



Let's give the earth

BY CHRISTY SEYLER

It's time to step up and take action. It's time to stop living as a disposable society and learn to reuse. It's time to make sure our children and our children's children can have a clean place to live. So this Earth Day I'm giving you four — yes, just four — easy things to incorporate into your active lifestyle that will start making a difference in everyone's life.

Step one

• Think before you buy

What the heck do I mean? Well, let me give you a few examples.

If you like beer and wine, buy locally. We have a ton of great local wineries you can help support and feel good about drinking. When you buy local, you reduce packaging and the fossil fuels required to ship heavy wine bottles.

If you are more of a beer drinker, again look for local beers, but also look for organic beer. Anheuser-Busch, Miller and New Belgium are all introducing organic products. The best would still be buying locally because you don't have all the shipping — or you could start brewing your own organic beer. There are a ton of different kits you can buy online. I

started making my own wine two years ago and haven't bought a bottle since (I even use my own home-grown fruit).

Are your cleaning products giving you headaches? Do you have to wear a mask when you use them? That can't be good for you or the environment, especially when you consider that whatever you put down the drain goes back into the water. In the last

few years, lots of earth-friendly products have come out and they are really worth taking a look at. Check out the buying guide at Funcoast.com for more information some kinder cleaning products.

Say you need new light bulbs and you go to the store and just pick up whatever's on sale. Stop, put them back and take a closer look at the selection of light bulbs. They now have CFL light bulbs (Compact Fluorescent Lamps), which may cost a little more money than the four pack that's on sale for \$1.99, but they will save you money when it comes to your energy bill. I looked up the lifetime of CFLs and Wikipedia.com said this: "CFLs typically have a rated lifespan of between 6,000 and

15,000 hours, whereas incandescent lamps are usually manufactured to have a lifespan of 750 hours or 1,000 hours."

One thing to be aware of with these light bulbs is that they have mercury in them, so if they break you need to be careful cleaning them up. You also cannot just throw them away (for the same reason).

There are lots and lots of earth-friendly products on the market now and more companies are stepping up to make them, too. I found a great shopping guide that can answer any and all of your questions, so make sure you visit thegreenguide.com/buying-guide. It's easy to use and has really, really good information that everyone can understand. It covers everything from carpets to pet food.

Step two

• Water usage

We live by a lake and sometimes it's really easy to forget to conserve water, but we need to. Water is one of our greatest natural resources and everything needs it to live. If we don't take care of it, we will lose it and that's

bad news.

So what can we do? Easy again. Take shorter showers, for one. I know sometimes it feels really good to take a long shower and that's ok every once in a while, but on average we really don't need to. Cutting 5 or 10 minutes off will save on water and electricity or gas (hot water heater). Also, don't let the shower run for 5 minutes before you even get in.

Washing your clothes in cold water instead of hot will also help save on those costs. And, while we are talking about washing our clothes, try to only wash full loads of laundry.

There's one other thing you can do. Do you let the water run while you are brusha, brusha, brushing? Well STOP IT. You don't need to do that — it's literally just water down the drain and extremely wasteful. Turn the water off and then turn it back on. You can also collect rainwater by using rain barrels. Our local parks and county have rain barrel workshops you can sign up for and all their events are listed on our event calendar.

Step three

• Recycle, Recycle, Recycle

I know you have heard it a thousand times



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(or maybe a million by now) but it's not just cans and paper. Here are a few surprising things you can recycle (for the complete list, visit squidoo.com/recycle-everything): old bricks, wood, old electronics, VHS tapes, BBQ grills, old batteries, flip flops, shipping Styrofoam, roof shingles, shaving cream cans and old screened doors.

We only have limited space on our planet and we need to keep the landfills empty of the things we can reuse. So please do your part and start to recycle.

Step four

• Start your own garden

Starting your own garden is fun and you get to eat all the yummy foods you grow. You don't need a lot of space because you can grow plants in containers inside or out (you can even grow them in a flower box). You can grow your own tomatoes, peppers, strawberries and much, much more.

For more on starting your own garden check out last week's story on "Get green — start a garden." You can also go to your local farmers market and get great produce if you can't grow your own. Trust me, it tastes better.

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