SUSTAINABILITY AMBASSADORS

"Rapidly advancing a sustainable future."

Why it Matters

Learn about the "Why?" behind each of the sustainable actions listed on your family's Current Practices. Explore the links below to learn how many small actions can really add up!

Family Sustainability Practices and Impact Project Ideas

1 - SAVING WATER

Take shorter showers to conserve water.

WHY? An average showerhead uses 2.5 gallons per minute. Showerheads with a WaterSense label use no more than 2 gallons per minute. Showerheads manufactured before 1994 can use 2.75 to 8 gallons per minute See what kind of shower head model you have! By installing efficient showerheads, a family of four could save 3,600 gallons of water and $60 in utility costs per year. SOURCE

Also… did you know that your shower has a carbon footprint? Well, it takes a lot of energy to heat water. Heating one single gallon of water produces 0.18 lbs of CO2. So, do the math… 0.18 lbs of CO x (X) gallons per minute x (X) minutes of shower time x (X) showers per week x 52 weeks in a year = (X) lbs of CO2 x (X) number of people in my family. SOURCE

Run dishwashers as full as possible to conserve water.

WHY? Some dishwasher models can use up to 14 gallons of water per load, while others use as little as 3 gallons per load. Conserve water by filling the dishwasher to capacity with each load. SOURCE

To calculate how much water (and money!) you could be saving, see our **Dishwasher Full Loads** Impact Project! For more ways to save water at home, see our **Water Conservation Project List**. To avoid contributing to water pollution when doing your dishes, check out our **F.O.G. - Nope, Not Flushable** Impact Project. And when you're in the market for a new dishwasher, be sure to look for the EnergyStar label!

Fill the kitchen sink to wash dishes by hand instead of running the faucet.

WHY? If you wash dishes by hand, you can save a significant amount of water by filling the sink and adding soap rather than running the faucet while you wash. SOURCE

To calculate how much water (and money!) you could be saving, see our **Dishwasher Full Loads** Impact Project! For more ways to save water at home, see our **Water Conservation Project List**. To avoid contributing to water pollution when doing your dishes, check out our **F.O.G. - Nope, Not Flushable** Impact Project.

Run clothes washers as full as possible to conserve water.

WHY? Running your washing machine takes a huge amount of water, and each load has significant greenhouse gas emissions. SOURCE Also, consider switching to a more efficient washing machine to reduce your water use by as much as 75%. SOURCE

To understand how a change in your washing machine usage will lead to big savings, check out our **Washing Machine, Full Loads** Impact Project. For more tips on ways to conserve water when doing laundry, see page 3 of our **Water Conservation Project List**. And when you're in the market for a new clothes washer, be sure to look for the EnergyStar label!

Install timers for irrigating the yard to conserve water.

WHY? Smart watering practices reduce runoff and may decrease the need for pesticides and fertilizers. Timed irrigation can help you avoid watering in the middle of the day. This way, the sun's heat won't cause too much evaporation before the water can reach the plants' roots. This cool infographic offers some great water saving tips!

Remove lawn areas and plant native species that need less water.

WHY? With several ongoing droughts and world-wide climate change issues, water conservation has become a very important topic. One of the best ways to conserve water at home is to partially or fully remove your lawn and replace it with a more water friendly option. Removing the lawn results in lower water bills and less time spent on upkeep. (SOURCE) If you don't want to remove your lawn, consider letting it go dormant in the summer. It'll bounce back when the fall rains arrive. Watch our youth-voiced series on how to save water in the pursuit of the Great American Lawn!

Live in high-density housing with no individual yard or lawn.

WHY? Maintaining green lawns requires special equipment and chemicals like fertilizers and pesticides. There is also a huge financial burden associated with lawns: purchasing seeds, chemicals, and ***lots of water***! And then there's your free time – would you rather spend your weekend mowing, weeding and spraying chemicals or doing the things you love? (SOURCE)

Living in densely-populated communities provides more ways to connect with neighbors while having less of an impact on the environment. Suburban sprawl requires more natural resources and destroys crucial wildlife habitat. As a bonus, high-density housing is usually located near shops, schools and public transportation, so you can get wherever you need to go without ever needing a car – yet another reason to live close to your neighbors!

2 - TREES ARE COOL

Plant trees in my yard to increase our urban tree canopy.

WHY? Planting trees is an affordable, natural, effective way to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Trees also provide shade and cool our cities by up to 10 degrees, which can help prevent heat-related deaths in urban areas. Neighborhood trees have shown the ability to reduce stress, improve overall health and development in children, and encourage physical activity. (SOURCE)

Learn more about the 22 Benefits of Trees!
To get to know the trees in your neighborhood, see our **Trees Are Cool Impact Projects**!

Volunteer to plant trees in parks to increase our urban tree canopy.

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Learn more about the 22 Benefits of Trees!

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3 - WASTEWATER SOLUTIONS

Do not let fats, oils, or grease (FOG!) go down the drain.

WHY? When fats, oils, and grease cool, they transition from a liquid form to a solid. If you pour these materials down your drain, they reduce the amount of space in the drain or sewage line and cause backups. This harms the drain and makes it difficult for the city to maintain the sewer system. To prevent FOG blobs from backing up your drains, pour grease into a can and let it cool before capping it and putting it in the trash. You can also check with your waste management service to see if they can recycle it! Seattle Public Utilities will recycle your used cooking oils. (SOURCE)

Use environmentally friendly, non-toxic cleaning supplies.

WHY? Toxic cleaning supplies not only have a larger carbon footprint than green supplies but also have negative health impacts when inhaled. But don't worry, green cleaning doesn't have to be expensive! Old-fashioned, non-toxic cleaning supplies like vinegar and baking soda do the job just as well at a fraction of the cost to your wallet, your lungs, and our water supply! SOURCE

Find out how to make your own green cleaning supplies here!

Make our own environmentally safe, non-toxic, green cleaning supplies.

WHY? The green cleaning products you can make at home often cost a fraction of the price you pay for store-bought cleaning products. You can also reuse glass containers for home-made cleaning products rather than buying plastic bottles every time you need to replenish your supply!

You probably even have most of the ingredients you'll need to make your own cleaning supplies already! Vinegar, baking soda, and lemon juice are some common examples. Just be careful about what you combine… certain compounds (like hydrogen peroxide and vinegar) are unsafe when mixed together. Learn more about making your own cleaning supplies in this Seattle Times article.

Return old medications to the drugstore. NEVER flush them down the toilet or drain.

WHY? You must dispose of medications safely when they are no longer needed to prevent accidental ingestion or misuse by others, especially children and pets. It's important to keep medications from entering our waterways because they can impact the health of our ecosystem, even interfering with the reproduction and growth of aquatic species. Most wastewater treatment systems are not equipped to remove medications from our water system, so prevention is the best course of action. Find out where you can bring your old or expired meds here and here.

Put hair from my brush in the trash, never down the toilet.

WHY? Hair can clog drains and prevent water from flowing through plumbing systems. It also pollutes the water supply, making it unsafe to drink. Do yourself and your environment a favor and make proper hair disposal a habit! (SOURCE)

4 - STORMWATER SOLUTIONS

Use a commercial car wash to save water and capture grime.

WHY? At-home car washing requires approximately 100 gallons of water while an automatic car wash only uses around 35 gallons, which are then recycled! This is important not only for water conservation but also for preventing pollution. At-home car washes send pollution into storm drains, whereas commercial car washes are required to properly treat dirty water before it reaches the Puget Sound. (SOURCE) See our **Impact Project** on using **Commercial Car Washes** to track the amount of water you're saving, and the amount of grime you're saving from going into vital habitat. Check out our post for 'Puget Sound Starts Here' month to learn about the pollution involved with washing your car.

Fix oil leaks in cars at home so we "don't drip and drive."

WHY? Oil that is leaked, spilled, or improperly discarded can enter stormwater runoff and eventually end up polluting our waterways. Most vehicle repair shops adhere to waste disposal compliance regulations, but if you are maintaining your own vehicle, you can bring automotive fluids to hazardous waste sites. (SOURCE)

Check out free oil recycling programs like this one.

Scoop the poop (in a baggie) and put it in the garbage.

WHY? Pet waste contains bacteria and microorganisms such as Roundworms, E. coli, and Giardia that can make people sick. Some can stick around in your yard for as long as four years if they are not cleaned up. Children who play outside and adults who garden are at greatest risk of infection. When left on streets, curb strips, or in yards and parks, pet waste can be carried by rainwater into storm drains. It is then deposited into our creeks, lakes, and the Puget Sound without ever being treated! Always put dog poop in a bag and dispose of it in your garbage (not your yard waste)! (SOURCE)

Advocate to install more dog poop bag dispensers in parks and neighborhoods.

WHY? When left on streets, curb strips, or in yards and parks, pet waste can be carried by rainwater into storm drains. It is then deposited into our creeks, lakes, and the Puget Sound without ever being treated! This

contaminates aquatic habitats and our drinking water. You can help by putting bag dispensers in your neighborhoods and parks. Get together with your neighbors to make it happen! Dogs are great, but their poop is not. (SOURCE)

Disconnect our downspouts so water flows into the yard or garden instead of the storm drain.

WHY? Rainwater harvesting systems reduce stormwater pollution by slowing runoff and collecting rainfall for later use. Our houses have gutters that direct stormwater to treatment plants or nearby bodies of water. We can capture some of that water in rain barrels to use in our gardens, yards, and rain gardens! This allows the groundwater to be slowly replenished rather than allowing all that water to rush out into the Puget Sound full of contaminants. Rain gardens are a beautiful way to slow water and purify the air. (SOURCE)Learn more about rain gardens here.

Use compost rather than synthetic fertilizers in our yard or garden.

WHY? The pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers that we use on our lawns can run into our waterways. These contaminants create dead zones that are no longer habitable to fish and other aquatic life. Fertilizers also promote the growth of toxic algae blooms that endanger aquatic organisms and humans alike.

The biggest difference between compost and fertilizer is that compost feeds the soil while fertilizer feeds the plants. Healthy soil = healthy plants, so building healthy soil reduces the need for chemical fertilizers. Home composting transforms yard debris and food scraps into a valuable soil resource and closes the recycling loop in our own backyards! (SOURCE).

You can download your own backyard composting guide here for free!

Clean out litter, leaves, and gunk from storm drains on my street.

WHY? Leaves and other debris that accumulate in storm drains can clog drainage pipes, leading to street flooding and increased maintenance costs. Disposal of grass clippings and other organic matter into waterways also leads to decreased oxygen levels in the water that can harm fish and other aquatic life. Fertilizers and pesticides on garden clippings can contaminate water bodies as well. (SOURCE)

Volunteer for litter cleanup in my community.

WHY? We all want to live in clean communities. In Seattle, you can participate in the Adopt-A-Street program to keep your neighborhood litter-free. The city will even provide all the supplies you need to keep your streets clean! You can also organize a group of friends and family to Adopt-A-Park or trail in King County Parks here.

5 - LOTS MORE BIKES

Ride my bike to school along the safest route.

WHY? There are tons of reasons to bike to school. It helps you reduce your carbon footprint, get some fresh air and exercise, have fun, clear your head before you start the day, and unwind at the end of the day while pedaling home! Finding safe routes to bike to school can be a challenge, but King County has resources to help! If you live

in Seattle, the city has a bike route map that's super handy. And finally, Cascade Bicycle Club offers support and resources if you want to start biking to school. Start biking now!

Ride my bike to my friend's house instead of driving.

WHY? You will learn how to navigate your neighborhood and feel a new sense of adventure and belonging when you're out exploring on your bike. And, of course, you can take pride in the fact that you're ***not*** adding harmful emissions to the atmosphere like you would in a car!

Check out page 3 of the Seattle By Bike Guide to learn why it's better to bike, then keep reading for some city bicycling resources!

Ride my bike to run errands instead of driving.

WHY? Running errands on your bike reduces the need to use a vehicle that expends fossil fuels. If your destination is very far away, you might want to ride your bike and then jump on the bus – most buses in King County have bike racks on the front. When you combine bikes and transit, you can go just about anywhere!

Find out how to ride the bus with your bike here!

6 - CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

We have a "right-sized" home for our family size without extra rooms.

WHY? Heating and cooling accounts for more than half of a household's annual energy consumption. Even if you don't change your daily habits, downsizing can significantly reduce your energy costs. The smaller your living space is, the less energy is required for heating and cooling. By living in a home that is no larger than necessary, you can use the same amount of water and electricity, keep your home at a comfortable temperature, and still save money on your monthly power bill! (SOURCE)

Dry some clothes in the sun on a line or on an indoor rack to conserve energy.

WHY? In many households, the dryer is the third-most energy-hungry appliance, just behind the refrigerator and washer. Air-drying your clothes can reduce your household's carbon footprint by a whopping 2,400 pounds a year!. (SOURCE)

Switch from gas lawn mowers and leaf blowers to electric.

WHY? Turf grass uses more water than other plants and requires frequent maintenance. Maintenance of turf grass requires gas operated mowers, edgers, blowers, and more! One hour operating a new gasoline lawn mower emits the same amount of carbon as driving a new car 45 miles! Garden equipment produces up to 5% of the nation's air pollution. Switching to electric is a small change that makes a big difference! (SOURCE)

Watch our youth-voiced series on how to save water in the pursuit of the Great American Lawn!

We have installed LED lights everywhere in our house or apartment.

WHY? LEDs are today's most energy-efficient lighting technology. LEDs use up to 90% less energy and last up to 25 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs. By switching to LEDs, you will save energy, money, and reduce your carbon footprint! (SOURCE)

Check out our **LED-ing the way to a brighter future** **Impact Project**!

Manage “vampire loads” draining 24/7 on stripcords and appliances.

WHY? Did you know that devices that are plugged in use electricity even when they appear to be off? Vampire loads are an often overlooked energy expense to which your TV, gaming consoles, power strips, and lighting all contribute. These loads are approaching 10 percent of the average household electric use, according to the Environmental Protection Agency! Remember to unplug when not in use! (SOURCE)

Check out our **Vampire Plug Loads** **Impact Project**!

We keep the thermostat a few degrees lower to conserve energy.

WHY? You can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling costs by turning your thermostat down 7°-10°F for 8 hours a day! This depends on the time of year and your needs. Always turn down your heating and cooling when you’re out of the house to save money and energy. (SOURCE)

Our thermostat is on a timer to maximize heating efficiently.

WHY? You can save money on your heating and cooling bills by putting your thermostat on a smart timer! You can set this for when you’re away or asleep based on your usual routine. Time your thermostat to stop heating or cooling while you’re out and save up to 10% on your energy costs! (SOURCE)

We have improved the insulation of our house to conserve energy.

WHY? A well-insulated home can make a real difference on your utility bills. The EPA estimates that homeowners can save an average of 11% on total energy costs by sealing and insulating their homes, especially in attics, floors over crawl spaces, and basements. (SOURCE)

We use the free weatherizing service provided by our utilities.

WHY? If your home tends to be too cold or too hot, a predicament accompanied by high energy bills, your house probably isn’t properly protected from the weather. Your family can get help weatherizing your home through your utility service!

Check out PSE’s Program.
See other Washington State Programs.

We have solar panels on our house or apartment.

WHY? Solar energy is sustainable, renewable, and abundant! Installing solar panels or buying into a solar community will lower your monthly utility bills so much that you will sometimes even pay nothing! Solar energy does not require fossil fuels, thus substantially reducing greenhouse gas emissions like CO_2. (SOURCE)

We are researching the subsidies and tax breaks for installing solar power.

WHY? You've probably heard solar is expensive, but it doesn't have to be! Your own utility will offer rebates for installing solar, and residential or business solar can qualify for a 30% federal tax rebate. (SOURCE)

Check out solar resources like Rebate Finder and PSE Rebates.

We have a heat pump in our house or apartment.

WHY? Today's heat pump can reduce the electricity required for heating by approximately 65% compared to electric resistance heating like furnaces and baseboard heaters. This will save you money and reduce your home's carbon footprint! (SOURCE)

Learn more at Energy Smart Eastside.

We are researching the subsidies and tax breaks for installing a heat pump.

WHY? Rebates and incentives are available to ease the cost barrier of switching to a heat pump. Find them through your energy provider or other federal rebate finders!

PSE Heat-Pump Rebates
Energy-Star Rebate Finder

We have a HEPA Air Purifier for indoor air quality during forest fire smoke season.

WHY? These air purifiers can keep you and your family safe inside during the intense smoke seasons we've been experiencing in our region. An energy efficient HEPA filter can use up to 25% less energy than standard models and save you money on your bills! (SOURCE)

We know where to access cooling centers if needed in a heat wave.

WHY? As we face ever-worsening heat-waves, it is important that you know where to find a cooling center near you if needed. By choosing to take refuge there instead of trying to cool your home with fans or by leaving the fridge open, you will save energy and reduce pressure on the power grid! (SOURCE)

We buy into the "Green Power Program" through our utility.

WHY? There are a number of green power programs available through regional utilities and outside organizations. One example of this program is PSE's Green Power Program, which matches 100% of your home's energy use to renewable sources and purchases them on your behalf to reduce your emissions.

Learn more from Carbon Balance and Seattle's Green Up Program.

7 - SMART TRANSPORTATION

Walk to school.

WHY? Walking to school reduces the need for car travel, cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions AND fossil fuel consumption! It promotes physical health and is a zero-emission mode of transportation. Plus, traffic congestion is reduced and your community air quality will be improved. (SOURCE)

Ride the school bus to school.

WHY? School buses are meant to carry a large number of students, making them more energy-efficient per passenger than individual cars. By consolidating trips, they greatly reduce the number of vehicles on the road, leading to lower emissions and less traffic overall. Utilizing school buses is a step towards reducing the carbon footprint associated with your daily commute to school. (SOURCE)

Carpool to school with one or more other people.

WHY? Carpooling maximizes the passenger capacity of vehicles, reducing the total number of cars needed for transportation. This leads to fewer per capita emissions, decreased fuel consumption, and reduced congestion. Carpooling is an efficient way to conserve energy and minimize environmental impact while also offering social connection! (SOURCE)

Ride public transit for trips and errands using my free Orca pass (youth under 18)!

WHY? In King County, all students are granted free public transportation passes. By taking advantage of this resource, you can help support a system that reduces per capita emissions, conserves energy, and significantly cuts your personal carbon footprint (many buses in the King County fleet are already electric)!

Check out the King County Public Transportation Map and King County Trip Planner to get started today!

We live in high-density housing close to bus lines or the light rail.

WHY? If you live in high-density housing close to bus lines or rail networks, you can significantly reduce your reliance on personal vehicles, thus lowering greenhouse gas emissions and decreasing local traffic congestion. Close proximity to public transportation can result in a lower annual expenditure when it comes to transportation while contributing to environmental conservation and community building.

What is High Density Housing?
King County Metro Map

We drive a hybrid car.

WHY? A hybrid car combines gas and electricity for power. This provides better fuel efficiency and even lower emissions than conventional vehicles. Hybrid cars not only require less fuel but also emit less pollution than standard vehicles! (SOURCE)

We drive an electric car.

WHY? Electric cars run on… electricity! They produce zero tailpipe emissions, which makes them renewable and more energy efficient than any other choice of vehicle. This further reduces the carbon footprint associated with driving.

Learn more from the PSE Electric Vehicle Guide and the EV Guide provided by the Washington Department of Commerce!

We are researching the subsidies and tax breaks for buying an electric car.

WHY? Governmental financial incentives like subsidies and tax breaks aim to make electric vehicles more accessible to a wide range of people. These incentives encourage the adoption of EVs, contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and pollution by promoting a shift away from gas-powered transportation. (SOURCE)

We buy carbon offsets for any time our family flies.

WHY? Flying is one of the most carbon-intensive forms of transportation. Purchasing carbon offsets can help to make up for the emissions produced by air travel. The funds from these add-ons are invested in renewable energy, reforestation, and other environmental projects. In the long term, these offsets reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and "make up" for the environmental impact of flying. (SOURCE)

Calculate your carbon offset needs here!

We do not fly on airplanes.

WHY? As stated above, air travel is one of the most harmful, carbon-inefficient forms of transportation. Airplanes not only emit huge amounts of CO_2 but also a whole host of other harmful gasses. By choosing alternative modes of transportation when possible, you can greatly reduce your environmental impact! (SOURCE)

Take a look at these Facts & Figures about aviation sustainability.

8 - ZERO WASTE

Buy sturdy, long-use clothes from responsible labels.

WHY? The process of making clothing takes a toll on the environment, using a tremendous amount of natural resources in its production and shipping. When you constantly refresh your wardrobe, you are contributing to climate change. By ignoring the trend cycles meant to drive constant consumerism and instead dressing based on your own style, you can invest in quality clothing that will last a long time! As an added bonus, long-use clothes tend to fit better and feel better due to the quality of the materials! (SOURCE)

Try to implement some of these sustainable clothing tips!

Boycott fast fashion labels.

WHY? Fast fashion centers around the production and consumption of new clothes and styles with rapid turnover. When fast fashion companies introduce hundreds of new pieces every day, this motivates the consumer to buy more and stay caught up on trends, presenting a need where there is none. To provide these low-quality pieces at a low cost, these companies base their factories in the global South, where their employees work in inhumane conditions for an unlivable wage. There is also a huge environmental impact from producing pieces that will deteriorate with each wear and end up in a landfill soon after entering your wardrobe!

Learn more about Why Fast Fashion is Bad, check out Re+ King County, and implement these sustainable clothing tips!

Get creative with thrift shopping for clothes or use hand-me-downs and clothing swaps.

WHY? Buying from thrift stores dramatically decreases the environmental impact of your clothes shopping. Thrift shopping allows you to give new life to items that have already been produced, giving you new clothes without the environmental impact! This saves clothes that would otherwise be thrown away from the landfill. Thrifting can also help you better determine your personal style by offering you a wide selection of one-of-a-kind pieces that exist outside of the trend cycle. (SOURCE)

Use office paper from 100% recycled content.

WHY? Recycling paper conserves natural resources (trees! water!), saves energy, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and keeps landfill space free for other types of trash that can't be recycled. Recycling WORKS! Watch this video to learn how.

We have shifted to paperless billing.

WHY? Going paperless is better for the environment, and much more convenient for you! The process of making paper and printing bills is a major contributor to environmental pollution. Printing and paper production produces sulfur oxides, nitrogen oxides and carbon dioxide, which contribute to acid rain, greenhouse gas emissions, and water pollution. (SOURCE)

Use a sturdy refillable water bottle. Boycott bottled water.

WHY? Around the world, one million plastic bottles are purchased every minute. By using a reusable water bottle, you could prevent an average of 156 plastic bottles from filling our oceans every year. (SOURCE)

Bring reusable bags to the grocery store.

WHY? Reusable bags are superior to flimsy plastic bags for multiple reasons. Reusable bags are better quality than plastic bags and are less likely to tear. In addition, they are much cheaper. According to the National Resource Defense Council, the average American family uses about 1,500 plastic bags each year. At a nickel per bag, you'll save $75 per year by investing once in reusable bags! Above all, reusable bags are simply more sustainable than plastic bags. A reusable bag only needs to be produced once for unlimited uses, unlike single-use bags that take an abundance of resources for their production only to be used once and discarded. (SOURCE)

Bring reusable fabric mesh bags for produce instead of plastic bags.

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Challenge: make your own bags if you're feeling crafty!

We recycle paper, glass, plastics, and metals.

WHY? Recycling paper, glass, plastics, and metals conserves our trees and minerals while reducing the need to extract new raw materials (which often further damages the environment). This practice greatly lowers energy consumption, as manufacturing products from recycled materials requires less energy than new products. Additionally, the recycling industry creates jobs and helps stimulate a market for green materials! (SOURCE)

Learn more about the Economic Benefits of Zero Waste.

We recycle styrofoam packaging at a center that takes it.

WHY? When you recycle styrofoam at specialized processing centers, you prevent the material from making its way into landfills, where it will take centuries to degrade and decompose. By recycling your styrofoam properly, you are reducing the need to create more **polystyrene** from harmful fossil fuel sources. This also encourages innovation in recycling technology, which helps in the long term to make the process more efficient, accessible, and reliable! (SOURCE)

Find a Styrofoam Recycling Center

We recycle E-waste (phones, computers, cables, screens) at a center that takes it.

WHY? When you recycle e-waste at dedicated recycling centers, you prevent hazardous materials in electronics from harming both environmental and human health. E-waste recycling is a critical practice in the push for sustainability, mitigating environmental impact and promoting further innovations in the recycling world. (SOURCE)

Did you know? E-waste recycling supports the circular economy by giving old electronics a new life through refurbishment and the re-extraction of precious metals and processors for new products!

Find E-waste Collection Centers in King County
Learn more about Tracking the E-Waste Recycling Process

Buy used, refurbished electronics and continue to use electronics for their whole useful life.

WHY? Refurbished smartphones, computers, and other devices allow us to continue using the technology we have become accustomed to while significantly lowering its environmental impact. New electronics require lots of minerals, plastics, and carbon to create. This E-waste is toxic to the environment and only 20% of it is properly

disposed of! We can reduce the waste we produce and save a lot of money by using electronics for their entire useful lives. (SOURCE)

Subscribe to “Ridwell” to recycle odd items including plastic bags, batteries, threads.

WHY? Ridwell is a company that picks up your hard to recycle waste and properly reuses or recycles it for you. This keeps your waste out of the landfill, reducing your carbon footprint and pollution. (SOURCE)

For recycling weird stuff we use King County's webpage, “What do I do with?”

WHY? There is a lot of waste you throw out everyday that you could actually be recycling or that needs to be specially disposed of! Using this tool from King County can keep pollution out of the environment, reduce your carbon footprint, and give new life to your trash. (SOURCE)

Order sustainable toilet paper from “Who Gives a Crap” or similar company.

WHY? This company donates 50% of their profits to help build toilets and improve sanitation in the developing world. Not only that, contaminated water contributes to over 1 million deaths per year – this company works toward providing proper sanitation to reduce that threat. All of their products are plastic-free and made with sustainable materials. (SOURCE)

9 - FOOD SYSTEMS

Conduct a refrigerator audit to reduce food waste.

WHY? All food has an impact on the environment. Natural resources go into the growth and production of your food, as well as labor on farms and in factories. These laborers are often exploited: overworked and underpaid. Transporting food from its place of origin to the grocery store has significant environmental impacts through carbon emissions. When you waste food, you are also wasting all of the resources that are required to make that food available to you. In addition, when food goes to the landfill to rot, it produces methane, a greenhouse gas. (SOURCE)

Explore this webpage to learn how to conduct a refrigerator audit.

Find creative ways to eat up all leftovers before anything rots.

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Check these Tips to use all your leftovers!
Learn more about how to prevent food waste!
Find out What to do with food that's about to go bad!

Use shopping lists to plan out meals for minimal waste.

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Find out more about How to create shopping lists and How to meal prep.

Use sturdy food containers to store leftovers for later use.

WHY? High-quality storage containers will help keep your leftovers fresher for longer while also reducing the risk of bacterial contamination. If you have to buy food containers, choose glass or ceramic containers rather than plastic. This will help prevent plastic from entering landfills while also being a safer option for storing hot foods or food you intend to microwave. However, it is always best to reuse or repurpose containers you already have before buying new ones. Consider saving the containers from things like dips, yogurt, lunchmeat, or takeout; the jars from soup or sauces; the resealable bags from cheese and some nuts and sugars; and the plastic wrap from some produce. (SOURCE)

Learn about the best ways to store food using the King County Food Storage Guide and the Seattle Food Storage Guide!

Compost all food scraps with zero going into the garbage.

WHY? Composting allows to return the nutrients from the food to soil as opposed to food going to the landfills where it releases methane and other greenhouse gasses. Compost will eventually turn into topsoil that can be used in your yard or garden! (SOURCE)

Eat healthy, nutritious food that is local and organic when possible.

WHY? Eating local, organic foods not only supports the local economy but also favors foods that have only had to travel a short distance to reach your home! This is far better for the environment than eating foods that are locally out of season and therefore must be transported to you via boat or truck because these foods use massive amounts of carbon in transport. When food doesn't have to be shipped long distances, it is less likely to be bruised or exposed to preservatives. This decreases food waste and increases how flavorful your food will be! Local food can also help lessen the severity of your allergies because it exposes you to plants and pollen near you. (SOURCE)

Use this resource to find local food near you!

Eat very little beef or pork.

WHY? Raising cows and pigs for food has significant environmental impacts. Keeping cows contributes to mass deforestation in order to provide them with grazing land. They also emit huge amounts of methane gas, which contributes to climate change. Pig-farming also harms the environment, as these farms produce massive amounts of waste, polluting the air and waterways. Eating red meat also contributes to many physical health problems. (SOURCE)

Learn about the impact of cows and pigs on the environment.

Our family is vegetarian / vegan.

WHY? Shifting to a plant-based diet is better for you and the planet! Eating less or no meat will significantly decrease your risk of many diseases and support your immune system as a whole - as long as you make sure you still get all the nutrients you need. Raising livestock for meat contributes to deforestation, loss of biodiversity and natural resources, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. Animal products are also often the product of inhumane living conditions and animal exploitation. (SOURCE)

Learn more about the environmental impact of meat.
Volunteer with Vegetarians of Washington

Eat mostly at restaurants that publicly promote, "local, fresh, organic."

WHY? Eating local, organic foods not only supports the local economy but also favors foods that have only had to travel a short distance to reach your home! This is far better for the environment than eating foods that are locally out of season and therefore must be transported to you via boat or truck because these foods use massive amounts of carbon in transport. When food doesn't have to be shipped long distances, it is less likely to be bruised or exposed to preservatives. This decreases food waste and increases how flavorful your food will be! Local food can also help lessen the severity of your allergies because it exposes you to plants and pollen near you.

Use this resource to find local food near you!

We grow some of our own food in our garden.

WHY? Growing your own food saves money, reduces your carbon footprint, and provides you with direct access to healthy foods! It also gives you the opportunity to gain new skills, partially divest from supporting large grocery stores, and stimulates greater connection to the environment. SOURCE

Learn more about Growing Food in the City

We hunt, fish or gather a portion of our family's food.

WHY? Hunting, fishing, and gathering helps you learn about and engage with your home environment. It provides you with a sustainable means of acquiring food, and it also teaches you valuable survival skills! By using the resources made readily available by nature, you can - to a certain extent - disengage from less sustainable consumption at grocery stores.

Hunting Tips
Foraging Tips
Common Edible Weeds

We use the app "Too Good To Go" to get bags of food just past their shelf life.

WHY? This app helps decrease food waste from stores and other businesses by providing users with surprise bags at a low price. You will save money, have the opportunity to try new things, and save food from entering landfills! (SOURCE)

We support a local community garden or urban farm.

WHY? Supporting local food systems not only reduces community dependence on imported produce with a large carbon footprint but also increases food security and stimulates the local economy! By prioritizing local gardens over large stores and markets, you help them stay in business and provide access to healthy, nutritious food within your community. (SOURCE)

We support a local farmer's market.

WHY? Eating local, organic foods not only supports the local economy but also favors foods that have only had to travel a short distance to reach your home! This is far better for the environment than eating foods that are locally out of season and therefore must be transported to you via boat or truck because these foods use massive amounts of carbon in transport. When food doesn't have to be shipped long distances, it is less likely to be bruised or exposed to preservatives. This decreases food waste and increases how flavorful your food will be! Local food can also help lessen the severity of your allergies because it exposes you to plants and pollen near you. (SOURCE) Use this resource to find local food near you!

We subscribe to a CSA program (Community Supported Agriculture).

WHY? CSA programs provide you consistent access to fresh, in-season, locally grown food. You support farms in your community and thus channel support away from large businesses that are run less ethically and with a greater environmental impact. You will also save money on produce! (SOURCE)

We subscribe to "Imperfect Produce" to make use of "ugly" fruits and veggies.

WHY? This program reduces food waste from produce that would otherwise not be sold in grocery stores while providing you with perfectly good food at a low price! The carbon footprint of your food consumption will decrease significantly and your purchases will make a statement that the environment is a priority for consumers. (SOURCE)

10 - CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & CONSUMER ADVOCACY

We research the environmental policies of political candidates.

WHY? Knowing how political candidates will vote on important topics such as climate justice, pollution laws, transportation, land use, water conservation and other environmental policy is crucial when casting your vote – but only if you want a sustainable future! You can look up your lawmaker's voting record here. And make sure you read the Washington Voter's Guide that comes in the mail before each election to make informed decisions about the candidates. It is also available online here.

We email, call, or meet with our elected officials to express support for sustainability policies.

WHY? When more people participate in democracy, we have more hope for a sustainable future. Our elected officials' job is to represent us but they can only do that if we let them know what's important to us! Emailing, calling and meeting with them at town halls is critical for advancing environmental protection, the health and equity of our communities, and a strong economy for all of us. Get involved and learn more at Washington Conservation Action.

We bank at a credit union or independent bank that does not finance fossil fuel projects.

WHY? It's a good thing to know where your money may be going. If you're paying for a service such as a bank, sometimes your money may be going back to financing and supporting fossil fuel projects. Take a look at "Why are banks still financing fossil fuels?" to learn more!

Does your bank finance fossil fuels? If so, what areas are they financing? Use this resource to find out.

Check out this inspiring TED Talk by Lucie Pinson about her work in reducing fossil fuel investments by banks!

Our family does not have investments (stocks, funds, etc.) that include fossil fuel companies or companies that finance fossil fuel projects.

WHY? Though it may not seem like a big deal, keeping stock or investing in the fossil fuel industry keeps these environmentally polluting practices running. Divesting from fossil fuels and using your money to invest in fast-growing renewable sources is good for not only your finances but also the environment. Learn more about analyzing your family's investments here.

Use this tool to analyze your investments and find new funds.

We support media outlets that tell the truth about climate change.

WHY? Climate change is a real emergency that can often be misreported. Supporting news outlets that report on good, reliable science, can help reduce the spread of misinformation and bring you the real news about our climate. Check out some of these climate centered news sources. Be critical of the news and information you consume; it matters!

We write letters to the editor of your local newspaper or neighborhood blog highlighting important climate and sustainability news and correcting misleading or incomplete information in news coverage.

WHY? It is integral that people be properly informed on the climate crisis, as public awareness of these issues leads to change. When incorrect information is shared in the news, it can reach a large audience and cause them to underestimate the gravity of an issue. Conversely, it could inspire panic. By writing a letter to the editor, you will be doing your part to share correct information to which an audience can react accordingly.

Learn How to write a letter to the editor!

We share information about climate solutions on our social media accounts.

WHY? Social media is a free, accessible way to reach large audiences. When you share something on your social media accounts, others can reshare that same information to raise awareness about pressing climate issues. In an age where we have unlimited access to information with the click of a button, it can be hard to stay caught up on everything. Sharing climate information on social media can help others understand and become aware of issues that might otherwise pass them by. However, always be sure to further research what you read online so you can have a fully-informed understanding of these topics. (SOURCE)

Check out this Analysis of Instagram Infographics

We follow public figures who share information about climate solutions and amplify their posts.

WHY? Amplifying posts and promoting public figures who share information about climate updates is a strategic way to raise awareness, inspire action, and help foster a more informed community to collectively tackle the challenges of climate change. By extending the influence of public figures who engage in climate advocacy, you too can have a role in inspiring individuals to take action themselves.

Take a look at these 10 Environmental Celebrity Activists to Follow and these Climate Policy Champions!