



Householders' Options to Protect the Environment Inc.

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Editorial

Welcome to HOPE's special edition newsletter on sustainable living! Our mission is to encourage individuals and their communities to "Think Globally – Act Locally" by taking an active role in protecting and enhancing the environment today, both locally and globally. HOPE advocates for responsible stewardship of the environment and supports adopting sustainable long-term solutions to the manifold environmental problems facing humanity. Our role can be summarised as follows:

RAISE awareness by providing people with information – letting people know about current environmental issues

EDUCATE – provide solutions on ways that we can tackle environmental issues; and

SHOW how easily it can be done

Guest newsletter editor – Allan Fong, HOPE researcher NSW

What is sustainable living?

Sustainable living is a lifestyle aimed at reducing environmental impact by using resources wisely, minimizing waste, and supporting practices that protect the planet for future generations.

The issues of the state of the environment and of pollution have become worldwide concerns, but fortunately this new awareness brings hope for the future. The simple act of disposing rubbish has an impact on the environment, and the more rubbish we dispose of, the worse the problem becomes. Earth's average surface temperature continues to rise because human induced greenhouse gases cause the Earth to absorb more energy than it radiates back ([Climate change: global temperature | NOAA Climate.gov](https://www.noaa.gov/climate-change/global-temperature)). **By working together and adopting a sustainable lifestyle, we can make a collective difference to improve the current and future state of the environment and reduce pollution.**

Benefits of sustainable living

Focus area:	Benefits:
Finance	Reduced energy bills, reduced overall spending on disposable goods, reduced spending on petrol
Health	Increased physical activity and associated psychological benefits, improved fitness, less stress, less exposure to toxins
Resilience	Better prepared for weather extremes (both hot and cold), less reliance on limited non-renewable resources
Ethical	Preserving nature and biodiversity for future generations

While the internet contains a wealth of information on environmentally friendly tips and sustainable living, this newsletter aims to provide readers with practical and useful tips, and additional links for those seeking more information. The following topics will be explored:

1. Household hints and chemical free options
2. Organic gardening
3. Waste minimisation
4. Sustainable housing
5. Sustainable transport
6. Other practical tips

1. Household hints and chemical free options

Key Points:

- **Clean without chemicals by using baking soda and vinegar, or just hot water**
- **Be aware not all “natural” products are safe**
- **Improve ventilation by opening windows or using exhaust fans**
- **Reduce chemical exposure through non-toxic swaps**



Many everyday household chemicals are hazardous and cause harm to the environment and our waterways. Reduce hazardous chemicals by choosing safer, non-toxic options.

- Cleaning without chemicals: Simple everyday staples like vinegar and baking soda can be used to clean surfaces, mirrors, windows and floors ([Choosing safer, non-toxic household chemicals | Sustainability Victoria](#)) ([Does vinegar really kill household germs? - ABC News](#))
- Don't underestimate the power of hot water. We don't need to kill all germs as we are not living in hospitals ([Our simple guide to cleaning without harsh chemicals - ABC News](#))
- Be aware that natural doesn't necessarily mean it's safe. Borax and eucalyptus oil, both natural products have the potential to be toxic in small amounts to children
- If you prefer homemade cleaning solutions with fragrance, here's a link to three recipes for essential oil cleaners with tea tree, lavender and eucalyptus oil ([Chemical-Free Living - Non-Toxic Essentials | Homecourt](#))
- Open windows daily and use exhaust fans to reduce exposure to indoor pollution from cooking byproducts (e.g. nitrogen dioxide, fine particulates), volatile organic compounds (from furnishings, paints) ([Chemical-Free Living - Non-Toxic Essentials | Homecourt](#))
- Don't microwave plastic, as heat can accelerate the leaching of chemicals from plastics into food. Use glass or a ceramic dish instead ([Low-cost ways to go toxic-free - Toxic-Free Future](#))
- Some good examples of non-toxic swaps:
 - Swap traditional non-stick pans for ceramic coated
 - Swap high-heat cooking in non-stick pans for stainless steel or cast iron
 - Swap non-stick baking trays for stainless steel, glass or uncoated alternatives
 - Swap metal utensils for wooden or silicone
 - Swap plastic food containers for glass or stainless-steel
 - Swap single use plastics for reusable silicone alternatives ([Best Non-Toxic Swaps For Everyday Life | Reduce Chemical Exposure](#))

2. Organic gardening

Key points:

- **Treat your garden like a biodiverse mini ecosystem**
- **Feed the soil, not the plant**
- **Make your own compost and add mulch to garden beds**
- **Avoid chemical fertilisers and pesticides**
- **Grow your own vegetables and practice crop rotation**

Organic gardening is a holistic approach where the garden is treated like a biodiverse mini ecosystem and every insect, microbe and plant plays a role. It is essentially about working with nature, rather than using chemicals to maximise outcomes. Soil health is optimised by adding compost or well-rotted manure, and the result is that plants are better equipped to resist pests and diseases leading to a stronger, more robust and productive garden. Healthy soils contain plenty of microorganisms, which play a crucial role in breaking down organic matter to release nutrients ([Building soil health for a biodiverse, productive garden](#)). Mulching performs several useful functions in the garden including reducing moisture loss, suppressing weed growth, adding nutrients to soil (if an organic mulch is used) and reduces run-off and soil movement from garden beds ([Which garden mulch is best | Sustainable Gardening Australia](#)).

Other useful links:

[Gardening Australia](#) Centred around the long-running ABC television program, the Gardening Australia website provides practical, expert horticultural advice to all gardeners. Episodes cover a wide range of topics including plant care and organic vegetable gardening as well as showcasing inspirational gardens across Australia. Here are some quick links to articles related to sustainable living:

- [Friends and foes of your edible garden](#) – animals and insects are inevitable in any garden, but do you know which are beneficial and which are damaging? [Animals in the Garden - Gardening Australia](#)
- [Making the perfect compost](#) – often referred to as “black gold” because of the way it revitalises soil [Compost - Gardening Australia](#)
- [Crop rotation](#) – a practice which has been used successfully for thousands of years [The Veggie Guide: Crop Rotation - Gardening Australia](#)
- [Re-using plastic pots](#) – how to clean black plastic pots for re-use [Top Tip | Re-Using Plastic Pots - Gardening Australia](#)
- [Managing weeds](#) – weeds can overwhelm a garden if not properly managed [Weeds 101 - Gardening Australia](#)
- [Organic fungicides](#) – fungicides work best as preventatives rather than cures [Organic Fungicides - Gardening Australia](#)



[GH Content Library – Green Harvest](#) Established in 1992, Green Harvest supplies an extensive variety of high-quality non-genetically modified seeds for Australians to grow herbs and vegetables in their home garden. Their website also features articles on seed starting, plant care and organic gardening techniques:

- [Growing information](#) (e.g. organic citrus care, raising seeds successfully, growing strawberries) [Growing Information – Green Harvest](#)
- [Pests and plant diseases](#) (e.g. choosing the right product, organic weed control, controlling leaf eating beetles) [Pests and Plant Diseases – Green Harvest](#)
- [General gardening tips](#) (e.g. seasonal care tips, benefits of mulch, green manure, permaculture) [General – Green Harvest](#)

Don't forget the seasonal benefits of planting deciduous trees:

- Provide summer shading and winter warming for your house and garden
- Well placed deciduous trees can lower air conditioning costs in summer and heating costs in winter
- Help to improve air quality and reduce the urban heat island effect

([The Benefits of Planting Deciduous Trees in Your Garden](#))

3. Waste minimisation

Key points:

- **Reducing waste saves money and is good for the environment**
- **Check what waste management and recycling services are offered by your local council, and other local businesses**
- **Buy second hand where possible**
- **Home mulching, composting and worm farms are a great way to move towards zero waste**



Minimising waste makes sense on multiple levels. Economically, waste represents money spent on materials, labour and energy that provided no final value. Environmentally, landfill sites produce toxic liquids which contaminate ground water and greenhouse gases like methane which contribute to global warming. Healthwise, there is emerging evidence microplastics are entering the food chain causing concerning implications for long-term public health. Here are some handy tips to assist readers on their waste minimisation journey:

- [Local councils](#) – find out what resources are available from your local council regarding waste and resource recovery. For example, Parramatta City Council provide a community recycling centre for households to dispose of problem waste such as paint, gas bottles and electronic waste ([Community Recycling Centre \(CRC\) | City of Parramatta](#))
- [Community and commercial services](#) – buying second hand goods is cheaper and benefits the environment and your local community. It extends the life of products and delays them going to landfill. Check out a local garage sale, or browse online ([Gumtree: Australia's Marketplace - Buy, Sell & Trade](#))

[New or Second Hand Goods, eBay Australia | Electronics, Cars, Fashion, Collectibles & More, Freecycle: Front Door](#))

- [Reverse Garbage](#) is Australia's largest creative reuse centre based in Marrickville, Sydney. Businesses and residents are encouraged to donate their unwanted goods and materials which are put up for sale on their website. Follow the instructions in this link if you have goods suitable for resale (they will let you know if it's something they can take) [Donate goods – Reverse Garbage](#). Use this link if you want to browse what they currently have for sale [Shop Online – Reverse Garbage](#)
- [Recycling near you](#): Still unsure where to send your goods for recycling? Check out Planet Ark's website "Recycling near you" which provides information on a wide range of recycling options for materials such as aerosol cans, bar fridges, power tools and rubber tyres ([Recycling Near You](#))
- Don't forget that [mulching](#) the home garden, as well as keeping soil healthy is a good way to keep green waste like tree prunings and leaves on your property, minimising the fuel and energy required for trucks to transport green waste to a processing facility. Similarly, making your own [compost](#) turns green waste and food scraps into a resource rather than a liability
- [A worm farm](#) is another excellent way to recycle your kitchen waste into soil and reduce household organic waste from entering landfill. Worms turn leftover food scraps into a rich soil like material called worm castings, which is a great additive for gardens. Visit the Tumbleweed website for information on starting your own worm farm [Worm Farming Products | Tumbleweed](#)

4. [Sustainable housing](#)

Key points:

- **Use sustainable materials when building / renovating a home. Ensure correct orientation to take advantage of winter sun and summer shading.**
- **Improve energy efficiency of existing homes through insulation, draft sealing and heavy drapes.**
- **Shift from a high-consumption, high-debt lifestyle to one which is more self-reliant and neighbourhood focussed.**

A sustainable home reduces household costs due to lower energy bills and reduced maintenance costs. It features the following:

- Correct orientation to take advantage of the sun (for warming) and wind and shade (for cooling).
- Made with eco-friendly materials.
- Well insulated with thermal mass.
- Better indoor air quality and thermal comfort.
- Features solar panels and a battery to generate clean on-site energy.



For more information on sustainable housing, visit “Your Home”, the Australian government guide to sustainable homes [YourHome](#). The website includes extensive information on all aspects of sustainable housing from buying, building or renovating, to suitable materials, passive design and case studies ([Welcome to Your Home | YourHome](#)).

The [CSIRO](#) (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation) report that many Australian homes were built before the introduction of energy efficient standards in 2003 and are not suited to the current climate nor future extremes. To compensate, people rely on heating and cooling which is costly and damaging to the environment. Fortunately, these homes can be upgraded through renovation. Their analysis shows the first approach should be improving air tightness and insulation in roofs, walls and floors. Houses with lightweight walls (e.g. weatherboard) as well as a framed roof make up about half of housing stock and are among the worst performing.

Summary of approaches to improve energy efficiency of existing homes:

- Ceiling/wall/floor insulation, draft sealing, heavy drapes and roller shutters
- Additional layer of glass OR film on windows
- Electrifying hot water and cooking appliances can slash energy bills

[Australian homes can be made climate-ready, reducing bills and emissions – a new report shows how - CSIRO](#)

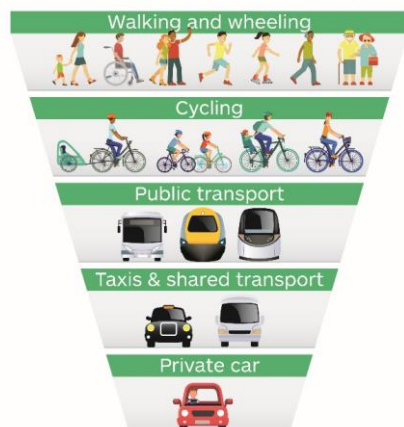
[Retrofitting Suburbia](#) by David Holmgren is a concept centred around transforming our suburbs from places of consumption into productive sustainable ecosystems. As the co-founder of permaculture (meaning “permanent culture” to encompass social and economic sustainability), David talks about modifying homes to better capture winter sun whilst blocking summer heat, adding insulation and sealing drafts to reduce reliance on energy. In the garden, he speaks of converting lawns into vegetable patches and orchards and including chickens or bees for nutrient cycling and food security, as well as composting and worm farms to convert household waste into a valuable garden resource. Finally, on a social level he talks about shifting from a high-consumption, high-debt lifestyle towards being self-reliant, and moving work and entertainment back to the home and local neighbourhood to reduce reliance on transport. [Retrofitting the suburbs for Sustainability](#)

5. Sustainable Transport

Key points:

- **Walk, cycle or use public transport where possible**
- **Upgrade to an electric vehicle**
- **Use rideshare / carshare services**
- **Write to your state transport minister asking for better transport options in your area**

Prioritising Sustainable Transport



Sustainable transport is an integrated approach to mobility systems using technology, infrastructure, planning, policy and behavioural change to minimise greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impacts. It ensures safety and affordability and improves energy and resource efficiency, thereby providing equitable access to all people in society. It includes walking and cycling networks, good public transport systems, electric road transport and clean fuels for shipping and aviation. As the transport sector is currently responsible for 13.7 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, sustainable transport initiatives play a crucial role in tackling climate change ([What is sustainable transport and what role does it play in tackling climate change? | UNDP Climate Promise](#)

What governments can do to promote sustainable transport:

- Improve public transport by making it safer, more reliable, better integrated and powered by renewable energy
- Integrated ticketing for multiple modes of public transport
- Safe and inclusive walking and cycling infrastructure
- Use technology to improve service quality and traffic congestion
- Create dense, mixed-use developments which encourage walking and reduce the need for long distance travel

What YOU can do to promote sustainable transport:

- Discover public transport options in your area. Rather than focussing purely on getting to your destination, enjoy the journey by watching the scenery and landmarks along the way.
- Discover your local neighbourhood through walking and notice the details you miss when driving. Marvel at the vibrant autumn colour changes in deciduous trees, the birds feeding on the nectar of native trees and shrubs, or the refreshing scent of eucalyptus from trees in local reserves after rain. Consider walking to your local shops or library.
- Discover the benefits of cycling as a healthy, fun, low impact exercise and mode of transport for people of all ages ([Cycling - health benefits | Better Health Channel](#)). Explore dedicated cycleways and shared paths in your state ([Maps & Rides | Tips & Resources | Bicycle Network](#)).
- When you are ready to upgrade, switch to an electric vehicle and discover their many benefits ([Electric vehicles - Australian Renewable Energy Agency \(ARENA\)](#)).
- Use ridesharing or carsharing to minimise single-occupancy vehicle use ([Top Benefits of Carpooling: Save Money & Go Green](#)).
- Email your State Transport Minister telling them more needs to be done to address climate pollution by promoting sustainable transport initiatives ([Help us ask for cleaner, cheaper transport | Climate Council](#)).
- Join the global movement and support “World Sustainable Transport Day”, celebrated on 26th November to reflect and make transport safer, more efficient, more sustainable and greener ([World Sustainable Transport Day](#)).

6. Other practical tips

Key points:

- **By working together and adopting a sustainable lifestyle, we can make a collective difference to improve the current and future state of the environment and reduce pollution**

Some final tips to assist readers on their journey towards sustainable living!

- Conserve energy by switching off unused lights and using energy efficient appliances
- Reduce single use plastics, opting for reusable bags, bottles and containers
- Choose sustainable foods by buying organic, seasonal and locally grown produce
- Practice minimalism by purchasing only what is necessary and prioritise durable, eco-friendly products
- Support ethical products, fair labour practices and local sustainability initiatives

