

## NAB Communities Commits to Enlightened Living CULTURE | EXERCISE YOUR ECO-ACTIVISM | 1



"... the most important precept of all is to live in awareness, to know what is going on, not only here, but there. For instance, when you eat a piece of bread, you may choose to be aware that our farmers, in growing the wheat, use chemical poisons a little too much. Eating the bread, we are somehow co-responsible for the destruction of our ecology." —Thich Nhat Hanh

From your material to spiritual needs, there are many ways for you to actively exercise your eco-activism. In James Eggert's *Meadowlark Economics* he explains that we are all co-responsible for the changes currently taking place on our planet from global deforestation, climate change, and more. Before we take the steps needed for a more eco-friendly life and planet we must also be conscious—"to know what is going on, not only here, but there." Here are some ways you can go about awakening the inner eco-activist in you.

### Three Simple Tips for a Greener Kitchen

Kitchens are the source of much waste, in terms of uneaten food that is thrown away; water that is used carelessly; power and fuel consumed by stoves, refrigerators, and other gadgets; and food packaging and other materials that are thrown away.

Alexandra Sten Jørgensen is one of several designers exploring ways of reducing waste in the kitchen. Her Ethical Kitchen, designed while a student at Buckinghamshire New University in the U.K., is a conceptual project that uses wastewater and food to feed climbing plants, which are trained over the kitchen units. Organic waste is composted in an integrated bin, and gray water from washing vegetables is recycled to water the plants. Drawers beneath the counter are for temporary storage of packaging for recycling. The effectiveness of the user's recycling is apparent: if the plant is not fed, it will die.

Your kitchen is one of the most important aspects of your own. For the health of both the planet and your family, consider these simple solutions for a greener kitchen the next time you are looking to take on an eco-fabulous kitchen redesign.

**TIP |** Use water dripping from an overhead dish rack to water herbs.

**TIP |** Save the cold water that first runs through when a hot tap is turned on to water plants.

**TIP |** As your refrigerator must run 24 hours a day, make sure you choose an energy efficient one to conserve energy and save money.

### Three Simple Tips to Spare the Air

Many of us love the *idea* of living a more environmentally friendly life but don't take the necessary steps to make it a reality. In *Meadowlark Economics*, James Eggert calls for a collective awareness of our actions and asks everyone to take "co-responsibility" for the environment.

*"I confess to living day to day mentally predisposed to destructive states of denial, and also to a gross numbing of my native sensitivities, of accepting wide-ranging forms of social and environmental blight as normal—light pollution, exhaust pollution, subtle chemical pollution, endless sprawl—and also of doing very little to prevent the cancers, the children's asthma, or the mercury in fish, to name just a few transgressions of my values, of my covenant with our rare Earth.*

*If I could only be more aware of my actions and what I am consuming, I would understand that I too am co-responsible for the poisons, for animal and plant extinctions, for global deforestation and the planet's slow but inexorable climate change ...*

*Lately, for example, I have been thinking about my driving habits. Consider the fact that my wife and I drove to a nature trail. Each gallon of gasoline, when combined with atmospheric oxygen, adds nearly twenty pounds of carbon dioxide into the air. Indeed, on a recent fill-up (about a week and a half 's worth of driving), I consumed approximately 10 gallons of gas for 320 miles. In driving the 320 miles, I was responsible for adding about 200 pounds of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Furthermore, my own records indicate that I've averaged some 10,186 miles per year over a four-year period (a little less than the U.S. average of 11,300 miles). At 32 miles per gallon, that's 318 gallons per year, or over 6,200 pounds (over 3 tons) of carbon dioxide!"*

Luckily, we don't have to accept that the air pollution we are contributing to the environment is inevitable; there are a number of simple ways to personally help spare the air. Remember these three simple tips and begin to make a real difference!

**TIP |** Don't drive if you don't have to. This may sound like common sense, but challenge yourself to really cut down on the unnecessary trips you make in your car. Walk to the library or farmers' market, carpool or take public transit to work, or bike to your friend's social function.

**TIP |** Avoid wood-burning grills that pollute the air. Consider other cooking modes like using propane grills, oven broiling, or pan searing instead. If barbequing with charcoal is a must, try using a briquette starter instead of lighter fluid, which contains high levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are hazardous to human health.

**TIP |** Buy local. In the United States, the average grocery store's produce travels nearly 1,500 miles between the farm where it was grown and your refrigerator! By purchasing locally-produced food you can decrease the gas required to transport it to your table. Want to take it one step further? Become a "locavore" by following a diet of only foods that are produced within a 100-mile radius of your home.

Excerpt from *Meadowlark Economics: Collected Essays on Ecology, Community, and Spirituality* by James Eggert