



ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

Reducing Your Ecological Footprint

An ecological footprint is a measurement of how much land, water and energy is required to produce the goods and services to satisfy an individual's lifestyle.

But that's not all, an ecological footprint also includes how much land and water is needed to process any wastes produced. So, it's not just about what is coming out, but also about what is being put back into the environment.

The average global ecological footprint is approximately 29 Global Hectors (gha), but there is only about 15.71 gha of productive land available per person. This means that we are running a deficit. At this point we need one and a half earths to sustain the world's population and all we consume and produce. However, there are several actions people can take to drastically decrease their ecological footprint, here are a few:

Transportation

In Canada, transportation is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gases. A total of 15 percent of Canada's carbon dioxide emissions are from larger vehicles like trucks, vans and SUVs. On average, Canadians make 2,000 trips in their car that are less than 3 kilometres in distance.

- Avoid idling your car.
- Use people power; walk, bike or rollerblade to get where you need to be.
- Use public transit.
- When choosing a new car, consider purchasing a hybrid or fuel efficient car.
- Keep your tires well inflated and have your vehicle checked regularly.
- When possible teleconference instead of travelling

Home Energy Use

- When it is time to purchase new appliances, look into getting an energy efficient model.
- Turn your lights, television or computer off when you leave the room. Or, go one step further and put anything with a digital display on a power bar to prevent phantom loading and reduce your energy consumption.

Water Consumption

- Turn off your tap while brushing your teeth.
- Take a shower, as they use about half the water needed to fill a conventional bathtub. Go further and try to reduce your time in shower by one minute. This could save as much as 9.5 litres of water.
- Put flow controls in your shower and a toilet dam (eg. a water-filled pop bottle) in your toilet tank.
- Make sure your taps aren't dripping.
- If you have to water your lawn or garden, do it in the morning or at night. Gardens that are watered during the day lose about half of the water to evaporation. Remember, gardens only need about 2-3cm of water per week.
- Never dump water down the drain, there are other uses for it; you could water a house plant or the garden.
- Keep water in your fridge instead of letting the tap run until it gets cold.

Food

- Buy food locally; and don't forget to check your labels when you shop! Much of our food is shipped from thousands of kilometres away.
- Buy organic or seasonal fruits and vegetables when possible.

- Get even more local and visit the Peterborough District Farmers Market every Saturday at Morrow Park (George St and Lansdowne) or the Wednesday Farmers Market on Charlotte Street
- Compost food scraps.
- Buy one, non-toxic, multiuse house cleaner instead of many different ones to cut down on your waste. Or better yet, make your own earth friendly cleaners.
- And as always reduce, reuse and recycle.

Shopping locally doesn't just cut down on your carbon emissions from the gas it took the food to be shipped, it also cuts down on the amount of chemicals as the food didn't need to be preserved for a long trip.

- Eat vegetarian once a week. It's estimated that 18% of the earth's greenhouse gas emissions are generated as a result of current meat consumption, as raising animals uses far more resources than any vegetable farm.

Housing

- If you live alone, consider renting or buying a condo or apartment instead of a detached single family home. Also try to make sure you are close to work and a grocery store to cut down on your driving time.
- Use native species of plants in your home garden and research non toxic pest control, such as citrus peels and companion planting.
- Use plants in your garden that do not require much water.
- Try to incorporate green technology in your home by using solar panels, rainwater collection or compostable toilets.
- Furnish your home with secondhand or recycled Furniture.
- Avoid hosing down your deck, front step or driveway

Goods and Services

- Take cloth or canvas bags to stores instead of using plastic bags.
- As much as possible, buy products that are made from recycled material or use no packaging.
- Only buy products that you need and will use again. You can always borrow or rent the rest, which cuts down on packaging waste.

The Next Step

We can all commit to simple actions in our every day lives to reduce our ecological footprint. From saying no to plastic bags or turning down the thermostat. The goal isn't to have no footprint, that's just not possible, but we can be sure that we aren't using more than our fair share of the earth's resources.

Now that you know what an ecological footprint is, why not take an online test to find out just how much of an impact your lifestyle is having? You can take the test before and after whatever changes you commit to and see the difference you are making! There are many different footprint calculators available online or you can visit www.myfootprint.org to take the test today!

For more information on just what an ecological footprint is or for fun ideas to help you reduce your footprint today check out the following websites,

- <http://www.communityenergy.bc.ca/>
- <http://www.ecoholic.ca/>
- <http://www.ec.gc.ca/>
- <http://www.pollutionprobe.org/>
- <http://www.zerofootprint.net/>

Bibliography

- Redefining Progress, Nature of Economics
- One Tonne Challenge
- Global Footprint Network
- Nature Canada
- David Suzuki's Nature Challenge

THE CAMP KAWARTHA
Environment Centre

