



Live Greener in the New Year by adopting these 12 simple tips.

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THE RECORD

By now you've probably determined your resolutions for 2012. Perhaps you want to exercise more, pay off those credit cards, or volunteer in your community. But before you execute this plan, remember there are some small things you can resolve to do each day to live a little greener.

Thinking about climate change, our limited natural resources and waste issues can be overwhelming. But experts say taking small steps to reduce our environmental impact can make a significant difference.

"The global community, and particularly people living in industrialized societies, have put unsustainable demands on our planet's limited resources," says Robert Engelman, president of the Worldwatch Institute, an environmental research organization based in Washington, D.C. "If we expect to be able to feed, shelter and provide even basic living conditions to our growing populations in years to come, we must act now to change."

The United Nations has designated 2012 the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All. Broadening access to sustainable energy addresses many of the world's challenges, including food production, security and poverty, according to Danielle Nierenberg, director of Worldwatch's Nourishing the Planet Project.

You can play a role in tackling these problems. Here are 12 small steps to reducing our impact on the planet, according to the Worldwatch Institute.

Recycle

In 2006, the most recent date we have statistics for, New Jersey's recycling programs saved more than 235 trillion BTUs of energy, which represents the amount of energy that would be required to power more than 2 million homes for one year, according to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's website. Recycling also saves taxpayer dollars, by creating less garbage and generating revenue from the reusable material, according to Kimberly Birdsall, a [Rutherford](#) councilwoman and the community Green Team liaison.

What you can do: Have recycling bins easily accessible next to your garbage can — one for bottles and cans and another for mixed paper. Also, state law now requires that you recycle electronics like televisions and computers. Visit the [Bergen County](#) Utilities Authority website for collection dates ([bcua.org](#)). [Passaic County](#) is holding a computer and electronics recycling event for residents on Jan. 21. See box for details.

How you can help save the planet

Useful resources for fulfilling your green resolutions:

- The New Jersey State Department of Environmental Protection's Solid and Hazardous Waste Program: [state.nj.us/dep/dshw/recycling/](#)
- Bergen County Utilities Authority: [bcua.org](#)
- Passaic County Office of Recycling and Natural Resources: [passaiccountynj.org/natural-resources](#)
What: An after-holiday computers and electronics recycling collection event. (For residents only. Monitors, hard drives, printers, key boards, modems, television sets, radios, VCRs and printer toner cartridges are accepted.)
When: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Jan. 21
Details: Passaic County Para-Transit Facility, 1310 Route 23 north in Wayne
Info: 973-305-5738
- Energy Federation Incorporated: [efi.org](#)
(website with details about energy-efficient light bulbs and surge protectors for the home)
- Recycling New Jersey: [recyclingnj.com/NJTowns.html](#) (easy to navigate website for learning more about recycling).
- Sustainable New Jersey: [sustainablejersey.com](#) (state program that certifies municipalities for being green.)

— Sachi Fujimori

Turn off the lights

If you're at home and three-quarters of the lights are on while the family is spending time in the living room, that's a huge energy waste, said Ed Schwartz, a [Ridgewood](#) resident and co-founder of Green Living Solutions, a home energy auditing company. "It's wasting up to 1,500 watts at any given time," he said.

What you can do: Turn off the lights when no one is in a room.

Make the switch

Stop using incandescent light bulbs, which are inefficient.

What you can do: Switch to compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), which use 20-30 percent less energy, or LED's which consume 10 percent less energy. Both can be found at home improvement retailers like Lowe's or Home Depot.

Stop using foam takeout containers

Foam takeout containers don't biodegrade and often end up in waterways, soil and landfills.

What you can do: Follow the lead of [Secaucus](#) — which in October passed a resolution banning foam in its restaurants, schools and businesses — and lobby your town for a similar ban.

Turn on the tap

The energy required to produce and transport bottled water could fuel an estimated 1.5 million cars a year and yet much of these bottles end up in our oceans and waterways. "When we're doing river clean ups, the most proliferation of trash are water bottles," said Capt. Bill Sheehan, the [Hackensack](#) Riverkeeper. And just because you're drinking bottled water doesn't guarantee that it's safe. A recent study revealed that 10 of the most popular brands of bottled water contain a wide range of pollutants, including pharmaceuticals, fertilizer residue and arsenic, according to Worldwatch.

What you can do: Drink from the tap. Water that comes from the faucet is required to meet drinking safety standards. Fill up at home by carrying a reusable container like a Nalgene or stainless steel bottle. If you don't like the taste of your tap water, install a filter or keep a pitcher or bottle with a filter, like the Brita models, in your fridge.

Turn down the heat

For each degree you reduce the thermostat, you get 3 percent savings on your heating bill, said Schwartz.

What you can do: Don't walk around the house in the winter in a tank top and shorts. Put on a sweater and turn down the thermostat. Consider a home energy audit, which can improve your home's overall heating efficiency.

Support food recovery programs

Each year, roughly a third of all food produced for human consumption — approximately 1.3 billion tons — gets lost or wasted, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. Grocery stores, bakeries and other food providers throw away tons of edible food daily that may be cosmetically damaged or past the expiration date. In North Jersey, Table to Table, a community-based food recovery program, collects food that would otherwise be wasted and redistributes it to those in need in Bergen, [Passaic](#) and Essex counties.

What you can do: Visit tabletotable.org to learn about donating or volunteering with the organization.

Buy local

Shopping local reduces your carbon footprint by reducing driving time. In addition, author and consumer advocate Michael Shulman argues that small businesses are more sustainable because they are often more accountable for their actions, have smaller environmental footprints, and innovate to meet local conditions.

What you can do: Shop at farmers' markets and small businesses in your community.

Get out and ride

Many cities across the country are initiating bike sharing programs to offer an alternative to cabs, subways and buses. Biking is both good for the environment and your body.

What you can do: Get to know the bike paths in your area and use them.

Share a car or carpool

In 2009, car-sharing was credited with reducing U.S. carbon emissions by more than 482,000 tons, according to Worldwatch.

What you can do: Visit ezride.org for information on finding a carpool to join or its car share program in [Wood-Ridge](#) and [Rutherford](#).

Plant a garden

You not only save money on groceries, but help the planet by eating locally and not using pesticides.

What you can do: Start simple with a lettuce or herb window box. Join a community garden.

Eat less meat

Livestock production accounts for about 18 percent of all human caused greenhouse gas emissions and accounts for about 23 percent of all global water used in agriculture, according to Worldwatch.

What you can do: You don't have to forsake meat altogether, but simply cut down on the number of meals you have that include animal protein. Consider substituting one meal a day with a vegetarian option or learn more about the Meatless Monday movement. meatlessmonday.com