

## Eco tips

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## Food & drink

**Plastic.** We can all reduce the amount of plastic we buy with our food. Many retailers are taking this on board and some accept you taking your tupperware or bags. Don't forget the markets and farmers markets around Oxford where you can often purchase food without more plastic. Consider a veg box scheme or getting milk in glass bottles delivered to your door. And don't forget to take your shopping bags!

**Reusable cups.** Invest in a reusable bottle for water and a lidded cup for hot drinks while out and about. This saves on plastic bottles and paper cups.

**LOAF.** Have you heard of the LOAF principles? This approach involves making choices about the food we buy, based on it being Local, Organic, Animal-friendly and Fairly traded. If doing all four of these feels overwhelming for you, maybe try concentrating on one at a time for a month and see how you get on. For more information go to <http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/loaf-principles.htm> and <https://greenchristian.org.uk/resources/loaf/>.

**Christmas leftovers.** Try reducing food waste at Christmas by freezing portions of leftovers to eat up in January and boil up the turkey bones for stock to use in soups, risottos and casseroles.

**Cloth napkins.** If you have guests staying during the holidays, use cloth napkins instead of paper ones. Napkin rings, sewn initials or even different coloured paperclips can be used to show which is which so you don't have to wash them after every meal.

**Foodwrap.** Clingfilm, when disposed of, is bad for the environment. There are a number of alternatives available now, beyond just using a plate on top of a bowl for your leftovers. Check out

beeswax foodwrap, reusable plastic food covers, cloth sandwich bags, silicon lids and airtight containers with lids. For more information go to [www.beeco.green/top-cling-film-alternatives/](http://www.beeco.green/top-cling-film-alternatives/)

**Vegetarian/vegan.** The Living Lent challenge continues! Have you chosen to be vegetarian or vegan? If this feels too big a step, how about having 2 or 3 meat-free days a week during Lent? For help looking at how our food choices have an impact on the environment, visit [www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46459714](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46459714).

## Garden/nature

**Plant a tree.** Autumn is a good time to plant a tree. Look at joining local tree planting schemes (try Low Carbon Oxford North [www.lcon.org.uk](http://www.lcon.org.uk) or The Woodland Trust). Alternatively you could support organisations planting trees in rainforest regions where trees grow faster and will suck more CO2 out of the atmosphere. The Eden Project works with local people in Indonesia and other countries to replant forests.

**Garden action.** Earthwatch's Naturehood project in Oxford have identified three actions everyone can take this winter which will have the biggest positive impact on the wildlife around us.

1. Install houses for hedgehogs
2. Put up nesting boxes for sparrows
3. Provide homes for insects using leaf piles, log piles and compost heaps – i.e. keep a part of your garden messy, which sounds pretty easy!

**Birdwatch.** This weekend is the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch. You are invited to spend an hour sitting and watching which birds come to your garden today. Check the website ([rspb.org.uk](http://rspb.org.uk)) for a form to tick to record what you see.

**Wildlife-friendly.** To make your garden more welcoming to wildlife such as hedgehogs, frogs and insects, leave logs and sticks under bushes and in shady corners. Let your lawn grow longer around the edge or in one area to provide shelter.

**Grow your own.** It's a good time of year to sow some seeds for vegetables and 'grow your own'. Even the smallest garden can have pots or window boxes for herbs or lettuces.

**Untidy.** If you have a garden, it would really help the birds (as well as hibernating insects and hedgehogs) if you don't hurry to tidy it up this spring. Birds are hunting for nesting material from vegetation as well as for food from old seed heads. Overgrown shrubs and climbing plants also provide shelter and places to build a nest. If you already have a tidy garden, you could put some suitable nesting material in a spare hanging basket or a bush - natural materials such as straw, twigs, wool and moss are great!

**Hedgehog Street.** Seen any hedgehogs recently? The national Hedgehog Street campaign is all about connecting gardens to enable hedgehogs to keep off roads and find safe spaces to breed. All you need is a hole the size of a CD in your garden fences or walls. For inspiration, read about Kirtlington's Hedgehog Street <https://kirtlingtonvillage.co.uk/kirtlington-hedgehog-street> If you don't have a garden you can still report sightings of hedgehogs and find out how you can support the campaign at <https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/>

**No Mow May.** Did you hear about No Mow May? If you left your lawn unmown through this month, don't forget to join in with the Every Flower Counts survey 22nd-31st May by counting flowers to find out how many bees could be feeding on your lawn. If you missed it, you can find advice on leaving some or all of your lawn to flower for a month or more.

See <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/everyflowercounts/>

## Community/lifestyle

**Community gardening.** If you don't have a garden or access to a shared space, talk to your local school or team up with a friend or neighbour. For more ideas visit [www.naturehood.uk](http://www.naturehood.uk), [www.lowcarbonwestoxford.org.uk](http://www.lowcarbonwestoxford.org.uk) Together we can care for God's earth. <http://littlegreenspace.org.uk/features/Help-birds.html#:~:text=It's%20a%20good%20idea%20to,hanging%20basket%20or%20nearby%20bush.>

**Repair Cafe.** Do you have items that are a bit broken which you are tempted to throw out and replace? Check out the Repair Cafe by SHARE Oxford ([www.shareoxford.org](http://www.shareoxford.org)). Bring your items (such as bikes, electrical or sewing repairs) on a Sunday afternoon once a month and the volunteers will try to fix them. If you have a skill and time to share it, you could consider volunteering to repair items.

## Travel

**Alternative transport.** If you want to make a green New Year's resolution, consider walking, cycling or taking the bus to work or school. If you need to drive each day, check out car sharing or find a car club.

## Consumers/shopping

**Second Hand September.** Have you heard about Second Hand September? The fashion and clothes industry has an enormous carbon footprint. This month, challenge yourself to not buy any new clothes. Visit local charity shops, Oxfam online or repurpose a garment. <https://oxfamapps.org/secondhandseptember>

**Refills.** Cut down on plastic by refilling your bottles of washing up liquid, washing machine detergents, liquid soap and more. See [www.sesi.org.uk](http://www.sesi.org.uk) for local stocklists.

**Present wrapping.** Your Christmas shopping can be even more eco-friendly if you wrap presents with uncoated brown paper, newspaper or old maps, calendar photos or sheet music. If your gift requires batteries, get rechargeable ones.

**Borrow not buy.** If you need an item as a one-off or just now and again, consider exploring SHARE Oxford's Library of Things. Launched in 2018, this project enables people to borrow instead of buying

items needed only occasionally, such as outdoor, domestic, cooking equipment and more. [www.shareoxford.org](http://www.shareoxford.org)

**Greener deliveries.** If you don't need an item urgently when internet shopping, choose to collect from a local pick up point or store rather than request a specific delivery slot. It saves you money and saves gallons of fuel. If you need your items delivered, look out for the green van logo for greener supermarket delivery slots when ordering online, or try a food company which chooses its own delivery routes to minimise food miles and carbon emissions, such as local or regional veg box companies.

**Single-use plastic.** If you are trying to avoid single-use plastics there are now many packaging alternatives for toiletries, household products and food, including compostable plastic and cardboard. Some supermarkets sell fruit and veg loose or in reusable mesh bags.

## Recycling

**Symbols explained.** Are you confused by what can be recycled? For help understanding recycling symbols on packaging, go to [www.recyclenow.com/recycling-knowledge/packaging-symbols-explained](http://www.recyclenow.com/recycling-knowledge/packaging-symbols-explained)

**Supermarket plastic.** Did you know that some larger supermarkets will take your waste plastic to recycle, such as bread bags, magazine wrap and multi-pack wrapping. Also Walkers are recycling crisp, biscuit and chocolate wrappers via collection points across the country. Check the map to find your nearest point [www.walkers.co.uk/recycle](http://www.walkers.co.uk/recycle)

## Household

**Carbon footprint.** We know the choices we make every day have an impact on our planet. Have you ever tried to measure your carbon footprint? Check out Simeon's blog <https://livinglent.org/exploring-your-carbon-footprint/> and then try to take one of the surveys, such as <https://footprintr.me/>

**Paperless.** If you shop and bank online you could consider going paperless with monthly bills, bank statements, catalogues and special offers from your favourite shops. Check or uncheck the boxes in the small print to receive these things via email instead. It saves paper, ink and storage space.

**Water consumption.** Take a look at your water consumption. Use a suction cup shower timer in your shower to see how long your showers are, and then cut one or more minutes off when you shower.

**Switch off the tap.** We have been reminded to wash our hands thoroughly and frequently to prevent the spread of infections. If you can, switch off the tap while soaping your hands. Where possible, use a container to catch the excess water so you can reuse it on the garden, houseplants, in toilet cisterns and cleaning floors. For more ideas see <https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/astonishing-ways-to-recycle-water-at-home.php>