

REDUCING YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

The developed western countries are producing more and more carbon emissions therefore it is more important than ever to start minimising your footprint. We need to lead the way. Melissa Jones reports...

Here's a list of simple things you can do immediately. These will start to reduce your contribution to global warming. The items in this list will cost you no money at all and will in fact save you money:

- Sign up to a green energy supplier, who will supply electricity from renewable sources (e.g. wind and hydroelectric power) - this will reduce your carbon footprint contribution from electricity to zero
- Turn it off when not in use (lights, television, DVD player, Hi Fi, computer etc.)
- Turn down the central heating slightly (try just 1 to 2 degrees C)
- Turn down the water heating setting (just 2 degrees will make a significant saving)
- Check the central heating timer setting - remember there is no point heating the house after you have left for work
- Fill your dish washer and washing machine with a full load - this will save you water, electricity, and washing powder
- Fill the kettle with only as much water as you need
- Unplug your mobile phone as soon as it has finished charging
- Defrost your fridge/freezer regularly
- Do your weekly shopping in a single trip
- Hang out the washing to dry rather than tumble drying it
- Go for a run rather than drive to the gym

The following is a list of items that may take an initial investment. They should pay for themselves over the course of one to four years through savings on your energy bills:

- Fit energy saving light bulbs
- Install thermostatic valves on your radiators
- Insulate your hot water tank, your loft and your walls
- 35% of heat generated in the house is lost through the walls. Installing cavity wall installation to a medium size house could reduce your heating bills by up to £100 per year
- By installing 180mm thick loft insulation you could stop about 25% of your heating escaping through the roof
- Recycle your grey water
- Replace your old fridge/freezer (if it is over 15 years old), with a new one with energy efficiency rating of "A"
- Replace your old boiler with a new energy efficient condensing boiler

Travel less and travel more carbon footprint friendly:

- Car share to work, or for the kids school run
- Use the bus or a train rather than your car
- For short journeys either walk or cycle
- Next time you replace your car - check out diesel engines. With one of these you can even make your own Biodiesel fuel.

As well as your primary carbon footprint, there is also a secondary footprint that you cause through your buying habits. If you buy foods out of season at the supermarket, then these will have either been flown or shipped in from far away - all adding to your carbon footprint.

- Reduce your consumption of meat
- Don't buy bottled water if your tap water is safe to drink (especially if it has been shipped from far away)
- Buy local fruit and vegetables, or even try growing your own
- Don't buy fresh fruit and vegetables which are out of season, they may have been flown in
- Try to buy products made closer to home (look out and avoid items that are made in the distant lands)
- Buy organic produce
- Don't buy over packaged products
- Recycle as much as possible
- Think carefully about the type of activities you do in your spare time. Do any of these cause an increase in carbon emissions? e.g. Saunas, Health clubs, restaurants and pubs, go-karting etc.

In addition there is your footprint at work. Do you leave your computer and monitor on when you are away from your desk? Do you leave the lights on when you leave the office? Do you print documents unnecessarily - and could you print two pages to a side and double sided?

A Closer Look at Bio-diesel

Using Biodiesel is a brilliant way of reducing your carbon footprint, it is biodegradable and non-toxic, and is a fuel that can be used in any diesel powered vehicle. Because biodiesel only releases the carbon dioxide that has been previously absorbed by the plants when growing, it has no negative impact on the carbon cycle.

Biodiesel can be made from processed waste vegetable oil – that has maybe come from your clubhouse kitchen - and used to run any diesel motor. The natural cleaning properties in Biodiesel mean that it is actually good for your car, it can help to clean injectors, fuels lines, pumps and tanks – plus it's extremely cheap.

Words of warning:

- Anyone can make biodiesel but you may need to pay a small amount of duty on the fuel
- If you intend to use cooking oils, make sure that they do not contain animal fat. The use of animal fats as a fuel is illegal as it falls under a specific waste legislation
- Check your car manufacturers warranty – some manufacturers will not honour the warranty should you use a fuel different to that advised

FACT: Research is currently underway into the use of algae in biofuel production. Algae has the potential to yield much higher quantities of oil and can be grown on sewerage plants and other alternative areas, taking the pressure off conventional farm land.

Useful Websites:

www.co2savings.co.uk
www.whatsmycarbonfootprint.com/reduce_transit.htm
www.environmentalgreensystems.co.uk
www.envirogreenbiofuels.com

Rainwater Harvesting

This is a low cost option that simply involves the collection of rainwater from surfaces on which rain falls. Generally, water will be collected from the roofs of buildings and stored in rainwater tanks. All you need is to capture this rainwater and direct it from roof gutters to your rainwater storage tank.

Info taken from
www.carbonfootprint.com

Grey Water: The Facts

Not only is water a scarce resource globally- it also takes a huge amount of energy to move it around - all adding to your carbon footprint. Grey water is the solution.

Money goes down the plug-hole

Most consumers are very wasteful when it comes to water usage. In Western economies, we take water supply for granted and use huge quantities of potable water - often for non-essential purposes and - worst - sometimes we just pour it straight away. An increasing number of us now have water meters fitted to our homes - meaning that we are quite literally pouring money down the drain.

So what can you do? Clearly, we can all make efforts to cut down on our use of water by simple means - but also domestic water treatment equipment is now available to help householders and golf clubs to recycle used potable water ('Grey Water') and also to harvest rainwater. We like to think of this as Green Water.

Giving Grey Water the Green Rinse

With the right treatment, you can put Grey Water to good use in applications such as laundry, toilet flushing, and also for plant watering - for which the phosphorus and nitrogen nutrients provide a good food source. Grey water provides many benefits. You can install a home UV filtration system from a number of suppliers globally.

