**New Year, new (more sustainable) you?**

A christmas tree with a clock and ornaments

Description automatically generatedThe start of a new year is often a time when we look forward and resolve to make positive changes in our lives but, as 2023 begins, how many of us are thinking about trying to reduce our individual impact on biodiversity loss or climate change?

Every choice that we make, no matter how large or small, has an environmental impact. This can be anything from who we bank with, to how much water we use, what clothes we buy, whether we use slug pellets in our gardens, what food we eat and even what type of toilet roll we choose – all of which can have a positive (or negative) impact on our planet. Becoming more aware of this impact on both climate change and loss of biodiversity is part of the solution.

Living more sustainably doesn’t have to mean making major purchases such buying an electric car (although this would obviously make a difference). It’s more about making as many small changes as we can that will add up and really make a difference to our personal impact. Walking or cycling 3 miles a week instead of driving may not sound like much if it’s just one journey, but over the course of a year, this amounts to 156 miles (156 miles of car use avoided). Do the same journey twice a week and you’ve cut your car use by more than 300 miles!

How many of us make purchases online or in a shop without even thinking about whether we can choose a more sustainable option? Getting into the habit of checking for more greener or more eco-friendly options is just one way of making small but positive cumulative impact. You can look for pretty much anything, such as sustainable ways of descaling a kettle or getting rid of limescale, to more sustainable options for nappies, toiletries or curtains.

It also helps to start asking yourself questions like:

* Do I really need something, or do I just want it? Could I live without it?
* Can I use less/make it last longer/make do with what I’ve got?
* Is there a more sustainable option (ie with fewer chemicals, less plastic, lasts longer, is reusable/recyclable or has less environmental impact)?

There are lots of websites that can help us make more eco-friendly choices. For example, <https://directory.goodonyou.eco/brand/> is a website that rates clothing brands based on a variety of criteria from animal welfare, greenhouse gas emissions and water use to worker safety and living wages to support people to make more sustainable fashion choices. There are many other similar websites (some are below).

Whilst we can’t all do everything, we *can* *all do* *something*. The list of possibilities is endless, but here are a few simple suggestions:

* Reduce your shower time by 2 minutes (or take a shower instead of a bath)
* Plant insect-friendly pots of flowers on paving or driveways
* Avoid lighting up porches or gardens (impacts negatively on insects and wildlife)
* Checking supermarket labels and try to choose food from the UK (or Europe) rather than Argentina or South Africa
* Avoid fast fashion
* Try a meat-free meal once a week
* Try eco-friendly cleaning products which don’t contain strong chemicals (or even household products such as citric acid, bicarb of soda or white vinegar which usually work just as well)
* Drive in a more eco-friendly way and avoid engine idling
* Avoid wasting water (which also requires energy to produce it)
* Choose plastic free products where possible, such as hairbrushes, toothbrushes, teabags, dental floss

Ben Fogle, the environmentalist, likens making changes to save the planet to an expedition: “You have to value your resources. When you’re in the middle of the Atlantic or halfway up a mountain, you can’t just pick up the phone for a food delivery; you have to use what’s in your bag. If your jacket gets torn or something is damaged, you have to repair it, you can’t just buy another one. If you have a finite amount of water, you’re not going to waste it by having an endless hand shower. You have to make those things last”

<https://metro.co.uk/2022/01/24/ben-fogle-on-conquering-eco-anxiety-its-like-rowing-the-atlantic-15961131/>

So, if you are thinking of making New Year’s resolutions (or even if you’re not), now is a good time to reflect on how much we all take our planet’s resources for granted. Just being conscious of the impact each of our choices has and resolving to be more frugal, greener or more eco-friendly where we can, is a good start.

**Useful websites:**

Eco-friendly banking <https://bank.green/>

Eco-friendly driving tips <https://www.confused.com/car-insurance/guides/eco-friendly-driving>

Eco-friendly cleaning <https://ezswaps.co.uk/eco-friendly-cleaning-brands/>

<https://www.ecoliving.co.uk/>

<https://smolproducts.com/>

Eco-friendly makeup <https://www.beautypie.com/shop/makeup>