



Simple Steps. Big Impact

A Home Checklist



Home

OUR MOST INTIMATE
OPPORTUNITY FOR
POSITIVE IMPACT

As caretakers of our land, our homes, and our families, we can make choices in design projects and everyday habits that will support sustainable and environmentally sound ways of living that are within reach.



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ESSENTIALS

5 ESSENTIALS FOR A RESILIENT WORLD



Replenish our Resources



Reconnect to Nature



Respect all Life



Revamp our Spending



Regreen our Planet

Five Essentials for a Resilient World



CONSIDERING OUR CHOICES

As you think about the changes you'll make, focus on the Five Essentials for a Resilient World:

- Reconnect to Nature
- Respect all Life
- Regreen our Planet
- Revamp our Spending
- Replenish our Resources

Read our [Introductory EnviroTip](#) for a full explanation of each of the Five Essentials.

How to Use This CHECKLIST

1. **SAVE THIS PDF TO YOUR COMPUTER.** File is not interactive when opened in a phone or web browser.
2. **OPEN WITH ADOBE ACROBAT READER.** Don't have it? Download for free [here](#).
3. **RATE THE FOLLOWING AREAS ACCORDING TO WHAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY DOING, THEN CIRCLE THE STEPS YOU WANT TO WORK ON.**
4. **SAVE FILE.**
5. **REPEAT STEPS 3 & 4 EVERY MONTH OR SO TO NOTICE THE IMPACT YOU'RE HAVING FOR A HEALTHY, NATURE-CONNECTED LIFE!**

3 = I DO THIS FREQUENTLY

2 = I DO THIS OCCASIONALLY

1 = I BARELY OR RARELY DO THIS

0 = I NEVER DO THIS

? = THIS NEVER OCCURRED TO ME



GENERAL TIPS

3 = I DO THIS FREQUENTLY **2** = I DO THIS OCCASIONALLY **1** = I BARELY OR RARELY DO THIS
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Include at least one houseplant, picture, or object from nature in every room.

Eliminate single-use packaging, straws, napkins, and beverage containers—especially plastics and polystyrene.

Avoid buying anything new if you can borrow it, find it second-hand, re-imagine it from some other waste product, or decide you don't need it at all.

Unplug all electrical appliances that don't need to be plugged in all the time.

Re-imagine your outdoor space—all of it—as a delightful habitat for your family as well as the family of non-humans who make their home in your yard.



Ask yourself if each decision is just for the human aesthetic or could it be expanded to include the needs of birds, bees, butterflies, and soil? Set the mower to the highest level and mow as seldom as possible.



Plant beneficial gardens—either native wildflowers & shrubs or vegetables—in place of all that grass.

Only buy plants that are adapted to your weather patterns and don't need extra water or chemicals to thrive. See the resource list below.

Buy plants that have not been treated with pesticides, especially neonicotinoids, and don't use chemicals in your yard.

Plant for all seasons to provide habitat, host plants, and food sources as well as blooms.

Intentionally create shelter and habitats like frogscaping and birdhouses.

RESOURCES

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Kansas City Resources: Metropolitan Energy Center's [Project Living Proof](#) demonstration home

Mid America Regional Council's [RecycleSpot.org](#)

Evergry & Spire's [Energy Savings Program](#) for Missouri customers LED light bulbs throughout and [Energy Efficiency](#) options

Shopping and living without single-use packaging: [ZeroWasteKC Facebook page](#) or [ZeroWasteNerd.com](#)

Gardening for pollinators, birds, healthy water, clean air: [Deep Roots KC](#) (formerly Kansas City Native Plant Initiative), [GrowNative](#), [Missouri & Kansas Extension Master Naturalists](#), [Burroughs Audubon Society](#), Bridging the Gap's [Heartland Tree Alliance](#) and [Native Plants](#) program

Growing food: [Cultivate KC](#), [Food not Lawns](#), [Giving Grove](#)

Composting: [Missouri Organic](#), [KC Can Compost](#), [Compost Collective](#)

INTERNET RESOURCES

Health & beauty and cleaning products: [Environmental Working Group Better World Shopping Guide](#)

Find a location where you can drop off your compost or offer to let others share their compost with you: [ShareWaste](#).

Sierra Club's [Ask Mr. Green](#)

Purchase the highest-rated [Energy Star](#) appliances that you can afford.

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RESILIENCY TOOLS

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Take it simply, one change at a time. Read through our library of [EnviroTips: Simple Steps. Big Impact](#) for inspiration and explanation of why certain steps are important.

Enlist the whole family in making the decisions and act first on those where there is a consensus; speak from your heart about why it's important to you.

Print this list then check off your upcoming goals and highlight those that you've accomplished.

Create a timeline for implementing various changes.

Assign a family member to help keep you accountable!

For the more difficult changes, see what compromises you can make.

Plan on regular review and celebrations to acknowledge your positive impact.

Donate to local and global charities that are protecting or restoring what you love.

Volunteer regularly with local environmental organizations and know you're making a difference.

Join a supportive organization or community that shares your nature-aware heart.

Forward this list to everyone you know and include a personal note about why this is important to you!

Publish your adventures on social media and talk about it with others—this is a really important step. You'll be teaching others and encouraging them to make their changes too.



OUTDOORS

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Plant native wildflowers and shrubs between formal hedges or in open areas along a fence line to provide nectar, pollen, and nesting habitat for native pollinators.

Gradually replace non-beneficial plants like Stella De Oro daylilies, burning bush, and liriopé with native perennials and shrubs.

Remove non-native ornamental grasses and shrubs that are designated as noxious, invasive, or aggressive in native areas.

Replace non-native annuals in your decorative pots with chemical-free nectar plants or herbs.

Plant herbs in large pots. Many herbs are host plants for a variety of butterflies and moths: fennel, dill, parsley (black swallowtail butterfly), tomatoes (hummingbird moth), thyme (lacewings—a beneficial insect).

Plant native trees and create an understory beneath the larger trees with native groundcovers and shrubs.

Remove rock-covered beds and heavy wood mulch and replace them with open dirt, native ground covers, and shredded leaf mulch for habitat for native bees.

Place signs from organizations like Grow Native, Monarch Watch, and others by the street: “Native Plant Garden” and “Leave the Leaves”.

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Plant native ground covers including clovers and violets to gradually replace much of the lawn for pollinator benefit (especially bumblebees) and to add nitrogen to the soil. Mow less often than usual to give the clover a chance to bloom.



OUTDOORS continued

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Stop mowing a portion of the back yard to allow an urban rewilding of a native meadow. It will take 2-3 years before it comes into its own as a fully mature garden requiring almost no watering or maintenance except to keep tree seedlings or invasive shrubs from sprouting. Native wildflowers and grass meadows absorb as much or more carbon (CO₂) as a forest of trees!

Seed bare spots with native wildflower and grass seeds; shop local native plant sales to fill in empty areas.

Edge with a natural garden edge such as logs or rocks. A clean garden edge makes a wild wildflower meadow look less unkempt.

Put out bird feeders and a birdbath—clean regularly with baking soda and dish soap and rinse well. Get a solar or electric birdbath heater to provide water all year round.

Install hummingbird feeders and keep them clean and full (¼ cup pure cane white sugar—NOT organic! Mix well in 1 cup of boiling water.)

Provide butterfly bubblers (shallow water containers with sand). Butterflies sip the water and get minerals from the sand.

Install compost bins for kitchen scraps and yard cleanup—one to use currently and one to just biodegrade. Consider registering your compost bins on the [ShareWaste.com](https://www.sharewaste.com) site and so others can bring their food scraps to add to your bins.

Create a brush pile in an out-of-the-way spot for fallen branches and twigs from tree/shrub trimming. These make a good cover for birds, and as they decompose they will provide habitat for insects and improve soil quality.

Save/store autumn leaves for use in your compost pile or as cover around shrubs and trees. Don't mow/shred them until the next spring since they host overwintering pollinators like the Luna Moth. After these critters emerge in the spring, last year's leaves can be shredded.

Install rain barrels to capture rainwater from a downspout (a 1" rain on a 1000 sq. ft. roof created 600 gallons of water!) Reduces flooding and erosion and prevents chemicals from the roof from going into the streamway system.

Year one: rewilding the backyard.



BEDROOMS

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Cover air vents in unused rooms.

Install window treatments to block cold air in the winter and heat/sunlight in the summer.

Keep curtains open to let in natural light and to see nature outside the window.

Open windows as much as possible to let in fresh air.

Decorate with pictures and objects from nature.

LIGHTING

Use sensor lights that shut off automatically.

Use bulbs that cancel out blue light.

Bring in a salt lamp or large rocks for grounding.

Have at least one house plant in the room. See [10 Best Air Filtering House Plants, According to NASA](#).

Purchase organic cotton, hemp, bamboo, and other sustainable mattress, sheets and bed linens.

Use wool rugs to help filter and purify the air.

Keep toys, books, and clutter in covered boxes or glass case in the closet to control dust.

Do not use chemical scents in the room and consider the impact of essential oils and natural scents.

Use natural fibers for pajamas.

BATHROOMS

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WATER

Install low-flow fixtures.

Set max temperature for hot water (120-130 °F), heated floors, etc. to reduce energy usage.

Install dual-flush toilets and/or a bidet.

Consider a water purifying showerhead. This limits the build-up of harsh mineral water deposits in your shower and is kinder to your skin/hair.

Turn off the water when brushing teeth or shaving.

Reduce the amount of time you spend in the shower (5-minute challenge).

Open a window to the outside so steam can escape naturally.

Use 100% post-consumer-waste or other sustainable toilet paper & tissues.

Buy organic, fair-trade beauty and health care products or make your own.

Purchase the largest size possible and use refillable/decorative bottles of health and beauty products.

Buy cotton swabs with wooden stems so they can be composted.

Purchase eco-friendly toothbrushes—replace the brush head only. Recycle heads and handles with the manufacturer; use recyclable heads from Oral-B.

Purchase packaging-free toothpaste tablets or make your own.

Consider using eco-friendly floss with a compostable, recyclable paper container and vegan wax.

Purchase organic cotton, hemp, bamboo, or other sustainable towels.

Reuse towels. Hang them up to air-dry between uses.

Use fabric guest towels rather than paper.

Use fabric shower liners rather than plastic; open shower curtains fully to dry after each shower.

HOMIE OFFICE

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Print on both sides of the page; print 2-up on the page; or don't print at all.

Use 100% post-consumer waste recycled or other sustainable paper.

Print business cards and promotional materials using an environmentally-conscious printer. In Kansas City: [PrintForest](#).

Put power strips on all electronic equipment so it can all be turned off with one switch.

Recycle printer cartridges.

Recycle gently used or extra office supplies with [Scraps KC](#). Check their online list of items.

Recycle electronic equipment at county recycling days or take to [Connecting For Good](#) (formerly called Surplus Exchange).

Purchase office equipment and supplies from a resale shop like Scraps KC or Connecting for Good.

Use [Ecosia](#) for your internet browser (instead of Bing, Google, MSN, or Yahoo).

Host websites with a sustainable hosting company such as [GreenGeeks.com](#).

Use the night-time setting on your computer monitor to reduce blue light emissions in the evening that interferes with your natural circadian rhythm.

Never create a working office space within your bedroom. This interferes with your ability to relax and sleep.



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Consider a standing desk, alternative for desk chairs such as yoga balls, or ergonomic chair designs.

Use strategic task lighting (such as desk lamps, under cabinet lighting LED 5000) to improve direct lighting while softening overhead lighting (leaving off and using only daylight + lamp light), opting for daylight whenever possible.

KITCHEN

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Choose cleaning products that are eco-friendly for dish soap and dishwasher soap. Use baking soda, vinegar, and Bar Keeper's Friend and other natural cleaning products.

Purchase an Energy Star Dishwasher; only run it when it's full.

For hand-washing dishes, fill the small sink or a small tub with soapy water and wash it all in there, then rinse rather than letting the water run the whole time you're washing.

Reduce or eliminate the use of paper towels and paper napkins by using old fabric and towel scraps for cleanups. If you do use paper towels or napkins, opt to purchase ones that are made from 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper.

Gradually add more organic, fair trade, and locally-grown food to your shopping list.

Compost kitchen food waste, non-meat food scraps, pizza boxes, and paper towels. Compost at home or connect with a local curbside compost pickup service.



LAUNDRY ROOM

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Purchase laundry products that are organic and non-harmful to the environment.

Purchase laundry products in bulk to reduce packaging or make your own. Optional: [Eco Egg](#) found in Grocery Stores reduces the need for laundry detergent with a refillable egg container filled with minerals.

Purchase clothes washer and dryer that are highly-rated Energy Star compliant and use the eco-friendly settings.

Run larger loads to save water; keep the filter clean.

Reduce or eliminate using the clothes dryer whenever possible. Hang up wet items that aren't wrinkled—like polyester shirts, underwear, and kitchen towels. Everything else can go into the dryer for just a few minutes to get the wrinkles out, and then hang them up immediately to finish drying. If towels are too rough, dry them a few minutes longer by machine.



GARAGE

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Recycle special items or create a special storage area in the garage or basement for these items.

Clean and reuse plastic bags. Some plastic wraps can go in the bins at the entrance of most grocery stores to be recycled into something else, such as [Trex](#) decking.

Glass is recycled in the purple bins with [Ripple Glass](#). You can leave the labels and metal or plastic lids on the bottles. [Here's the list](#) of what they accept.

Subaru dealers will take disposable cups, lids, and straws, candy and snack wrappers, and coffee and creamer capsules—even Keurig coffee pods. These are sent to [TerraCycle](#) for recycling.

Batteries are recycled at hazardous waste collection sites and many of the bigger hardware stores and battery stores.

Plastic tubs and containers can be reused for craft projects, potting plants, and starting seeds.

Don't throw out dirt and dead leaves from house plants. Instead, empty them into the compost pile.

Some pet rescue organizations will take empty prescription bottles and freezer packs to use for their animals.

Paint, cleaning products, and other chemicals can be recycled at hazardous waste centers. Watch for hazardous waste drop off events in your city or county.



Take your reusable shopping bags to ALL stores—not just the grocery store.

If you forget your bags, ask yourself if you really need a bag. If you do need one, it's better to get paper bags rather than plastic from the store. Then reuse them for anything you can think of!

Use the most compassionate ways you can find to remove insects and critters from inside the house. If you can take them out alive, all the better. The best way to remove a spider or other insect is to get a drinking glass (clear) and slowly put the glass over the spider. Then get a piece of stiff cardboard and gently slide it under the edge of the glass, being careful not to trap the spider's legs. Once the cardboard covers the opening of the glass, hold the cardboard down tightly and carry the spider outside to be released. Feels good to save a life!

DINING OUT

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Carry reusable hot & cold beverage containers and use them whenever the only other choice is plastic or paper cups. Compostable is only beneficial if it will actually be composted.

Strive to live with the motto “No Straws/No Styrofoam”. If it feels comfortable for you, let the server or restaurant owner know that you care.

Carry a reusable straw, silverware, and cloth napkins for use at restaurants that use plastic silverware or paper napkins.

Take a reusable carryout container for leftovers or carry-out. According to the KCMO restaurant inspector’s office, as long as the customer’s containers are not brought into the commercial kitchen, clean personal containers are fine. Place your order and ask that they serve your items on a regular plate and bring it to your table. Then you can put the food into your containers to take home.

When you order carry-out ask (and check again when you pick it up!) to eliminate any plastic silverware, napkins, condiments, etc. that you’d normally just throw in the trash.

Support restaurants that are locally owned and that purchase food from local farmers and growers.



TRAVEL

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Drive vehicles that use the least amount of fossil fuels and plan everyday trips to save miles. Note: Air travel is one of the big contributors to greenhouse gases. If you can find another way to travel, you'll make a big difference. If you can't, consider purchasing carbon offsets for the environmental impact of your flights at sites such as <https://united.conservation.org/>.

Use public transportation whenever possible.

Rent a hybrid or electric vehicle when you travel.

Bring home recycling and food waste if your hotel doesn't take care of it.

Search for "green travel tips" on the internet to learn more ways to travel with a minimal footprint.

Book hotels on [Ecosia's new travel portal](#) and plant trees with your booking.

Shop local and support local restaurants when you travel.



Final Thoughts

EVERY SIMPLE CHANGE YOU MAKE WILL HAVE A VALUABLE IMPACT.

Yes, it may take more time and a bit more thought and planning than just following habits you've lived with for many years, but as you shift into a level of deep connection to that which is healthiest for the planet—for this glorious Earth—you may be surprised at how uplifting it feels.



EnviroTips brought to you by
THE RESILIENT ACTIVIST

OUR VISION

The Resilient Activist envisions future generations living in a healthy, diverse, and regenerative environment.

We believe that the world needs environmental stewards who have the resiliency to confront these difficult times with optimism and hope for the future.

OUR MISSION

The Resilient Activist offers support for those who are fearful, anxious, fatigued or overwhelmed about the climate crisis. We provide community-building and resilience tools with additional programs specially designed for environmental activists.

We are developing programs in partnership with mental health and wellness professionals who are committed to expanding their scope of expertise to include the emotional grief and anxiety related to climate change.

We support our mission through our business for good courses, guiding businesses through the Five Essentials for a Resilient World. Our programs educate, inspire, and provide simple action steps to support a vibrant and thriving nature-connected business community.

