

Talking Conservation

Drie Valleyen

Environmental Sustainability at Home

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The word sustainability/sustainable development was made popular in 1987 by Gro Harlem Brundtland in her commission's report, to the UN, titled "Our Common Future".

The UN's Brundtland Report formally introduced the concept of sustainable development, which highlighted the unsustainable nature of modern-day resource use and its impact on future generations. The report defined sustainable development as: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." However, all these reports, and Conferences of Parties or Conferences of Biological Diversity, like the one held in Johannesburg in 2006 and the most recent one in 2022 in Montreal, Canada seldom reach the man on the street and perhaps then fail to inform, educate and stimulate discussion and action from the broader community.

For the concept of sustainability to succeed, its disclosure or expression must become common throughout all aspects of society, and it should start at home. One of the most sustainable things to do at home is to start a legacy, or pass on a sense of responsibility for this wonderful world we inhabit. In the context of environmentalism, sustainability refers, in the broad sense, to any effort spent to reduce your personal and community environmental impact through an environmentally aware

lifestyle, and there is no one correct way to implement those changes.

For some, sustainability might be interpreted as to consume as little as possible, for others it might mean striving for a zero-waste lifestyle and recycling. But broadly speaking, living sustainably means much more than just consuming less and sorting your recyclables. Because it means different things to different people, it is important to decide what sustainable living means to you. The following list is not complete but will challenge you to live more sustainable. This might mean adopting some lifestyle changes, but it does not have to be hard.

Sustainable solutions are now easier than ever to incorporate into your life.

- 1) Save energy by using energy efficient lighting.
- 2) Reduce "phantom drain" energy consumption. Turn off lights and unplug appliances, 35% of energy used is wasted by standby appliances.
- 3) Invest in a rainwater catchment system. In a water scarce country such as ours it is not a luxury, but a necessity.
- 4) Take a time limited shower instead of a bath and make use of a water-sense shower head.
- 5) Set up a compost system. This is by far one of the best sustainability practices you can implement.
- 6) Plant indigenous, or even better, plants from our region.
- 7) Get to know your invader species and eradicate them or report them
- 8) Mulch your garden as it feeds the soil and keep it moist for longer.
- 9) Dry your clothes on the washing line whenever possible.
- 10) Use the dishwasher. A fully packed dishwasher saves water.

Use eco-friendly dishwasher tablets.

11) Use water-based paints when renovating. Oil based paints have harmful chemicals which could pollute our water and/or soil.

12) Ditch take aways, plastic and styrofoam containers dominate ocean plastic. Alternatively, take your own take away container.

13) Do not use plastic straws as they are among the top ten contributors to plastic marine debris around the world.

14) Do away with single use plastic wraps.

15) Use your own reusable coffee mug when ordering take away coffee.

16) Use eco-friendly cleaning products. Most surface disinfectants use chemicals that are slow to breakdown, threaten wildlife, and are toxic to you.

17) Change to reusable material or other eco-friendly diapers. Disposable diapers are the third largest single consumer item in landfills, being around 4% of solid waste.

18) Pick up your dog's poo in biodegradable waste bags. These dissolve in water over time resulting in no build up in landfills like their plastic counterparts.

19) Use recyclable shopping bags, both the environment and your pocket will benefit.

20) Drive less, walk more, it is the healthier option for you and the environment.

21) Give seed packets or an indigenous plant as a gift and volunteer for eco services in your community.

The generosity of our planet, and the resilience of our natural systems, is under pressure but we have the capacity to support and maintain it.