

It's Easy Being Green

100 SIMPLE WAYS TO GREEN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE

by Chris Weller

CLOTHING

1. **Be hip with what you have**—You don't have to purchase a brand new wardrobe composed entirely of organic cotton, hemp, wood pulp, soy, corn, and bamboo to show off your greener side. Consumerism is consumerism. Wear what you already own with pride.
2. **Get thrifty**—If you really need to expand the horizons of your wardrobe (or just the waistline), consider shopping at a thrift store or vintage boutique for reusable threads. Remember that one man's hand-me-down is another man's pre-loved, stylish treasure.
3. **More bang for your buck**—Too cool to "rummage" for thrifty threads? If you must buy new, take into account the longevity factor. Think about durability. Reparability. And yes, style (Editor's note: Listen pal, your skin-tight jean shorts may look trendy now, but let's think about next summer).
4. **A greener wardrobe palette**—When you shop for clothing, look for classic styles coupled with contemporary, complementary colors. Your taste for stylish, eco-friendly longevity can outlast the flavors of the week.
5. **Mix and match**—Sporting a greener wardrobe full of colors and styles that complement each other allows you to create several unique ensembles throughout the week with the same garments—which means less washing, drying, and let's face it, folding.
6. **Check the tag**—The price tag isn't the only tag to examine prior to buying a new article of clothing. Whenever possible, avoid purchasing any clothing designated on the tag as "Dry Clean Only".

THE COMMUTE

7. **Telecommute**—The greenest commute is no commute at all. Now's the time to shack up at the home office. Working from home gives you less time on the road and more time at the desk—just imagine no more rush-hour traffic. No more cheap coffee from the break room...
8. **The Greener Mile**—Okay, so not everyone can sit at home and work in their underpants. But we all can dress up our commuting habits a bit. Consider carpooling or taking public transit. It doesn't take a hybrid to get hyped up about greener commuting practices.
9. **"Hold on to your Butts!"**—You know what the Surgeon General has to say about smoking. But did you know that it can take up to ten years for

that butt that you just tossed out your window to degrade? If you must smoke, dispose of your cigarette butts properly.

10. **Get a tune-up**—You can increase your fuel efficiency without a hybrid. Check your tires for proper inflation. Replace that clogged air filter. Renew the plugs. Inspect the exhaust. Lighten the load. Avoid heavy braking. Easy on the throttle. Even an All-American gas guzzler can still guzzle less.

11. **Are you a leftist or a rightist?**—Avoid making left-hand turns whenever possible. Just think about all that time spent waiting for a break in oncoming traffic. Idly tapping your finger on the dashboard as the fuel continues to burn.

12. **Pony up**—The days of hopping on the saddle and riding into town are over. Or are they? Bicycle commuting is a great way to stay fit and reduce your carbon footprint at the same time. Just tie her up outside the office until it's time to clock out and ride into the sunset.

LAWN

13. **Bring on the compost**—The added organic material can greatly improve your soil's ability to retain and drain water. You can reduce the need for supplemental watering in your yard and boost the quality of your soil at the same time.

14. **Pass on the grass**—For areas of your lawn not being used for games of Ultimate Frisbee or Bocce Ball, consider swapping the grass for less water-intensive plants such as flowers, shrubs, or low-growing ground covers.

15. **Look shady**—Taller grass may look a bit unkempt, but those longer blades provide much-needed shade for your soil. It may not appear that you're keeping up with the Joneses, but at least your soil will look rich.

16. **Protect your turf**—Keep your hunk of the globe from warming by mulching around plants. Covering your soil with a layer of organic material can prevent erosion, moderate soil temperature, restrict weeds, and conserve soil moisture—further reducing the need for supplemental watering.

17. **Ditch the sprinklers**—Conventional irrigation systems, such as the oscillating sprinkler, provide inefficient supplemental watering to your lawn because of evaporation and runoff. If you'd like to try a less wasteful method (slow and direct), consider using a soak hose.

18. **A labor of love**—Take your commitment to greener lawn practices a step further. Exchange the gas-powered mower or leaf blower for some classic zero-emission elbow grease. With a rake and a manual push mower, you can have the greenest lawn on the block.

SHOPPING

19. **B.Y.O.B**—Paper or Plastic? Neither. Bring Your Own Bag. A cloth one.

20. **Buy in bulk**—There's more to saving money at the grocery than blue light specials and coupons. By carefully considering you packaging options, and acting accordingly, you can save money and reduce waste. Avoid individual serving sizes—bottled water, cereal, sugar, etc. Invest in larger quantities and reusable containers.

21. **It's a packaged deal**—Steer that shopping cart in the direction unpackaged or minimally packaged foods. Remember that you're not only purchasing the product but also the packaging that comes with it. Steer clear of non-renewable petroleum-based plastics, in favor of recyclable and bio-based packaging.

22. **Living' la Vida Local**—"Think global, act local." It's more than a bumper sticker for your Volvo. Don't forget to root for the home team when it's time to get out the shopping list. Local food is fresh, tasty, and it reduces the environmental costs of transportation and packaging. Plus, you'll be supporting community development.

23. **'Tis the season**—Buying locally in season flowers and produce conserves energy by supporting unprocessed or lightly processed food while simultaneously cutting back on transport emissions.

24. **Play fair**—But give the Man the one-two punch. Make an effort to ensure that workers receive proper wage and humane working conditions by purchasing Fair Trade products. Your buying habits will also promote stringent environmental standards.

25. **Read the fine print**—Before you purchase a product, be sure to have a look at the label. Find out all you can about the product's composition. Learn whether the manufacturer supports eco-friendly practices, promotes the conservation of resources, and/or supports fair trade.

26. **Greener shopping requires concentration**—Look for concentrated juices and cleaning products.

27. **Think like the Energizer Bunny**—Whenever possible, purchase products that will keep going and going and going. That means ditching the disposables and refusing to purchase a product that's not reusable and long lasting.

28. **Why buy?**—Sometimes it just makes more sense to borrow it. Do you really need it forever? Save materials and energy by lending to or from a friend. But don't be a mooch. Exercise responsible borrowing practices.



IN THE GARDEN

29. **Did you know that water evaporates four to eight times faster during the heat of the day?**—If you must water your lawn, think about making time for it during the morning or evening.

30. **Protect your turf**—Tuck those flowers in by covering your beds with at least 3-inches of organic material. You'll conserve water, add nutrients, and hinder those pesky weeds.

31. **Home Field Advantage**—Select your landscaping varieties carefully. Look for plants that are known natives to your region, with regard to things like temperature range, precipitation, soil type, exposure to the sun. Opting for plants that thrive in your area will save you time and require less watering.

32. **Assign groups**—Minimize the need for supplemental watering by grouping plants according to their water needs.

33. **Home testing kits are the way to learn some dirt about your soil**—Testing the quality of your soil in early spring can provide you with everything you need to know about any unhealthy deficiencies and what organic supplements you may need to fix the problem.

34. **Seek natural and organic alternatives to chemical fertilizers at all costs**—More often than not, a bit of wholesome composting can remedy your soil deficiencies.

35. **Dig it. Turn it over. Break it up**—Properly aerating your soil increases the circulation of air and nutrients by alleviating soil compaction and displacing rocks and hard earth—allowing roots to grow healthier and deeper. Avoid frequently agitating your soil, however, as it can dry out the soil.

36. **Who's got the herb?**—Organic herbs are more than just pretty landscaping plants. They flavor food. They make great tea. They boast medicinal properties. And they can be used to fragrance your home.

37. **Matchmaker make me a match**—Any dyed-in-the-wool organic gardener recognizes the benefits of companion planting. It's like the organic equivalent to the buddy system. If one particular plant is known to suffer from a particular insect, be sure to place it next to a plant known to repel that pest.

38. **Don't Player-hate, Pollinate**—Beans, peas, apples, and strawberries require active pollinators to flourish. Encourage bees and butterflies to shack up in your garden. Learn how to attract them with natural shelters.

39. **Mother Nature knows best**—Always consider natural alternatives to pesticides. Consider Mother Nature's answer to pest removal: the good ole' food chain. Shelter the local wildlife. Birds eat grubs. Praying Mantises will eat aphids. Bats and toads will eat mosquitoes.

40. **In the realm of organic gardening, garlic is renown for repelling more than Dracula and his minions**—Legend has it that garlic will thwart the onslaught

of larvae from several harmful insects. Disperse it throughout the garden (except around onions).

LAUNDRY

41. **Cleaner and greener**—Whether you buy new, buy used, or don't buy at all, the environmental-friendliness of your clothes really comes down to the way you wash and dry them. A few small changes can make a big difference.

42. **Bring the funk**—Yes, it's certainly possible to survive wearing a garment more than once, repeatedly even, before washing it. Dark colors are less likely to share your dirt. Natural fabrics are less likely to make you sweat.

43. **Go big or go home**—Launder a few large loads instead of several smaller ones. You'll save time, money, and energy.

44. **Save the hot water for coffee and tea**—Make an effort to wash your threads on the warm or cold water setting. And don't think twice about removing "hot water rinse" from your vocabulary entirely. Keep it cool and you can significantly reduce your carbon emissions.

45. **Green your whites**—Chlorine-based bleaches are harmful to trees and tree-huggers alike (aka the environment and you). Take a natural approach to stain removal. Dunk your dirties in water mixed with hydrogen peroxide, lemon juice, or white vinegar.

46. **Get on your soapbox**—Refuse to purchase conventional detergents, fabric softeners, and stain removers that contain non-renewable petroleum, irritating synthetic fragrances, and harsh chemical whiteners. There are many eco-friendly vegetable-based alternatives available on the market today. Try one!

47. **Go au naturale**—No, we aren't asking you to forsake clothing altogether. But you might consider giving up on your clothes dryer. Allow your laundry to air-dry the old-fashioned way—naturally, on a line. There's plenty of solar energy to go around. Besides, isn't that the way they do it on all those laundry detergent labels?

48. **Under the weather**—If the radar turns foul, try hanging your wet clothes on an air drying rack.

49. **All tied up**—No time and/or space to hang your clothes on a line? If you must tumble dry your clothing, do it efficiently. Remember to clean your lint trap after every load and periodically examine the condition of your dryer exhaust system. You can ensure that your dryer is more energy-efficient and much safer as well.

50. **UV rays have sterilization properties**—Freshen up that funky tee with a little help from the morning sun before you take it out on the town again.

51. **Defunct defunking**—Nearly 80% of the nation's dry cleaners utilize a nasty concoction of hazardous chemicals to defunk your garments. Although the fabric appears clean and undamaged, toxic residues can remain in the fibers. And toxic residues make us sick. Instead, consider gently hand or machine-washing that cocktail dress with a mild detergent.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

52. **Plant trees**—Healthy trees can not only help increase the value of your home, but also provide useful shade from the sun in the summer (which can lead to lower energy bills).

IN THE OFFICE

53. **Hit the Lights**—Way back in 1983, Metallica released this song to remind us all that when away from the office space, all hardcore environmentalists turn the lights off to conserve energy.

54. **Don't just hug a tree; save a tree**—Give your printer a break and get with the digital age. Share files digitally, view files digitally, and swap some filing cabinets for an external hard drive.

55. **Sometimes paperwork is unavoidable**—When you do buy printer paper, look for the recycled stuff and know your highs and lows—high percentage of post-consumer content and low chlorine bleaching.

56. **Don't get lost on the paper trail**—Shell it out online. Paying the bills online is a great way to cut back on your paper waste. You'll save trees and reduce the fuel consumption of all those planes, trains, and automobiles that help deliver the paper to your door.

57. **Pen to paper**—Spend some green on greener office supplies. From envelopes to business cards and other marketing and promotional materials, put your pulp where your mouth is. But it doesn't stop there. Look for recycled pens, pencils, printer cartridges, and any other non-disposable or biodegradable goods that you can get your hands on.

58. **Special delivery**—Forget about packaging peanuts. Save any refuse from your paper shredder for use as packaging material. And you can always reuse anything that comes to your door; like boxes.

59. **A screen saver may save screens, but not energy**—Turn that monitor off. Running a lively screen saver can cause your monitor to consume as much energy as it does on active duty.

60. **Give it a rest**—Even computers need to nap from time to time. Put that bad boy to bed whenever possible. Sleep mode can reduce energy consumption by as much as 60 to 70 percent. And when it's time to hit the sack – turn it off, tuck it in, and boot it back up in the morning.

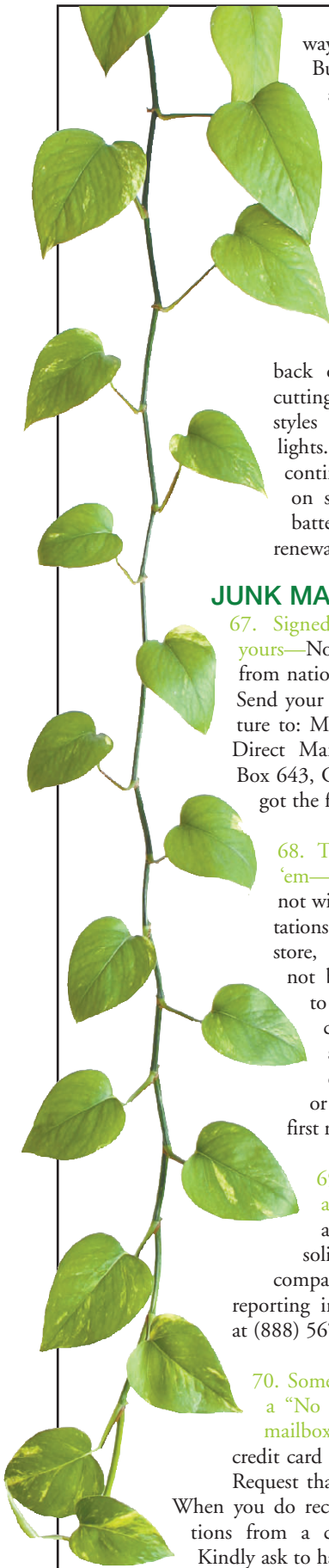
61. **Install a programmable thermostat**—And if you have a good memory, save a few bucks by manually turning down the heat when you're sleeping or away from the home.

62. **Is your air conditioning running?**—You better go catch it! Instead of turning on the A.C., consider opening the windows. Get some fresh air. Listen to the birds chirping outside. Think about the energy you're saving.

63. **Fortify your domain**—A man's home is his castle. So defend your walls and secure the entrances from the invading cold. Don't forget to caulk and weatherstrip all the doors and windows. Be sure that your walls and ceilings are adequately insulated. And remember there's a variety of green insulation material available these days.

64. **Blanket your home with savings**—If your water heater is more than a few years old, there's a chance that it may lack proper insulation. And that means it could be losing heat constantly. Increase the efficiency of your water heater by wrapping it in an insulating blanket.

65. **Green the light of your life**—Nowadays it almost goes without saying that replacing your old incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents is a simple and efficient



way to cut your energy bill. But did you know that CFLs also release less heat, which can lessen the burden on your cooling system? And for crying out loud, remember to flip that switch when you leave a room.

66. Reduce your use—Always remember that you can drastically cut back on carbon emissions by cutting back on inefficient lifestyles and habits. Turn off the lights. Unplug electronics that continue to suck power while on standby. Buy rechargeable batteries. Consider purchasing renewable energy credits.

JUNK MAIL

67. Signed, sealed, delivered, I'm yours—Not. Scratching your name from national mailing lists is simple. Send your name, address, and signature to: Mail Preference Service, c/o Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512. You've got the future in your hand.

68. Throw the book back at 'em—Or catalogue. If you do not wish to receive further solicitations from a magazine or online store, request that your address not be added, sold, or rented to any mailing lists. In most cases you can do this by simply checking the "Please do not rent or sell my name or address" box when you first request their services.

69. Tired of being pre-approved?—You can disapprove those annoying solicitations from credit card companies by dialing the credit reporting industry's opt-out number at (888) 567-8688.

70. Sometimes all it takes to hang a "No Trespassers" sign on your mailbox is a phone call—Call your credit card company. Call your bank. Request that your name not be sold. When you do receive unwarranted solicitations from a company, call them too. Kindly ask to have your name removed.

71. Junk mail is not junk—It can be used for scrap paper or simply recycled. Papier-mâché, anyone?

IN THE BATHROOM

72. If it's yellow let it mellow, if it's brown flush it down—You don't have to go to these extremes to conserve water in the bathroom (especially if you have guests). Consider placing a plastic bottle in the toilet tank. A small, strategically-placed plastic bottle filled with water can save as much as 1-2 gallons per flush.

73. Breathe easy—The key to a pleasant bathroom has a lot to do with effective ventilation. To keep your

water closet functioning as a healthy and enjoyable space, allow fresh air to circulate properly (operable windows and ventilation systems).

74. Get some sun—Installing a skylight can save power and significantly lighten the mood in your bathroom.

75. They say to brush your teeth three times a day for at least three minutes each time for healthier teeth and gums—Now take a minute to consider how much water a clean smile and pleasant breath can cost the environment if you run the water the entire time. Don't forget to turn off the water while you brush your teeth, wash your hands, or clean the dishes.

76. Singing in the shower—Sure, we all love the fullness and depth of a heartfelt lyric in a hot, steamy shower. But let's try to keep it to one song, not an entire album. Taking shorter showers can drastically reduce your daily water consumption.

77. Go with the greener flow—Consider purchasing a low-flow showerhead to maximize your daily water savings.

78. Get your hands on some non-toxic organic soap—Purchase non-toxic cleaning alternatives whenever possible.

79. Going public—Do the deed. Wash the hands. See the paper towels dispenser (see the hot air dryer). Think about all the wasted paper that we're handing down from the dispenser to the landfill. You know what to do next.

IN THE KITCHEN

80. Roll over, paper towels—Paper towels and other single-use cleaning supplies are wasteful. Consider using cloth dish towels for drying hands, wiping counters, and even clean-up jobs. If you feel that you must use paper, use only recycled roll towels. Just remember that even recycled paper can still end up in the landfill.

81. Catch the cold—Be sure the gasket on your refrigerator door creates an adequate seal. Also, keep tabs on those coils on the back of your refrigerator; all that dirt, dust, and grime can cause it run inefficiently.

82. Lose the leak—Water is the world's most precious resource. And with every drip from a leaky faucet, down the drain she goes. Conserve your carefully purified tap water by checking all the faucets in your home and fixing and/or replacing them as needed.

83. Ditch the air freshener—Many toxic commercial air fresheners are not only unhealthy, but ineffective as well. Don't just mask the odor. Neutralize it. Baking soda is known to soak up acidic odors. Vinegar will counteract alkaline odors.

84. No vacancy—Before operating your dishwasher, be sure that you've stuffed it with a full load. As with laundering, this practice will get the most out the water, energy, and detergent used.

85. Greener cleaners—Petroleum-based cleaning products are non-renewable and generally not very healthy for you or the environment. Make the switch to vegetable-based cleaning products for a non-toxic, biodegradable alternative that we all can live with.

86. Put 'em in their place—Avoid dumping toxic household cleaners and other wastes down the drain. And don't just toss them in the garbage, either. Get rid of these materials responsibly. Contact your local facilities for proper disposal so they don't end up fouling the water supply.

87. DIY Dynamic Duo—Looking for mean and green do-it-yourself alternative to store-bought cleaners? Try mixing vinegar or baking soda with warm water for an eco-friendly homemade all-purpose cleaner.

COOKING

88. The other Big O—Give that special someone a real treat. An Organic one. Certified Organic fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, and dairy products just feel so good – and taste good, too. They also support and promote healthy consumers, healthy workers, and healthy eco-systems.

89. Don't waste the waste—Whether you roast it or toast it, be sure to compost it. Composting your leftover waste keeps funky rubbish out of your wastebasket and subsequently, unnecessary organic garbage out of the landfill. Better yet, that leftover sandwich can help enrich your soil.

90. Grow you own—If the potheads can do it, why can't you? No, we're not asking you to grow cannabis in your closet. But several varieties of fruits and veggies can be grown and consumed from the privacy of your very own home – in gardens and greenhouses, pots and window boxes.

91. Down carnivore, down—We all can back off on the meat a bit without committing to vegetarianism or veganism. Meat is the most resource-intensive item on the menu. Think about it – water, land, grain, hormones, antibiotics. Sure, the burger came from the Value Menu, but think about the cost to the environment.

92. Put a lid on it—You'll boil that Ramen faster if you put a lid on the pan.

93. Nuke 'em—More often than not, your microwave can be a greener choice than the conventional oven because it warms the food much faster and therefore consumes less energy.

94. Don't let your eyes get too big for your stomach—Think about portions. Cut back on waste. Get creative with your leftovers.

COFFEE

95. Drink responsibly—Whether you're regular at the local coffeehouse or the kitchen café, remember to support responsible brewing practices. A friend would never let a friend drink coffee that's not sustainable fair trade, organic, and shade-grown.

96. Greener perks of percolation—Forget about white paper filters. They can pollute an otherwise pristine cup of joe with chlorine and other harmful chemicals. Grab a reusable filter at your local grocer for a cleaner coffee experience that you can enjoy over and over again.

97. Filter your selection—If you must purchase paper coffee filters, seek those that are biodegradable and unbleached.

98. Show off that beautiful mug—Paper cups are so last year. And you can forget about Styrofoam. Mugs are in. Earthenware. Bone china. Porcelain. Stoneware. No matter. You can feed the need without feeding the landfill.

99. Stay true to your brew—Don't spoil a lovely cup of organic fair trade with leche leached from chemical and hormone-injected cows. Couple your Superbrew with a worthy organic sidekick.

100. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust—Add coffee grounds to compost. When the life force runs dry, return the grounds to the earth. Coffee grounds are known to contain high nitrogen content, tannic acids and other nutrients, making coffee the gift that keeps on giving—especially in the garden. •