

PSI SERVICE COMMITTEE
PRESENTS

HOME



SUSTAINABILITY



GUIDE

Spring 2021

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FASHION

Introduction

Our world runs on fast fashion. We're constantly surrounded by new trends, new clothes we're supposed to buy. Influencers on social media make their living from convincing you that the newest clothing is the best. And who doesn't love a new outfit? Or a new pair of sunglasses? But 84% of clothing ends up in landfills. That's crazy. And just because you don't want a piece of clothing anymore doesn't mean it has to end up in the landfill.



When you're constantly being told to buy new things, it can seem like the easiest way, maybe even the only way, to go about fashion. But there are so many options out there to help you break out of the fast fashion cycle! And that's where we come in. We've compiled a list of resources to make it easy for you to be a responsible consumer! From online thrift shops to DIY fashion to responsible companies (for when you do have to buy new) - we hope you not only challenge yourself to break out of fast fashion, but maybe even learn something new about your style!

Part I: Virtual Secondhand Marketplaces



Have old clothes you want to sell? Poshmark is a great option! You can set up a profile or “store” to list your clothes. People who shop on the website can then buy your clothes! Or if you’re looking for a skirt for a party next weekend you can search other people’s pre-loved clothes! Poshmark is known as a good place to find vintage luxury items. Maybe you’ve always wanted a Kate Spade bag, well you might be able to find a vintage one on Poshmark!

Similar to Poshmark, Depop is catered towards Gen Z and Millennials so if you want to follow some of the latest trends (but make it ~sustainable~) Depop is a good bet!



Unlike Poshmark and Depop, Thredup is a curated shop, essentially a consignment store, but online. All the clothes they sell are pre-loved. If you want to sell to them you can ship them a package of your clothes and if one of your items sells they’ll send you a payout. While you can definitely find some treasures on Poshmark and Depop, Thredup is a slightly more curated experience since the company is vetting the items first.

If Thredup is the online equivalent of a consignment store then Swap.com is the online equivalent of a thrift store. You can find all sorts of items for cheap - did we mention slow fashion is also easy on the wallet?



Part III: If you have to buy new - places to shop responsibly!

Brands with sustainable reputations

Girlfriend Collective

The Girlfriend Collective uses recycled bottles, recycled fishing nets, and recycled cotton to make their activewear. As always though, consider new pieces you are going to buy carefully to make sure you'll use them for a long time.

Besides donating 1% of their annual sales to environmental causes, Patagonia has also started an e-commerce business to resell secondhand Patagonia clothing (a great alternative to new items). They also aim to be carbon neutral by 2025.

Patagonia

These are just two examples of environmentally-minded brands, there are plenty more out there although they are nowhere close to outnumbering fast fashion companies. A quick search of a brand and “sustainability score” will bring up many different sustainable and ethical business practice evaluations by people who have done their homework. When shopping with sustainability in mind it can also be good to check out local artists and vendors!

Greenwashing - be an informed consumer!

Zara

Zara made big commitments to the environment within the past couple years and has been recognized for heading in the right direction for sustainability within the industry. However, the bar was on the floor.

When you look closely it is largely what we call greenwashing.

Greenwashing is the practice of using marketing to appear sustainable and environmentally-minded when really a closer look at production and policies reveals underwhelming changes to business practices. Zara has made commitments to transition to more environmentally friendly materials, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to minimize landfill waste but has not published any evidence or progress reports on these initiatives. Moreover, for a franchise that churns out over 500 new designs per week, changing to environmentally-friendly materials is better than it was before, but it is missing the mark on fast fashion's biggest impact, the massive amounts of waste generated by obsessive need for new clothing.

If you're interested in learning more about Zara's sustainability initiatives and their effectiveness check out these websites and articles:

- <https://goodonyou.eco/how-ethical-is-zara/>
- <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/27/745418569/can-fast-fashion-and-sustainability-be-stitched-together>
- <https://slate.com/human-interest/2019/07/can-zara-be-sustainable.html>



H&M has similar greenwashing issues to Zara. They have been recognized as a very transparent brand when it comes to their supply chains. For sustainability they do use some recycled materials and have made promises to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However there have not been many reports on their progress. Fundamentally, the fast fashion industry is based on an inherently unsustainable idea that clothing should not be made to last, but rather to accommodate fashion trends. The entire industry will certainly need to change with lawmakers and politicians playing their part to regulate a more sustainable future.

Read more here:

- <https://directory.goodonyou.eco/brand/h-and-m>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2020/apr/21/hm-tops-2020-fashion-transparency-index-as-10-brands-score-zero>
- <https://www.urbankissed.com/sustainable-fashion/in-the-know/how-did-h-and-m-end-up-ranked-worlds-most-transparent-brand/>

Check out this website that gives you an in depth rating of brands based on their sustainability, treatment of animals and workers:

Wear the change, you want to see 

Good on the planet, people and animals. Good on you.

Good On You

Thousands of brand ratings, articles and expertise on ethical and sustainable fashion. Know the impact of brands on people and planet.

And don't forget to shop local...!

SUSTAINABLE CLEANING TIPS AND HACKS

Part I: Introduction

Who doesn't love a clean and tidy environment? We use cleaning products everywhere and all the time, from dishes, clothes, windows, to furniture. Most of the products we see and buy online and in stores have environmental and health implications. Rather than buying these products, here are some tricks and techniques you can use to green up your cleaning routine and help the environment!



Part II: Simple tricks to immediately “green” your cleaning routine

1. Buy cleaning products in large bottles instead of buying small bottles every short period of time
2. Avoid using paper towels and use reusable cloths instead
3. Avoid throwing away old unusable clothes and instead use them for extra dirty situations
4. Maximize cleaning efficiency: wait for more clothes/dirty plates before washing
5. Plants are nature's air fresheners! Instead of buying air fresheners that would emit pollutants to the environment, get yourself a small plant to bring life and fresh air to your daily life! (check out section 5 in this guide!)

Part III: The power of baking soda

Rather than using the variety of cleaning products you might have in your home, try using baking soda to absorb odors and remove residues. While it might not be as effective as the chemical products when cleaning more difficult situations, baking soda has a significantly less impact on the environment than the common household cleaning products, and a side bonus is that you would not spend as much money on cleaning products in the long run. Use a simple mix of baking soda and water or vinegar, put in on the stain or area you want deodorized, wait a few minutes, and wipe it down with a cloth or old clothes.

Part IV: A more environmentally friendly DIY all-purpose cleaner

½ cup vinegar
1 tablespoon borax
1 tablespoon hydrogen peroxide
2 cups hot water
2 tablespoons lemon juice

1. Dissolve the borax in water
2. Mix the remaining ingredients into the solution
3. Transfer the final solution into a spray bottle
4. (Optional) add essential oil
5. Spray to surfaces and clean with cloth/ old clothes!

Part V: Eco-friendly cleaning brand recommendations

Well Earth Goods

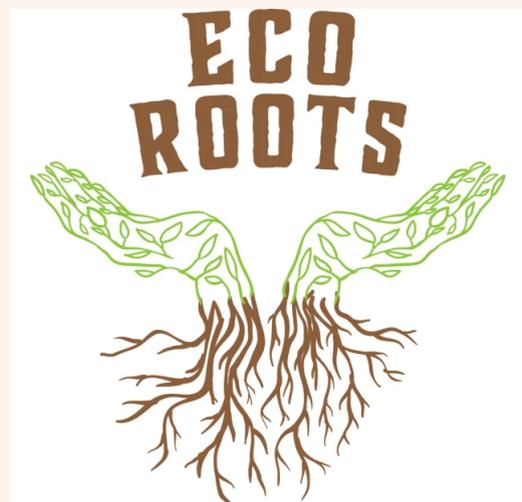
Well Earth Goods is dedicated to making cleaning products more eco-friendly. Their products are plastic-free and biodegradable. From plastic-free detergent slips for laundry to block dish soaps that are not in plastic containers, Well Earth Goods is the perfect online store for green cleaning products.

Visit: <https://wellearthgoods.com/?rfsn=3752724.3c568c>

EcoRoots

EcoRoots offer a variety of eco-friendly products, from cleaning supplies and personal hygiene products to kitchen utensils. Not only are the products all plastic-free and sustainable, EcoRoots donate 1% of their sales to sustainable initiatives and organizations. Attached to their online store is a zero waste blog that informs visitors about how to promote sustainability in their daily lives.

Visit: <https://ecoroots.us>



FOOD WASTE REDUCTION

Part I: why is this an issue?

Around 125-160 billion pounds of food are wasted in America every year. This amount comes out to around \$218 billion per year, which is an insane amount of wastage. There are many reasons as to why this food isn't consumed, overbuying, lack of planning, confusion over proper storage, and more.



There are 2 main types of waste: food loss and food waste. The former is defined as edible food that goes uneaten, in homes, stores, and crops. Food waste is a subset of food loss, and includes discarded food due to appearance by retailers, or plate waste by consumers. There is food lost at every step of the process from growing to transporting food, and even more after it reaches you. This discarded food occupies landfills and produces greenhouse gases, which contribute to climate change. This is a serious impact, and thus it is important to reduce as much food waste as possible, so the next few sections will offer some tips.

Part II: planning/prep tips (proactive)

Firstly, it is important to shop smarter. Really think about what you're buying in bulk, and if you're actually going to consume it all. It might be better to buy smaller amounts every time you visit the grocery store, and actively finish it before your next trip. Another thing that often happens is food spoiling because you don't consume it in a timely manner.



With your groceries, it is important to store it properly at home to avoid premature ripening and rotting. You should keep in mind the container you're using, and different foods in proximity to each other. Fruits and vegetables give off gases as they ripen, and can affect other foods kept next to it. Ideally you should keep fruits and veggies separately from other things in the fridge. Also, don't wash produce before storing it in the fridge, as mold could grow because it's damp. Meats should be wrapped and kept uncut in the fridge until used. Store raw and cooked food separately, as bacteria from raw foods can contaminate the cooked foods. If they must be kept together, store raw foods below cooked ones to avoid liquids (meat juices) dripping.

For cooked foods (leftovers like casseroles), usually you can refrigerate it for up to 4 days. Meats spoil a bit faster and last up to 3 days. If you don't think you'll finish it by then, freeze the food instead, as it will prolong its life without spoiling quickly.



Part III: what to do with the food waste (retroactive)



- Separate scraps from other waste.
- Compost!
 - Worm composting can be done indoors and in an apartment.
- Give your food waste to local farmers, or see what programs your community/neighbourhood offer. It can also connect you more to local residents!



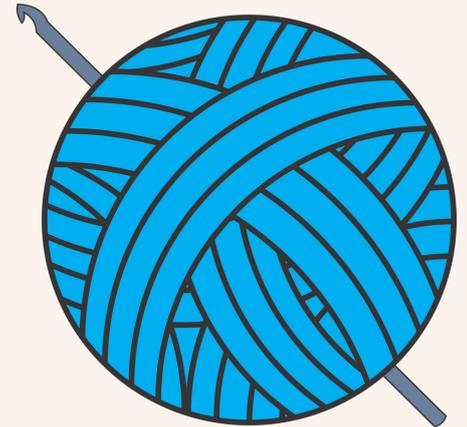
SUSTAINABLE CRAFTING TIPS

Part I: Introduction

Calling all crafters!

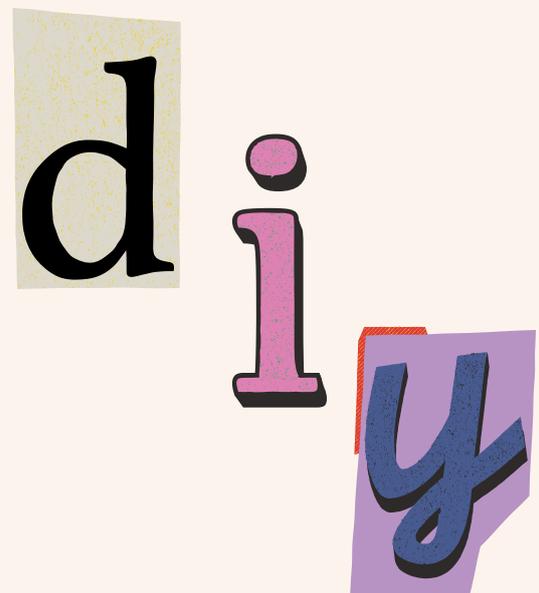
Just like not all fashion is sustainable (see the “Fashion” section of this guide for more details), not all crafting is truly eco-friendly. Many companies produce materials that aren’t durable or biodegradable and use production methods that harm and pollute the environment.

Choosing to take a green approach to crafting is the first step in combating some of these problems in the maker sphere and building a better community for all. The good news is: if you’ve picked up this guide, you’re probably already on your way to thinking sustainably!



This guide provides a foundation for future projects: first, we discuss where to buy materials in a way that respects the environment around us. Then, we discuss potential projects both for recycled materials and for scraps. Finally, we discuss further reading and exploration.

This guide is just a starting point - as a crafter myself, I encourage you to do your own research and deep dive into your particular area of interest. There are tons of resources available on the internet and I hope this guide provides you with the foundation and encouragement you need to explore!

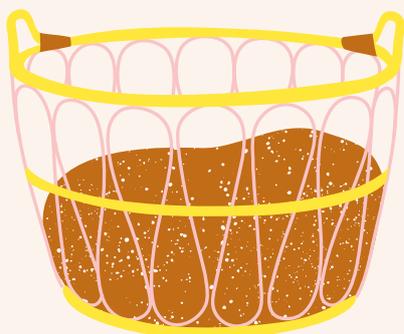


Part II: What you can do

- Buy fabric/yarn/materials from creative reuse stores
 - You can often find them in your hometown - try searching for reuse stores in your city!
 - There are also online ones:
 - Pittsburgh Center for Creative Reuse
- Keep and reuse your scraps!
 - Fabric/yarn scraps are great for stuffing crafted animals
- Craft using recycled materials
 - You can turn plastic bags into durable “plarn” (plastic yarn) for making grocery bags and more. Here are some projects:

Laundry basket

This laundry basket plarn project is super simple and beginner friendly! Materials: a 12 mm crochet hook (though you could use a different size and vary the number of rounds) and plastic bags.



Reusable bag

Another very easy, very beginner-friendly project that you could use weekly! Materials: a large crochet hook and plastic bags.



GARDENING AND LAWN CARE

Part I: Introduction

Gardening and caring for an outdoor space is a great way to destress and reconnect with nature. However, like all aspects of life, there are ways to ensure that your gardening practices are sustainable. Whether you currently live in a house with a big yard or a dorm room on campus, here are some tips for eco-friendly gardening!



Part II: Caring for Your Yard

Sustainably

If you live somewhere with a yard, there are many actions to take to ensure you care for it in a sustainable manner. These tips will help conserve resources, prevent pollution and waste, and support the wildlife in your area.

- When you mow, make sure to leave the grass clippings which can act as a natural fertilizer. Fallen leaves can also fertilize the lawn.
- Using compost is another way to enrich the soil. This can be purchased or made at home. If you do not have the space or ability to compost outside, vermicomposting is a great alternative. These lessen the need for artificial fertilizers, which can pollute waterways if they are used incorrectly.
- Make sure to mow the grass to its optimal height depending on the grass type. This leads to deeper root structures and healthier grass.



- Lawns should only be watered when necessary, such as during a drought. It is best to avoid watering in the middle of the day because the water evaporates quickly; watering in the morning or evening when the sun is not as bright conserves water. If you have sprinklers, make sure they are adjusted so that they are not watering the road or driveway to conserve additional water.
- Consider using a rain barrel to water your lawn. These are connected to the downspout on your house and reduce flooding as well as runoff. This is important because runoff can carry pollutants like pet waste, automotive fluids, and fertilizer into local waterways.
- Including native plants in your garden is a great way to support pollinators in your area. Research which plants are native to your region, and try to plant a variety so that they attract different types of pollinators and are available through multiple seasons. You can plant perennials in bunches to attract pollinators.
- You can also build a bird, bee, or bat or houses or provide a bird feeder.
- Provide water elements like bird baths to attract all kinds of wildlife, not just birds.



Part III: Gardening in a Small Space

If you live somewhere with limited access to outdoor space, whether it be an apartment in the city or a dorm room, there are still many options for gardening. These methods are perfect if you have limited space, but they can be used no matter your living situation! By growing your own food, you can be in control of the products used on the plants, which can reduce the pollution caused by fertilizers. Growing food in your home also reduces the carbon footprint because it does not have to be shipped to you!

- Some plants that are ideal for growing in small spaces are herbs like basil, microgreens, lettuce, and tomatoes. Microgreens and lettuce can grow in long, shallow containers with proper sunlight. Cherry tomato varieties work best in small spaces, and they can be grown in pots.
- Some other plants you might be surprised to know can grow in apartments are strawberries, Meyer lemons, and chili peppers!
- If you are starting your gardening journey and need planters, consider using what you already have rather than buying new items. Planters can be upcycled out of tin cans, milk jugs, and egg cartons. You can even use toilet paper rolls as seed starters. When the plants are ready to be moved, simply put them in a larger container without needing to remove the roll!
- Many people think composting requires large piles or tumbling composters and lots of spaces, but it is possible to compost in your dorm room or apartment.
- Succulents are a great sized plant for small spaces and are easier to take care of. You can also propagate succulents from plants that you already own! This article provides steps to properly cut and propagate from leaves:
<https://www.succulentsandsunshine.com/how-to-propagate-succulents-from-leaves-and-cuttings/>

*THANK YOU FOR
READING OUR
SUSTAINABLE GUIDE!*

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to any of the contributors on Facebook:

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