



SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Our earth's resources are being used much faster than they can be renewed meaning that we are not living in a sustainable way. The best possible way to combat the depletion and destruction of our resources is through the active practice of sustainable living worldwide. Sustainable living is about realising the interconnectedness of the environment and creating a balance between what we take from the earth and what we give back. Living in a sustainable way is important because it means that humans and the rest of earth's species may live long into the future. Sustainable living's guiding principles are stated by the IUCN as people sharing with each other (for example, ideas and information), being actively aware in caring for the earth and taking no more from nature than can be replenished. By reducing our waste through consuming only what we need, saving water and using less electricity and chemicals we can ensure a healthier environment for ourselves and our children into the future. By having clean air, drinkable water and fresh food we are also sustaining

our health and economies.

In order for sustainable living to work, we must embrace new and what might initially sound like radical management practices for Earth's resources. 'We' not only includes governments, industries, corporations and communities but also we as individuals. Our currently unsustainable society is not an inevitable outcome of being human: each day we choose and create, consciously or not, unsustainable practices that have led to the present situation.

We have enough knowledge, technologies and resources available right now to dramatically reduce our environmental impact and 'solve' many of our problems. In order to do so however, support of sustainable technologies as well as concern and personal responsibility are required.

Reference: IUCN (1991) Caring for the Earth, online at <http://www.ciesin.org/IC/iucn/CaringDS.html>

WHAT CAN I DO?

A sustainable society will depend on active changes to both our behaviour and culture as well as on environmental design and innovation. As citizens, we have the choice to be involved with both of these areas. What changes can we make to the way we live and work that would help achieve ecological sustainability? What changes are we prepared to make to the way we live and work that would help achieve ecological sustainability?

A good place to start addressing environmental problems is taking responsibility for, and looking for ways to minimise, our own impacts on the planet and others around us. Every positive action, no matter how small it may seem is important every action counts! For example-

- Practice waste avoidance through smart-shopping - buy only as much as you need, reuse and repair where possible, this saves our natural resources and reduces energy and water consumption.
- Help recover resources by recycling and reusing items where you can and buy recycled products: this creates a market for such goods.
- Reduce use of chemicals in the home and garden not only will you protect your health and those around you, you will reduce toxic waste and prevent dangerous chemicals from entering our waterways.
- Help reduce greenhouse gas emissions - leave the car at home and catch a bus, ride a bike or walk instead.
- Before buying, look into the policies and operations of the companies that make the food, clothes, cars and other consumables you purchase.

It is equally important to think about the communities where we live. Creating sustainable communities is a process where through learning, action and reflection, people can use their everyday experiences to address social and environmental problems and create a shared vision for the future. WE can all make a difference today!

MORE INFORMATION

- <http://www.urbanecology.org.au/ecocity2/sustainableliving.html> - an example of a community organisation's plan for sustainable living, including resource management and recovery, renewable energy, composting and water recycling.
- <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/support/living.htm> - a wide array of information and links on how to live sustainably
- <http://www.sustainableliving.org/> - The US based Sustainable Living Network provides worldwide links and information on sustainability
- <http://www.bloomington.in.us/~csl/index.html> - one community's focus on living sustainably and information on related projects
- <http://www.slf.org.au/> - The Sustainable Living Foundation is a community organisation that promotes, celebrates and practices the principles of sustainable living.