.”

Lesson #1: Educate Yourself

One of the first steps in starting your environmental justice journey is educating yourself.

“We need to firmly identify who and where these communities are,” Rogers-Wright says. “There is a fantastic piece of legislation sponsored by Representative Cory Bush, in partnership with Senator Ed Markey; an environmental justice committee mapping act.”

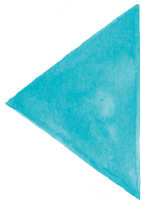
Identifying these communities reveals the disproportionate impact harmful environmental actions have on them. Rogers-Wright identified public health as the first and foremost concern.

“There are communities like Cancer Alley, in Mississippi and Louisiana, where there are some of the highest instances of cancer in the United States due to exposure to fossil fuel refinery operations,” he says.

This public health crisis is worsened by other inequities these communities face, from poor access to healthcare to lacking education and over-policing.

Rogers-Wright warned that these communities are not looking to be saved, however.

“These [community-led environmental justice]



Hundreds of people, led by Native American water protectors, gather on the shores of Gichi-gami (Lake Superior) to protest the proposed Enbridge Line 3 tar sands pipeline. Photo from September 2019, by Fibonacci Blue via Flickr.

organizations are not indigent, they're not waiting to be saved, rather, they have good solutions that need to be heard," he says, emphasizing empowerment over control.

Two examples of such empowerment are climate reparations and Indigenous consent.

Lesson #2: Support Good Policies

"The root causes of climate change are white supremacy, patriarchy, and colonization," Rogers-Wright explains. "The progenitors of these root causes and their respective nation states owe a debt to populations of developing nations and the so-called global south for centuries of extraction, subjugation, genocide, and violence."

Such a debt can be partially paid with new legislation and policies that empower and benefit communities most affected by the climate crisis, like climate reparations, a relatively new concept in the environmental movement.

"Climate reparations is about restoring some semblance of balance in an effort to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that those hit first and worst have an equitable opportunity to absorb inevitable climate shocks and survive them," Rogers-Wright explains.

Another social justice concept that must be followed by policymakers and businesses is free, prior, and informed consent when it comes to land use. In dozens of projects in the last decade, like Standing Rock and Line 3, as well as an untold many projects in the history of the US, Indigenous communities have been ignored during development of their lands.

"No project should be placed in any Indigenous community without the community's consent and without the tribe holding tribal sovereignty—that's a major component of environmental justice."

Lesson #3: Vote, Vote, Vote

How to make these policies a reality?

"Push your local leaders and your local media," Rogers-Wright advises.

Campaign for what you believe in and support leaders who believe in the same thing by voting. Unfortunately, voting rights are under attack nationwide. Do what you can to stop voter suppression, which in turn will help these climate policies become reality.

If leaders in power aren't doing the right thing or what they promised they'd do, pressure them by calling their offices, writing letters, and threatening the loss of your vote.

Lesson #4: Resist the Status Quo

"Whenever there is some sort of large awakening, what comes with that is this idea that we all have to be conscious about this problem. But then it dies down and we go back to the status quo."

It's happened over the past several years—mass protests, marches for women and science, and corporations claiming accountability without taking meaningful steps toward change.

Rogers-Wright says it's not easy for change to come of these awakenings because of a two-fold issue: money and leadership.

"When we look at funding advocated for environmental justice groups, versus the largest, white-led organizations, 2% of these white-led environmental organizations command 98% of the funding," he explained.

"I think the reason why we are still in the position that we are in is because of the environmental organization founded by a white supremacist: John Muir who founded the Sierra Club," says Rogers-Wright.

(Continued on p. 14)

Organizations Led by Communities of Color to Know and Support

There are environmental justice groups to support in all parts of the country, led by the Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color that are most harmed and stand to gain the most from the enactment of environmental justice.

Find a group in your region and support their work.

- Hip Hop Caucus, Washington, D.C. hiphopcaucus.org
- New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, New York City, NY nyc-eja.org
- Vermont Releaf Collective, Colchester, VT vtreleafcollective.org
- Opal Environmental Justice, Portland, OR opalpdx.org
- Front and Centered, Seattle, WA frontandcentered.org
- Communities for a Better Environment, California cbecal.org
- Indigenous Environmental Network, Bemidji, MN ienearth.org
- Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, New Orleans, LA dscej.org



Anthony Karefa Rogers-Wright

“[Traditional environmental groups have] historically been a white-male dominated apparatus and unfortunately, it remains that way.”

It’s time to upend this norm.

Lesson #5: Put Your Money (and Time) Where Your Heart Is

The final lesson Rogers-Wright imparted is to “dig into” this work.

If you have time but not money, Rogers-Wright suggests reading the Jemez principles for Democratic Organizing and educate yourself on how people in your community might be affected by environmental injustice—see his list of recommended reads in the sidebar. You can also push your local leaders and media in particular, to pay attention to local environmental justice groups and actions.

“When we talk about climate change, the ‘experts’ are often white men, but they’re not the ones experiencing the worst aspects of the climate crisis. It’s important to ask, ‘What is the role you can play with your privilege and use that to flip the script and transform the narrative?’”

Speak up for environmental justice and marginalized communities, but not over them.

We made a list of organizations (p. 13) across the country led by people of color that are working for environmental justice causes locally, which is where you can make the biggest difference. 🌱

RESOURCES FROM OUR CONVERSATION

Rogers-Wright urges us all to “dig in” to environmental justice to understand it and our role in creating a just society. He gave us many resources to start that journey—here are a few resources he referenced and where to find them.

- ❑ Learn more about Cancer Alley from Pulitzer Prize-winning Jarvis DeBerry of the Louisiana Illuminator in “Science catches up to what residents of Louisiana’s ‘Cancer Alley’ have been saying about pollution.” lailluminator.com
- ❑ The act introduced by Rep. Bush (D-MO) and Sen. Markey (D-MA), as well as Sen Duckworth (D-IL), is called the **Environmental Justice Mapping and Data Collection Act of 2021**. You can find it by searching its name or H.R. 516, which you can also call it by when you call your representatives to support it.
- ❑ Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is a right of Indigenous people that is advocated for by Indigenous leaders around the world. Native scholars Carla F. Fredericks and Kate R. Finn wrote about FPIC in “Indigenous Peoples’ Human Rights as a Minimum Standard for Corporate Practice.” ssir.org.
- ❑ The **17 Principles of Environmental Justice** was created by the delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. ejnet.org/ej/principles.pdf
- ❑ The **Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing** were created by participants at the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice meeting in Jemez, Mexico, in 1996. It was adopted by its participants upon creation, and by many other environmental groups in the years since, including the Sierra Club in 2014. ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf
- ❑ In a longer version of this interview, Rogers-Wright spoke about a 1989 essay by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, in which the Black feminist scholar coined the term “intersectionality,” which is now widely used. The essay is called “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” and can be found by searching that title online.

Food Insecurity & How to Help



Food distribution to address food insecurity during the pandemic in Tamarac Florida in May 2020. Photo by YES Market Media.

by Cyna Mirzai

Ending hunger and food insecurity is an unfinished battle we face as Americans. The Food Research & Action Center reports that 10% of households in the United States experience food insecurity. While it can be difficult to address such a large-scale issue, confronting hunger in your own community can lead to a long-standing ripple effect.

Take these steps to help relieve hunger in your community.

Reach Out to Restaurants

At the end of the day, many businesses will throw out leftover food; food that could be going to hungry people in your community. Asking local restaurants if they would give any leftover food that can be donated to a food bank can help combat this. Not every restaurant will agree, and some are already donating. But by asking around, you could lead one more business to helping those in need.

Support Black-Led Food Justice Initiatives

With 19.1% of Black households experiencing food insecurity, according to USDA data, Black Americans remain the most food insecure group in America (though Native American communities were not included in the data group). This disparity makes it critical to support Black-owned food justice initiatives. Fuel The People, The Okra Project, and Brooklyn Rescue Mission all work to provide both food and support to marginalized communities. The Heal Food Alliance has an even longer list of groups to support, across the country. You can show your support by donating or asking restaurants to consider partnering with these initiatives.

If you don't have the proper means to financially support, local food banks are often under resourced and in need of volunteers. Find food banks in your community by searching your location on feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank.

Set up a Community Fridge

Since the pandemic started, community fridges grew increasingly popular as many Americans lost their jobs and thus, their means to buy food. Community fridges act as a free fridge that is accessible to anyone in need, while also cutting food waste and creating a more bonded community. *Freeedge* is an online resource to find community fridges in your state and finding inspiration when creating your own. To set up a fridge in your community:

- ❑ **Research:** Read about why community fridges are effective and crucial. Look into the difference between mutual aid and charity, and how to implement solidarity over charity through your fridge. Read our article on the power of mutual aid at greenamerica.org/mutually-inclusive.
- ❑ **Reach Out:** Connect with people in your community and other community organizers to create a base of volunteers.
- ❑ **Resolve Logistics:** Before buying the fridge, it's important to discuss a thorough plan with other organizers. Deciding where the fridge can be plugged in, how it will be restocked and cleaned, and how to engage the rest of the community can be done through a text thread or social media group.


Once these questions are answered, you can plug in the fridge, stock with fresh food, and begin a new chapter in your community. ✨



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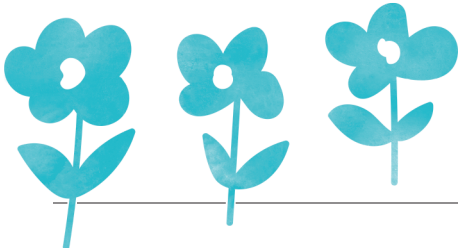
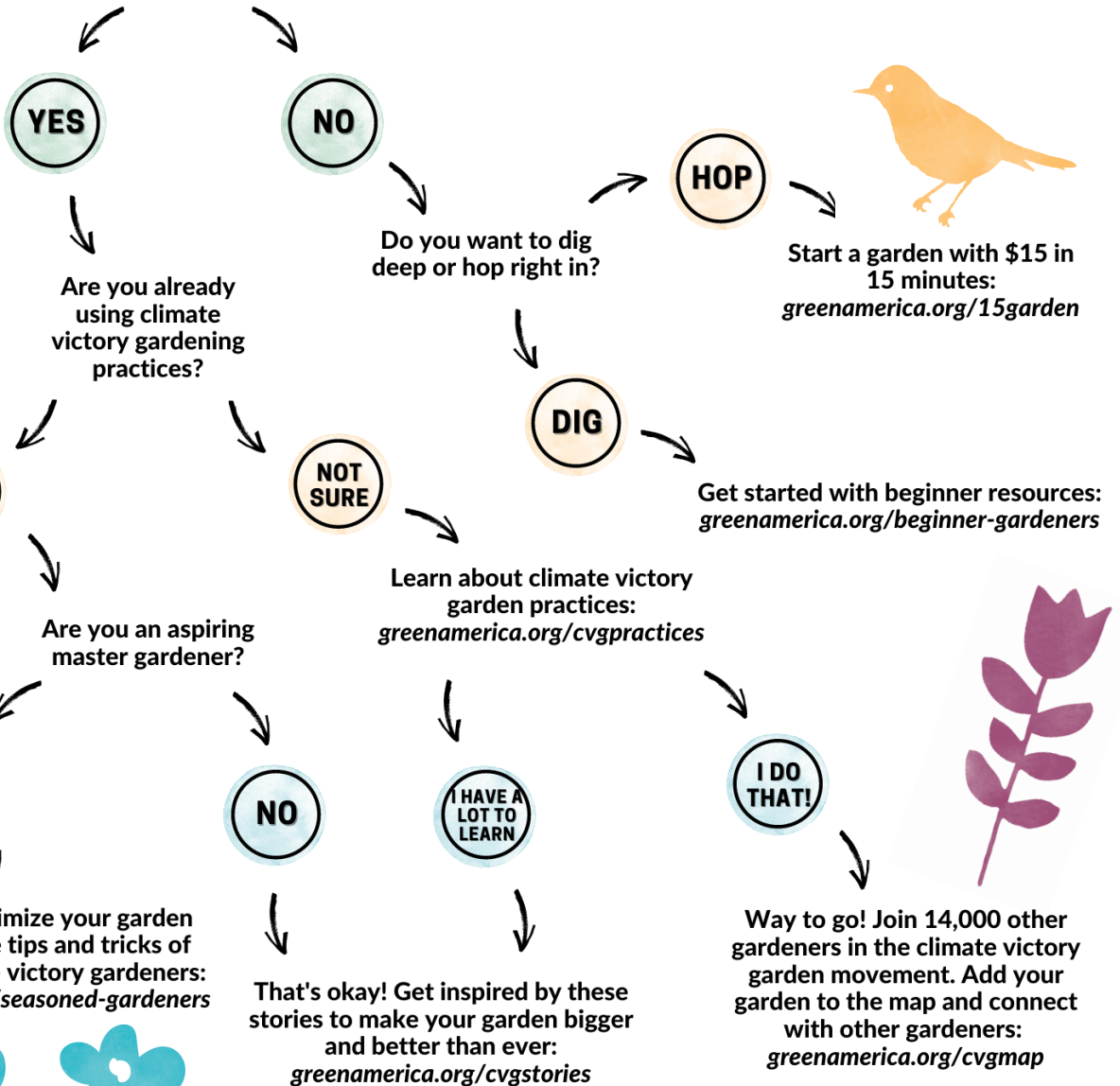
FIND THE RIGHT GARDEN RESOURCES



by Mary Meade

A big part of our Climate Victory Gardens campaign is giving everyone the resources they need to make a successful and planet-friendly garden, whether they're gardening on a tiny balcony or a sprawling community garden. Find the right resources for you at greenamerica.org/cvg. So, what are you waiting for? Let's grow!

Have you ever gardened before?



GARDEN GIFTS

Great green gifts

Find the perfect green gardening gift to help your friends and family jumpstart or continue their gardening journeys.

by Clairey Yang

Whether you are gift-shopping for an advanced green-thumb or a hopeless horticulturalist, here are some rad(ish) green gardening gifts to jumpstart them into next spring.

{GBN}
Find other Green Business Network {GBN} certified companies at GreenPages.org



Collect next season's bounty in an artisan-made, pine needle and pajón (a native grass found in Guatemala) Harvest Basket from A Thread of Hope {GBN}. Find this unique piece for \$60 at athreadofhope.com.



The Great Outdoors Survival Kit from Purple Prairie {GBN} is filled with goodies, like the body butter and gardener's carrot salve to relieve hardworking hands. The bug spray, sunscreen, soaps, and sanitizer protect your favorite gardener from the wilderness. Get this set for \$44 at purpleprairie.com



Florida Native Wildflower's {GBN} fresh seeds are the perfect way to spice up a garden, while attracting pollinators to improve veggie production. Seed packs for this Blanket Flower are \$4 at floridanativewildflowers.com.



◀ A Toad Stool from Nomadics Tipi Makers {GBN} is a charming accent to small spaces (12" height, 8" diameter, max 150 lbs). They are made from scraps recycled from the tipi-making process. Nomadics Tipi Makers helps to sustain the values of Native American Culture via donations, and their scholarship. Toad stools can be found for \$45 each at tipi.com.

Sproutamo's {GBN} Easy-Sprout containers help maintain the optimal temperature and moisture levels to quickly and easily grow and store sprouts. Starting at \$10.95 at sproutamo.com.



▲ Subscriptions from Permaculture Gardens {GBN} have something for everyone—from a low commitment, one-time permaculture guild to an annual grow-it-yourself program which includes a step by step 8-hour course, Masterclasses, Zoom classes, seeds, plants, and tools, garden-themed printables and apps. Inquire at growmyownfood.com.



THE PROS AND CONS OF ONLINE THRIFTING

It's easy to find deals online, but is online thrifting greener than the brick-and-mortar option?

by Kendall Lowery

The state of the fashion industry is harrowing to say the least; can online thrifting help abate this crisis?

The fashion industry is currently responsible for roughly 10% of all humanity's carbon emissions, making it one of the world's largest air polluters. It is also the second largest consumer of the world's water supply. It takes roughly 650 gallons of water to make one new cotton t-shirt and a single pair of jeans takes 1,800 gallons. Plus, studies show that the constant

shopping culture combined with low-quality goods from the fast fashion industry means the average American tosses 81 pounds of clothing annually. When you add all that waste up, roughly 26 billion pounds of textiles are thrown into landfills every year in the United States.

It's abundantly clear that we need to push for major change in the fashion industry. Secondhand shopping significantly reduces textile waste, lowers our carbon footprints, and helps conserve water. Recirculating clothing through thrifting is a solution that benefits both our world and our wallets.

Over the past decade, companies have taken notice of the trend towards thrifting, and online clothing resellers like Depop, ThredUp, and The RealReal have popped up alongside fast fashion retailers. These online thrifting sites make a lot of promises

surrounding the positive environmental impacts that they create.

These companies create a lot of messaging around reducing textile waste and creating a circular economy, making it difficult to discern whether or not these sites are greenwashing their services or changing the market for the better. Ultimately, the decision of whether to use them may boil down to your location, lifestyle, and consumption habits.

Take time to consider where your money is headed. Brick-and-mortar thrift shops may support charitable causes and create jobs in your community.

Green: E-Thrifting

Transit is a major component of shopping. According to a 2008 study by Carnegie Mellon University, e-commerce is the more energy efficient option in roughly 80% of transactions, with 30% less energy use on average than in-store purchases. According to the Department of Transportation and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Americans travel a total of 14 miles on an average shopping trip, with 1.5 items purchased per trip. According to the Carnegie Mellon study, delivery trucks drop off approximately 1 package for every 0.1 to 1 mile that they drive. If you live in a rural or suburban area and can't reach your destination by foot or bike, online thrifting may be the way to go.

ThredUp is a popular site that takes donations and pays people a small percentage of what they will sell them for, or may decline to take a donation. The company reports it has processed 125 million items as of 2021 and displaced 1.1 billion pounds of carbon emissions. It does not report what it does with donations it declines or items that do not sell, making it similar to a traditional large thrift store chain, like Goodwill or Savers, plus the added shipping to customers.

Poshmark, eBay, and Depop are platforms where you can buy from individual sellers, who may have different sustainability and business goals. Depop's 2021-22 sustainability plan outlines many goals, like achieving carbon neutrality by the end of 2021, but not all of its goals are specific and measurable. Poshmark does not have public-facing sustainability goals or reports. Green America encourages all businesses to be transparent in their practices and goals, in part so their customers can help hold them accountable.

Greener: Thrift Locally

Local thrifting is one of the greenest ways to get your clothes, period. Brick-and-mortar thrift shops create jobs in your community and often are nonprofits or support charitable causes. You can also find green materials at more accessible prices than buying new.

If you want to broaden your selection of sellers while keeping it local, you can check out online community hubs like your town's Facebook groups, Nextdoor, Freecycle, or local websites that host forums for online sales and trades.

When you thrift thoughtfully, whether online or in-person, you're keeping clothes out of the landfill and contributing to greener business models than conventional fashion.

Tips for Greener E-Thrifting

Go Slow:

To maximize your emissions savings while online shopping, opt for the tortoise instead of the hare. Choosing a longer shipping window, where offered, allows companies to reduce packaging and fuel by bundling your orders in the most efficient way. Further reduce your emissions by narrowing down your search results to only display listings from local sellers or warehouses. Etsy, Poshmark, Depop, ThredUp, and eBay all offer this filter option.

Don't Rely on Returns:

Frequently returning packages is another polluting pitfall of all e-commerce; free returns aren't free from emissions—it doubles the transportation emissions, and oftentimes, returned items aren't resold. Instead, they're sold in massive pallets to liquidation companies, or worse, trashed.

In 2019, Etsy became the first major online retailer to fully offset its emissions generated from shipping and packaging. Items returned to ThredUp are subject to a \$1.99 restocking fee in order to ensure that they can be inspected and re-listed on the site. On sites like Poshmark, Depop, and eBay, return policies may differ from seller to seller.

Ensure that your pieces are the perfect fit and won't need to be returned by checking garment measurements prior to adding them to your cart. If you can't find measurements, message the retailer for more information.

Shop for Quality:

Being able to filter by brand is another perk of e-thrifting. Even though you're picking up items secondhand, buying clothing from environmentally conscious brands that offer quality materials is still key. Along with encouraging others to buy green, sporting these brands promotes garments made with ethically produced textiles such as organic cotton, hemp, soybean fiber, and linen. Check out GreenPages.org to find over 50 clothing brands that have achieved Green America's certification.

Though the internet often encourages excessive shopping, it can also act as an invaluable tool to curb unnecessary emissions. If you live in a suburban or rural area, lack local stores with the items you need, and are dedicated to conscious consumption, online thrifting may be right for you. 🌱

MOVING HOUSE, SUSTAINABLY



With all the excitement and anticipation that comes with moving, large amounts of waste can follow. Make your move greener by using reusable moving boxes, second-hand resources, and choosing a more sustainable moving truck.

by Cyna Mirzai

Finding a new place is exciting, but the moving process can be a wasteful one. Here are some ways to make your move more Earth-friendly.

Cleaning Out

Whether it's an old couch or unused glassware, moving out is often the time when we bid farewell to unwanted items. With about 146 million tons of municipal solid waste being landfilled each year in the US, these products contribute to the growing landfill crisis.

Since what gets donated to thrift stores doesn't always sell and might end up in landfills anyway, the first-choice option is to rehome what you don't have space for anymore. Websites like Facebook Marketplace, Shopify, and Craigslist make the process of gifting or selling nearby easier. If you don't have time to sell them or think they might not be worth selling, offer it to neighbors on Buy Nothing, Freecycle, or Nextdoor. You can also have a yard sale or post free signs around your neighborhood.

Making the Move

Of course, you're going to need moving boxes, and cardboard boxes are not always made from recycled materials. Fortunately, greener options are easy to find.

BoxUp {GBN} is a New York City-based business that rents reusable moving crates to reduce the waste created by cardboard moving boxes and packaging tape. Founder Lily Tran rents various crate packages that will safely store home décor, clothing, dishes, and

glasses, as well as eco-friendly packing paper and cushioning.

“We know moving can be a stressful process and we want to make it both easy for customers to pack and unpack, while also reducing the amount of waste involved in the process,” says Tran.

“There are so many cardboard boxes that go in the trash each time someone moves, and because of COVID-19, there are even more boxes as people are getting more deliveries. Since cities like New York actually ship out trash to other states and countries, using non-reusable moving boxes is just not a sustainable way to operate.”

If you don't have a renting service near you, Tran recommends reusing any boxes you may already have or to buy cardboard boxes and offer them for other people to reuse on the other side of your move. Your moving company may also offer boxes for free or for a low rental price.

Settling In

Part of the excitement that comes with moving into a home is decorating.

However, in 2018, Americans landfilled 9.7 million tons of furniture, with more and more furniture being landfilled each year, according to the EPA.

Avoid contributing to this waste by purchasing second-hand. You can visit local antique, thrift, and consignment stores to find items that fit your style. These stores often sell well-made pieces with very little damage at half the price. Try Etsy, Ebay, Craigslist, and Facebook Marketplace to find secondhand steals online. If you're planning a short-term move, renting furniture can be a great option. Try searching “home furniture rentals” to find companies that serve your area.

Of course, there are times when a specific item cannot be found second-hand and in time for a move. If you do plan on buying brand new, we recommend using sustainable brands, like those at GreenPages.org.

Repurpose Old Décor

An alternative option to purchasing home décor is redesigning furniture to fit your current style.

Painting wooden furniture a new color or pattern can bring new life to it. All you need is paint, a few paintbrushes, and time. See more about eco-friendly paint on p. 26.

Or, opt for clear wood finish. Older wooden furniture pieces may look run-down. With a coat of wood finish, you can make your furniture look new. Look for eco-friendly wood sealers that are made with citrus solvent and tung oil or hemp oil.

You can also repurpose unused pieces. Transform old household products into useful home décor—try using old doors as a headboard or taking apart a baby crib to create a bookshelf or organizer. Find tutorials for these and thousands of others on Pinterest or Youtube.

If you enjoy being crafty, try making your own pillow covers, throw blankets, or dishtowels. Many skilled knitters and crocheters post step-by-step tutorials on YouTube, and once finished, can transform the style of your current furniture. 🌟

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SUSTAINABLE STUDENT HOUSING



Student leaders at Scripps Scrapps, a program at Scripps College to rehome dorm furnishings and reduce waste at the school, posing in their storage container in spring 2018.

Hit the books, make friends, and live greener when you take these sustainable student housing tips to campus.

by Kendall Lowery

Each fall, a new class of undergraduates moves into student housing, urged to purchase new bedsheets, desk lamps, textbooks, plus hundreds of other supplies.

As companies profit from encouraging this impulse, students are left with overstuffed dorm rooms, and by the end of the year, college dumpsters are packed with unwanted furnishings. Living off campus is just as problematic as spaces that don't come furnished tend to get filled up with cheap finds that get hauled to the curb at the end of each semester.

If you or a member of your family is moving to school, take steps to shift consumption habits and reduce waste.

ENGAGE ON CAMPUS

If you have a few minutes, find a community on campus.

Before buying something new, see if you can get it used from a campus organization dedicated to re-homing pre-loved dorm furnishings. Your school may also have a Facebook group dedicated to students selling or giving away used items, which can be a helpful forum to pick up inexpensive school supplies. If you can't find one, call or email the school's administration—even if a program doesn't exist yet, your inquiry will demonstrate

interest and may encourage support of one in the future.

Not sure what to say? Try this email:

*To whom it may concern,
I am an incoming freshman and was wondering if [college name here] has an organization dedicated to helping students re-home their dorm furniture and supplies. If so, I'm interested in learning more about what products I may be able to repurpose from the program during my time on campus.*

*Thank you,
[Name here]*

START A MOVEMENT

If you're passionate about reducing waste, start a student group at your school.

If an organization dedicated to diverting dorm supplies from the landfill doesn't already exist, you can work alongside your college to start one.

How reuse programs are structured

There isn't one perfect formula for a waste diversion program. However, most programs perform three main functions: (1) storing furniture and supplies on campus over the summer, (2) reducing supply costs for incoming students, and (3) reducing consumption and diverting waste from the landfill.

Advice from organizers

Waste diversion student organizers from UC Berkeley, Scripps College, and Warren Wilson College all emphasized fostering a strong relationship with members of college administration.

"Student leadership and activism are crucial in advancing sustainability on campuses, while also finding administrative support and resources to make sure those changes last," says Brian Liechti, vice president for enrollment and marketing and director of sustainability at Warren Wilson College.

The organizers also stressed the importance of connecting with local organizations.

"Community partnerships—like we have with homelessness organization Homeward Bound—help connect folks to resources they need, the social side of the circular economy," says Liechti. Organizers can also make use of local government programs.

"We teamed up with this program called Cal Recycle, which is a free California government run mattress recycling program, and we were able to recycle over 600 mattresses," says Kathryn Wilson, the Zero Waste Coalition chair in UC Berkeley's Office of Sustainability and Carbon Solutions. The group also partnered with the city of Berkeley, a property owners' association, and a moving company that volunteered to pick up furniture from off-campus housing.

Amalia Barrett of Scripps Scrapps recommends offering students a list of nonprofits or businesses of where they can recycle, donate, or dispose of items that aren't accepted by the program. Students who don't get provided lists like this should check with local thrift shops to make sure their donations will be accepted, as not all items can be accepted by all stores.

As with any organization, building a strong logistical foundation is essential to long-term success.

"While there are a lot of great sustainability ideas that bubble up, not all get incorporated into campus systems and culture," Liechti says. "If you're a student with ideas and energy and passion, make sure to build systems and processes around that idea so you can hand it off when you graduate."

Program benefits

Despite the significant work these efforts require, reuse organizers believe that widespread proliferation of the program is a no-brainer.

"I really think this program should be implemented at all schools, because I know there's so much waste that comes from move-out every year," says Wilson.

Ultimately, in order to address our waste problem, in or out of colleges, we need to slow consumption patterns. Furniture and school supply reuse programs are one piece of long-term efforts to change the buying habits of college communities and to mitigate the waste left behind after graduation.

"Even though we don't want people to be buying brand new things, they're going to do it anyway," says Barrett. "We need to figure out how to deal with that, not only for the community, but for the world."

IF YOU NEED TO SHOP

If you need to shop, pick a green business to support.

If you can't avoid purchasing new items, opt for more sustainable alternatives. Check GreenPages.org for certified sustainable businesses offering a wide range of products and services. Here are some recommendations for college-bound folks.

If You Need to Buy New, Buy Green

Get a good night's sleep

- Delilah Home{GBN}: their 100% organic cotton and non-toxic hemp bedsheets and towels are allergy-friendly.
- SAMINA Healthy Sleep & Organic Beds{GBN}: this company specializes in the creation of organic and hypoallergenic pillows and comforters.
- Living Fresh{GBN}: this company offers Tencel+Plus™ eucalyptus fiber sheets.

School supplies + more

- Acorn Designs{GBN}: their nature-inspired notecards, journals, and stationary are printed on 100% recycled paper and handmade tree-free paper.
- EcoPlanet-EcoChoices.com Natural Living Store{GBN}: this company offers high-quality, non-toxic and environmentally friendly art supplies, bath products, bedding, décor, clothing and kitchenware.
- Nature's Crib{GBN}: Nature's Crib offers organic bedding, bath products, clothing, personal care products and kitchenware.



{GBN}

Find other Green
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at [GreenPages.org](https://www.GreenPages.org)

CHOOSING GREENER

Home Renovations

Home renovations can make dreams come true, but they're a lot of work.

Use this green guide while designing your new space.

by Anya Crittenton

You found your dream home and you're ready to start a new chapter. Unfortunately, many of the foundations of our homes, from paint to garbage disposals, are relics of bygone days that don't reflect the changing landscape of the planet and our responsibility to protect it.

Take these steps to make your renovations are kinder on the planet and your family.

CONSIDER THE FLOOR PLAN

If your home renovations begin with the actual floor plan, this is the perfect place to start creating a green space.

There are two things to consider: room placement based on seasons and cardinal directions, and the practice of daylighting. Daylighting utilizes windows and skylights for the maximum and most efficient natural light.

South-facing rooms receive plenty of winter sunlight, but less direct summer sun, while northern rooms receive the most even natural light. East-facing rooms receive the most morning sun and west-facing rooms are the opposite.

PAINT IT GREEN

Not literally green, if that's not your aesthetic, but choose a shade of eco-friendly and non-toxic paint.

Many traditional paints (and other household items) contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which emit noxious fumes as the paint dries. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has identified the numerous health effects of VOCs in the air and they

contribute to poor indoor air quality.

Fortunately, many companies these days tout VOC-free paint. The Real Milk Paint Co. {GBN} is one such company, boasting paint made with 100% organic, nontoxic, food contact safe, VOC-free, and biodegradable ingredients. You can also find VOC-free floor sealers and stains when it's time to do your floors.

DON'T FORGET THE EXTERIOR

According to Yale Environment 360, darker surfaces, like asphalt, reflect only 4% of sunlight compared to fresh snow reflecting 90%. Across the planet, 2% of land surface suffers from urban heating and one possible solution is painting roofs white, or using light-colored shingles. Keith Oleson of the National Center for Atmospheric Research found if every roof in each major US city was painted white, the minimized effects of urban heat “reduce the maximum daytime temperatures by an average of 0.6 degrees C.”

Research from the Department of Energy says this practice is primarily beneficial for those who live in hot climates.

COMPOST, DON'T DISPOSE

The garbage disposal can be satisfying, but it isn't the best option for food waste. By grinding up your food and sending it down the drain, garbage disposals divert waste from landfills, technically. But what happens next depends on where you live—it could end up in an anaerobic digester, where bacteria break down the material and create a green source of energy. Or, the scraps might end up being filtered out at the water treatment plant and end up at the landfill anyway. Sometimes, water containing food particles can get released back into waterways, which can cause major problems in ecosystems.

So though using a garbage disposal is possibly better than landfilling, it could be as bad or worse. Equipping your house with compost space is the greenest thing you can do to deal with food waste.

Composting isn't just for homes with outside space—but it is great for that, especially if you have your own Climate Victory Garden. Composting is something anyone can do, even an apartment.

When planning your new kitchen, choose where your compost bin will be: a small countertop jar to be emptied in a larger outside bin, an under-sink worm composting tote, or a place for a bucket to fill for a local compost pickup company.

LIGHT IT UP

Switching from standard incandescent lighting to energy-saving lighting, including light-emitting diodes (LEDs) and compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), helps save energy and money.

According to the Department of Energy, energy-efficient light-bulbs use anywhere from 25-80% less energy than standard light-bulbs, and their bulb life is anywhere from three to 25 times the length of a standard bulb.

Switching lighting is one of the easiest ways to green your home renovations and plenty of companies, such as Eco Smart {GBN}, specialize in sustainable home products, including lighting. Plus, if your floor plan is making the most use of natural light, you'll need to use artificial light less overall.

GET COOKING, SAFELY

If you're getting a new range, you might be drawn to the blue flame of a gas stove. While gas is popular for home chefs, gas ranges

come with health and climate risks.

According to a 2020 report by the Rocky Mountain Institute, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Mothers Out Front, and the Sierra Club, gas stoves produce dangerously high levels of nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, and other pollutants. Often, the levels of air pollutants caused by gas stoves are higher than Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) outdoor air quality standards.

Gas stoves run on natural gas, the extraction of which creates excessive methane pollution. Methane has more than 80 times the global warming potential than CO₂. As cities and states work on greenhouse gas reductions, natural gas used for cooking and heating is on the chopping block. For example, the City Council in Berkeley, California, voted to ban natural gas in new buildings because 27% of the city's emissions are traced to natural gas.

The cleanest stove for earth and air is the induction stove, which uses electromagnetic energy to send heat directly into pans. They're safer too, as the cooktop remains relatively cool during and after cooking. Induction stoves also come with a high price tag.

Electric stoves might not be glamorous, but they are a better option than gas and more affordable than induction. If electric is your choice, choose an ENERGY STAR model to meet strict EPA and Department of Energy standards and look into powering your stove with green energy from an ethical energy provider (see p. 28).

Energy-efficient appliances are important for lowering your carbon footprint in all parts of your home. Check out our article “Buy the Best Appliances” at greenamerica.org/green-living/buy-best-appliances.

RECLAIM, REUSE, RECYCLE

You don't need the shiniest and newest flooring or countertops—in fact, reclaimed materials are in style. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and waste sent to landfills, as well as saving energy and money are benefits of reusing materials.

There are so many options for reclaimed and recycled materials, from Gilasi's {GBN} recycled glass stone to Centennial Wood's {GBN} home products and building materials using reclaimed lumber.

An EPA-endorsed option is Habitat for Humanity's ReStore shops, which keeps valuable home improvement goods from being sent to the landfill and sells them at a steep discount. The stores, which you can find at habitat.org, accept donations and sells gently used items, including appliances, furniture, building materials, and more.

Home renovations are a massive undertaking and one that is often overwhelming. While these are only a fraction of options for a green renovation, they will hopefully provide a less daunting launch point for your new start. 🌱

JOIN A CLEAN ENERGY CO-OP



Even if you don't have a roof of your own, plugging into clean energy is more accessible than you think.

by Mary Meade and Kendall Lowery

Four days into a July heat wave, the city of New York urged all households and businesses to immediately reduce their energy usage by reducing their use of air conditioning and turning off household appliances. At least 1,700 customers in Brooklyn were without power as temperatures climbed into the high 90s.

On the opposite end of the thermometer, the Texas power grid went out during an extreme winter storm last February. Natural gas wells that supplied homes with heat iced over; equipment froze at the power plants that supplied half the state with electricity. Millions were left without energy or warmth to weather the storm.

Severe weather events will only become more common as the climate crisis intensifies. For decades, scientists have warned that a warming planet would drive unprecedented weather events—and energy regulators warned that electric grids would not be prepared. If the nation's energy continues to come from fossil fuels, the climate crisis will create even more unprecedented natural disasters.

By switching to renewable energy, we are voting with our dollars for action on the climate crisis. We can get started by investing in self-sufficiency, connecting with a clean energy provider, and pushing for meaningful action from policymakers and utility companies.

Connecting with a Clean Energy Provider

The electricity powering your home comes from many different sources—fossil fuels, wind, solar, and nuclear power all funnel into the same power grid. Once the energy travels down the power lines and into your home, it can be hard to determine exactly which source is keeping your lights on. This is where RECs (renewable energy credits) come in.

RECs are a guarantee that your dollars are truly going to a clean energy provider. For each megawatt-hour a solar company (or a wind or geothermal company, etc.) produces, a REC is created. As credits, these can be sold to individuals and companies that want to use clean energy. When that REC is purchased, you are directly supporting clean energy, and that renewable energy company—whether that be solar, wind, geothermal power, or more—will be generating that energy for you.

Purchasing RECs on your own can be confusing, so companies like Arcadia Power{GBN} and Clean Choice Energy{GBN} make it simple for homeowners and apartment dwellers alike. Arcadia Power sources RECs from wind energy farms and community solar projects to serve their customers. Similarly, Clean Choice Energy sources wind and solar energy RECs close to their customers' locations, keeping renewable energy generation regional.

By purchasing RECs yourself or through a provider, you are supporting the continued use and development of renewable energy without having to install solar panels on your home or apartment. And you're also reducing your carbon emissions to help support the transition to renewable energy.

While these solutions lead to a greener grid, they unfortunately will not shield you in the short term from local power outages in the case of big storm or natural disaster.

Financing Self-Sufficiency

For most people, buying into clean energy co-ops or offsetting fossil fuel energy is easier than setting up your own renewable energy system, especially if you do not own your home. But if you can install your own home energy system, you can save thousands over a 20-year period. Average New York state households can save an estimated \$35,436 over 20 years with at-home solar, according to Energy Sage Marketplace.

Purchasing and installing solar arrays for your home can also earn tax credits. Under the federal Investment Tax Credit, a solar energy system that costs \$12,000 could qualify for a \$3,600 reduction in taxes owed to the government. That tax credit is set to expire in 2024, unless Congress renews it, so if you want to benefit from the program, act soon. Let's Go Solar (letsgosolar.com) is full of resources to help homeowners understand the costs, benefits, and rewards of clean energy at home.

With federal and state credits and grants, transitioning to clean home energy is more affordable than ever. Additionally, Clean Energy Credit Union{GBN} focuses exclusively on renewable energy and helping people make the green transition with affordable loans on home energy renovations, electric vehicles, and more. As a Green America member, you are eligible to join Clean Energy Credit Union. See if it's the right fit for you on p. 50.

Advocating for Change

If you aren't able to switch your energy utility or install your own solar panels, you can still put pressure on your electric utility to incorporate more renewable energy into their portfolio. As a first step, call or email your utility company to see if it offers a green energy-powered alternative to their conventional fossil fuel-based energy plan. A growing

*As a first step,
call or email your
utility company to see if it
offers a green energy-powered
alternative to their conventional
fossil fuel-based
energy plan.*

number of companies are offering renewable alternatives, and even if your local provider doesn't, your call will demonstrate interest and encourage them to invest in clean energy projects in the future.

The American Coalition of Competitive Energy Suppliers has also compiled a state-by-state resource identifying the areas in which consumers are able to choose who supplies their energy. Check out the map by searching online for "ACCES state by state." Our nationwide directory of Green Business certified companies at GreenPages.org includes energy products, services, and carbon offsets, which is another great way to familiarize yourself with different electricity options.

You can also lend support to organizations like the Local Clean Energy Alliance of the Bay Area, Emerald Cities Collaborative, OPAL Oregon Environmental Justice, New Alpha Community Development Corporation, Partnership for Southern Equity, Chispa, and STAND-L.A.—all are regional organizations led by communities of color that are all pushing for a renewable future.

Boosting their online presence through social media engagement and participating in their action items with friends and family is a powerful non-monetary way to combat the climate crisis. 🌱

We all need water, but it's a little more complicated than that. Follow these steps to ensure your family's tap water is safe.

*by Eleanor Greene and
Sytonia Reid*



OPTIMIZE YOUR TAP WATER

Water is life. Some of us drink it straight from our faucet without a second thought. Others go to great lengths to buy enough jugs or bottles from the store to always have on hand. Safe water isn't straightforward—but the best-for-you, best-for-the-planet solution is: filtration.

Though utilities will claim that their water meets all Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards, the fact is that the EPA isn't doing all it could to protect Americans from toxic chemicals in our water supply. Its science can be decades out of date and it bases recommendations on chemical levels on cost-benefit analyses which may not put enough value on community health, according to Sydney Evans, science analyst at the Environmental Working Group (EWG) who works on the organization's tap water database. She says filters are the best option for households today, and infrastructure development is the best way to secure safe water for the future.

Follow these three steps to ensure your drinking water is as safe as it can be.

Step 1

Don't Drink Bottled Water

Americans are buying bottled water now more than ever, perhaps because they don't trust their tap water. Bottled water accounted for 25% of beverage consumption in the US as of 2018, according to research by Statista. But research from the Barcelona Institute for Global Health reported in 2021 that the impact of bottled water on

natural resources is 3,500 times higher for bottled water than tap, and the impact on ecosystems was 1,400 times higher. In the US, 17 million barrels of oil are used per year just to meet plastic water bottle demand.

Nonprofit Ban the Bottle has reported that 24% of bottled water is just municipal or tap water—only sometimes put through extra filtration.

Since bottled water is a packaged product, it's regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which in some respects has looser guidelines than the EPA, which regulates tap water. For example, the FDA requires bottled water to be assessed for coliform bacteria, an infection-causing pathogen, once a week. The EPA requires community water systems to test their water multiple times a day.

Bottled water also leads to grim circumstances for both the environment and society. According to the Container Recycling Institute, 75% of the 70 billion water bottles sold in the US in 2018 ended up as litter or in the landfill. It takes three liters of water to make a plastic bottle that will hold one liter of water, and it takes over 1,000 years for that bottle to biodegrade, states EarthWatch.

A lesser-known fact, confirmed by the nonprofit Food and Water Watch, is that employees at bottled water plants often receive low wages and are injured at a rate 50% higher than the overall manufacturing industry and the construction industry.

Bottled water poses risks to health, workers, and the environment. But what if your tap water has contamination issues?

Step 2

Get to Know Your Water

Water filters offer people an active role in improving their water quality without the plastic waste. Plus, you'll save money: a study from Penn State found that skipping plastic bottled water can save a family of four about \$5,000 per year.

If you get water through a utility, check your local contaminants. In a review of 140,000 public water systems across the US, *The Guardian* found that 25 million Americans are drinking from the worst water systems—those that accrued more than 15 standards violations over five years. Income, geography, and race are the most likely to affect one's access to clean water, with poor, rural, and Latinx Americans the least likely to have clean water.

For a robust look at your local water, visit the EWG's Tap Water Database at ewg.org/tapwater, which lists the contaminants found in 50,000 water systems across all 50 states over multiple years. This resource notes any violations of federal legal contaminant limits a utility may have incurred, as well as what the legal limits are for each contaminant, and the negative health effects associated with that contaminant.

Evans explains that the EPA's standards weigh the lab studies on the safety of chemicals against the cost of municipalities actually filtering those chemicals out.

"Many EPA standards are based on research and technology and costs that are now decades out of date. About 90 contaminants are regulated, but there are hundreds detected regularly in our drinking water. But in spite of that, no new chemical contaminants have been regulated in about 20 years," Evans says. "That's why we publish our own guidelines—because our guidelines make no such compromises. They are based purely on health outcomes and take into account sensitive populations."

If you access water from a private well, your local government does not test your water, so you will need to send it to a lab to test for coliform bacteria, nitrates, dissolved solids, pH levels, and other suspected contaminants. EWG recommends a certified lab to test for contaminants, which goes beyond what a home test can detect. Find a lab to do a state-certified test on the water in your home by consulting the EPA's Drinking Water and Wastewater Laboratory Network.

Step 3

Find the Best Filter for You

Different filters work on different contaminants so there is no one universal "best filter." At the end of the day, a filter only works if it filters out the actual pollutants in your water.

NSF International and the Water Quality Association are public health organizations that certify water filters for safety and effectiveness. Check a water filter before you buy that it's certified by one of these organizations.

Which Filter Do I Choose?

Carbon: Carbon bonds with and removes contaminants from your water. Pitcher filters like Brita are usually carbon filters. Maintenance includes replacing filters on a schedule, as once the filter is "full" of contaminants, it can start releasing them back into the water.

Best for: Chlorine and chemical byproducts of disinfection from your utility. Some types will also remove asbestos, lead, mercury, and VOCs (check packaging). These tend to be the least expensive filter type.

Cons: Quality can vary widely, and they won't remove pollutants including arsenic, fluoride, nitrate, and others.

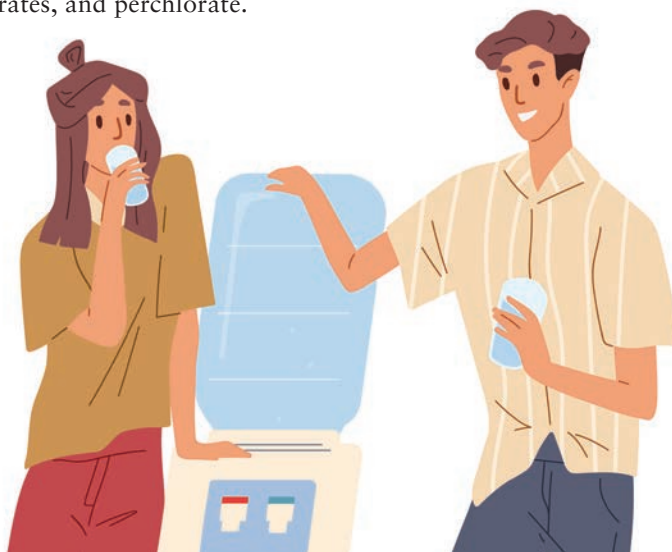
Ion exchange/water softeners: A special type of resin is used to attract excess magnesium and calcium. These filters are mechanical and tend to last about a decade—maintenance may include repairs by a professional, and the resin in the system will need to be replaced periodically. These can be installed under a single sink or for an entire house system.

Best for: Reducing the level of calcium, magnesium, barium, and radium which can build up in pipes or occur naturally in tap water.

Cons: Levels of other contaminants won't change. Also, softened water replaces minerals it removes with sodium, so softened water isn't recommended for people with low sodium diets, or for watering plants.

Reverse Osmosis: These filters push water through a membrane that blocks contaminants. Those sold for home use often include carbon and/or sediment filters as well. EWG has named reverse osmosis as the most effective filtration system. These systems can also be installed under specific sinks or for a whole house.

Best for: Arsenic, fluoride, hexavalent chromium, nitrates, and perchlorate.



Cons: Uses a lot of water—taking in about five times as much water as they produce. They also remove important minerals such as iron, calcium, and magnesium.

You may have heard of other types of filtration methods—some are more focused on pathogens and bacteria, which are useful if you are drinking untreated water. Others on the market, like ceramic filters, do not work well enough to filter out chemicals, says Evans. For filtering chemicals from treated water, stick to the main three above. You can learn more about filters at ewg.org/tapwater.

Why We Need More Than Filters:

Water filters are far better for the environment than bottled water—even if they waste some water or require maintenance and filters that must be replaced.

Evans says filtering water can have unmeasurable positive effects on our health. We drink unfiltered tap water today and are fine today. But based on research by EWG, many utilities are providing their customers water with chemicals that may cause serious health impacts over the course of a lifetime. Filtering water is a great step that we have control over.

But a filter is just a bandage. Evans says more often than not, communities that need improved water quality the most are the ones that are least likely to be

able to afford a filtration unit.

For example, in Flint, MI, chronic quality issues were overlooked even as Flint residents became sick and children were poisoned by lead. It's no coincidence that this community being denied access to clean, affordable water is majority Black with a nearly 40% poverty rate. The Flint water crisis was an environmental justice issue. Needing to buy a filter to access clean water is an environmental justice issue as well.

“There’s sometimes this disconnect between what we advocate for and what’s reasonable for individuals, because there’s an emotional burden to this as well,” says Evans. “Today you’re told you need a water filter. And yesterday, it was PFAS and nonstick cookware, and tomorrow, it’s pesticides in your food. All of these issues are important issues with serious health consequences that can be overwhelming. The ultimate solutions need to come at the community and the national level.”

Evans recommends investment in infrastructure so the utilities have the resources they need to protect the communities they serve, whether or not those people can afford filters. After you see what contaminants are present in your water, reach out to local legislators and ask what they can do, and what you can do, to support the safe water in your area. 🌱



Many EPA standards are based on research and technology and costs that are now decades out of date. About 90 contaminants are regulated, but there are hundreds detected regularly in our drinking water. But in spite of that, no new chemical contaminants have been regulated in about 20 years.



—Sydney Evans, Environmental Working Group

Packaging Solutions

Packaging offered at most stores or coming via delivery can be frustratingly wasteful. Buy items with greener packaging and encourage companies to follow tried and true solutions. Find more tips at solvingpackaging.org, created by Green America and our allies.



The bad news: wasteful and throwaway packaging is bad for human health, human rights, communities, wildlife, and climate and we're using more and more. The good news: we've made big strides in sustainable packaging. It is possible for customers and workers to be healthy and safe without excessive waste and other negative impacts. It's time to embrace and scale the sustainable packaging solutions that are already here and pursue innovations for the future.



WHY DO MATERIALS MATTER?

- 40% of all the plastic made each year is for packaging, most of it designed to be tossed.
- More than half of all the paper made each year is used for packaging. Only about half the pulp that goes into that packaging is recycled, and much of it is not or can not be recycled after.
- Glass is made from sand and extracting sand is the largest mining endeavor globally and also the least regulated. Globally less than 35% of glass is recycled.
- Aluminum is made with bauxite which is extracted through damaging open-pit mining. It is far less energy-intensive and damaging to recycle than make new, and infinitely recyclable, yet less than 70% of aluminum products are recycled.

CAN'T WE JUST..?

- **Make everything so we can compost or recycle it?** The infrastructure to recycle or compost packaging is not currently available in most parts of the world. Packaging is more difficult and expensive to recycle because of the types of plastic used or because it's made by layering different materials together. To fix this, companies need to make packaging that is easier to recycle and policymakers need to prioritize improving recycling systems.
- **Replace all the plastic in packaging with another material?** Replacing one kind of unsustainable packaging with another isn't a true solution. For example, if a candy bar used to be wrapped in plastic you could only toss in the garbage and now it's wrapped in paper you can only toss in the garbage, that's a false solution.
- **Use bioplastics? They're less harmful, right?** Most bioplastics, which can be made from as low as 20% plant material, require industrial processes to break down and many release toxic chemicals when they do break down. Bioplastics also can contaminate the recyclable plastic stream. They can rely on large-scale, unsustainable agriculture and require additional land for agriculture. While some bioplastics are better than traditional petroleum-based plastic, these negatives make them a poor choice for long-term sustainability.
- **Use biodegradable packaging?** Biodegradable is a term that is used inconsistently and often misunderstood. It is applied to a wide array of materials, including plastics that take a very long time to break down and leave toxic residues when they do. Compostable is a word that has applied standards in regards to break down time and impact on soil health that make it a better standard to aim for.

WHAT REALLY WORKS

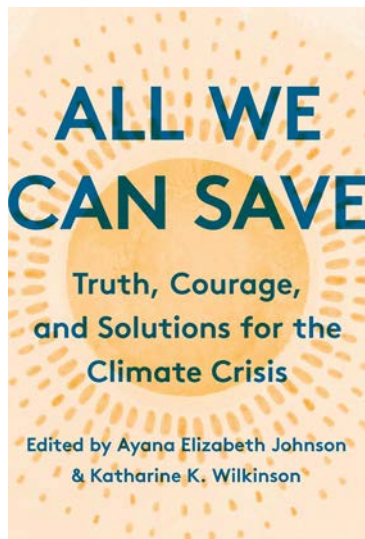
- **Get naked.** More companies are going naked or packaging free, even designing their products and their stores so they don't need packaging.
- **Go reusable!** Many companies are creating products with reusable packaging and zero-waste stores are popping up to help people buy staple goods in packaging they bring from home. ✨



Eco-reads for your book club

Begin your environmental education journey by checking out these great books.

By Cyna Mirzai



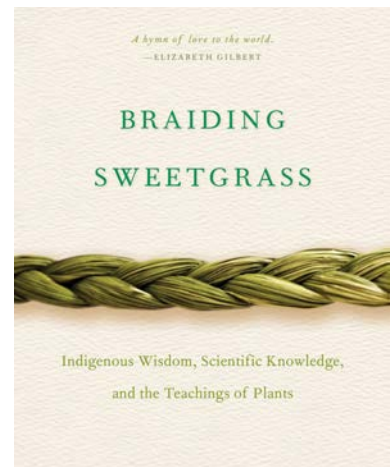
◀ Women are already bearing the disproportionate brunt of climate change—so it makes sense to listen to the women at the forefront of climate change work, sharing stories and solutions for environmental issues. **All We Can Save** (Penguin Random House, 2020) is a staple for understanding the role feminism and intersectionality have in protecting our planet.



◀ Byrd and DeMates offer a great first step in learning what sustainability can mean and how to become agents of change, in their book **Sustainability Made Simple** (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017). The book introduces the

environmental problems seen by all humans, discusses how companies and institutions transition toward sustainability, emphasizes why individual action is vital, and gives examples of changes we can all make.

There are numerous factors contributing to our current climate crisis, but Naomi Klein points to capitalism as the root cause in her book **This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate** (Simon & Schuster, 2014). Klein discusses the intersection of profit and environmentalism, and how economic systems have power in creating a sustainable planet. While this book has been noted as provocative and controversial, it is a good read to help understand how our economy contributes to the environmental crisis.



▶ It's always good to start with the basics—the plants and life on our planet, and the stories they tell. In **Braiding Sweetgrass** (Milkweed, 2014) Robin Wall Kimmerer, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and a botanist, gives voice to these living things in order that we may better co-exist. This book weaves tales of myth, science, and history, to reveal how sacred our world is.



HOUSEPLANTS: IS YOUR GREENERY GREEN?

Houseplants are all the rage, but before you dive in, make sure you're making environmentally friendly plant choices, especially avoiding the dark sides of peat.

By Mary Meade

Houseplants can brighten corners and liven empty spaces in your home. Studies show that just a little bit of greenery inside can improve productivity and mental health.

However, the ornamental plant industry is rife with pollution and toxins. Houseplants, like fresh-cut flowers, are excluded from the pesticide regulations of the food industry. Additionally, popular houseplants are often derived from tropical varieties, meaning many are imported and may be harmful to local species, if grown outside.

But one of the most detrimental impacts is buried within potting soil. Most soils are a mix of different materials to absorb water, provide nutrients, and drain properly. Peat is a marshland soil that retains moisture without getting soggy. It's cheap, too, making it a popular growing medium.

However, peat is like petroleum in that it's naturally occurring and emits greenhouse gases when it's harvested or burned. Peatlands store twice as much CO₂ as all the world's forests combined and are our most efficient carbon sink despite only making up 3% of the Earth's surface. Digging up peat also results in habitat destruction for wetland creatures and, without a place for standing water, the danger of flooding increases.

With more people interested in houseplants than ever, here are a few tips on how we can improve their environmental impact.

How To Reduce The Impact of Houseplants
Go peat-free. Coconut fibers, wood fibers, and compost provide the same moisture retention and aeration benefits as peat. How much you use in your soil mix will depend on the plant's needs.

Buy from a local nursery. Employees at local nurseries are often very knowledgeable about local varieties they stock, as well as organic soils, fertilizers, and pesticides that are not found in big box stores.

Avoid trends and plants that are born to die. Fresh-cut flowers, poinsettias, and spray-painted succulents have short lifespans. The energy it takes to grow and ship seasonal plants result in unnecessary environmental impacts.

Keep indoor plants inside. Sometimes we cannot keep our potted plants indoors, but don't plant houseplants in the ground without research, as it may be an invasive species. Try selling or swapping unwanted plants.

Share with friends. Many popular houseplant varieties are easy to propagate. Sharing and trading cuttings among your friends can cut back on environmental impacts (and save a few dollars, too). 🌱



what to know when you're hiring a caregiver

When you hire a caregiver in your home, you have a chance to vote with your dollars and make your space a just workplace. Whether you're looking for a nanny, housekeeper, or home health attendant, care for your caregiver and they will better care for you.

By Eleanor Greene

Bringing an outside caregiver into your home is such a personal decision and can make you feel vulnerable. Whether the person is there to work with your kids, an elder, or a family member with a disability, it can feel awkward to have a stranger there doing the job. Imagine being on the other side—domestic workers are often women, immigrants, non-native English speakers, and/or from other vulnerable groups.

When you hire a domestic caregiver, you are working together to create a caring environment and you can use your justice and equity values to guide that relationship. At Green America we talk a lot about using your money to express your values—we call it voting with your dollars. When someone works for you, think of yourself as an employer and what kind of workplace and policies you want to have.

“Most people who employ someone in their homes don't think of themselves as employers because of legacies of oppression in the United States, which begins with workers being left out of landmark labor policies,” says Erica Sklar of Hand in Hand, the domestic employers network. “So before people even start their research, stepping into the identity of ‘employer’ is really important.”

Rethink your role:

- It is a symbiotic relationship—and to borrow biology terms, you want it to be a mutualistic relationship, where both parties benefit, not a parasitic one, where one takes and the other gives. There may be tension sometimes, like in any workplace, but you can return to questions that ask how you both can benefit.
- We are more than our work—at Green America, we often quote folk singer Charlie King, saying “Our life is more than our work, and our work is more than our job.” That’s true for domestic workers as well. Caregiving encompasses many kinds of different work, plus workers have whole lives outside of the homes they work in. Being compassionate to that will go a long way.

Making your home a safe and hospitable work environment can mean better care, and a better life for the worker. It can also be a big lift. Hand in Hand offers tons of resources for employers to start thinking about wages, leave, and other concerns during the hiring stage. It also offers checklists of topics to consider in advance and steps to take as you bring a nanny, cleaner, or health attendants into your home—find those resources at domesticemployers.org. Sklar also recommends introducing your employee to the National Domestic Workers Association because domestic workers often work alone, which can be very isolating. By joining that group they can become aware of their rights and find solidarity with each other and with justice-minded employers.

Offer fair pay and time off:

If you’re not working through a hiring service (a visiting nurses association for example), the person coming into your home is working for themselves and wouldn’t have days off unless they are given by you. Christy Schwengel, director of major gifts at Green America, is a mom of two whose nanny worked with her family for 10 years. She offered vacation, sick leave, and snow days, as well as pay if her family canceled at the last minute.

“Our motto was, if we were paid and off, she should be paid and off,” Schwengel says.

Determining what to pay and how much time off to give is a conversation between you and your employee, but there are guidelines in the bevy of resources online. Don’t forget to check laws, Sklar reminds—domestic workers do have rights, but they’re not nationally mandated. Do an internet search for “domestic worker laws” and your state.

Communicate and consider a contract:

Make sure to talk about important issues up front. Hand in Hand works with the National Domestic Workers Alliance to create sample contracts in English and Spanish, to talk through important issues

with care workers in advance. A contract is a good way to have a conversation right at the beginning to plainly state assumptions and eliminate guessing one another’s needs. A contract can also be a good place to outline your family’s COVID-19 precautions and what you expect from someone working in your home. Make sure the conversation is two-way, so that an employee may express concerns or add their needs into the contract as well.

Share the work, if the fit is right:

Marketing manager Dana Christianson likes using a nanny share for her toddler, to lessen the cost and switch off the location of kids and a nanny. Shares can be challenging to navigate, but can be worth it



Before people even start their research, stepping into the identity of ‘employer’ is really important.

—Erica Sklar, Hand in Hand



if you find a family in your area with similar values when it comes to childcare. Hand in Hand also has resources about navigating nanny shares.

Sklar recommends signing Hand in Hand’s Fair Care Pledge, because having solidarity among ethical domestic employers is important for creating fair policies that include, instead of discount, the importance of care work done at home.

“We know that most people want to be ethical employers, but what that looks like is not always clear, and that’s particularly unclear in a pandemic,” says Sklar. “Once you sign the fair care pledge, we send you any resources we develop because we’re constantly meeting our moment and expanding our resources.” ✨

REDUCING YOUR BABY'S EXPOSURE TO TOXIC CHEMICALS



{GBN}

Find other Green
Business Network {GBN}
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Don't forget about chemicals when you make your home safe for a new baby.

by Kendall Lowery

Welcoming a little bundle of joy to your family can be equal parts joy and terror. Parents are on high alert for anything that might harm the baby. This is hard to do because of the lack of US government or corporate policies to ensure products marketed to parents are actually safe for babies. Sadly, too many products are not safe.

Every time we introduce something new to little ones, it is important to ask, “could this be made with an unsafe material that leeches toxic chemicals?” Protecting your baby from toxic chemicals is a key step in ensuring their healthy development.

Though chemical exposure affects us all, children in critical developmental stages face the highest risk. Developing brains of fetuses and children are especially susceptible to the effects of lead, mercury, and other toxic chemicals. According to Bruce Lanphear of Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, adults absorb roughly 10% of ingested lead whereas an infant will absorb about 50%. Additionally, infants use their hands and mouths to explore different environments, which compounds the risk of chemical exposure.

Ditch Dust

Vacuuming, wet mopping, and dusting is the best way to reduce toxic substance exposure. According to the same Canadian study, house dust has been shown to contain measurable concentrations of bio-accessible lead. Even at very low levels, lead is dangerous to developing brains, so creating a low-dust environment is key during pregnancy and childhood.

Leaving shoes at the door is an easy way to reduce the dust, bacteria, and chemicals that come into your home and are close to little hands and mouths.

Investigate Ingredients

Non-toxic cleaners will save you money and reduce the chemicals in your family's life. Baking soda, vinegar, and castile soap are all simple, affordable, and healthier cleaning solutions. Avoiding air fresheners and selecting fragrance-free products can help your family avoid chemicals that have been linked to hormone disruption.

Learn more about harmful chemicals in your home from our spring 2019 *Green American*, Your Home, Detoxed, at greenamerica.org/yourhomedetoxed.



Blankets and toys from Cozypure {GBN}.

Find better products

All of the businesses on GreenPages.org have received Green America's Green Business Certification; we've vetted them to ensure that their products are green, healthy, and ethically produced. Read on to learn about some of our favorite baby-focused businesses and non-toxic products.

Mattresses and Bedding

Conventional baby mattresses are often made with harmful off-gassing chemicals, flame retardants, and vinyl. Side-step these ingredients by opting for the following brands:

MAPLE GRACE {GBN}: This family-owned business is based in California, and is dedicated to finding healthy alternatives to toxin-laden home products. Its quality organic and nontoxic products include bedding, furniture, mattresses, toys, and clothing. Maple Grace products can be shipped throughout the United States.

NATUREPEDIC {GBN}: These luxury organic mattresses are free of toxic chemicals so you don't have to compromise on health or comfort. Naturepedic products do not contain polyurethane foam, flame retardants, flame barriers, perfluorinated compounds, pesticides, or latex.

“By and large, the system isn't working the way it should be working,” says Barry Cik, founder and technical director of Naturepedic.



Lemongrass body moisturizer by NAIWBE{GBN} is perfect for parents.



Maplegrace{GBN} organic cotton and wool crib mattress.

“A lot of products are being made with inappropriate materials.”

Materials in Naturepedic mattresses include certified organic cotton and wool. Naturepedic products can be shipped to the United States and Canada.

COZYPURE{GBN}: For more than 25 years, the folks at Cozypure have been working to make organic blankets, mattresses, crib sheets, burp cloths, and baby soap available to people in the United States and Canada. Since its founding, Cozypure has exclusively used organic and eco-friendly materials and have built a supply chain of products that are made-to-order in Norfolk, Virginia.

Diapers

Many diapers are manufactured with volatile organic compounds, irritating fragrances, and petrochemicals, but greener options are available:

ORETHIC{GBN}: This woman-owned and family-run business has been offering organic and polyester-free alternatives to diapers, sanitary pads, bibs, and more since 2013. Orethic products can be shipped throughout the United States and Europe.



Polyester-free diaper wraps by Orethic {GBN}.

Medicinals

Avoid the unnecessary dyes, allergens, and chemicals that are present in other brands in the medicine aisle:

GENEXA {GBN}: This Los Angeles-based company was founded by two dads who were determined to create medicine without unnecessary additives. They worked alongside doctors and pharmaceutical experts to craft products with the same active ingredients that people need and skip the artificial additives found in many medicines. Infant products include Vitamin D supplements, probiotics, saline nasal spray, and more. Genexa is sold in stores like Sprouts, Target, and CVS, and its products ship internationally.



Genexa {GBN} kids cold medicine.

Skincare

Take care of the body’s largest organ by checking in on the ingredients in your daily skincare routine and investigate mindfully made green options.

BE GREEN BATH AND BODY {GBN}: This small-batch line of natural and organic skincare has been crafted in Massachusetts since 2008. Founder Karen Roche set out to nourish her skin safely, and has developed a line of fragrance-, nut-, soy-, and gluten-free and vegan products made with high quality natural and organic ingredients. Its baby products include non-toxic gentle baby oil, organic baby balm, and non-toxic baby powder. Be Green Bath and Body products can be shipped throughout the United States and Canada.

NAIWBE - NATURAL AS I WANNA BE {GBN}: Between breastfeeding, play, and cuddles, your baby will be exposed to the ingredients in your skincare as well as their own. Opt for organic, eco-friendly, plant-based products from NAIWBE. This Black-owned business was founded by Sylvia Walker, a registered nurse who sought to develop her own natural skincare solutions after struggling with contact dermatitis and eczema. NAIWBE products can be shipped internationally. 🌱



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YOUR GUIDE FOR A LOW-WASTE BEAUTY ROUTINE

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*Looking to make your beauty routine more sustainable?
Create a greener routine with multipurpose makeup
products and plastic-free skincare essentials.*

By Cyna Mirzai

Curating a green personal care routine isn't always the easiest pursuit, especially when the products to choose from are endless. With all these products wrapped in unrecyclable materials, today's beauty care results in tons of waste. In fact, the beauty industry relies on plastic to create copious amounts of products inexpensively.

In 2018 alone, over 120 billion units of cosmetics packaging were produced globally, meaning the majority of makeup you see in stores is directly contributing to landfill waste. Along with this, it's even more important to make sure you are protecting yourself from toxic chemicals found in countless products today. Visit the

Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Database to see what chemicals might be lurking in your makeup bag. Head to [ewg.org/skindeep](https://www.ewg.org/skindeep) to search over 73,000 personal care products. Though finding low-waste and sustainable beauty products can be a challenge, there are numerous ways to turn your everyday routine into a more sustainable one. When you do buy new products, consider certified green products at [GreenPages.org](https://www.GreenPages.org), to ensure you are protecting yourself and then start focusing on protecting the planet.

Makeup

For many, everyday makeup is a crucial part of their morning routine.

Luckily, there are various ways to easily adapt your current makeup routine into one that creates very little waste.

Face—When reimagining your makeup routine, foundation and concealer are the most difficult to reconsider since liquid products often rely on plastic containers. However, many makeup brands are beginning to introduce a refillable program, allowing you to bring your old foundation bottle to refill it with the same product. This is an easy way to use the same product you love while also creating less waste.

Lips and Cheeks—Multi-purpose products are one of the easiest ways to reduce waste and create a more minimalist routine. Since the most common lip colors are often similar to blush colors, try using a multi-purpose beauty stick in a pink or red shade. Then you can purchase only one item instead of two, but you still get to wear your favorite blush and lip color. If you're also a fan of contouring, you can buy a beauty stick in a brown or darker shade, and use it as bronzer as well as an eyeshadow color.

Brows—Instead of purchasing a brow gel, make your own brow pomade in a large batch. Most DIY brow pomades are made from corner store items like coconut oil and beeswax, and you can use any eyeshadow you have or cocoa powder to make the pomade match your eyebrow color.

Skincare

Whether you only use a facial cleanser or engage in a ten-step process, creating an effective but eco-friendly skincare routine is easier than it might seem.

One of the most important thoughts to consider when implementing a low-waste skincare routine is where you are sourcing your products from. Karen Roche, founder of Be Green Bath & Body{GBN}, sells locally sourced products with a mission to provide affordable, non-toxic items with little waste. A family-owned business, Be Green Bath & Body sell various facial cleansers, day creams and night creams, as well as toners and serums. Roche believes in a refuse, refill, and recycle approach when looking at skincare products.



First look at what you use the most—if you are someone who goes through a bottle of shaving cream a month, then that can be an area you can look at addressing since it would make the most impact by reducing that waste. You could go and see if our shaving cream bar would work for you, but the replacement also needs to be easy and work well, or else you won't stick to the change."

—Angie Ringler,
Tangie Waste Free Products



"I always tell people to refuse any products they don't need and start using products in a multipurpose way," says Roche. "A body oil can also be a makeup remover and a moisturizer, there is no reason to buy all three separately. Because we sell refills, and many other companies do as well, it makes it easy to resell the same products and reduce any waste."

Shower

With the majority of shampoos, conditioners, and body washes sold in plastic bottles and manufactured unsustainably, it's crucial to look for products that aim to create little to no waste.

Tangie Waste Free Products{GBN} is a Florida-based business devoted to reducing the plastic waste that comes with traditional hygiene products—soaps, shampoos, hand wash, laundry soap, etc. Founder Angie Ringler creates bar and paste formulated products that can either be used as is or dissolved with water at home to make your own liquid product. Ringler also advocates for a progress over perfection mindset.

"First look at what you use the most—if you are someone who goes through a bottle of shaving cream a month, then that can be an area you can look at addressing since it would make the most impact by reducing that waste," says Ringler. "You could go and see if our shaving cream bar would work for you, but the replacement also needs to be easy and work well, or else you won't stick to the change."

Apart from packaged items, the EPA reports that the average family uses up to 40 gallons of water from showering each day. To combat this water waste, you can start by setting a timer to limit how long your showers last. The EPA also recommends replacing shower heads with WaterSense labeled models. This replacement can save your water and electricity costs by \$70 while also saving more than 2,700 gallons of an average family's water per year.

Consider the waste created from your out-of-shower routine. If you wash your hair, choose compostable or wooden brushes and combs rather than those made with plastic. For leave-in conditioner, you can take a spray bottle and mix your conditioner, water, and any nourishing oils you already have at home. This way, you don't have to purchase another hair product made with plastic, and you can continuously refill the bottle. 🌱



MICROPLASTICS

LURKING IN YOUR LAUNDRY

When we wear synthetic materials we dress in microplastics. Learn what you can do to reduce plastic use and pollution in your closet and laundry routine.

by Jessica Beck

As your clothes tumble around in the washing machine, water washes away your shirt's dirt, smells, and tiny pieces of microplastics. Microplastics, plastics less than 5 millimeters long, can be shed off clothes in the form of microfibers of non-biodegradable material such as polyester, nylon, acrylic, or spandex. When water empties from the washer and goes down the drain, microplastics head toward rivers and oceans. They have been found across the globe,

sinking towards Mariana Trench and climbing up to Mount Everest.

"We are seeing microplastics showing up literally everywhere. You simply can't avoid them," Jay Sinha, founder of Green America's member Life Without Plastic{GBN} explained.

A 2015 study published in *Marine Anthropogenic Litter* notes that microplastics can cause serious harm to sea creatures, causing them to eat less, lose weight, and more. In terms of fish and

other marine life, individuals should be concerned by microplastics' ability to have worse and worse repercussions as they go up the food chain, says Paul Anastas, professor at the Yale School of the Environment and School of Public Health.

Scientists still don't know the full extent of the impact of microplastic pollution on human health. Of course, all microplastics pollution is caused by humans, as the users of plastic.

Shedding from synthetic clothes in home washing machines make up about 35% of the global release of microplastic, coming from the synthetic fibers that make up 60% of global fiber consumption, according to 2017 estimations by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

We can all take steps to reduce opportunities for plastics to travel towards our oceans and harm marine ecosystems and human life. Microplastic pollution is a problem that can be solved, if consumers and businesses play their part.

Managing Microplastics in Your Closet

Even if your closet is already full of clothes made with microplastics and synthetic microfibers, such as polyester, nylon, or spandex clothing, you can act against microplastic pollution.

- **Wash your clothes less and do full loads.** Washing clothes less creates fewer opportunities for the fibers to be shed—try letting your clothes air out after wear and spot cleaning to reduce smells and trips through the wash. The Environmental Protection Agency explains that washing full loads causes less friction between clothes, reducing the number of microfibers shed. Meanwhile, a 2020 study done by researchers at the Newcastle Innovation Center and Northumbria University estimated that going from small to large loads about halved the number of microfibers released.
- **Buy a filter for your washing machine.** More and more companies, such as Lint LUV-R and PlanetCare sell filters that specialize in capturing microfibers and stop many microplastics from leaking into waterways. One 2018 study from the University of Toronto found that the Lint LUV-R filter captured about 87% of microfibers shed each wash. One can also buy laundry bags or laundry balls that specialize in catching microfibers, such as those from Guppyfriend, Cora Ball, and Woven.

- **Use a front-loading washer.** Researchers at the University of California Santa Barbara found that front-loading machines had microfiber masses that were 7 times smaller than top-loading machines. This is likely occurring because of the central agitator in top-load machines that causes clothes to move more vigorously.
- **Filter your drinking water.** This won't reduce the pollution already in the water system, but will keep particles out of your system. See p. 30 for more.

Alternatives to Synthetic Microfiber Clothing

There is no need for microplastic pollution. It is possible to create non-polluting fabrics.

Choose plastic-free fabrics. This includes organic cotton, wool, linen, and other natural fibers. These fabrics are easy to find and do not contain the synthetic microfibers that are shed in washing machines.

Many of Green America's members work on producing plastic-free products and clothing. For example, Life Without Plastic {GBN} produces fabrics made out of organic cotton and laundry materials that reduce plastic use. Their lavender drying bag replaces microplastic-containing dryer sheets, can be composted, and is made from organic cotton. OOOLOOP {GBN}, and others, sell a variety of clothes that come from natural and organic fibers like organic cotton and linen. Linen, silk, and wool can be particularly expensive to buy new, so look out for them at the thrift store, too.

Reach out to companies about alternative forms of plastic. When asked about solutions to microplastics, Anastas replied that "There are three steps that should be taken: design, design, design." Design makes it possible to create plastics and fabrics that biodegrade and do not harm wildlife.

Reach out to companies using the "Write an Effective Letter to a Company," on greenamerica.org and request that they do more to address microplastic pollution. Let them know that alternatives exist, and they should do their part to implement them.✻

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HOW TO BUY IN BULK

Hoping to save money while reducing packaging waste?

Buying bulk could be your answer.

by Kendall Lowery

Buying household essentials individually can add up fast—in packaging waste and actual dollar cost. Yet according to a study from Portland State University's Food Leadership Center, shoppers can save an average of 56% by purchasing natural and organic foods in the bulk foods aisle of a grocery store. Bulk buying is exactly what it sounds like—instead of purchasing items like hand soap, rice, coffee, and other household essentials in small, individual containers, bulk buying means purchasing a lot all at once. Some grocery stores offer bulk aisles, where shoppers can fill a bag and pay based on weight, or a store can be entirely dedicated to bulk shopping. Whether you're looking to cut costs or reduce your own packaging waste, review our key tips to maximize your bulk-buying benefits.

1 Get the most bang for your buck The key to being a bulk aficionado is having a solid plan! Before heading to the store, take inventory of what your household regularly uses. Non-perishables are the way to go. Fruits, vegetables, and dairy products aren't the only items that may spoil: spices and oils are a few products with surprisingly quick expiration timelines. Consider what items you could purchase in bulk that could refill existing containers—hand soap is a common example. Keep this list handy and reference it often.

2 Stay intentional Once you are at the store, being intentional about your purchases is key. The many deals offered by bulk sellers can be tempting—overconsumption is a frequent pitfall of buying in bulk.

Whether you visit the bulk aisle of your local grocer or a wholesale co-op, sticking to your list will save you from unnecessary purchases.

3 Save by calculating cost-per-unit

A 50-pound sack of rice will cost more than a 16-ounce bag, so check the price tag for unit cost. If this measurement isn't available, use your calculator to divide the total price by the number of units—for example \$22 for 50 pounds of rice would be \$0.44 per pound. If it's cheaper than your regular purchase, you're saving.

Additionally, bulk products typically last a long time—so if you stick to your list, you'll save money in the long term and use less packaging. You can also dedicate some time to couponing; an extra 5% off can go a long way.

4 Curb the packaging waste

Some stores allow you to bring your own container for bulk purchases, such as filling a reusable produce bag with your favorite dried fruit. Of the packaging you do have to purchase, make the most of it by reusing—such as a large plastic bag to line a trash bin or big boxes that can double as crafting materials.

5 Share the goods

Prior to picking up that pallet of garbanzo beans, make sure that you will use it all! If some might go to waste, reach out to friends to split bulk purchases. Green America staff have long shared bulk-buying from Frontier Co-op {GBN}, and go in on monthly orders together that get shipped to the office and split up.

6 Buy green in bulk

Just because bulk is cheaper doesn't always mean it's better. A gallon of laundry detergent may be cheaper at a bulk store, but if it contains toxic ingredients, then it's just a bargain sale on chemicals. We recommend purchasing from local wholesale co-ops, the bulk aisle of green grocers, and asking sustainable businesses if they sell in bulk.

Green Business Network® has a page dedicated to bulk food vendors that have achieved Green America's Green Business Certification; these vendors are great places to find organic, non-GMO, and Fair-Trade food items. Here are a few of our favorites:

GloryBee Foods Inc {GBN}: GloryBee is a family-owned bulk food distributor dedicated to providing high quality organic ingredients to its customers. It also offers beekeeping and hygiene products alongside a selection of groceries.

Numi Tea {GBN}: This Bay Area-based company produces premium quality organic teas and fresh herbs, which you can buy in bulk if you're a big tea-drinker. Their blends are created with only 100% real fruits, flowers, and spices, and the Numi team travels around the world to source their organic ingredients and build partnerships with farmers.

SunRidge Farms {GBN}: This purveyor of snacks was founded during the organic movement of the 1970s. What was once a small family business and has grown to offer a selection of almost 1,000 products in bulk.

"Our bulk shopping mantra relates to [being] earth-friendly, with less packaging to help our planet and a reduced carbon footprint," says Greg Koenig, SunRidge Farms' director of e-commerce. Its inventory includes trail mixes, seeds, dried fruits, granolas, grains, and beans. 🌱



Tip: If you have your own containers to refill in the bulk section, be sure to weigh them empty and label them with the weight. Then you can reuse them over and over, and not pay for the weight of the container itself.

WHAT "MEAT" TO EAT

Meatless options are mainstream now, but what's the best meaty veggie burger?

Let's find out.

by Mary Meade

In 2019, meat alternatives went from a fringe food to a mainstream trend. "Meatless" beef—practically indistinguishable from actual beef—made its way to fast food establishments to appeal to meat eaters as the climate-friendly burger. But with all these choices, what's the difference, and are they truly planet-friendly?

We compiled a shortlist of the most popular meat alternatives out there, looking at environmental impacts, ingredients, and taste.

Sunshine Burger: The Green American Pick

The Sunshine burger contains no soy, peanuts, or tree nuts, and is vegan, non-GMO, and the only option on this list that is USDA-certified organic. Unlike other alternative meat companies, Sunshine Plant-Based Foods {GBN} does not claim its burgers taste like beef. It is also the least processed compared to other options on this list, offering "whole food ingredients" like sunflower seeds and brown rice.

Beyond Burger: Non-GMO Peas, Please

The Beyond burger is made with a variety of plants, from pea for protein to fatty coconut oil to imitate that classic grill sizzle. Beyond Meat's entire line of products are non-GMO. A peer-reviewed Life Cycle Analysis published by the University of Michigan in 2018 revealed that the Beyond burger uses 99% less water, 93% less land, and produces 90% fewer greenhouse gas emissions than a quarter pound beef burger.

Morningstar Farms: Cheap, Easy, Everywhere

Morningstar Farms are stocked on grocery shelves across the nation, making it accessible for many people. The company, which is owned by Kellogg, carries a wide variety of flavors when it comes to vegetarian burgers, but these were never intended to taste like real meat. Ingredients can vary widely between options, but all contain some form of soy, and only some are non-GMO. A 2016 Life Cycle Assessment notes that the spicy black bean burger produces 89% fewer greenhouse gas emissions than a beef burger of equal weight, making it a solid alternative for reducing your carbon footprint.

Impossible Burger: Fast Food Goes Vegetarian

The Impossible burger made headlines in 2019 for tasting just like beef. According to the company that makes it, the process uses 87% less water, 96% less land, produces 89% fewer greenhouse gas emissions than a beef burger. Its ingredients include soy and potatoes, but would-be eaters should know that the component that makes the burger meaty—heme protein—is produced with genetically-modified yeast. As one of the few food companies to create lab-grown proteins, more research is needed to understand the scope of potential health and environmental concerns caused by creating those proteins.

What's the Scoop on GMOs?

In the 70s, GMO foods were created to work in tandem with synthetic pesticides and have resulted in high pesticide use on crops and fertilizers. Atrazine, a component in pesticides, is linked to severe health issues like birth defects. Overuse of nitrates, found in synthetic fertilizers, is responsible for eutrophication and mass marine animal die offs in the Gulf of Mexico. Glyphosate, also called RoundUp, is linked to cancer. Read more about Green America's work against GMOs at greenamerica.org/gmo-inside. 🌱

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WHEN IT COMES TO COFFEE, DOES FAIR TRADE MATTER?



Smell the coffee...then learn what fair trade and direct trade mean, and why they're important for your morning cup.

by Mary Meade

Ordering a coffee includes confronting a long list of lingo—if you’ve ever stood in front of a Starbucks menu scratching your head, you get it. Among these phrases are “fair trade” and “direct trade” which are terms to describe how a coffee bean is traded, but discerning the difference can be just as confusing as choosing between a café au lait and a latte.

WHAT IS FAIR TRADE?

Fair trade’s focus is alleviating farmer poverty by protecting them from predatory corporations and fluctuations in the market by setting a floor price

for the commodity. Fair trade also mandates a premium to be paid on top of the floor price, which is invested into community needs, like schools or hospitals. Purchasers must pay the floor price but can, and often do, pay more. However, the price set by the fair trade organization may not necessarily equate to a true livable income.

How it really works:

Fair trade certifications help to improve supply chain conditions by ensuring producers and workers receive a minimum wage and labor laws are followed. Some fair trade certifications set standards for environmentally sustainable

practices, but not all, and can vary widely between industries like cocoa, which tends to be weak when it comes to protecting forests. Not all fair trade organizations will support farmers if they have a bad year or lose their crop to natural disasters. Fair trade can also certify farmer co-ops, which exist to establish a farming community, democratize decision-making, and ensure the certification is benefiting many.

Several fair trade certifications have emerged within the last 40 years, with Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA among the largest. Where these organizations differ depends on who they are willing to certify. Fairtrade

International only certifies organized farmers, while Fair Trade USA will also certify plantations—which may have problems such as dangerous working conditions and may contribute to environmental pollution—under the rationale that more fair trade products will be available on the market.

WHAT IS DIRECT TRADE?

Direct trade is a practice where coffee roasters purchase straight from the farmers, cutting out middlemen: buyers, sellers, and certifiers. Without the middlemen, farmers may get paid more for their beans. Direct trade roasters can also identify exactly how the relationship is impacting partner farmers and the surrounding community. In this way, direct trade is very personal. Like fair trade, direct trade is used for different types of products, like cocoa and tea.

How it Really Works:

Since direct trade partnerships happen between individual farmers and small-scale roasters, the roasters have more control over social justice and sustainability initiatives. Naturally, this means direct traders may have an outsized impact on the economic well-being of their farmer partners compared to the broader reach of fair trade certifications that impact many. But the actual economic benefit for growers is highly variable.

The close partnerships from trading directly also mean roasters have greater control over the quality of beans. Some direct trade proponents believe that this means the cup of coffee tastes better than fair trade beans—where flavor is not considered in certification—but that is not necessarily true, as taste is subjective and high quality beans can result from both trading methods.

Yet what direct trade truly lacks is fair trade's strength: standardization and third-party audits. Unless direct trade roasters are fully transparent with their supply chain, customers may be paying for environmentally damaging practices and workers' rights violations alongside that morning coffee. One roaster may compensate their farmers well and work with the growers on environmental stewardship, while another may not do

Start by finding a cup of coffee with a flavor you like, and then do some homework.

either. Without a third party to oversee accountability and transparency in the supply chain, customers are relying entirely on the roaster's word.

Which is Better?

The differences can be narrowed down to scale and impact—direct trade tends to be small, whereas fair trade has wider reach. Farmers under a fair trade certification may have their beans sold to corporations like Starbucks or supermarkets that can purchase in bulk, while direct traders buy and sell smaller batches of beans better suited for small coffee shops. Neither approach is the end-all solution for coffee farmers. Both are evolving strategies to improve lives in coffee-producing communities.

Therefore, it's not a question of which method is better, but how can a consumer make an educated coffee purchase?

Start by finding a cup of coffee with a flavor you like, and then do some homework. If you're at the supermarket, look for rigorous certifications like Fairtrade International, which only certify organized farmers and co-ops. If it's a small shop, ask where they get their beans and if they have a fair trade certification. If it is fair trade, which certification is it? If the shop trades directly with farmers, ask about that relationship—do they describe it in detail, touching on environmental stewardship and liveable wages, or do they brush over it? And if you find the perfect coffee, ask to buy the shop's beans so you never go without.

To find coffee companies that meet standards for social responsibility and environmental sustainability, visit GreenPages.org. Certified Green America businesses take into account human and planetary health—and also the delicious flavor of a cup of joe. ☀



Fair Trade Leader:

Equal Exchange{GBN}, started in 1986, has helped improve the lives of coffee farmers through certification with Fair Trade Federation as well as working with farmer co-ops, and served as a model for coffee companies since.



Direct Trade Leader:

Direct trade roasters can still practice fair trade values without the added cost of certification. Velasquez Family Coffee{GBN} is one such example. The small business purchases directly from a family farm in Honduras, practices fair trade values and maintains high standards for environmental sustainability.



{GBN}

Find other Green Business Network {GBN} certified companies at [GreenPages.org](https://www.GreenPages.org)

CREDIT UNIONS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

A group of clean energy geeks decided that renewable energy should be accessible—so they started a credit union to do just that.

by Mary Meade

Above: Siblings help charge their family car at an electric vehicle charger. Their parents bought the car with financing from Clean Energy Credit Union (CECU). Photo courtesy of CECU.

As a self-proclaimed “clean energy geek,” Blake Jones has taken his passion for the environment to co-found several cooperatives around renewable energy—one of which being Clean Energy Credit Union, a trailblazing financial institution dedicated to clean energy lending and environmental stewardship.

“We started the credit union because we couldn’t find any national banks or credit unions that were providing these kinds of loans,” says Jones. “We may be the first to do this, but we hope we won’t be the last. In fact, we’re currently helping over 40 other credit unions to learn about clean energy lending, and we ultimately need to help all financial institutions transition away from financing fossil fuels and see that there’s a huge need for—and a huge opportunity in—helping to finance the clean energy movement.”

Jones is right—part of the green transition will include

renewables. It seems that the market is ripe for clean energy investing, with renewables expected to account for 70% of the \$530 billion spent on all new generation energy this year. And it's crucial that banks start making this transition, since 60 of the largest banks in the world have funneled \$3.8 trillion into the fossil fuel industry, enabling polluters to pump greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and fueling the climate crisis.

Banks like JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citi, and Wells Fargo have enabled this by using your banking deposits, and those of institutional investors, to support fossil fuel projects in the form of loaning funds to fossil fuel companies. Where we bank can have powerful impacts on what projects—like fossil fuels or clean energy—receive funding.

Unlike big banks, credit unions, community development financial institutions, and green banks use those deposits to invest in the community—whether that be meaningful education and technical financial assistance or fairly-priced loans for affordable housing, small business, and everyday purchases for people with imperfect credit history. Additionally, such financial institutions work to build wealth in underserved communities as well as help members free themselves from predatory debt and gain control of their personal finances.

These financial institutions exist to serve their members and grow the community's economic well-being—not line the pockets of mega-bank executives. By divesting from big banks and putting money in credit unions, green banks, and building socially responsible portfolios, anyone can put their dollars to work are working towards a green economy.

That's why credit unions like Clean Energy Credit Union{GBN}

have emerged to help people make smart, environmentally and socially responsible investments for themselves and the health of the planet. Clean Energy Credit Union (Clean Energy CU) is online-only and provides loans exclusively for electric vehicles, electric bicycles, residential electric solar systems, residential geothermal systems, and other clean energy and energy saving projects.

Clean Energy CU is based in Colorado and serves members across the entire country. It's also a certified member of Green America's Green Business Network®, meaning it has passed rigorous standards for environmental and social responsibility.

"Clean Energy Credit Union's vision is a world where everyone can participate in the clean energy movement," says Jones. "We make it easier for everyone to afford clean energy and energy saving products and services by offering loans with amazing terms. And we make it easier for anyone to invest in the clean energy movement by offering federal insured checking accounts, savings accounts, and clean energy CDs. The deposits are solely used to help others pursue their clean energy saving projects."

Green America has partnered with Clean Energy CU, so that you—as a Green America member—your household, and immediate family members are all eligible to join this credit union and put your money to work today for the green economy. ✨

WHERE DO MY BANKING DEPOSITS GO?

When you deposit money at a bank, it doesn't just sit there collecting dust. Banks use that money to finance loans.

JPMorgan Chase, Citi, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America have a long history of financing the fossil fuel industry. Do you want your assets to finance the climate crisis?

\$3.8 TRILLION

funneled into the fossil fuel industry from 2016 to 2020 by the 60 largest commercial banks in the world.

Source: Banking on Climate Chaos 2021



8.1%

of dollars for housing purchases went to Chicago's majority-Black neighborhoods while 68.1% went to majority-white neighborhoods.

Source: WBEZ/City Bureau analysis of Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Data and United States Census Bureau data, 2020

\$2.6 BILLION

in credit and loans to private prison companies from Wall Street banks.

Source: The Wall Street Banks Still Financing Private Prisons, 2019



READY TO ALIGN YOUR MONEY WITH YOUR VALUES?

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CRYPTOCURRENCY IS DIRTY MONEY

Cryptocurrency isn't sustainable—it's driving climate change with its reliance on dirty energy.

by Kendall Lowery

Ever since the creation of Bitcoin in 2009, the cryptocurrency market has staked its claim as the 21st century gold rush. Investors have made and lost millions in the digitized crypto trade, and as of 2021, over 100 million people are using cryptocurrencies.

Whether you're hoping to strike it rich, or you think that crypto investors are chasing fool's gold, it is probably here to stay, and so is the massive amount of energy that is required for its operation.

What is cryptocurrency?

Mainstream cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum are defined by three main qualities: they can be mined and used internationally, are not regulated by a central authority, and their value can be quite volatile.

Crypto's unique security system, investment potential, and convenience have led to its rise in notoriety over the past decade. Because of a recording technology called blockchain, cryptocurrency is considered very secure, almost impossible to counterfeit, and able to operate without a regulation authority.

The volatility of cryptocurrency creates opportunities for considerable financial gain or significant loss. Trading cryptos also allows for lower transaction fees for online money exchanges and may be an enticing option for unbanked individuals.

Earning Coins Takes Big Energy

Here's where things get complicated. At first glance, deviating away from paper money and plastic credit cards seems like an effective way to conserve resources. However, most cryptocurrencies are produced through a process called mining, which requires extensive computing power. To mine cryptocurrency, high-powered computers from around the world race against each other to verify and record cryptocurrency transactions; the first computer to do so is rewarded with cryptocurrency coins.

But the intense computations involved in the mining process require massive amounts of energy, and much of this energy is derived from fossil

Cryptocurrency
mining rigs
operate

24/7

Yet just one Bitcoin
transaction uses
the same amount
of energy as it
would take to
power the average
household for

53
DAYS

fuels. Mining rigs operate 24 hours a day, and Digiconomist estimates that one Bitcoin transaction uses the same amount of energy as powering the average US household for 53 days.

As cryptocurrency becomes more popular and prices rise, mining competition intensifies, and more energy is consumed. As more miners enter the market to compete for coins, the probability that a single computer will win the race to solve a given computation goes down, and it becomes increasingly difficult to make a profit through mining. This carbon-emitting cycle causes miners to continually up the processing power of their servers to increase their chances of striking gold, which requires more and more energy.

The mining process also produces a significant amount of electronic waste. As the special hardware required to mine crypto is updated and older versions become obsolete, most previous technology is thrown away. Mining technology is highly specialized and can't be repurposed; Digiconomist estimates that the bitcoin network alone creates eight to 12 thousand tons of e-waste every year.

It's Only Getting Dirtier

Environmentalists have raised concerns about the oppositional relationship between cryptocurrency prices and mining efficiency. On the Bitcoin network, the computations required to mine get more complicated as the price of bitcoin increases, extending time required to solve each problem increases but computing power stays constant. Therefore, as the price increases, the network will have to use more computing power (and fuel) in order to process transactions.

“The hard part about cryptocurrency is because people can mine it and create anywhere in the world,” says Brady Quirk-Garvan, co-owner of the Money With A Mission Team at Natural Investments LLC {GBN} and Green America board member. “You can't really standardize and say, ‘this currency is only created from renewable energies, or is even low carbon.’”

The location of mining is important because it determines the type of fuel that is used to produce electricity. According to researchers at Cambridge University's Centre for Alternative Finance, roughly 65% of bitcoin mining is based in China, which is heavily dependent on coal. CNBC reported that the fossil fuels used to mine bitcoin release more yearly carbon dioxide emissions than New Zealand (about 36 million tons per year).

“The good news is that the overall policy framework in China is conducive to climate action,” says Marilyn Waite, co-host of the China Cleantech podcast and head of the climate and clean energy finance portfolio at the Hewlett Foundation. “China is the largest market for solar panels and electric vehicles. Now, the challenge in China is to not build any new coal fired power plants, retire the old existing coal power plants, and replace them with renewable energy. Those climate-friendly investments will lead to decarbonization, and therefore everything, including blockchain activities, will become greener.”

In September 2021, China declared all cryptocurrency transactions illegal. How this will affect mining and the market is still unclear because the country had banned cryptocurrency trading in 2017

and it remained a hub for mining and trading.

A relatively new coalition of cryptocurrency firms, renewable energy producers, and even a crypto-friendly environmentalist group called the Crypto Climate Accord is dedicated to expediting this process of greening cryptocurrency. They're pursuing this goal through a combination of improving cryptocurrency mining methods, using 100 percent renewable energy, and using open-source technology to anonymously and transparently report on how much mining is actually green. Bitcoin and Ethereum are not currently signatories of the Crypto Climate Accord; you can see the supporters and signatories at cryptoclimate.org.

As of 2021, the BBC and Digiconomist reported that each year, the Bitcoin and Ethereum networks use about 180 terawatt-hours of electricity combined; that amount of energy could power over 15 million homes for an entire year.

“Mining cryptocurrency is just like any other economic activity—what is causing it to be harmful for the planet and for the climate is the underlying energy sources that we use,” says Waite. “Mining cryptocurrency though very inefficient in energy use, is not inherently climate change-causing. Because our energy systems are mostly fossil fuel-based, any economic activity, whether it's manufacturing EVs or industrial agriculture, is going to have this negative impact on climate change. To solve that we need to do what we should be doing anyway: transforming our energy systems to low-carbon resources.” 🌱

BECOME A GREEN ENTREPRENEUR

Are you an entrepreneur starting a green business? Here are four tips from seasoned business owners to help get it off the ground.

by Mary Meade

Being an entrepreneur is rife with challenges—most startups fail due to a combination of reasons, with financial strain being at the forefront. But we've found that companies that put profit priorities alongside human and planetary health tend to weather the storm a little easier.

To find out what it takes to create a thriving company, we asked the business leaders in Green America's Green Business Network®, "what advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?" Here are their answers.

1 Go Slow and Steady

Pam Wheelock hand makes organic and nontoxic pet toys for her company, Purrfect Play{GBN}. She has kept her business running for over a decade. Her advice for weathering financial storms like the 2008 recession and the COVID-19 pandemic is to take it slow and be intentional.

"Take your idea and do something with it, even if it's small. See how that feels to you. Don't convince yourself you have to survive on it," she says. "Do it small, do it bootstrapped, learn as you go. When you don't have a lot of skin in the game, you can afford to make mistakes."

2 Ask For Help When You Need It

Bexar Soap{GBN} is a young start-up, just two years old—but business is booming for the nontoxic soaps and lotions company. Jennifer Williams never intended to become an entrepreneur, but it is something she welcomes as her company grows.

"For aspiring entrepreneurs, I would definitely say, seek mentors that have entrepreneurial experience," says Williams. "Set your goals high, no matter how crazy they sound. Have confidence in your product and yourself."

3 Find Joy in the Job

Organiz-ER{GBN} helps clients organize their business, home, and life. Susan Walko has worked with people downsizing to start new lives, as well as companies with cluttered workflows to improve operations. Instead of discarding items that



Charise Cowan-Leroy, founder of 4Elements, with a selection of her products.

her clients no longer want or need, she often donates to groups and organizations that could use them.

"Stay true to what your mission is," says Walko. "I've always been about helping people in their life—and people have said to me, 'you can make more money by doing complete business organizing!' And you're right, I can. But I get my most joy by working with people and helping them personally and I never lost sight of that vision."

4 Stick to the Plan

Charise Cowan-Leroy started her personal care company on a dare—and with thorough research, dedicated experimentation, and a good dose of optimism, 4Elements Bath{GBN} has flourished for nearly a decade.

"The thing that helped me the most was first to create a business plan and then to review that a few times a year," says Cowan-Leroy. "I found that we've had a lot of opportunities come over the years. Some of those work within our business plan, our scope—others would just be a diversion and that was not going to help us in the long run. So doing that business plan and updating it regularly really helps you stay focused on what you want." 🌱

HOW TO SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES

Sometimes you have the time, but not the money, to support small businesses you love. Follow these steps to boost your favorite local and green businesses.

by Kendall Lowery



We all know that supporting small businesses is key to strengthening our communities. According to the Small Business Administration, they create 1.5 million jobs annually and account for 64% of new jobs created in the US. But how can we support green and local businesses without over-consuming? Check out our list of tips for some ideas on how to diversify the ways that you support your local businesses.

Boost their online presence

If any of your local businesses have a social media presence, funnel more eyes towards their pages by tagging them in your own posts, writing reviews on sites like Yelp and Google and signing up for any promotional newsletters that they may have. You can also find new small businesses on sites like Etsy and Shopify, browse and buy from local businesses on Sook and find used, out-of-print and rare books from independent booksellers on Alibris.

Vocalize your support

Recommend your favorite local

businesses to friends and family. Word of mouth is an incredibly powerful marketing tool: a study by global marketing research firm Nielsen found that 92% of consumers believe recommendations from friends and family over all forms of advertising. Leverage the power of your endorsements to bolster support for local businesses.

Open your eyes, ears, and laptop

The impulse to click “place order” online before shopping at a brick-and-mortar store is stronger than ever. Counteract this by evaluating your online purchases and taking notice of local businesses in your city or town.

There are plenty of ways to find new favorites. Your local Chamber of Commerce, community Facebook groups and Nextdoor forums are all resources to broaden your index of neighborhood businesses. Make an adventure out of exploring new community businesses with friends. These local stores may carry items that you would otherwise buy online; increasing your knowledge of your surrounding

merchants allows you to shift from buying shipped items to making purchases from small businesses.

Pickup is preferred

Though getting meals or groceries delivered is tempting, ordering from most delivery services reduces the profits received by merchants. Companies like Postmates, DoorDash, and Instacart charge additional fees to the businesses who use them, whittling down already thin profit margins. When you're able to buy from a local restaurant or grocery store, picking up your dinner order and grabbing products in store bolsters the impact of your purchase.

Start Networking

Green products and services are at high demand with more and more people keeping people and the planet at top of mind. Businesses that join the Green Business Network® (green-businessnetwork.org) can get lots of resources for going green and meet other eco-entrepreneurs. 🌱

HOW TO

Switch to a GREEN BANK

You align your business with your green values—but what about your bank?

by Mary Meade



You align your products and practices with your values—but does your banking align with your values, too?

Where you choose to bank has an impact on people and the planet. When your company acquires a loan or opens an account, your dollars are going to projects that the bank chooses to fund. Some banks specifically invest in the success of green businesses like yours—and some banks will loan to drilling projects in the Arctic and will not fairly serve diverse communities.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of the US economy, driving innovation and creating two-thirds of net new jobs, according to the US Small Business Administration. Therefore, where your small company banks matters. Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), including banks and credit unions, finance local projects that enhance traditionally underserved communities. When your small business banks with these types of financial institutions, your dollars are reinvested into the local economy, which brings more customers to your door.

“What most distinguishes CDCUs [Community Development Credit Unions] from mainstream financial institutions is the support we provide to help small businesses and entrepreneurs think through the capital they need to best grow their business,” says Cathie Mahon, president and CEO of Inclusive{GBN}. Inclusive, headquartered in New York but serving people across the country, is a national federation of CDCUs committed to closing gaps and removing barriers to financial opportunities for people living in underserved communities.

Unlike megabanks that prioritize the projects of corporations—too often at the expense of local communities—many small financial institutions invest in projects to grow the community. Therefore, mission-driven financial institutions have a vested interest in the success of your small business. If your company

fails, the small bank or credit union loses, too.

Mahon notes how the COVID-19 crisis has further exposed the gaps in the financial system. Thousands of small businesses have suffered as a result of the pandemic, particularly minority and social purpose enterprises.

CDFIs across the country have stepped into that gap and are meeting crucial, time-sensitive capital needs for businesses. Inclusive has offered relief to their community through increased credit lines, deferral of loan payments, has eliminated ATM fees and late payment fees, as well as expanded emergency relief loans. 🌟

Break up with your mega-bank:

- ❑ Find a better bank near you with Green America’s Better Bank directory at greenamerica.org/getabetterbank. If you don’t have one in your city, reach out to one in your state—you still might be able to work with them. Or, try one of many online banks or credit unions.
- ❑ Open your new account. Keep your old account open while you order checks, debit cards, and deposit slips.
- ❑ Move your automatic deposits to your new account. Once you have sufficient funds in the account, move your automatic withdrawals and payments.
- ❑ Get print or electronic copies of statements and canceled checks from your megabank in case you need them later.
- ❑ Transfer the remaining funds from your megabank account to your new account. Close your megabank account!
- ❑ Tell your megabank why you’re breaking up with it. This sample letter can help: greenamerica.org/samplebreakupletter

MEMBER PROFILE:

Joanne Dowdell

Joanne Dowdell started her career on the marketing side of business-to-business publications, then moved into social corporate responsibility at two socially responsible investing firms that were Green Business Network® members. She then moved into government relations at one of the biggest media companies in the world. In between all that she found the time to run for Congress in New Hampshire and was the first Black woman to do so. Having worked with Green America on the Green Business side since the early 2000s, she was elected for a seat on the board of directors by our worker member staff in 2016.

Editor-in-Chief Eleanor Greene spoke with Joanne to learn more about her background, expertise, and vision for the future. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Green America/Eleanor Greene: *You have such a ‘Green America’ background in civil rights, politics, investing, and corporate responsibility. How did you first hear about Green America and what inspired those directions in your life?*

Joanne Dowdell: The editorial piece and introduction to government and politics was in the early part of my career. Then I had a mid-career crisis. Sometimes you think, ‘I want a change of pace, I want to do something different.’ I ended up working with a small, but very mighty team of women at a company, doing advocacy with the religious community.

One of those women was also the president of socially responsible asset management firm, Citizens Advisors in New Hampshire, which was a Green Business Network® Member. She offered me the job as Director of Corporate Responsibility. In 2003, the industry was really starting to have a foothold, making major strides on the side of activism, and pushing companies to improve their business practices, either based on



Joanne, at right, at Mineral Springs Ranch, a 240-acre biodynamic farm and vineyard in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. At left is her friend Martina Bradford, president of Palladian Hill Strategies.

a corporate, social, or environmental criteria. I found the work fascinating and fulfilling and recognized then that change doesn’t always happen from people pushing from the outside. Sometimes you have to be inside, pushing for change. That got my juices flowing.

Green America: *You ran for Congress in 2012. How was that experience and how did it shape your view of the world?*

Joanne Dowdell: It’s important to remember that elected officials work for us; our tax dollars pay their salaries. Their service is to work on behalf of their constituents, and by extension on behalf of the country. I felt there was a need to represent everyone and running for office really gave me exposure to people in parts of the state that my work didn’t take me to, that I wouldn’t go to normally, and to be able to listen to their concerns. I found the process to be very energizing. It’s really hard work running for public office, even if it’s school board. It was fulfilling, because I have an interest in what people think and feel and what can government do, not to overstep or overreach, but to really improve the lives of Americans. I realized that representation has a number of definitions and we

need more women and more people of color to be representing us in the House and Senate. I encourage young people to run because I think it’s time for those of us with some gray hairs to turn over the reins to the next generation.

Green America: *As a Green America member, what excites you about our work and where we are headed in the future?*

Joanne Dowdell: As a member of the board, I’m thrilled with how Green America has been able to navigate a changing economy and that we have kept pace with our digital presence. I feel that our members are more fully engaged in the programs that we are initiating or supporting in partnership with others. And it doesn’t happen in a vacuum—credit goes to the staff that work tirelessly with an eye towards perfection. The materials we put out are excellent, and the campaigns seem seamless. Our Center for Sustainability Solutions has moved into a higher level of engagement with corporations and has so much success and even more potential. The future is bright for Green America and its members. 🌱

HOW WE DRIVE REAL CHANGE

"Green America's mission is to harness economic power –the strength of consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace—to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society. Since 1982, Green America has used economic strategies to shift corporations and entire sectors toward clean energy, support workers around the world, deploy emerging solutions such as regenerative agriculture, build the green marketplace, and help millions of people green their lives."

GREEN AMERICA PRESIDENT & CEO, ALISA GRAVITZ



Our members are the heart of our success!

Green America's members are a driving force for creating a green economy. When members like you donate to Green America, take our actions, and shift your purchases to green businesses and products, it makes a world of difference!



We create change through our three hubs, Consumer Action, our Green Businesses Network®, and our Center for Sustainability Solutions—all three work together to rapidly shift our economy to one that supports people and the planet.

Our Consumer Action programs mobilize our network of over 300,000 members and engaged citizens to vote with their dollars and send powerful messages to corporations to demand humane, just, and sustainable products and production.

Theory of Change: Economic change always starts with demand of the people.

Our Green Business Network® of over 2,000 certified green businesses proves that green innovation can be profitable and in-demand. Ours was the nation's first and most diverse network of socially and environmentally responsible businesses. It represents 38 sectors as of 2021!

Theory of Change: Businesses meet consumer and investor demand with breakthroughs that change economic models and possibilities.

Our Center for Sustainability Solutions brings together diverse stakeholders along entire supply chains to solve complex problems that no single business, organization, or leader can solve alone.

Theory of Change: Once consumers and investors demand change and innovative businesses prove it can be done, then green solutions can scale up to transform entire supply chains.



SKIP THE SLIP

"Thanks to the pressure from 32,000 Green Americans and our recommendations to CVS, the company has taken big steps to improve its receipt practices. Skip the Slip is working to reduce paper waste and emissions, save water, and protect human health."

CLIMATE CAMPAIGNS DIRECTOR
Beth Porter

Victory

CVS implemented phenol-free paper in all 10,000 of its stores and quintupled the number of customers signed up to receive digital receipts—saving 48 million yards of receipt paper—enough to circle the globe!

☆☆ **NEXT:** *We will build on this progress and urge more major retailers to Skip the Slip.*



"Amazon is making progress on reducing its climate emissions, but is a laggard when it comes to worker safety. That's why consumers need to pressure America's #1 retailer to do more to respect workers here and abroad."

CAMPAIGNS ASSOCIATE
Brooke Bennett



Victory

Thanks to pressure from over 117,000 Green Americans, Amazon committed to use 100% renewable energy by 2025.

☆☆ **NEXT:** *We will pressure Amazon to protect warehouse workers and drivers in the US and factory workers overseas who make clothing sold on its site.*





Victory

"If we want to maintain a climate-safe world in the long term, we need banks to end their financing of greenhouse gas emitters and switch to financing climate solutions as rapidly as possible. We're co-creating strategies and approaches for banks and regulators to do so in a way that protects financial institutions and the world."
CLIMATE SAFE LENDING NETWORK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR James Vaccaro



Green America's Climate Safe Lending Network (CSL) is working with a broad range of stakeholders—NGOs, banks, investors, academics and regulators—to implement changes to the financial regulatory system that will best address climate change. CSL is also connecting efforts by organizations across its network to optimize the agency of clients in pressing for more rapid decarbonization of their banks.

☆☆ **Our Goal:** *By 2025, European and North American bank lending is consistent with staying well below a 1.5°C global temperature increase.*

"Company commitments to move toward zero exposure of workers to toxic chemicals in electronics manufacturing will protect millions of workers worldwide."
CLEAN ELECTRONICS PRODUCTION NETWORK SENIOR DIRECTOR
Pamela Brody-Heine



TOWARD ZERO EXPOSURE

Clean Electronics Production Network

Victory



Tech giants, including Apple, Dell and HP worked with Green America's Clean Electronics Production Network to launch the Towards Zero Exposure, a program where companies are jointly committing to the elimination of toxic chemicals in electronics production and the use of safer alternatives.

☆☆ **NEXT:** *In 2022, we will double company participation in Toward Zero Exposure as we launch the program's second cohort.*

"It's so inspiring to see members of our business network innovating during COVID-19 to reach new consumers and provide them with healthy and safe products and services. We're proud of the work we're doing at Green America to help these businesses stay strong during this difficult time."

GREEN BUSINESS NETWORK®
DIVISION DIRECTOR
Fran Teplitz



Victory

During the pandemic, Green America worked with its Green Business Network® members to help them survive and thrive, ensuring that we all have access to the greenest products and services.

☆☆ **NEXT:** *We will work to grow our membership, provide new resources to help businesses go green, and offer training to strengthen green businesses' communication of how they support people and the planet.*

"We're reaching millions of people through media, social media, and webinars about the advantages of gardening that creates healthy foods, while saving the soils and addressing climate change. In homes and communities nationwide, people are planting Climate Victory Gardens and creating a healthier future for all."

FOOD CAMPAIGNS MANAGER
Emma Kriss



Victory

From 2020 to 2021 we more than *tripled* the number of registered climate victory gardens around the globe and grew the movement to

14,535

Climate victory gardens on the map!

These gardens are drawing down **4,636** tons of carbon per year.

☆☆ **NEXT:** *We will work together to put 20,000 gardens on the map!*

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Connect and learn anytime at GreenAmerica.org

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GREENAMERICA.ORG/SIGNUP

Transforming supply chains through diverse, multi-stakeholder innovation networks:

Soil & Climate Alliance
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Clean Electronics Production Network
centerforsustainabilitysolutions.org



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David Kim, President, a founder of Working Assets, in SRI since 1983.

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**Questions?
Contact us today:**

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