

52

easy things

You can do to live a more
planet friendly life

Preface

10 years ago Karen Heron had an idea to start a food waste composting business. She started off with a worm farm and soon realised that there was still too much food waste going into the trash. After an internet search, she came across a Japanese food waste composting method called “bokashi” and decided to start a bokashi food waste recycling business.

Gavin, her husband, joined the business a couple of months later.

Over the past 10 years, they have developed scalable food waste recycling technologies for households, businesses, remote bush lodges, and shopping malls across South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique, and in the Seychelles.

Their South African developed solutions include scaled up bokashi systems and automated in-vessel composting machines.

“52 easy things” celebrates Earth Probiotic’s 10 years in business and illustrates that every environmental positive action, large or small, is important and can “enrich earth”.

Introduction

The purpose of 52 Easy Things is to inspire positive action: doing one small thing today, will motivate us to do another next week, and in 52 weeks' time we'll be able to look back and go "wow, I have made a big and lasting difference!"

The environmental crisis in which we live can feel so overwhelming that it stops us from doing any good things at all. Our negative mindsets tell us that "little things won't have any impact on the big difference that's needed." But each positive action we take, no matter how small, has the potential to have a major impact!

The "Butterfly Effect" – the idea that the flapping of a butterfly's wings in Siberia can create a cyclone in the Mozambican channel - is the idea that small actions can have major effects.

Each of us can make a big difference by making changes in how we clean, where we shop, what we buy, if we recycle, how much water and energy we save, and how and what we garden.

Large numbers of people doing lots of small good things will have a massive positive impact.

For example, if each one of the 10 million Gauteng households saved half a liter of water every day, the entirety of that saving would be just under 75 million liters a month - enough water to fill 30 Olympic sized swimming pools each and every month!

Just because we are one person, or one family, or one community doesn't mean that you don't have the power to impact your world.

Starting to do one good thing, and inspiring others to follow, is the start of positive change.

52 "easy things" is a list of things that anyone can start doing.

We know that there are many more ideas that could be added to this list (trust us, we cut out a lot of good ideas for various reasons).

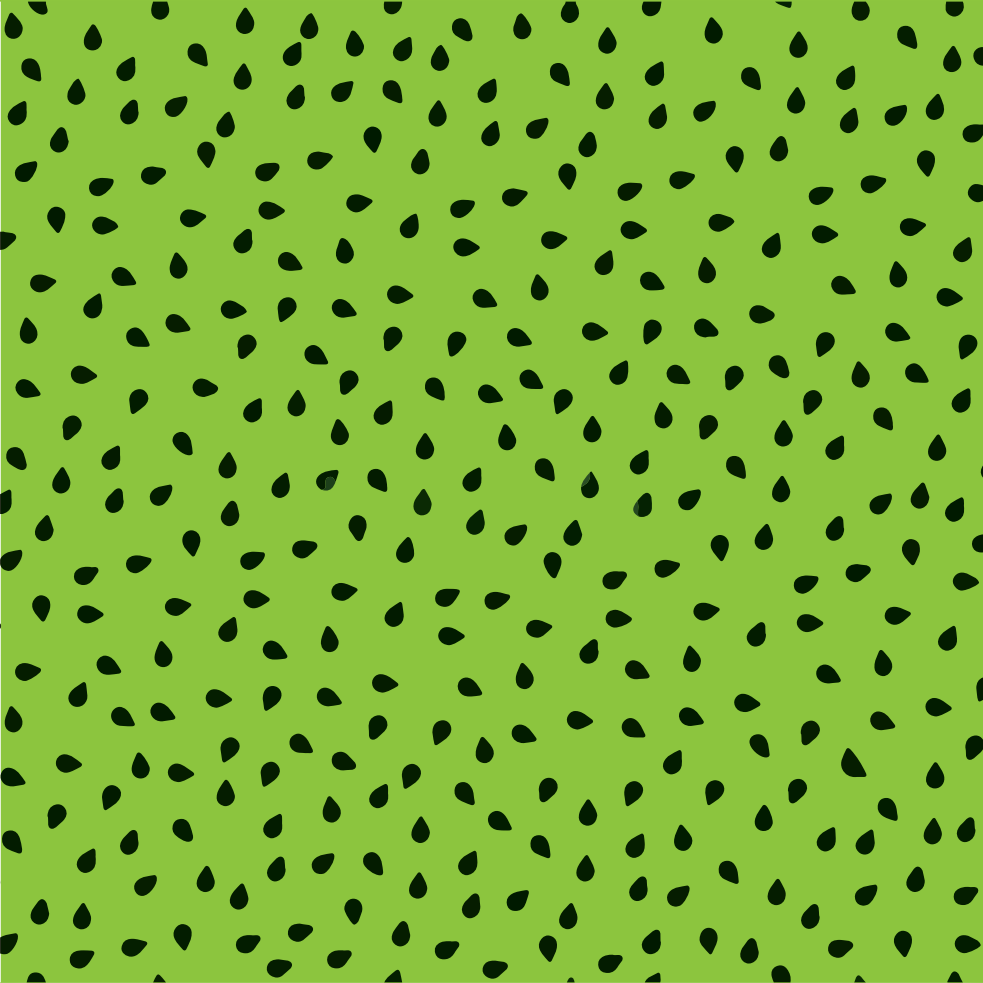
Perhaps there will be "52 More Easy Things" in the future!

But, today, we can start by doing just one of the 52 easy things!



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in your
garden

1

Start gardening.

Whether in a pot, a small space, or in a bag.

Gardening is good for your health: soil microbes have been shown to make us happy, while plants clean our air and produce oxygen.



2

Grow an edible plant.

You'll save money and carbon emissions by buying less. It's wonderful to be able to pick some fresh herbs or salad greens for your meal – and edibles are really not difficult to grow.



3

Use organic fertiliser.

Use organic fertiliser. This reduces your use of petroleum products. Organic fertiliser has all the good stuff to build healthier soil, and thus grow more robust and better tasting vegetables.



4

Plant heirloom seeds.

Heirloom seeds are neither genetically modified or commercially hybridised. The massive variety of seeds make growing fun, interesting and help keep our food system under our own control (vs. just buying the three or four varieties that the major seed and food companies want to sell us).
Be a seed rebel! Be seed independent!



5

Save and share your seeds.

The great thing about heirloom and open pollinated seeds is that the seed is as viable as the original mother plant.

Sharing seeds creates friendships and builds community food resilience.



6

Reuse old containers as seedling trays or pots.

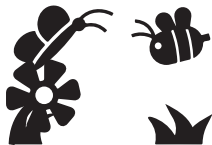
An old milk container is easily transformed into a seedling pot – lay it horizontally, cut a rectangle in the upward facing side, fill with healthy seedling soil, then plant.



7

Grow bird, bee and butterfly friendly plants.

Every little creature with whom we share our world needs a little help (and love). Rewild parts of your garden with indigenous endemic plants which will become a haven for the small creatures we know and love (and you will definitely encourage some visitors you've never seen in your garden before).



8

Stop using toxic chemicals in your garden and home.

They contribute to the demise of key species like bees (upon which our food system depends), frogs and toads as well as song birds. Glyphosate, known as Roundup, has been classified as a “probable carcinogen” by the World Health Organisation, while insecticides have been linked to bee colony collapse.



9

Compost all your garden and food waste.

When organic waste goes to a landfill it rots and produces methane (a greenhouse gas 22 times more powerful than carbon dioxide). Dumping food waste, wastes nutrients. Recycling organic matter puts these valuable food nutrients, microbes and organic carbon back into soil. Healthy soil grows healthy plants.



10

Protect your soil with mulch.

Mulch, mulch and mulch your soil by covering it with wood chips, leaf litter and even compost. Mulching helps retain soil nutrients, reduces water evaporation, stops soil erosion, restricts weed germination, and, over time, becomes incorporated into your soil as humus.





at the
shop

Shop with a list.

So you don't end up buying stuff you already have or don't really need. Also, men tend to buy on impulse more than women (this has been proven in research). So, think about who you're sending to do the shopping!



12

Buy loose fruit and veg and weigh them.

This way you are only buying what you need and are also reducing the amount of packaging from your shopping. Keep a mesh bag handy for these purchases.



13

Buy just what you need from the meat counter.

Don't forget to ask him or her to wrap your meat in paper which can be composted.



14

Support brands which minimise packaging.

Don't support businesses and brands that don't care about their packaging waste footprint.

Over packaged products are not only wasteful of scarce resources they, because of the added weight, also have a higher carbon footprint.

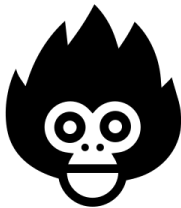


15

Don't buy products containing palm oil.

This industry is mostly responsible for the destruction of orangutan habitat in Indonesia and Malaysia.

There are better and more sustainable options available (but be careful, the manufacturers hide “palm oil” under lots of different names).



16

Ignore everything but the “use by” date.

The “sell by” and “best by” dates are just guides (and have been shown to radically increase food wastage).





in the
home

17

Use biodegradable cleaning products.

These days they are just as effective as chemicals for cleaning; and are water, people and animal friendly.



18

Find alternatives to single use plastic.

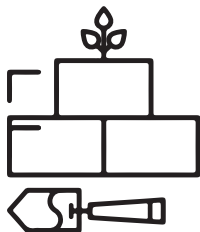
There are now a large number of alternatives available, including shopping bags, earbuds, drinking straws, cling wrap, food packaging and refillable soda stream bottles.



19

Make an eco-brick.

Stuff a bottle with your non-recyclable plastic, foils, nylon and other non-recyclable material which, no matter how hard you try, still finds a way to come into your home (this stuff is sneaky!).



52 Easy Things You Can Do To Live A More Planet Friendly Life

20

Support 'good' companies.

Those that are improving their environmental footprint and working to make the world a better place.

But keep a look out for greenwashing where companies use one green eco thing to hide the other bad things they do.



21

Install owl and bat boxes.

They help keep rat and mosquito populations down. Don't use poisons as these will inevitably kill an owl, your cat or dog, or even a local civet or mongoose. Poisons kills everything down the line and these toxic chemicals find their way into streams, lakes, and rivers, poisoning fish and other marine life.





at
work

22

Bring lunch in reusable containers to work.

Really really try to stop using polystyrene and other single use plastic containers.

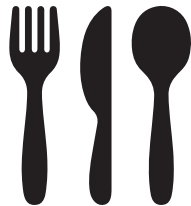


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23

Replace disposables in the office kitchen,

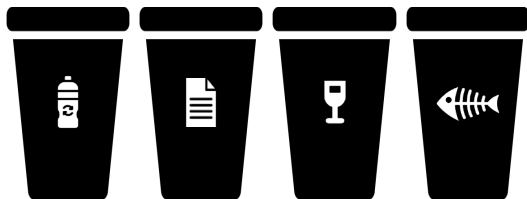
including plates, cups, and utensils with reusable items (they are cheaper in the long run).



24

Install clearly labelled recycling bins.

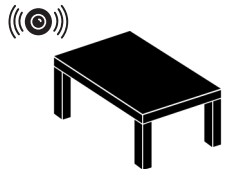
Including ones for compostable organic waste in the office, kitchen and coffee areas.



25

Save energy by installing movement sensors,

which will automatically turn meeting room lights off when they detect, through lack of movement, that no-one is in the room.



26

Install a water filter system in your office.

Get rid of plastic single use bottles. Installing a mains connected filtration system will not only reduce the amount of plastic going to landfill (or being dumped) but will also save money in the medium to long term.



27

Stop needless printing.

If you do print, ensure that you are using the double sided print setting. Recycle single printed sheets back into the printer for re-use.



28

Plantscape your office.

Plants boost oxygen levels and remove harmful pollutants such as carbon dioxide and formaldehyde from the environment (no more sick building syndrome).



29

Open the windows, turn off the aircon.

Air conditioners use a lot of energy (and always seem to be either too hot or too cold).

Opening windows has been shown to slow down the spread of viruses through one's office.





in the kitchen

30

Buy local and buy seasonal.

Buying local supports our local farming and agricultural sector. Buying local also reduces the carbon footprint of the stuff you buy (a seasonal avocado from Nelspruit is a lot less heavy on the environment than an out of season avo imported from California).



31

Reduce the amount of red meat you eat.

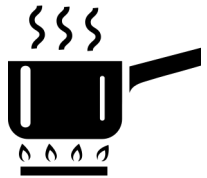
Beef, especially, has a very high environmental cost in terms of water use, methane production (cow farts), and deforestation (especially in the Amazon).



32

Reuse water from your cooking activities.

For example, boiling peas leaves nutrients in the water. Use this nutrient rich water for your animals or as liquid feed for plants.



33

Catch rinsing water in a tub.

Use this to water your plants.

We know people who use bloody fish rinse water to water their citrus trees (blood is full of iron).



34

Cover pans & pots when cooking.

Covering pans reduces cooking time. This saves energy and prevents grease splatters that would then require additional water, or cleaning products, to remove.



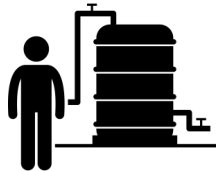


you and water

35

Install a rainwater tank.

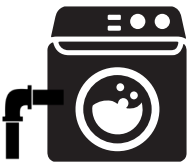
Water is precious and especially for us living on a continent which is susceptible to drought.



36

Catch greywater from your washing machine.

This is much easier than it seems and can be used to wash paving, outside walls, as well as for watering your lawn.



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37

Catch shower water with a bucket.

You can then use this water to flush your toilets or
to water ornamental plants.



38

Install a water saving shower head.

These actually really do work well and your shower (feeling wet) experience is really good.



39

Don't flush your toilet every time you use it

(or discard a tissue):

“if it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down.”

Obviously, use common sense.



40

Keep on doing the good things you were doing

when you were living with water restrictions due to a lack of rain (that time will definitely return).



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41

Maximise your washing machine loads.

If your washing machine doesn't have a 1/2 load setting, wash full loads of clothes instead of partial loads.

A partial load will use the same amount of water and energy as a full load.



42

Use a broom,

instead of a hose pipe to clean your driveway and other paved areas.



43

Fix that leak when you notice it.

Don't leave it for next week (which turns into next month and then next year). The cumulative impact of water leaks on our water supply is massive. Leaks cost you money.



44

Use a hose pipe to water your garden

instead of an expensive automatic watering system (which invariably turns on during a heavy thunderstorm).

When you manually water your garden you become more engaged with your plants, your soil and the creatures living in the habitats you've created.





**save
energy**

45

Start replacing old bulbs with new LEDs.

LED's are initially expensive but, by lasting longer and using less energy, will save you money in the long run.



46

Monitor your kettle boiling.

You'll be shocked by how much energy boiling a kettle uses. Think about boiling just the water you need. Keep boiled hot water in a thermos (vs. re-boiling the kettle).



47

Instead of the tumble dryer, use the sun.

This saves energy, your clothes will last longer, and they will smell better.



48

Insulate your home

and seal the gaps around windows and doors.





**you, your
family and your
community**

49

Use cloth nappies and wipes.

Not only will these save you money, your drains and our sewers won't get blocked (even "flushable" wipes still block our drains and sewer system).



50

Move away from single use menstrual products

and try menstrual cups and/or washable pads.



51

Don't litter. Pick up your trash!

The “but I’m keeping people employed” justification for littering is a fallacy: research shows that recycling creates seven jobs vs. maintaining one conventional trash collector job.



52

Use and visit your local and national parks.

Teach your family to love nature. Frequenting these public facilities ensures that they are looked after; unused parks become neglected and can be lost forever.

(We were first exposed to this idea at a talk by the South African consultant and weatherman Simon Gear a few years ago).



Be an activist!

Share ideas, talk about climate change, support community environmental action.

Give your time to clean ups and educational initiatives.

SUPPORT OUR YOUNG PROTESTORS.

Again, every small action you take will have a big impact as it is multiplied by thousands of people doing your **one easy thing.**



Acknowledgements

The idea for this 'book' came from a Facebook competition that Earth Probiotic ran in Mid 2020.

To enter the competition, participants were asked to post a picture of their positive environmental actions for seven consecutive days.

The hope was that other people would be inspired by these examples into taking action themselves.

The winner of the competition won a gardening bundle consisting of Earth Probiotic's instant raised bed garden and an Earth Bokashi composting kit; 10 packs of heirloom seeds from RAW; and a wonderful selection of Talborne Organic's organically certified fertilisers.

Actionable ideas were contributed by Hillary Basson,

Lianda Colquhoun, Danielle Fern, the Affodille Guesthouse, Candice Istace-Kelly, Tracy Michau, Megan Taylor and Abagael Hodgkinson (who was the prize winner).

“52 Easy Things” includes many of their inspiring ideas and actions.

The Earth Probiotic team (Karen Heron, Gavin Heron, Portia Madonsela and Amanda Dlamini), Tracy Burrows (from Out There Publicity) also provided valuable input, ideas and actions to the list.

The final draft was edited by Kelly and Chris Heymans, and Jurgen Lubbe who caught quite a few errors while proving valuable feedback.

Finally we need to thank Yvette de Jager (Eighth Day Branding & Design) for the layout of “**52 Easy Things**”.



52 Easy Things is a simple to-do list which can help you be more eco-positive in your daily life.

52 Easy Things seeks to inspire people to “just start doing good by doing one good thing”.

52 Easy Things was produced by Earth Probiotic to celebrate their 10th year in business.

info@earthprobiotic.com | www.earthprobiotic.com