

BIOCENTRIC

10 SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR HOME

Sustainable living starts with becoming informed and then evolves in to taking action. Sustainable living is good for our environment, our future generations and all the other species on our planet. Sustainable living can also save you money.

Begin with small actions and start at home. You may already be taking action. Make a plan and set some simple goals. Review it once in a while. How are you measuring up? Get the kids involved. After all, it is in everyone's best interest. Here is just a few of many things you can do:

- 1) BECOME INFORMED:** What is sustainability all about aside from another overused buzzword. Sustainability: the capacity to endure. The widely accepted view of sustainable development is: to provide for our present needs without hampering the ability of future generations to provide for their needs. It has been estimated that the human race has been living beyond the earth's sustainable yield at increasing rate since 1978. Is this important to you? If so what can you do? Start at the internet. Many governments, universities, companies, associations and communities have great information and are looking for volunteers, students and employees to help them take action.
- 2) WHAT IS YOUR ECO FOOTPRINT?** Google eco-footprint or go to footprintnetwork.org. This can be a fun for kids as well and it will give you a quick idea about your footprint on this planet. For most of us in the Developed World it is quite large but it is beginning to grow equally as large for many in the Developing World. You can also try measuring your carbon footprint.
- 3) REDUCE ENERGY USE AT HOME?** How much energy are you using in the home? Many local utilities provide a number of strategies, rebates and services to help you reduce energy use in the home. A lot of energy in buildings is lost in heating or cooling. Big gains in energy efficiency can be made by adjusting thermostats down or up depending on the season. Before making any large expenditures on new energy systems get an expert to assess how well your

home insulates against the cold and the heat and consider improvements to insulation, windows and draft proofing. Have a family campaign to turn off all fans, lights and electronic equipment that are not being used and reward your selves with savings.

- 4) **PLAN YOUR TRAVEL:** Plan your daily trips well so that you are not driving needlessly and get the most out of the trip. Can you walk, cycle, use public transport or carpool with someone? Do you need more than one vehicle in your household? The savings in after tax dollars can be substantial.
- 5) **THINK BEFORE YOU EAT:** Consider eating less dairy and meat. They are both energy intensive products. A quarter pound hamburger produces the equivalent CO₂e as using a gallon of gas. Along with making local & organic food choices you will be eating healthier for yourself and the planet.
- 6) **TURN WASTE INTO WEALTH:** Composting garden and green waste can reduce waste going into landfill and can be used to improve the soil in your garden. A compost pile can occupy a small piece of your garden and does not have to involve any sophisticated equipment. You can take small steps first. It can be as simple as mixing used coffee grounds into your garden soil.
- 7) **GROW SOME FOOD:** Food gardens are becoming popular on the urban landscape. Rooftop, balcony and indoor vertical gardening are becoming more popular. People are growing food for themselves and for others, and are selling it at local community markets which have become popular again. Not a green thumb. Start small with herbs, ask a neighbour who gardens for tips and if you are replacing a tree or planting a new one consider a fruit or nut tree. Gardening can be very rewarding on a number of levels.
- 8) **THINK BEFORE YOU PURCHASE:** Make a plan before you shop and try to shop to meet your needs. Ask yourself twice: Do I really need this? Avoid buying impulse items unless you really need them. Shopping has become an expensive form of entertainment. Window shop and kick those tires if you must but always ask yourself the magic question. Buy quality products that last. Really great design and fashion is timeless. You will buy less, waste less, and save money.
- 9) **WATER:** Clean fresh water is a treasure you only appreciate when it isn't flowing freely from a tap in your house which is the case for just less than 50% of all people. Don't waste it by letting taps run needlessly while brushing teeth or otherwise. If you have clean tap water why are you buying bottled water?
- 10) **JOIN A GROUP OF LIKE MINDED PEOPLE:** Whether it is about cleaning up a local stream, community gardening, creating a resilient community or any other number of group activities you can take positive action that will make you and others feel good.