

Save the planet



Save the planet

52 brilliant ideas for rescuing
our world



Natalia Marshall

CAREFUL NOW

In order to save the planet we all need to do our bit. No one can do everything on their own – most big changes happen because people act collectively and work towards a common goal. So don't take on too much and then burn out or lose interest because you're not getting the dramatic changes you dream of. Changing the small things and working with others will get us there in the end.

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Brilliant features

Each chapter of this book is designed to provide you with an inspirational idea that you can read quickly and put into practice straight away.



Throughout you'll find four features that will help you get right to the heart of the idea:

- *Here's an idea for you ...* Take it on board and give it a go – right here, right now. Get an idea of how well you're doing so far.
- *Try another idea ...* If this idea looks like a life-changer then there's no time to lose. *Try another idea ...* will point you straight to a related tip to enhance and expand on the first.
- *Defining idea ...* Words of wisdom from masters and mistresses of the art, plus some interesting hangers-on.
- *How did it go?* If at first you do succeed, try to hide your amazement. If, on the other hand, you don't, then this is where you'll find a Q and A that highlights common problems and how to get over them.

One small step ...

Take a look at your watch: within the next hour you could be doing your bit to conserve the planet's precious resources, reduce pollution and slow down climate change.



The news these days is full of stories about issues such as soaring carbon dioxide emissions, global warming, water shortages, toxins and pollution, most of them man-made. Few people now deny that our lifestyles are to blame, and that things have to change – sooner rather than later.

But it can seem very overwhelming. Where do I start? What can I do? Am I doing enough? These are probably some of the questions you've been asking.

The good news is that each and every one of us can take steps to make a difference, and ultimately make the world a better and healthier place. It may sometimes be tempting to blame far-away countries and politicians, but the fact of the matter is that we must all take some kind of responsibility.

And it is very easy to start making a difference; I've done it, and so can you. Even basic measures such as switching to energy-saving light bulbs or starting a compost bin are a step in the right direction. I found using the mantra 'reduce, re-use and recycle' an invaluable building block. Stick to that, and you can't go far wrong!

Once you've got your head round the basics, you'll be surprised how easy it is to go on to the next stage – and the next. Before you know where you are, you'll find yourself slyly patting your own back, secure in the knowledge you are well on your way to a greener, cleaner existence. If you take on just a fraction of the ideas I've suggested in this book, you'll be playing your part for a more sustainable future.

It can be uniquely satisfying to lead a simpler, less resource-hungry life, too. Research shows overwhelmingly that being part of a community (in this case, the eco gang!), appreciating the simple and natural, and acting positively greatly contribute towards personal happiness. And, what's more, many of the ideas in this book can help you save money.

So it's a win-win situation!

You certainly don't have to be living in an idyllic rural backwater to 'go green' either. If, like me, you are an ordinary city dweller with a pretty hectic schedule, you can easily adapt your lifestyle so it is less wasteful and more thoughtful. One thing I have learned is that it takes no more time to live green than any other way. And if your home's in a town, you'll have handy access to all kind of resources to help you on your way.

If you just do one idea in this book, that's a brilliant start. Take up a few more, and you're well on your way.

Start with the small things that fit into your daily routine easily and work up to biggies when you feel comfortable. Bear in mind that doing something is better than doing nothing. Our own small actions as individuals add up to a huge global effort, and this is the only way that the planet can recover.



1

Saint or sinner?

The first step to a greener lifestyle is a long, hard look at your current one. Is the way you live trashing the planet or nurturing it?



Let's face it, we're not all as honest as we could be when it comes to assessing our lifestyles. So indulge in a little navel gazing, and take this light-hearted quiz as a starting point for change.

If, like me, you are full of good intentions but decidedly lacking in willpower, it helps to know your weak spots. We all buy too many things that waste precious resources, drive cars and travel on planes that produce CO₂ emissions, overheat and cool our homes artificially, which does the same thing, and pour toxic chemicals down the sink that eventually end up in the sea.

Let's face it, as a generation we're spoilt rotten, and may not even be fully aware of the detrimental effect our self-indulgent habits are having on poor old Earth. There's nothing like a bit of self-assessment to kick start the conscience. The idea

Here's an
idea for
you...

Spend a day, or part of a day, with a notepad at your side (recycled paper, of course!), and jot down as many mundane activities as you can. Then try to divide them into two groups: 'wasteful' or 'not wasteful'. If more than half of them are in the latter group then you can give yourself a pat on the back. If you find it tricky, don't worry – the simple action of writing things down will get you thinking about the way you live.

Defining
idea...

'Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.'

TOLSTOY

behind the quiz is to give you a rough idea of how much work you need to do in your quest for a greener lifestyle that leaves less of an imprint on our troubled planet.

- 1 How do you mainly shop for food?
 - (a) You don't – it's all home produced.
 - (b) Online certified organic delivery schemes.
 - (c) At local markets and grocers.
 - (d) At the supermarket.
- 2 It's lunchtime in the office. Do you:
 - (a) Dive into your organic, homemade packed lunch?
 - (b) Order something decent at an upmarket macrobiotic café?
 - (c) Go where everyone else is going, e.g. the pub?
 - (d) Head for the nearest fast-food chain or work canteen?
- 3 How do you get to work/school?
 - (a) Walk or cycle.
 - (b) Take public transport.
 - (c) Share lifts.
 - (d) Drive.

- 4 When the temperature drops, what do you do?
- (a) Do nothing – your home is insulated and solar-powered.
 - (b) Put on another jumper and shiver.
 - (c) Turn up the thermostat just a little.
 - (d) Whack up the heating as far as it goes and bring in extra heaters.
- 5 What kind of holiday do you mainly take?
- (a) A working conservation holiday.
 - (b) Something low-key and national.
 - (c) A package holiday somewhere warm.
 - (d) As exotic and far flung as possible.
- 6 What are your cleaning materials of choice?
- (a) Lemon juice and bicarbonate of soda.
 - (b) Eco-friendly products.
 - (c) Anything from the supermarket that works.
 - (d) A whole army of branded mousses, sprays, wipes and liquids.
- 7 How much do you recycle?
- (a) Virtually everything, and the rest goes to charity.
 - (b) Newspapers, bottles, cans, vegetable matter.
 - (c) Newspapers and maybe bottles sometimes.
 - (d) Nothing – it all goes straight in the bin.
- 8 What kind of car do you own?
- (a) You don't.
 - (b) A small, low-emission model.
 - (c) A people carrier or family saloon.
 - (d) A nice big SUV.

If you suspect your home is not quite as green as it could be, read IDEA 3, *Clarity begins at home*, for a few tips on cutting your carbon footprint.

Try another idea...

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.'

MARGARET MEAD

Defining idea...

- 9 What sort of presents did you give last Christmas/birthday?
- (a) You didn't – the money went straight to charity instead.
 - (b) Ethical presents for good causes.
 - (c) Catalogue/online goods where some profits go to charity.
 - (d) Whatever the recipients wanted.
- 10 How ethical is your bank?
- (a) Very: that's why you chose it.
 - (b) It has several good environmental policies.
 - (c) Not sure, but hopefully pretty good.
 - (d) You went for the best deal – ethics didn't come into it.

Mainly (a)s. Congratulations, you are fully committed to the environment and well on your way to becoming a green goddess – or god, of course.

Mainly (b)s. You're definitely aware of what it takes to be green although there are one or two luxuries you're not prepared to give up just yet. But keep up the good work, and you'll be doing your bit for the planet in no time.

Mainly (c)s. The will to change is there, but you've got some way to go before you win the Zayed Prize for the Environment. You just need to spend a little more time thinking about how your actions could affect the planet.

Defining
idea...

'You must be the change you wish to see in the world.'

MAHATMA GANDHI

Mainly (d)s. Oh dear, you're something of a walking eco-disaster. Time to change your wasteful and spendthrift habits for a greener, cleaner lifestyle.

Q How long will it take me to go from a sinful d-grader to a straight-a star?

How did it go?

A *You can't change your entire life in a day, and nobody would expect you to. But the beauty of learning to live in a more sustainable way is that you can start with seemingly tiny changes and build it up from there. After all, if the six billion people on this earth all picked up one piece of litter, imagine how much cleaner it would be. Think of it as personal evolution!*

Q How can I decide whether something I do is 'wasteful' or not?

A *I suppose you could argue that anything we do is wasteful, from breathing in air to wearing out the pavements walking! But being sensible, you could try asking yourself a few questions: does the action produce pollution; does it produce waste material; and does it use up resources? If the answer is yes to more than one, classify it as wasteful.*

Q I'd like to be more environmentally aware. How can I measure my progress?

A *Why not start an eco-diary? Make it weekly, if you like, or even monthly. At the end of each week or month you could write down what changes you have made. You could also include how the changes make you feel, and the impact on your family, personal or professional life. It will make interesting reading later on!*