



# the best ways to love the planet

**Y**es, you regularly recycle and switch off the lights when you leave a room. You may even shorten your showers (slightly). But chances are, you probably still have a nagging feeling that we could all be doing more to preserve Mother Earth. To be healthier and make the planet healthier, too, try these 31 easy ways to green your routine. Test a new tip each day. Keep those you love; forget the rest. After four weeks, you'll feel a world of difference.

By Francesca Castagnoli and Catherine Ryan



Bask seaside in the glow of your new green wisdom.

**MORE AT SELF.COM!**

**WIN A TRIP** Sign up at Self.com to nab a vacation to Antigua, courtesy of The Verandah Resort and Spa and the Antigua and Barbuda Department of Tourism.

**MOTIVATE PALS** Send friends e-cards and test-drive this protect-the-planet plan together.

**TRACK YOUR TIPS** Log your faves and see what others love, too.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Begins on July 21, 2008, at 12:01 A.M. ET, and ends on August 17, 2008, at 11:59 P.M. ET. You must be a legal resident of the 50 U.S./D.C. and at least 18 years old as of the date of entry. Void where prohibited. Odds of winning depend on the number of entries received. Sponsored by Condé Nast Publications.

*You could be here!*

## Work out outdoors

- 1 If weather and smog conditions are fine, skip the gym and exercise outdoors. Each time you walk or run on a track or pavement instead of toiling on the treadmill for 30 minutes, you save 0.75 kilowatt hours. Bonus: Research finds fresh air may make you more active and twice as likely to work out. **I TRIED IT** □

## Lower your electricity bill

- 2 How's this for a shock: Thirty percent of all electricity consumed by household electronics is used while products are turned off, says Jeanie Pyun, editor of Sprig.com, a green lifestyle website. Plug gadgets into a power strip with a circuit breaker so when you flip it off, you stop the juice, too. You might also consider GreenSwitch, a dimmerlike lever installed in your home that allows you to turn off your lights, thermostat and electrical outlets simultaneously for a savings of about 25 percent a year. Because GreenSwitch offers split outlets, you can also choose what stays on (so you can still record your favorite shows). **I TRIED IT** □

## Buy locally

- 3 Championing neighborhood stores that sell locally made products rather than buying from far-flung locations can significantly cut down on pollution and fuel use. **I TRIED IT** □



# ONE-MONTH MAKEOVER

## Wipe with sponges

**4** Instead of paper towels, sop up messes with sponges. (Skip antibacterial types, which may not actually fight germs.) Disinfect them regularly in the dishwasher. **I TRIED IT** □

## Befriend the faucet

**5** Why pay up to \$10 per gallon for bottled water—more than double the price of gas—when you can fill up at the tap for pennies? Carry a reusable, Bispheol A-free bottle, such as a Sigg (from \$20; Sigg.ch), to hydrate. Tap water is safe in most areas (check yours at [www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater)), but if you're wary, try a filter (such as a Brita) or a Watergeeks sport bottle (left), which filters metals and chlorine. **I TRIED IT** □



## Flip your lids

**6** Some recycling centers can't accept plastic bottle tops so they can end up in oceans and rivers. Show these rejects some love by bringing them to any Aveda store: They'll convert them into shampoo caps and prevent the twist-offs from being swallowed by animals. **I TRIED IT** □

## Manage the mail

**7** Unwanted catalogs hog your mailbox and consume about 4 million tons of paper a year. Take a moment each day to weed out items you don't want. Before tossing them in the recycling bin, call the companies behind the mailings and ask them to stop the madness. Many have automated list-removal options, making the switch a snap. Or save a stack, then enter all offending parties at [CatalogChoice.org](http://CatalogChoice.org), which contacts retailers to cancel mailings on your behalf for free. **I TRIED IT** □

## Pack your lunch

**8** Green-bagging your PB&J in a reusable tote is good for the earth and your waistline. Polystyrene, the material that makes up plastic and white foam to-go containers, usually isn't recyclable and goes straight

## USE SOMETHING MADE WITH ORGANIC COTTON EACH DAY

**9** Cotton crops were doused with 52 million pounds of pesticides and other chemicals in 2007, according to the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. But when the cotton is organic, it is grown without chemical insecticides or fertilizers, so no residue seeps into the air, water or soil, nor does it come into contact with your skin when you don that new sundress. Consider organic for everything from cotton balls to T-shirts. American Apparel, H&M and Levi's all sell organic clothing.



## WASH CLOTHES IN COLD WATER

**10** You would use 90 percent less power than if you ran a hot-water wash. If every American did four out of five loads in cold water, that could keep 50 million tons of carbon emissions out of the atmosphere, the Center for the New American Dream in Takoma Park, Maryland, reports. Air-dry when time allows. **I TRIED IT** □



No clothesline? When using your dryer, clean its lint filter before each cycle to save energy.

to the landfill. Avoid pricey, high-cal takeout and disposable packaging with do-it-yourself meals. Find recipes at [Self.com/health](http://Self.com/health). **I TRIED IT** □

**11** **CARRY YOUR OWN BAG** Wallet? Check. Keys? Check. Fold-up reusable tote? Pack one each day so you'll always be set to shop. Find chic options at [NeelaBags.com](http://NeelaBags.com) or [EnviroSax.com](http://EnviroSax.com). **I TRIED IT** □



Recycled sails are used to make Sea Bags (\$110; [SeaBags.com](http://SeaBags.com)).

## Don't clean your plates

**12** Scraping scraps into the trash rather than prerinsing dishes uses up to 20 fewer gallons of water per dishwasher load and saves you \$40 per year. Conserve more H<sub>2</sub>O by running the machine only when full. **I TRIED IT** □

## Give away gadgets

**13** In 2005, 2 million tons of computers, TVs and printers ended up in landfills, releasing toxic materials. To safely dispose of outdated gizmos, find a recycler at [MyGreenElectronics.org](http://MyGreenElectronics.org). **I TRIED IT** □



# ONE-MONTH MAKEOVER

## Rediscover your wardrobe

**14** Being green isn't about doing without; it's about making the most of what you have. If your closet is filled with clothes you don't like or don't wear, try purging it of up to two thirds of its contents, says Christie Matheson, author of *Green Chic* (Sourcebooks). The payoff: You end up with items you love, your style will have instant focus, you'll shop more strategically and you'll actually enjoy getting dressed in the morning. **I TRIED IT** □

## Don't blow it

**15** Save electricity and your hair by letting it air-dry at least once a week. To tame frizz, try John Masters Organics Dry Hair Nourishment & Defrizzer, which is made with earth-friendly essential oils (\$16; Drugstore.com). **I TRIED IT** □

## 16 SHUT DOWN THE COMPUTER

By enabling your machine's energy-efficiency settings, you could reduce the juice by 80 percent. Yale University asked employees to power down at night, and they saved \$40 per work station in one year. **I TRIED IT** □

## EAT ORGANIC

**17** Vegetables and fruit grown without synthetic pesticides prevent those chemicals from harming farmers, wildlife and consumers. Plus, research shows that most organically grown produce has more cancer-fighting antioxidants than the conventional kind. Get a list of the most-contaminated produce to always buy organic at FoodNews.org. **I TRIED IT** □

To find organic produce, check the label for a five-digit number starting with 9.



Recycled paper notebook, \$9; SeltzerGoods.com

## Halt the paper trail

**18** Branch out with one of these tree-saving strategies each day: (1) Photocopy on both sides and single-space to use 75 percent less paper. (2) Download GreenPrint's free software to purge the mostly blank page that fol-

lows Web printouts (PrintGreener.com). (3) Reuse the memo your boss loved by turning it into scratch paper. **I TRIED IT** □

## Go through a green period

**19** On average, you'll probably use about 10,000 tampons in your lifetime. Given that conventionally grown cotton is swimming in pesticides, consider organic cotton, chemical-free, non-chlorine-bleached and biodegradable tampons from Natracare and Seventh Generation. Don't want to switch brands? Trade your plastic applicator for one that's cardboard, or consider changing to an applicator-free variety such as o.b. **I TRIED IT** □

## Bypass the dry cleaner

**20** Dry cleaning is dry because instead of water, 85 percent of cleaners wash clothes with a solvent called perchloroethylene (also known as perc), which research has shown to be a hazardous air pollutant and probable carcinogen. Look for a green cleaner who uses liquid carbon dioxide or a process involving water and soap that doesn't change the shape or appearance of your clothes. Search NoDryClean.com for a listing of green cleaners in your area. As an alternative, wash what you can by hand or in a delicate cycle at home, or use a steamer to refresh clothes. If you must dry-clean, make sure to remove the plastic and let clothes air out for at least an hour outside before storing in your closet to stop perc from giving off gas or fumes. **I TRIED IT** □

## Fine-tune your fridge

**21** Move your refrigerator away from any heat source such as an oven or sunny window; the warmth emitted forces the fridge to work harder to stay cool. Avoid keeping the door open (even when you're unloading groceries or pondering a midnight snack), and make sure door seals are tight to prevent cold air from leaking out. Once a year, unplug your fridge and clean the coils in the back to help it run more efficiently. **I TRIED IT** □

## POLISH YOUR BRUSHING ROUTINE

**22** Talk about decay—1.2 billion toothbrushes wind up in a landfill every year. You can avoid adding one more to the pile by switching to a toothbrush made of recycled plastic, such as Recycle's Preserve (right). And, as always, turn off the tap while brushing to save up to 2 gallons of water per minute. **I TRIED IT** □

Recycle Preserve toothbrush, \$3; Recycle.com



## ONE-MONTH MAKEOVER

### Skip meat at least once a week

**23** Livestock accounts for 18 percent of the world's greenhouse-related gases, including deforestation that clears grazing land and the transportation of your steak, a United Nations agency in Rome finds. Trade beef for beans once a week to save greenhouse gases equivalent to those emitted while driving 1,160 miles a year. Craving a burger? Eat organic or local beef, which isn't shipped as far. Get vegetarian recipes at MeatlessMonday.com. **I TRIED IT** □

### 24 GROW A LESS THIRSTY GARDEN

Ask your local nursery to recommend plants that require less watering for your climate to reduce water usage by 30 percent. You can also leave a bucket outside to collect rain to refresh flowers. **I TRIED IT** □

You can find biodegradable pots at EcoSourceOnline.com.

### Shun elaborate packaging

**25** Choose products that use the least amount of wrapping—the fewer bells and whistles, the better. When shopping for cosmetics, opt for brands that sell refillable compacts, such as Estée Lauder, or buy a palette with several prettifiers inside. **I TRIED IT** □

### Change your lightbulb

**26** Using compact fluorescent lightbulbs instead of incandescent versions will save 75 percent more energy. Because CFLs last 10 times longer, you can save \$30 over the life of one bulb! CFLs contain some mercury, so recycle them to avoid contaminating water sources. Look for collection sites at Earth911.org, or mail up to 12 used CFLs in a prepaid, pre-addressed Recyclepak (\$17; 1000Bulbs.com). If a CFL breaks, ventilate the room, then scrape up the mess with a stiff piece of paper and wipe down the area with a damp paper towel (never vacuum). **I TRIED IT** □

### GREEN YOUR CLEANING ROUTINE

**27** That powder shines your tub, but it could be toxic for your home and the earth. Almost 70 percent of 89 streams sampled in a study by the U.S. Geological Survey contained chemicals found in household cleaning products. Swap traditional solutions for biodegradable, eco-safe products that don't contain volatile organic compounds, chemicals which are emitted as gases that may be carcinogenic and harm the nervous system. Look for formulas that list ingredients, contain no chlorine or ammonia and come in a recyclable bottle. **I TRIED IT** □

### PICK JUICE OR MILK IN PLASTIC BOTTLES

**28** Yes, you read that right. Plastic isn't usually endorsed because it's made in part from petroleum, but it's easier to recycle and takes less energy to produce and ship than some glass. Avoid wax cartons: Many recycling centers don't accept them. Sip soda from aluminum cans. They are easily recycled, and 95 percent less energy is used to make cans from recycled materials. **I TRIED IT** □

### KNOW YOUR PLASTICS

Numbers on container bases reveal what they're made of.

**THUMBS UP** (These don't emit chemicals and are recyclable)  
#2 High-density polyethylene (HDPE): Milk jugs, shampoo and detergent bottles  
#4 Low-density polyethylene (LDPE): Frozen-food bags  
#5 Polypropylene (PP): Yogurt cups, syrup bottles, diapers

**CAUTION** (These are porous and may leach chemicals)  
#1 Polyethylene terephthalate (PET or PETE): Water bottles  
**NIX** (These can leach chemicals and are hard to recycle)  
#6 Polystyrene (PS): White foam  
#7 Polycarbonate or polylactide (PLA): Baby bottles, water jugs, stain-resistant food containers

### Shop and bank online

**29** Browsing e-tailers nixes emissions you'd release driving to the mall, and shipping purchases to the office instead of home can save package carriers from making extra stops, conserving gas. While logged on, sign up for online banking. If all Americans managed money on the Web, we'd spare 16.5 million trees a year and cut 3.9 billion pounds of greenhouse gases. **I TRIED IT** □

### Drive smarter without buying a hybrid

**30** Make any car tread more gently with a few easy fixes. For starters, turn off your auto if you linger more than 30 seconds: It takes less energy to kill and then reignite the engine. You can also worry less about that oil change, say Tom and Ray Magliozzi, hosts of NPR's *Car Talk*. Today's lubricants generally last 5,000 miles, not 3,000, but read your owner's manual to see what's OK for your wheels. Finally, evict junk from the trunk and remove roof racks you don't need; excess weight forces the engine to work harder (and less efficiently). **I TRIED IT** □

### Find planet-loving pals

**31** Share eco-friendly tips with like-minded folks at GenGreenLife.org, and meet a honey on GreenSingles.com or Green-Passions.com. You're in good company! **I TRIED IT** □

Method and Shaklee offer earth-conscious cleaners.