

Reduce: You Can Do It in 2019!

Did you have any New Year's resolutions related to sustainable living this year? It's easy to understand why many people don't make sustainable living resolutions - it's overwhelming! Wherever you turn, there's an article or a cleverly scripted Instagram post pointing out one more thing that the average American does that is bad for the environment. The extra spotlights on our unsustainable choices can make it seem like we can't do anything right and like doing something right will suck the fun out of life! It's true - in a world as connected as ours is, our choices are complicated. However, we only fail when we don't do anything because we can't do everything.

Let's take some of the complication out and focus on waste reduction in 2019. Recycling is still one of the best ways to deal with the waste we do produce, but we see the biggest positive impacts on the environment and its resources when we reduce how much waste we produce. So, let's try to make these four changes this year as a great start to living more sustainably and having fun while we do it! One of the best things about reducing your waste, is you save money by making upfront investments in reusable items.

1. **Replace dryer sheets with wool dryer balls** - Once you use up what's left of the dryer sheets you have, purchase wool dryer balls from your local farmer's market (some are open in the winter!) or by using a quick search online. Wool dryer balls work really well to remove static from your clothes. They last for at least 1,000 loads and are completely compostable when you're done with them. Additionally, they don't contain the toxic chemicals that dryer sheets contain.
2. **Make or buy cleaning rags** - Cut up some old t-shirts or purchase some reusable rags that you can wash time and time again after cleaning your house. Some microfiber rags only require water to clean glass, which reduces your chemical use as well. Having reusable rags will drastically reduce your paper towel use and purchase.
3. **Use reusable cloth grocery bags** - They've been around for years now, and most of us have them (find some at your grocery store or at a thrift store if you don't!). The problem for most of us seems to be actually remembering to use them. As a reminder, try putting all of your reusable bags in one reusable bag so that it's quick and easy to grab from the car and take into the store. If you drive alone most of the time, consider keeping the bag of bags on your front seat so it's in your eyesight when you get to the store. The reusable bags hold the weight of groceries a lot better and can be thrown in the wash if they ever get dirty!

4. **Wash with wrapped or unwrapped bar soap** - The bathroom might be the place in our houses that we use the most plastic. We have plastic bottles, plastic razors, plastic toothbrushes, plastic floss, and the list goes on. One way to reduce your waste in the bathroom is to switch from shower gel in a bottle to bar soap. You can find these unwrapped at health food stores and farmer's markets or wrapped in paper at your local grocery store. The paper waste is much less than the plastic bottle waste. Also, you can easily use bar soap on wash cloths instead of plastic shower sponges that get thrown away. Bar soap tends to be less expensive than liquid soap, and you can find some fun scents when shopping local too.

Even just four simple changes can make a big impact on how much waste you produce in one year. Try to make these changes in 2019 and see how your budget is affected too! Then, once you've conquered these, search for four more changes you can make. You are capable of helping care for our planet!