



**DIVERSE***city*  
community resources society



# Green Guide

## FOR NEWCOMERS

**Everyday tips everyone can do  
to help protect our planet**

A DIVERSEcity publication • June 2024

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



WITH SUPPORT FROM:





Learning to grow food with DIVERSEcity's Community Garden program.

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## Acknowledgements

Throughout this guide, we have gathered tips and resources from climate experts on how we can all do our part in reducing our environmental footprint. It's our goal to connect newcomers, as well as our staff, partners and community members, to valuable information on living green in our everyday lives.

We are so grateful to the David Suzuki Foundation's Living Green team for your partnership, guidance and information sharing. We are eager to amplify your messages of conservation and climate justice to the people and communities we serve.

Thank you as well to Surrey, BC-based A Rocha for your work in the local community, including presenting environmental awareness workshops at DIVERSEcity and sharing valuable content for this guide.

Finally, our gratitude goes to Dennis Leon, from the Kwantlen First Nation, for sharing an important Indigenous perspective to protecting the land.

We're in this together and we can all make a difference with changes to our everyday practices and by using our voices to call for change. Get more information on how you can take action here: [david Suzuki.org](http://david Suzuki.org).

## Why a Green Guide?

As a community-serving organization providing settlement, employment, mental health and other services, why is DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society doing a "green guide" for newcomers?

Our new Vision under our Strategic Plan 2024–2029 envisions "an inclusive, equitable and regenerative society that puts people and the planet first." And within our Values, we recognize our interdependence and responsibility for each other, the environment and future generations. So, the better question is: how can we do the work we do in building stronger communities *without* considering the environment?

Climate change may seem like a distant or intangible problem, but it's here. Extreme weather events, warmer temperatures, droughts, floods, poor air quality and more are affecting people and communities around the world. The potential for climate-related migration looms, and as an organization serving refugees and refugee claimants, we recognize this.

Protecting the planet can't be separated from the work we do; it needs to inform our approach, much like our commitments to inclusion, equity and

truth and reconciliation. In fact, social justice issues are deeply interconnected with the environmental movement. Racialized and Indigenous communities often face an inequitable level of environmental risk or disproportionate impacts from climate change. Environmental justice is about bringing attention to these issues and striving for fair treatment and participation of people of all races, genders, origin or income in the future of our planet.

There is much to do and it starts with taking action and raising our voices. As we learn and unlearn as an organization about being green, we want to share the knowledge we gather with the people we serve. We have done this through our longstanding Community Gardens program, and this *Green Guide for Newcomers* is another tool to help people meaningfully interact with the environment.

We encourage everyone to connect with nature, adapt to greener ways of living (which are often better for our health and finances, too!) and speak out on protecting our planet. Let's work together for a better future for people, for communities, for all!

## Going beyond the three Rs: reduce, reuse and recycle

By David Suzuki Foundation

You've heard about the three Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle); they have sent a useful message for years. But it's time to relook at them and give some other "Rs" some attention, too.

- **Reduce** to only what you need.
- **Reuse** what you already have before buying or consuming other products that serve the same need.
- **Recycle**, but recycle less. Recycling is better than sending waste to the landfill, but it still has environmental costs. It requires energy to collect, transport and process materials. And not all materials are easily recyclable. So avoid products with excessive packaging, reuse what you can, and focus on reducing and repairing items.
- **Refuse** what you don't need when you don't need it

(e.g., napkins, cutlery, straws, shopping bags, etc.).

- **Reclaim** and find new purpose for waste.
- **Revitalize** to extend an item's use or give it a second life before throwing it away or buying new.
- **Refurbish** old items in need of repair.
- **Rethink** your needs and ask yourself some questions. What's driving that purchase? Do you really need it? Can you make do with fewer things, such as ones with multiple functions?
- **Redesign** products, systems and lifestyles so that material objects have longer life cycles.
- **Remember:** every small change you make can have a big impact. The most important thing is to take steps, keep trying, be open to learning and make the journey toward green living!

# Living Green



## 15 suggestions to green your daily life

By David Suzuki Foundation

### 1. Walk, cycle, scooter or skateboard

Choosing active transportation for getting around (including your commute) will help you and nature. Active transportation increases your physical activity, improves your mental wellbeing and saves you money.

### 2. Take public transit (or carpool).

Regularly opting to ride the bus, take the train or carpool will save you money, lower your emissions, reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, and help out your community.

### 3. Choose a fuel-efficient car.

If you drive, the best vehicle for reducing your carbon emissions is electric. Next best is a plug-in hybrid vehicle. You can also join a car-sharing service like EVO to rent a hybrid for a day.

### 4. Fly less.

Flights are energy-intensive and depend on fossil fuels. The total carbon impact of a single flight is so high that avoiding just one trip can be equivalent to going (gasoline) car-free for a year. If you must fly, take direct, non-stop flights, take daytime flights, fly economy, stay longer and offset your flights.

### 5. Check for, and seal, air leaks in your home.

Air leaks along walls, windows and doors can account for up to 40 per cent of your home's heat

loss. By sealing air leaks, it will make your home more energy efficient and save you money on your heating bill. You'll also be cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

### 6. Avoid energy “phantoms.”

Unplug electronics when you're not using them. They use power and run up your energy bills even when turned off. Plug multiple devices into power bars you can switch off. Consolidate all devices that need to be charged onto the same power supply.

### 7. Be responsible for your electronics.

E-waste (i.e., anything with a plug, electric cord or battery) is the fastest-growing domestic waste stream. Consider your options for the entire life cycle of your electronic products and make responsible choices (read how in “Going beyond the three Rs” on page 3). Here's a location to recycle e-waste: [recyclemyelectronics.ca/bc/city/surrey](http://recyclemyelectronics.ca/bc/city/surrey).



## DID YOU KNOW?

In Canada, transportation accounts for 25 per cent of climate-polluting emissions.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Canada dumps about 725,000 tonnes of e-waste in landfills each year. Only 20 per cent is properly recycled. Canada also exports large amounts of e-waste to developing nations as “donations,” but the harms are the same.

### 8. Eat plant-based one day a week.

Skipping meat one day a week can reduce your annual carbon footprint as much as not driving a car for a whole month.

### 9. Read food labels.

Avoid overly processed foods. Local and organic products are always the best choice. They require less energy per unit of production, create less water pollution and soil damage and cause less harm to farm workers and wildlife.

### 10. Grow your own food.

Whether you have a backyard or windowsill garden, or access to a community garden, growing food saves money, avoids wasteful packaging and teaches valuable skills. (Learn more about DIVERSEcity's Community Gardens on page 9.)

### 11. Reduce food waste.

Avoid sending kitchen and yard waste to landfills by storing food properly, finding creative uses for food scraps, composting and making the best choices at the grocery store, for example, by meal planning and buying only what you need.

### 12. Use green cleaners.

Shop for green cleaners and make your own using household products like vinegar, baking soda, castile soap and lemon juice.

### 13. Talk to friends and family.

One of the most important things you can do about climate change is talk about it. Start with those closest to you. Invite your household to participate in “green” house rules.

### 14. Sign petitions.

Make it a regular habit to sign petitions asking governments to take climate action and protect nature.

### 15. Nudge the system.

Move to green energy, tell manufacturers you want products with minimal packaging and take other small actions that can lead to big change.



Participants in DIVERSEcity's learning Community Gardens program (above and below).

# Earth Connection



## An Indigenous perspective on our relationship with the land

**Dennis Leon, Tsatsomtun, from the Kwantlen First Nation, shares an Indigenous perspective on environmentalism. As Cultural Lead and Advisor at Len Pierre Consulting, Dennis has a longstanding relationship with the community, sharing Indigenous knowledge while helping revitalize culture, tradition and language. We are grateful to Dennis for his teachings for newcomers on how to connect with and protect the earth.**

### What does the land mean to you?

As an Indigenous person, we believe that we are part of the land; this is where we come from. We don't own it, but we have to protect it and keep the lands clean by using paper straws and earth-rendered materials avoiding microplastics. Perhaps the most important thing we have to take care of is the soil. The soil is the one that makes the plants grow.

I like to talk about earthing — where you take your shoes and socks off and go stand in the water or sand, or go sit by a tree, to feel that connection physically and be one with nature just for a little while, so our spirit feels safe and connected. Once people fulfill their spiritual needs, they can continue on with what they have to do to survive.

### Can you tell us more about that spiritual connection?

Our ancestors say that everything has *shwxéli* or spirit. Everything has a purpose, and so do we. We are all born with a gift, and we are sharing our gift with each other, and we learn from each other. Everything is spirited. We need to be connected more and love our surroundings because everything around us is beautiful.

We call ourselves people of the land. The people went wherever the food went and took only what they needed. People start to lose their connection and forget this because of material things [points to his cell phone], but we live on some of the most beautiful land on the planet. We are all connected.

### How can traditional Indigenous knowledge or practices inform newcomers on how to live better with the environment?

I would tell them to remember that everything in the soil, the dirt and the land is sacred. *So:lh tèmèxw* means land is sacred and anything that lives on it is sacred.

Anytime we want to learn something we watch the animals and what they do. This is how we learn what's good for us and what's not good for us.

We also need to lose colonized ways of thinking and let people who are non-Indigenous know that what happened in the past is not your fault, but the future now needs you.

### Where do you think people can start when thinking about being green?

It all starts right here [points to his mind]. A daily thing for me is meditating. I also do intermittent fasting, where you eat only when you need to. And using reusable items, trying to use earth-rendered materials whenever possible. I have this water filter jug that has a filter on it that allows the body to absorb 80 per cent more of the nutrients, and I also make my own sauces instead of going to the store and getting multiple bottles.

My family and I also use the bins and make sure we put the items in the right bin for compost, recycling and trash. It's all about unlearning and relearning, and then after that it becomes a part of your routine.

### What is the main message you would like newcomers to take from this conversation?

Have an open mind and an open heart about Indigenous teachings. It's not just for us, it's for everybody. Everybody has *shwxéli* "spirit" "inside them. In my language we say, *letsa maht* (one mind), *letsa thala* (one heart), *letsa shwxéli* (one spirit). What we all need to do is have our mind and our heart and our spirit all in the same place.

“ Have an open mind and an open heart about Indigenous teachings. It's not just for us, it's for everybody. Everybody has *shwxéli* 'spirit' inside them. ”



Dennis Leon from the Kwantlen First Nation.

# Nourishing Nature



## Eat for a more stable planet

By David Suzuki Foundation

The decisions we make about food can have a profound effect on the environment. Here are four simple ways you can make your diet more climate-friendly.

- **Eat more meat-free meals.** Animal agriculture produces huge amounts of greenhouse gas emissions, consumes massive volumes of water and causes a lot of pollution.
- **Buy organic and local whenever possible.** The average meal travels 1,200 kilometres from the farm to plate. Food grown locally produces fewer transportation emissions, is fresher and supports local farmers. As the distance food travels decreases, so does the need for processing and refrigeration to reduce spoilage.

- **Don't waste food.** Besides being a waste of money, time, energy and nutrients, unused food in landfills is one of the main sources of greenhouse gases.
- **Grow your own.** If you don't have space to grow your own food, join a community garden. DIVERSEcity has two community gardens in Surrey, BC, where newcomers can learn to grow healthy food organically.

[DIVERSEcity's Hazelnut Meadows Community Garden \(140 Street and 68 Avenue\) has 80 plots, a greenhouse and an orchard. Our Lionel Courchene Growing Roots Garden \(9839 155 Street\) has 21 plots, a community composting bin and tool shed. Learn more at \[dcrs.ca/gardens\]\(https://dcrs.ca/gardens\).](#)



DIVERSEcity Community Garden Coordinator Sasikala Sridar (right) helping newcomers plant vegetables.

## Connect with nature

By David Suzuki Foundation

Scientists and researchers agree: time spent in nature makes us happier, healthier and less stressed!

Evidence shows that being regularly immersed in a natural setting, like a park, wetland or woodlot can reduce blood pressure, anxiety and stress levels and boost immunity. It even makes us nicer and more empathetic, with more meaningful relationships and increased community involvement.

Here are a few ways to connect with nature.

- **Practise stress-relieving strategies** such as deep breathing. Deep breathing brings more oxygen into the body. It stimulates blood flow, jumpstarting your natural ability to restore and rebalance. It lowers stress, relieves aches, helps alleviate chronic pain, strengthens abdominal and intestinal muscles, improves sleep, and reduces fear and anxiety.
- **Practise forest-bathing.** We can't live without trees and forests. They provide oxygen, food, wood and other resources, and reduce carbon. Forests — and all natural spaces — are also beneficial for our physical and mental health. Numerous studies illustrate how much forest walks can do for heart and respiratory health, immune system function and lowering stress levels.
- **Spend at least 30 minutes a day with nature.** Savour the sunset from a window, listen for birdsong or dine al fresco!
- **Encourage kids to go outside.** The average North American child spends less than 30 minutes playing outside each day, and more than seven hours in front of a screen. Yet research shows time outside makes children healthier, happier and smarter. The message is clear — kids need nature! Teach them about environmental responsibility, too.
- **Visit a "Healing Forest."** This nationwide network of green spaces is dedicated to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and promotes health, healing and community. Learn more here: [davidssuzuki.org/take-action/act-locally/healing-forests](https://davidssuzuki.org/take-action/act-locally/healing-forests).
- **Take the One Nature Challenge.** Kickstart a nature habit that lasts all year — spend 30 minutes a day in the great outdoors for 30 consecutive days. Sign up at [davidssuzuki.org/take-action/act-locally/one-nature-challenge](https://davidssuzuki.org/take-action/act-locally/one-nature-challenge).

Remember to respect nature. When out and about, don't forget to carry out all items you bring and refrain from littering. Just as nature supports us, let's reciprocate this favour by being mindful!



### DID YOU KNOW?

Canada is the top per-capita energy consumer in the world! By becoming more energy efficient, you pollute less and save money on your energy bills.

# Energy & Water Savings

## Easy tips for saving energy

By A Rocha Canada

A large amount of the carbon dioxide produced in the world comes from domestic energy use. To reduce our impact on the environment, we must think about the energy we use at home and about the lifestyle changes we can make. Small changes can make a big difference. Here are some easy things you can do to save energy.

### Switch things off

Turn off and unplug lights, computers, games consoles, mobile phone chargers and more when not in use. Always switch off lights when you leave a room!

### Heating efficiently

Turn your thermostat down. If you reduce your room temperature by one degree, you can cut your heating bills by up to 10 per cent.

If you are feeling cold, then put on an extra sweater. And reduce temperatures in any unused rooms to a

minimum. If you have a programmable thermostat, you can set your heating and hot water to come on only when needed.

In winter or during cooler weather, open drapes and blinds during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat your home, and close them at night to reduce the chill you may feel.

In summer or during warmer weather, close drapes or blinds to keep it cooler.

Also, insulate your home well. You can use weather stripping or caulking around doors and windows and fix draughts from doors, windows and more.

### Use less water

Have a shower (try to stick to five minutes!) instead of a bath. It not only saves on water, but also on the energy used to heat the water.

Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth, shaving, lathering your hands or washing your face. Make sure taps are fully turned off when not in use and fix leaking taps.

Install water-saving shower heads and low-flush or dual-flush toilets.

When washing clothes or dishes, fill up the washing machine or dishwasher to the maximum; one full load uses less energy than two half loads.

### Use energy-efficient products

Use energy-saving light bulbs. They last up to 10 times longer than ordinary bulbs. And choose energy-efficient appliances including refrigerators, washer and dryers (look for the ENERGY STAR label).

Consider installing a tankless water heater — they heat water on demand so no stored water needs to be continuously heated.

**Ready for a bigger change? Reduce or eliminate fossil fuels from your home by replacing your furnace for a heat pump and your gas water heater with a heat pump water heater. You can also swap your gas stove for an induction stove and your gas fireplace with an electric one.**

## Water wise

By David Suzuki Foundation

Canada is known for its abundant freshwater, yet many regions and communities face significant water-related issues. Not everyone here has equal access to water.

Inadequate access to clean drinking water on Indigenous reserves and remote communities in Canada is an ongoing and pressing environmental and human rights issue that's deeply intertwined with the legacies of colonization, dispossession and discriminatory policies.

Increased intensity of droughts and floods are ramifications of climate change and have also affected water levels and water infrastructure for many communities in Canada.

It's crucial for all Canadians to conserve water as part of daily green lifestyle habits, even if your community isn't affected by water advisories or facing water scarcity.

Water is a finite resource. Conserving it ensures its availability for future generations.



# DIVERSEcity

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DIVERSEcity Directors  
Kirsty Peterson and  
Lenya Wilks helping  
out at a City of Surrey  
community treeplanting  
event.

**Work with us**  
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DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society recognizes that our work takes place on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territories of the SEMYOME (Semiahmoo), ǫ́íćǎý (Katzie), kʷikʷǎłǎm (Kwikwetlem), ǫ́ʷa:ńłǎń (Kwantlen), qiqéyt (Qayqayt), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and the sćáwaθǎn məsteyǎxʷ (Tsawwassen) First Nation. The knowledge and traditions of these communities are significant in providing context to the work we do and DIVERSEcity recognizes the importance that reconciliation has in building truly inclusive and strong communities.

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