

Church newsletter eco tips 2023-24 from St John's and St Stephen's Reading

August

Get free food and help restaurants/shops avoid food waste by downloading the **Too Good To Go App** and finding places near you with 'Surprise Bags' to give away (or sell at reduced prices).

John Lewis will give you a £5 voucher if you drop off 5 items of **clothing for recycling** (you need to spend £20 on homeware or clothes to use the voucher).

A scrubbing brush and bicarbonate of soda is just as effective at **removing limescale** as harsher chemicals with a cloth

You can **save water** by watering plants with washing-up water, cooled cooking water, water collected while running the tap for hot water, or water collected in a dehumidifier

September

Vacuum refrigerator coils to keep the compressor running efficiently.

Check out your cleaning products with Ethical Consumer. Ecover now has a very low rating (4 out of 20) since being taken over by SC Johnson. Bio-D (available at the World Shop on London Street) has one of the highest ratings (16). Smol (also in their 'good' rating at 14) use Royal Mail to deliver concentrated plastic-free products: smolproducts.com.

Friday 22nd is World Car Free Day. There are Reading cycle maps in the information stands in the church entrance; co-wheels.org.uk have cars you can book by the hour at seven locations in Reading; and you can find more advice on going car free at readingcan.org.uk/tip_categories/travelling.

It's **Seed Gathering Season** - check out the tree council's website at <https://treecouncil.org.uk/seasonal-campaigns/seed-gathering-season/> on tips on gathering seeds for eating or for planting new trees

October

We are now collecting **candle ends for recycling** with therecycledcandlecompany.co.uk/ - see the box in the café entrance. Buying candles from them will help keep up the cycle of re-use.

Our **bottle tops are now going to Air Ambulance** and we have started collecting **pens for Ellie's fund** instead - see the boxes in the café entrance.

Now that it's too damp to **dry laundry** outdoors, it is tempting to switch the radiators on to get washing dry. A greener option that also avoids damp in the house and eventually saves money is to invest in a dehumidifier. Then hang all your washing in your smallest room with the dehumidifier. (Much cheaper and greener than a tumble dryer).

Please don't put your **Halloween pumpkins** outside on the ground after use as hedgehogs will eat them and this can be fatal for them. If you put them up high then the birds and squirrels can enjoy them still.

November

You can become a **Wildlife Ambassador** for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust by [signing up here](#). Wildlife Ambassadors are supporters who help by lobbying MPs and councillors whenever BBOWT have a specific action needed – they will add your name to a mailing list and provide suggested actions with advice about effective communication.

Now is a good time to **plant trees and to plan a garden** for next year. However small your plot of land, there are ideas for planting for food and nature at mycoronationgarden.org.

There are lots of ideas to help plan a more **sustainable Christmas** in this blogpost on [The Carbon Footprint of Christmas](#).

More than 20 environmental, health and social justice organisations have come together on a zero-waste Christmas initiative to mark the festive season in a feel-good and ethical way while swerving rampant consumerism and waste. **The digital Injustice Advent Calendar** is completely free and gives participants the chance to countdown the days to Christmas by taking one positive action a day. Each daily calendar window gives an insight into the work of a charity or project, and a quick action you can take to make the world a better place.

December

The Citizens Advice team who visited the Café this Tuesday recommended buying an **electric blanket to snuggle under** (in bed or on the sofa) rather than an oil filled radiator or electric heater because it uses much less energy. You can find out how much energy different appliances use with their online calculator: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/check-how-much-your-electrical-appliances-cost-to-use/

Don't forget to **save the stamps** from your Christmas cards for Oxfam (collection box in Café foyer). Please trim a narrow margin around the edge.

Find last minute tips for a green Christmas [here](#). They include advice that even branded Sellotape is now plastic based, not biodegradable, so it's better to **use jute twine or washi tape**.

If you are looking for inspiration for **green New Year's Resolutions**, there are plenty [here](#). One suggestion is to choose 12 but only start one each month.

January

Reading Library of Things (RLOT)

The First Reading Library of Things will open its doors in early February in Caversham, with plans for two more centres in Tilehurst and South Reading. Anyone can join the Library for a minimal fee and then borrow tools, a marquee for a summer BBQ, display boards etc. This reduces the need for individual purchases and subsequent storage and provides good information on how to use the tools effectively.

Please look at the website and sign up to the newsletter.

WebLink: <https://lotreading.myturn.com/library/>

Choosing a sustainable pension fund is 21x more effective than stopping flying, going vegetarian and switching your energy supplier collectively! Watch this [eye-opening video](#), and for information and advice check out [Make My Money Matter](#).

If you would like to **try out toilet rolls with 50% fewer carbon emissions** than other eco-alternatives, you can get 10% off your first order at nakedsprout.uk with the code NAKEDFRIEND10%

The **RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch** is this weekend.

Find out more at

www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch

February

Every **email, online search or streamed video creates more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere** (the providers may be using renewable energy, but all the renewable energy they draw out of the grid means more fossil fuels are needed for energy elsewhere). Unsubscribe from spam (currently creating 28.5 kg per user per year on average); avoid unnecessary 'thank you's' and attachments (which require more energy).

Think before you use AI and find out more

at <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200305-why-your-internet-habits-are-not-as-clean-as-you-think>.

Do you spend time in online meetings? Did you know that **the carbon footprint of Zoom meetings** is much lower than Microsoft Teams, or that using a virtual background increases the carbon footprint by 18%?

If **recycling shredded paper** in your red bin, be sure to put it inside an old envelope.

According to [Mother Tree](#), £12,500 held in a current account (the average UK household saving figure in 2022) with Barclays, contributes 2.9 tonnes CO2 per year which is more than flying from the UK to Rome and back 14 times. For Triodos it's 0.317 tonnes. **Find out more about the greenest way to bank** on their [website](#).

March

Apparently **toilet flushing** accounts for one third of our water use. Placing a plastic milk bottle full of water (with a lid on!) or a 'save-a-flush' in the cistern reduces the amount of water used (and bills for those who are metered).

The **Big Plastic Count** is 11-17 March - you can sign up at thebigplasticcount.com and help create a record of just how much plastic we are using (and where it is ending up) in support of Greenpeace's campaign to get the government and big business to help reduce it.

If you missed ordering Meaningful Chocolate Company's **Fairtrade Easter Eggs**, the World Shop on London Road (RISC) have Tony's Chocolonely eggs.

The **Big Bee Hotel Experiment** - if you have a solitary bee hotel in your garden, you can help a national bee monitoring project by taking a photo of it once a month - find out more at <https://www.thebuzzclub.uk/thebigbeehotelexperiment>

April

The **Fairtrade Foundation** are encouraging us to sign their petition to the government to ensure smallholder farmers get the financial support they need to comply with new laws tackling deforestation - find out more [here](#).

The Big Plastic Count investigation revealed that the UK throws away 1.7 billion pieces of plastic packaging every week. 58% of it is burned, and only 17% recycled. It's leaking into our oceans and ecosystems, polluting our air, and damaging our health. Discover **ways to cut plastic** or join Greenpeace's campaign at <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/challenges/plastic-pollution/>

Lots of plastic bags and wrappers, including those for coffee, can be recycled at supermarkets so if you are using the church kitchen and have a recyclable bag, please put it in the bag by the fridge.

Having your food shopping delivered instead of driving to the supermarket means fewer vehicles on the road and makes you less likely to impulse buy stuff you don't really need (apparently).

May

Simple flowers with lots of petals are most likely to be the ones that **attract bees and butterflies**.

The **most significant action we can take to cut carbon emissions** is to start producing our own clean electricity, e.g. by adding solar panels onto the roofs of our houses. However, if your housing situation doesn't allow for that, the second best solution is to compare the options from different utility providers in your community and select an electricity contract with 100% renewable energy certificates (RECs). This ensures that the electricity you use is powered by renewables and that it financially supports the shift away from power generation using fossil fuels, such as coal or natural gas.

You can buy **reusable/washable make-up remover wipes**, or make them from an old t-shirt that isn't good enough for the charity shop.

Save your **coffee grounds to put on your garden**. [Used sparingly](#) they are great for lots of plants from roses to strawberries.

June

To keep ants and aphids away from plants, boil up 7 small onions in 5 litres of water with 3 teaspoons of baking powder, a small piece of biodegradable soap and a little wood ash. Leave for a day then spray on crops. For more natural pesticides or homemade plant foods, [see these ideas from Ripple Effect](#).

'Recycle' overripe bananas by hanging them up in the garden to attract beneficial insects such as butterflies, bees, and ladybirds. Then they release nutrients into the soil - either put them in directly (they'll attract earthworms too) or into the compost heap. For more banana peels uses in the garden: [check here](#).

It's **Great Big Green Week** and the theme this year is 'Let's swap together for good' - find ideas for swapping your shopping to Fairtrade, from Primark beauty products to KoolSkools uniforms, at the [Fairtrade Foundation blog](#).

We can do our bit to **help protect our waters from more pollution**:

1. no oil or fat down the drain - put oil in an unwanted plastic bottle inside your food bin
2. absolutely no plastic of any sort down the toilet - this breaks up and kills fish
3. if paints, household cleaners, pesticides or medicines go down the drain, sewage

treatment works often cannot deal with them and some drains go straight into the river untreated

4. switch to cleaners that are less harmful, eg Ecover, Method, Bio-D

You can sign an open letter to your MP about the **Climate and Nature Bill** [here](#) to effect change on a national scale.

July

It's **plastic free July** – why not make one room in the house your focus each week eg bathroom: switch to refillable bottles from the Global Shop on London street, research plastic free toothbrushes etc

It's plastic free July - discover 12 **alternatives to using clingfilm** in [this blog](#).

If you are planning on swimming in the sea, lakes or streams this summer, you can choose a **sunscreen that won't damage the wildlife** by checking they are free from Octinoxate and Oxybenzone. (The internet is full of advice on 'marine safe' sunscreens!)

The World Shop on London Street sell **bars of environmentally friendly soap** suitable for body, hair and clothes – perfect for travelling and no plastic involved.