

# GREEN LIVING

50 hands-on tips for a  
more sustainable life

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[www.hyperbrain.me](http://www.hyperbrain.me)



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# Introduction

We all know that we need to change our living habits to keep this world a healthy, green planet. But how do we start? Sometimes it can feel really overwhelming to hear about all natural disasters and negative development in the world, but at the same time there are loads of people out there doing their best to find solutions to the problems we have created.

Small streams make great rivers. Each one of us contribute to how the world looks = your small contribution is worth just as much as everybody else's. Actually, through leading with a good example and inspiring others it might be worth even more. That's why I wrote this book. To get you started on your path towards a greener life.

## The goal with this book

This book is meant to give you simple hands-on tips that you can apply today to start living more sustainable. See it as a workbook or a source for ideas. I have split up the book in 5 chapters with 10 tips each to make it easy for you to find your way to something you can start on right away. Browse freely or work through the tips one after the other. Your choice!

## Start where you are today

I want you to start where you are right now and see what you can implement in your own life. All of us can improve on the choices we make and I'm not here to point out what you're doing "wrong". I'm just suggesting alternatives you can try out and see if they work for you. I know I feel more content in general when I know I can do something that works with my own hands using simple materials and/or methods.

I feel good when I buy something I know has been produced in an ethical way and I have started questioning what I really truly need and what are unnecessary "wants" that will only make me happy for 5 minutes. A side-effect of this book might be that you start saving some money. Another one that you get a bit more fit when you choose your bike over the car. You'll also save some time on not shopping as much. That's time you can spend pursuing a hobby and hopefully feel even more empowered in your life – or just slack back in your sofa / out in the woods doing what you love. Hope you don't mind. ;)





My tip to get the most out of the book would be to take one thing at a time – especially when it comes to recurring tasks.

Changing one habit and sticking to it is better than trying to do 20 things and giving up on them after a short while. The one-time tips you can implement when you want of course. I have added suggested tasks to get started after each tip to make it easier to get going.

Underneath each tip there is space for you to add your own notes. Writing down when, how and where you're going to do things will increase the chances of sticking to your new habits.

## Who wrote this book?

I'm Veronica, founder of **Hyperbrain.me** – a lifestyle magazine for creative and sustainable living. For several years now I have been passionate about Permaculture and sustainable living and work actively on pursuing a greener lifestyle. I admire people who go the homesteading way, but I know it's not for everyone. I want to show that you can keep most of your everyday lifestyle whilst becoming more conscious about your choices. It's possible to live greener without having to go for a life in a shed in the woods.

When I'm not writing on Hyperbrain.me I create music, sew or craft and work hard towards my future goal of owning my own farm. It's going to be a place where you can take courses and learn about the topics mentioned above. I'm really happy to have you along for the ride!

## Disclaimer

This is by no means a book that covers all aspects of green living. It's just here to give you 50 hands-on tips you can try to limit your own environmental impact and make you a bit more aware of how you consume and how your choices impact the world around you.

As with any book suggesting you try doing something with your own hands or try to do something a bit differently I have to add this disclaimer. The suggestions included are things I have tried out myself or plan on implementing very soon. I write to my best knowledge when it comes to what has less environmental impact. You are personally responsible for checking up what applies for your specific conditions, what's legal in your country and so on.

Now let's get going and actually start living more green!



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# Travel & Transportation

**1. Walk or use your bicycle** (or use a rental service if you live in the city and don't own one). If it feels too difficult to go every day to work like this, or that you can only use it part of the year - do it when you can. Walk to work once a week as a start. Take your bicycle the part of the year when it's possible. Let the car stand when you go to a certain activity every week. It doesn't have to be all or nothing. Start small and upgrade with time.

*Task: Select one day of the week where you commute by foot or bicycle to go to work or a weekly activity.*

**2. Check your transport options** before a long trip to select the right one. I used a CO<sub>2</sub> emissions calculator and figured out that I better take a plane next time I go to Sweden, which actually surprised me. When traveling alone it would mean marginally less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than taking my car. On the other hand, if I would have company it would be better to drive. Be aware of your impact and fly as little as possible.

*Task: Before your next long trip, use a **CO<sub>2</sub> emissions calculator** to check what means of transportation will have the least impact.*

**3. Climate compensate for your trips.** Many airplane and train companies now offer this as part of purchasing your ticket. You can also use the site mentioned above to calculate your own impact and pay for some of your trips. We still need to reduce the impact, but for the trips we do take this is a good contribution. MyClimate invest the money into reforestation, education of farmers, progressive sustainable agriculture etc.

*Task: Go to **MyClimate** and pay in an amount free of choice or calculate your yearly impact from driving and pay in that amount.*



**4. Car-pool** with your colleagues or when you go to activities (or need to bring your kids). If you're going the same route every day it should be quite easy to coordinate with others. Same thing for longer trips - see if someone wants to join. There are several services for this (for instance **Blablacar**) where you can advertise where and when you're going somewhere to see if someone wants to join. You'll also save costs since your passenger will pay a certain amount for the trip.

*Task: Write down one type of trip where you can carpool instead of going alone.*

**5. Combine your trips** - go to the grocery store before/after you go to work or to visit a friend.

*Task: Write down a day of the week when you can go grocery shopping before or after work.*



*Small and compact but my car actually doubles as a camping vehicle = holidays with less impact.*



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**6. Take care of your vehicle.** Tires with the right pressure, clean oil and air filters and a newly serviced engine has a huge impact on your emissions and fuel consumption. Taking care of your bicycle will make it last longer.

**Task:** *Go check your tire pressure and schedule your next oil change (if you own a car) or schedule a check of your bicycle, give it some chain oil, rusts protection and so on.*

**7. Get an electro-scooter or e-bike.** These are great alternatives if you live in a city. Easier to park and less time stuck in traffic jams.

**Task:** *Consider if this could be an alternative for some of your weekly commute.*

**8. Select the right car** when you buy a new one. Unfortunately not all “eco friendly” cars are really eco friendly... Look at the whole lifecycle of a vehicle. CO2 emissions while driving aren’t everything. A car of good quality that lasts, has parts that can be recycled and repaired is a better option than an “eco friendly” car that needs to go to the scrap heap in just a few years. ***This article from National Geographic*** presents a nuanced picture of the different factors to take into consideration when selecting a new car.

**Task:** *Go read the article mentioned and make a list of criteria for your next car.*





*I use a bike from 1979. Works perfect and takes me where I want to go.*

**9. Go for local vacations.** What do you really need during your vacations? My guess is that you need some time off and that it doesn't have to be some exotic resort every time. Check up what your local area or nearby countries have to offer. There are probably loads of things to see and experience. You don't need to go half across the world every time you go on holidays.

**Task:** *Check for some things to go see in your local area and add this to your holiday list.*

**10. Go glamping or visit an eco-resort.** A nice vacation at an eco-labelled camping or hotel will assure that you stay in a healthy environment with great food.

**Task:** *Look for an eco-resort or eco certified hotel next time you book a vacation or a business trip.*






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# Food

**1. Go for organic and local food.** If you can't do anything else in this book, at least do this. You influence the market with your wallet. When I go shopping in a supermarket I have a simple rule. If there's an organic alternative available in the store I buy that product. If you have a local farmer's market – go there! Support the people that actively provide you with food that has travelled a shorter distance. My bet is that they will have produce that is superior to the food you find in the supermarket.

*Task: Write down a few products you can start buying organic next time you go shopping or follow my method and select organic whenever available.*

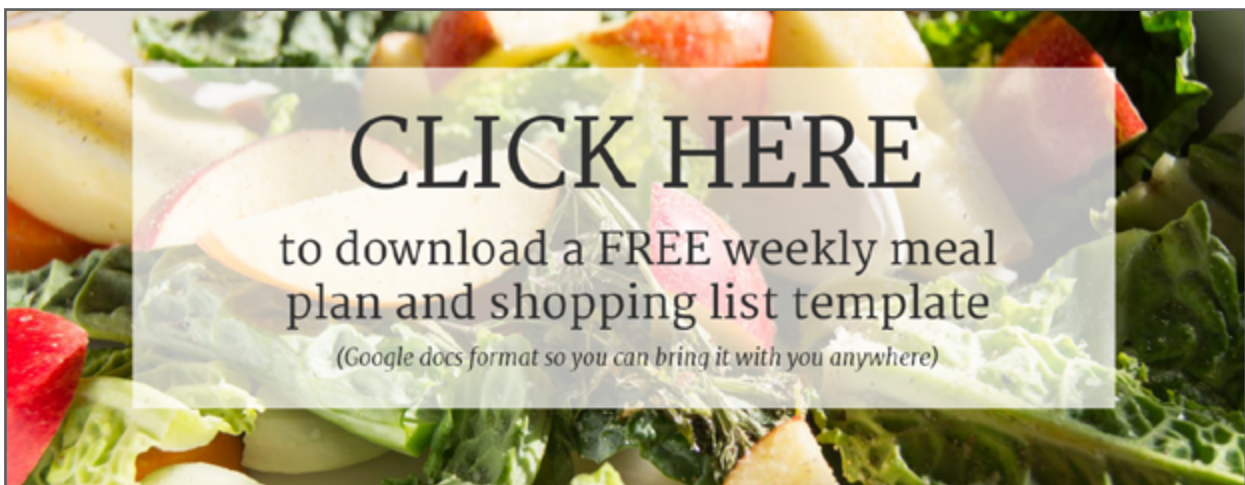
*Bonus task: Check where your nearest farmer's market is and schedule a day to go there.*



**2. Plan your week ahead & only buy what you need.** Download my **weekly meal planner** below to get started! Western households generally throw out several kilos of food every week (!) just because of bad planning or continuously buying the same things over and over thinking “I might need this” (when in reality you rarely eat it).

*Task: Make a meal plan for next week and a shopping list to go with it.*

*Bonus task: Be creative with leftovers and make up a new dish from them.*





**3. Eat seasonal.** Google for seasonal food for your particular area. You can often find lists and infographics with tips on what's in season when in your region. Select more of what's in season now and save the out of season food for another time. A simple way to do this is to mainly buy from your local farmer's market, home delivery of organic vegetables or **CSA**.

*Task: Make a list of 5 vegetables that are in season right now or print/save a full yearly list if you find one for your region.*

**4. Let luxury foods become a luxury again.** Just a few decades ago people wouldn't dream of eating tropical fruit and vegetables that have been shipped half across the world every day (it was rare for good reasons).

*Task: Select one to two things that you can put on your "luxury" list and make them be that special something again.*

**5. Eat more green.** Start with one vegetarian day a week or trading one meal a day for green alternatives. I'm not going to tell you to become vegetarian or vegan - that's all up to you. What I do suggest is that you start eating smaller amounts of meat and when you do, select local organic meat of good quality. The best you can select is actually game meat, but it can be hard to get. Locally produced grass-fed meat is the second best option from an environmental perspective + much better for the animals.

While I'm at it I'll also make a comment about vegetarian and vegan meat substitutes. Buying soy products that have been shipped long distances aren't always a better alternative than meat. Soy production is often closely connected to deforestation. If you care for animals, care about how many are killed to grow your soy... There are, however, many exciting products coming up such as quorn (mushroom based) and oat based meat substitutes. To put it short - know where your protein comes from and how it has been produced.

*Task: Select one meal a day or one day a week where you eat vegetarian or vegan (integrate this into your meal planning).*



**6. Go out foraging.** Learn about local herbs, mushrooms, berries, fruits and nuts growing in your area and pick for free. Take a course or join a local group of foragers if you're not sure what you're allowed to pick and what's good or not (be especially careful with mushrooms as some may be poisonous!). Cook at least one meal a week containing these ingredients. A lot can be dried, frozen, canned or preserved in other ways to make sure you have some in stock all year.

*Task: Write down 1-2 things you can forage next time you get out in nature.*

**7. Buy in bulk to minimize packaging + select food with recyclable packaging when possible.** Think about what items you can purchase in larger amounts to have a proper stock at home. One easy place to start is with dry products such as flour, rice, pasta, beans etc since they have a long shelf-life. Join up with friends to buy bigger packs. Like that you can get organic produce for a great price. Same thing with meat. It usually pays off to buy a full or half an animal from an organic farmer and put in the freezer. The kilo price will often be the same or lower than what you pay for lower quality meat from the supermarket.

*Task: Write down one to two food items you can start buying in bulk and add to your shopping list.*





**8. Grow your own.** Just a small amount of vegetables growing in your garden is a good start. Check out my **compact gardening tips** for some help on how to get started. If you have very little space, growing some herbs or **mushrooms indoors** can be alternatives.

*Task: Buy the things you need to start growing some herbs or vegetables at home or even better – reuse existing containers and other materials. You can recycle tins, milk cartons etc to use as growing containers.*

**9. Cook from scratch.** Learn how to cook and bake your own food, bread, cookies etc. Not only is it healthier, but it will also cut out one big baddie from your shopping list – palm oil. The production of palm oil is a disaster to the environment and unfortunately it's almost everywhere. Through buying less ready-made products you'll buy less palm oil. (Totally avoiding it is really difficult, it's even in some brands of organic shampoo... but we need to start somewhere).

*Task: Select two to three **recipes** you would like to cook from scratch and add to your weekly meal plan.*

**10. Compost!** Make sure your food scraps are turned into soil again – preferably in your own home. If you don't have space for a full warm compost bin, consider getting a Bokashi. More composting tips you can find **here**.

*Task: Start your own compost. (Check the regulations in your area – you might need a safe bin to prevent pests!)*



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# Household & Cleaning

**1. Switch for natural/eco-friendly cleaning products** next time you buy them. You actually only need a few ones to cover the needs of your household. Products based on vinegar, citric acid, classic soap or baking soda work just as well as chemical products - some of them even better. If you want them to smell nicer, buy some ethereal oils of choice. More and more professional cleaning companies primarily work with eco-labelled detergents + microfiber cloths and mops. If that works good enough for them it should be good enough for you as well.

*Task: Select eco-labelled products next time you go shopping.*

**2. Use the right amount of detergents.** Many times we use too much, which doesn't make things cleaner. Only harder to rinse.

*Task: Check how much detergent you should use and follow the recommendations on the packaging next time you wash or clean.*

**3. Switch your plastic containers for glass or metal ones.** I'm NOT saying you should do the "plastic diet"\* thing that is so popular right now = throwing out all your old plastic boxes to buy new glass ones. Use them until they're not useable anymore, but once you switch, go for glass, metal or wood. There are some cool new options out there as well using bamboo fibers and corn starch.

*Task: Check where you can buy sustainable containers and write this down for when you need new ones.*

(\*If health is a concern for you some plastic containers may be worth replacing or at least stop using them in the kitchen due to containing hormon-disturbing agents, PVC etc - but from an environmental perspective, don't throw away things that are still useable. They're no better off in landfill.)



*Some nice alternatives to plastic storage boxes.*

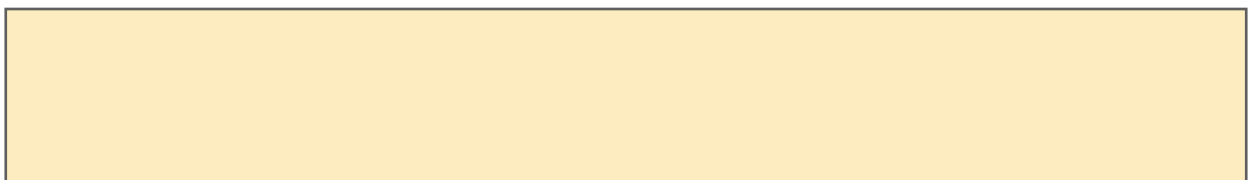
**4. Only wash when you have enough dirty clothes to run the washing machine full,** that saves both water, power and detergent.

*Task: Not much action needed here – just wait with washing until you have enough.*



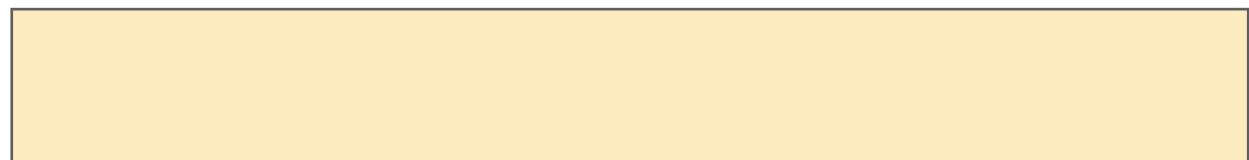
**5. Always choose the best energy rated products when you switch your appliances.** I don't say you should throw out machines that still work (unless they're extremely old, over 20 years or so). Remember the whole life-cycle of a product. Production and life-length should also be considered when you look at an appliance.

*Task: Do some product research in terms of sustainability next time you need to switch out an appliance. Having a list in advance of good brands will make it easier to select a good one in case your fridge, dishwasher, washing machine or other appliance breaks all of a sudden (which they tend to do...).*



**6. Wash your hand-dishes in a tub instead of under running water.** The rinse water (containing only small residues of detergents) can be used to water your plants.

*Task: If you don't own one, buy a simple tub to add to your kitchen sink.*

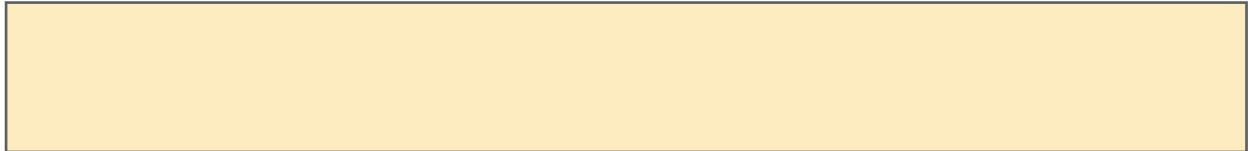






**7. Switch for LED lights** wherever possible. The range of LED lamps has broadened a lot the last years and you can now find LED's for almost any socket. You can save up to 80% electricity on using LED's instead of traditional lightbulbs. I recommend selecting these over so called "power saving lights" for three reasons. Power saving lights spend more electricity, don't last as long as LED's and they contain heavy metals. Many of them also take up to a couple of minutes before reaching full light strength.

*Task: Buy LED lamps next time you need to switch a light at home (don't throw out your existing ones as long as they work).*



**8. Rent or borrow machines or power tools** next time you need them. How often do you use a chainsaw? Do you need your own power-driller? Renting or borrowing them gives you access to higher quality professional tools and often the latest the market has to offer.

*Task: Check how much your local hardware store charges for renting tools or ask around among family and friends to know who owns what so that you can ask directly next time you need something.*





**9. Air out your home regularly.** Moist rooms make it harder to keep your home warm. A couple of minutes of wide-open windows every morning can lower your heating costs radically.

*Task: Put a reminder on your phone to air out your bedroom and other rooms in the house every morning.*



**10. Switch for renewable electricity.** Kind of a no-brainer actually, especially if your current provider uses coal, oil or gas for electricity production.

*Task: Check which electricity providers offer green energy in your area and ask to be transferred. They're usually very happy to help you out with the administrative part.*





# Clothing & Shopping

**1. Buy quality clothes** produced in responsible ways (for the environment and for the workers). They last longer and look better than cheap clothes. If you cannot afford them new there are loads on the secondhand market. It's better to put the same amount of money on a quality secondhand garment than to buy a new cheap one.

Shop from brands with a high focus on sustainability and brands that offer good conditions for their workers. When possible, select eco-labelled garments. Ecological cotton has a lot less impact than standard production. As mentioned before, your wallet is a powerful tool. What you buy is what the market will keep on selling.

Mend your clothes when they break. A few basic sewing stitches will take you a long way.

***Task:** Write down a few brands that work with responsible methods and/or generally provide very high quality. Look for these when you buy clothes. (Even better is if they're produced in your own country.)*

***Bonus task:** Learn how to sew a few basic sewing stitches by hand to be able to mend your own clothes (I'll show you how to do this later in the blog).*



*These outfits are both 100% second hand and cost me less than 50 Euros each. Value new: several hundred and all garments are in great shape.*





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**2. Trade clothes you don't use.** Join a clothes trading program if one exists in your area. Some second hand stores will let you trade your garments instead of paying you for them. Organize your own clothes trading day. Or just give away your surplus.

*Task: Sort out garments you haven't used in the last year and trade or give them away.*

**3. Buy clothes that fit well together.** Embrace the idea of the **capsule wardrobe**. You'll need less garments in total and can combine them in creative ways to have a new outfit every day. Go for a few high quality garments and work with accessories to change your look.

*Task: Write down a few garments that could make up your base wardrobe and see what you need to complete it with. Start with what you already own.*

**4. Buy a sustainable drinking mug / drinking bottle** – preferably glass, porcelain or stainless steel. Bring it to your local cafe and ask them to use it when you buy coffee (some big chains even sell their own). Much better than water in plastic bottles and coffee in paper mugs.

*Task: Buy one of the products mentioned above or just start bringing a mug you already have at home or save a glass bottle from a food item you buy with your groceries.*

**5. Buy quality kitchen supplies.** A proper iron or ceramic pan will last you a lifetime. Go for glass, metal, ceramic or wood when you select new items. Paying more for something will make you appreciate it and take care of it.

*Task: Buy a good quality kitchen tool next time you need to replace something. You can often find great ones in thrift stores for a cheap price.*



*An iron pot like this will last you a lifetime if you take good care of it.*

6. Buy a **Fairphone** (or other phone based on the **Phonebloks** idea) next time you need to switch. These are produced with conflict-free minerals, better conditions for the workers and have replacable parts. Who hasn't dropped their phone on the floor and seen the screen crack? With these phones you can repair it yourself + you can upgrade them bit by bit when needed instead of replacing the whole thing. Apply the same kind of thinking for other IT products and select TCO certified electronics when available.

Another tip for cellphones and computers is to consider reinstalling them or switching the operating system before you upgrade to new hardware. For Android phones initiatives such as **Cyanogenmod** and for computers various versions of **Linux** or **FreeBSD** makes it possible to get a lot more power out of your existing hardware. Try that first. The new distributions of these systems are just as easy to use as a Windows or Mac machine.

**Task:** *Try reinstalling or switching operative system before you decide to buy new hardware. When you buy new hardware, select a fairly produced phone or computer.*





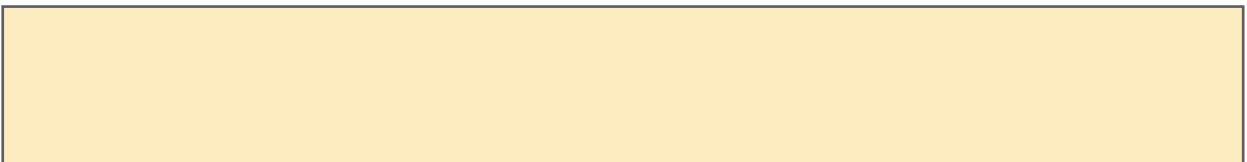
**7. Take part of a no-spend challenge.** In a no-spend challenge you only buy food and life-necessities for a specific period. It can be one week, a month and some people even go for a full year. It will make you think about what you buy and what you really need. Another trick is to write down things you wish to buy when you see them, wait for a month and see if you still want them. Then you can go ahead and buy it. If not, you see that you didn't really needed it in the first place. I'm organizing the **#CreativeOctober no-spend challenge** where you focus on crafts and creativity using only materials you already have. It's a really fun challenge that proves that you can do a lot with what's already available. Join us this year or the next! I'll keep on doing this.

*Task: Join the #CreativeOctober challenge or another No-spend challenge of choice.*



**8. Shop local,** it minimizes transport and keeps your local economy alive and thriving. Go look for a local crafts(wo)man and get something unique instead of buying what everybody else has. Instead of buying a fancy brand bag that is on every corner, you can get a handmade quality item for the same price. People will ask you where you got it! Ask a potter to make you unique plates, buy a hand-crafted lamp. Your home will be more personal, you know who made your item and you'll be able to go there and ask for a replacement item if something breaks (not possible with trend items that are sold during short periods in shops).

*Task: Write down a couple of things from your personal wishlist/need to buy list and see if someone in your local area offers them.*



*Handmade jewelry and mittens.*



**9. Move your pensions and savings to ethical funds.** Most people just leave these as they are and passively support big bad business without even knowing it. Check up where your money is invested and request to have them moved to an ethical alternative. It might look as if you lose some money now, but in the long run ethical & green businesses will gain value.

*Task: Check where your savings are placed today and request them to be moved to more ethical alternatives if needed.*

**10. Upcycle things for your home.** Often you can find good quality secondhand furniture that can get new life with a bit of paint or mending. Be creative! Try to come up with solutions to use old items in new ways.

*Task: Select an item in your home that you can give new life or see if someone is throwing out something that you could use with small updates.*



*These are some handmade items I use for medieval reenactment, but I actually like using them in my everyday life too.*





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# Personal Hygiene

1. **Switch for reusable sponges and wipes** instead of using cotton and paper disposables. Just toss them in with your laundry and they're good to go for your next wash.

*Task: Buy or make your own washable cleansing pads (**Love the planet** have ready ones or you can find instructions **here** on how to make your own.)*

2. **Buy natural cosmetics**, preferably in glass or other recyclable packaging. Trade in product by product and limit the number of products in your bathroom cabinet. Preferably select cosmetics that are **Natruce certified** or similar.

*Task: Add a note to your shopping list to select certified natural cosmetics next time you go shopping.*

3. **Try making your own products** – start with something simple like a sugar body scrub or **birch hair rinse**. Your kitchen is full of ingredients that work for skincare as well.

*Task: Look up a natural hair or body care recipe and try it out.*

4. **Take shorter showers and shower less times per week**. Or indulge in a Japanese style bath ritual instead, washing yourself with a bucket and sponge. Tune in with some calm music and wash away.

*Task: Set a timer next time you shower or try the Japanese style bath ritual.*



*Homemade natural cosmetics in glass jars and reusable cleansing pads*

**5. Save water on your daily wash routine.** Don't wash under a running tap.

*Task: Get yourself an old-school washbasin or fill up water in your sink for your morning wash instead of letting your tap run.*

**6. Buy quality products when you select a new shaver, nail scissors etc.** They will last longer and quality appliances and tools usually offer spare parts.

*Task: Write down brands that offer spare parts and that generally have a high quality. Select these next time you need to switch.*

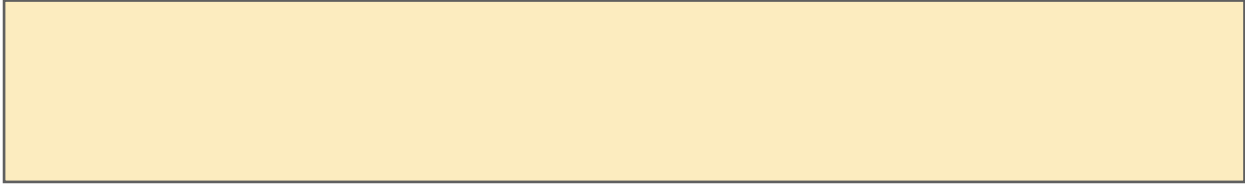
**7. Visit an ecologic hair salon,** especially if you're about to dye your hair. Natural hair dyes contain less (if any) harmful substances - both for you and for the environment.

*Task: Check for an ecologic hair salon in your area.*



**8. Buy a menstruation cup instead of sanitary pads or tampons.** (Sorry, this tip only applies females. If that's not you, maybe you know someone who could have use for it). Enormous amounts of raw-materials are saved on this over the lifetime of a woman + they're kinder to the body.

*Task: Order a menstruation cup or reusable pads.*



**9. Buy eco-labelled toilet paper and other disposable products.**

*Task: Add a note to your shopping list about looking for these alternatives.*



**10. Buy a comb or brush made out of natural materials.** This is usually better for your hair as well.

*Task: Buy a natural comb or brush when your old one needs to be replaced.*





# How to continue

These are obviously just starting points for a greener and more sustainable lifestyle. My major tip if you want to really step it up after this is to grow more of your own food. If you don't have a piece of land available, check for a community garden or if you can engage in urban gardening in some way.

I would also advise you to learn about Permaculture. The **videos of Geoff Lawton** are a great place to start. You will get an idea about what's possible to achieve in any climate, anywhere on earth and shows that we CAN reverse the damage we have caused. You just need to know how.

Learning about Permaculture will give you a holistic view on how we can tackle the future challenges of climate change, regardless of where you live and your current lifestyle.

If you really feel that you own too much stuff – Google around a bit on “minimalism” and “voluntary simplicity”. There you can get tips on how to start decluttering your home and life.

And of course, stay tuned for more to come on **hyperbrain.me**

I hope you enjoyed the book and you're most welcome to **contact me** and let me know what you thought of it. I love hearing from you!

Thanks for reading and now get going with your new, greener life!