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Know Your Impact

Big changes start with small steps. A carbon or ecological footprint helps demonstrate how much your life has on earth systems. You can calculate your footprint and plan to reduce it in successive years by gradually shifting to sustainable practices and products.

Here are some things that you can do to live more sustainably:

Reuse your coffee grounds
U.S. coffee drinkers consume almost 3 billion pounds of coffee a year! Try adding your used grounds to your garden soil to replenish essential nutrients like nitrogen, calcium, and magnesium.

Break the bottled water habit
America's demand for bottled water requires more than 1.5 million barrels of oil annually. For water on the go, invest in a nontoxic, reusable bottle. (Besides, 40 percent of bottled water is just tap water!)

Bring your own bag
Each year, it is estimated that more than 500 billion plastic bags are used worldwide. Take reusable bags to the grocery store whenever possible.

Beat the heat, wash in cold water
Ninety percent of the energy used by a washing machine goes to just heating the water. If every U.S. household makes the switch to cold water for four out of five loads, together we could save $6.7 billion per year and keep nearly 50 tons of carbon out of the atmosphere.

Eat locally
The average food travels 1,200 to 2,500 miles from pasture to plate. Buying local food helps local farmers and reduces energy consumption. Visit a local farmer's market or co-op, or grow your own.

Junk your junk mail
Annually, the average American receives 41 pounds of junk mail. The production of junk mail in the United states consumes more than 100 million trees, enough to deforest the entire Rocky Mountain National Park every four months. Online resources can help you opt-out.

Downshift your driving
A quarter of the trips that Americans take by car are within walking distance. Each gallon of gas equals 20 pounds of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere. Whenever possible, take public transportation, carpool, ride your bicycle or walk.

Plant a tree
Trees can mitigate urban heat island effect, help prevent storm water runoff and add to property values. Plant a tree for these benefits, and also to create restful and peaceful settings that allow us to refresh our minds, relax and better manage the stress of everyday life.

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