



>> THE GREEN ISSUE

It's Easy Being Green

Sustainable choices for city living.

by [Jesse Smith](#)

Going green can feel so fruitless at times. You bike home from work, flip on the TV and see rivers flowing with dead fish, ice caps melting into the sea and thousands of acres of rainforest burning.

But those forests? A lot of them were cleared to grow soybeans used around the world to fatten chickens.

What can you do to slow the pace of such environmental destruction?

For starters, you can buy chicken not raised on Amazonian soybeans. And surprisingly, that's pretty easy to do in Philadelphia.

The city actually offers a wide variety of shops and products that benefit the environment in a number of ways. We put together this sustainable business guide to help you make full use of your greenbacks' green power.

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Coffee

You could spend \$3 at Starbucks and support *Akeelah and the Bee*, or you could take that cash to a shop that serves only fair-trade-certified beans, and improve both the environment and the lives of farmers in developing nations. Such certification, which comes from TransFair USA, proves a product was sustainably produced. It ensures farmers and other workers are paid a living wage to produce the beans. Environmentally, certified coffee companies must preserve tree habitats by growing in shade, encourage organic processes and waste composting, and maintain biodiversity by supporting small-scale farming.

Joe Coffee Bar 1100 Walnut St. 215.592.7384

Bucks County Coffee Co. Multiple locations. 800.844.8790. www.buckscountycoffee.com

Mugshots Coffeehouse Multiple locations. www.mugshotscoffeehouse.com

Green Line Cafe Multiple locations. 215.222.3431. www.greenlinecafe.com

Kaffa Crossing 4423 Chestnut St. 215.386.0504. www.kaffacrossing.com

Infusion 7133 Germantown Ave. 215.248.1718. www.infusioncoffeeandtea.com

Dry Cleaners

Perchloroethylene, or perc, is nasty stuff. In humans it can lead to cancer, as well as kidney and liver damage. In the environment it causes air pollution. But in dry cleaning shops it removes stains, and about 80 to 85 percent of cleaners use perc for that reason. But cleaning processes are available that use either nontoxic, biodegradable detergents or the carbon dioxide byproduct of industrial operations. Cleaned clothes end up smelling less chemical-y too.

New Spring Cleaners 8006 Germantown Ave. 215.247.3717

Green Clean Dry Cleaners 2848 Moreland Rd., Willow Grove. 215.658.1541.

www.becleangogreen.com

Hardware Stores

There's the matter of *what* to buy-things like efficient appliances and toilets-and the matter of *where* to buy. The hardware juggernauts-Home Depot and Lowe's among them-thrive on a big-box design that promotes driving. Those expanses of asphalt also contribute to the urban heat-island effect, in which a lack of vegetation and exposed soil drives up temperatures, increasing demand for energy-intensive air conditioning. The hardware industry alone isn't to blame. Wal-Mart, Target, A.C. Moore-basically anything along the South Philly waterfront-is just as bad.

Patronize any place that's a walkable, independent alternative to the big-box chains. There are plenty.

Food

Philadelphians have long been part of a growing local food movement. Today the city's garnering much-deserved attention for its network of urban vegetable gardens, farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture cooperatives and umbrella "buy local" movement. Buying locally produced food reduces the global-warming-causing emissions that result from the traditional transport of food. (Most food travels more than 1,000 miles to the grocery store.) It also helps preserve small family farms, which in turn helps curb environmentally destructive suburban expansion.

Fair Food Farmstand Reading Terminal Market, 12th and Arch sts. 215.627.2029.

www.whitedogcafeoundation.org

Farm to City www.farmtocity.org

Buy Fresh Buy Local www.buylocalpa.org

Buy Local Philly www.buylocalphilly.com

Construction and Design

Your home constitutes your largest footprint on the planet. Those prints are growing as housing size climbs to monstrous levels-primarily in expanding suburbs, but also in tear-down communities. Build or remodel instead with the entire landscape in mind, and not just your little sliver of it. If you own a business, consider the same principles: energy efficiency, recycled materials and managed forest lumber.

Buckminster Green 862 N. Lawrence St. 484.432.2692. www.buckminstergreen.com

Consilience 1500 Market St. 215.665.5756. www.consilience.net

Boise-Holland Architects 923 S. 48th St. 215.727.5065. www.boiseholland.com

Re:Vision Architecture 133 Grape St. 215.482.1133. www.revisionarch.com

Grow-Design 615 N. Broad St. 215.432.9892. www.grow-design.com

Building Materials

Look at the construction boom underway in Philadelphia, and shudder at the thought of landfills rising with what's tossed aside to make way for the new. We're also talking about all that excessive packing material that once surrounded countertops, toilets and light fixtures. And don't forget the fossil fuels burned to get them to their destination. But several Philly businesses offer up salvaged elements that reduce construction's environmental impact. They're also just plain more interesting. Clawfoot tubs, Victorian tiles and old Belgian pavers make far more interesting additions to a home than anything you'll find at Home Depot.

Found Matter 1320 N. Fifth St. 215.701.3949. www.foundmatter.com

Kevin Brooks Salvage 1320 N. Fifth St. 215.848.5029. www.kevinbrookssalvage.com

ReStore 3016 E. Thompson St. 215.634.3474. www.re-store-online.com

American Soil/Provenance 1610 Fairmount Ave. 215.236.6677. www.americansoil.net

Housewares

If you're going to go new, do it wisely. One Philadelphia company, MIO, creates products-including wallpaper, light fixtures and storage units-using a sustainable design. Its production process also incorporates recyclability and minimal packing materials.

MIO 340 N. 12th St. 215.925.9359. www.mioculture.com

Power

Energy companies are pretty crafty. Use that air conditioner on hot days, and odds are you're tapping into an energy system that relies on nonrenewable sources, making the world even hotter.

Pennsylvania alone contributes 1 percent of the world's global-warming-causing pollution, topped in the United States only by California and Texas. Wind, solar and biomass energies-all clean and renewable-are infinitely superior alternatives to nuclear, oil and coal. PECO estimates the impact of buying three blocks a month of the providers' wind energy for one year is equivalent to the impact of

planting 268 trees.

PECO Wind 800.494.4000. www.exeloncorp.com

Energy Cooperative 215.413.2122. www.theenergyco-op.com

Philadelphia Million Solar Roofs Community Partnership 215.320.4612. www.phillysolar.org

Light Bulbs

More visually and aurally pleasant than the fluorescents found in classrooms and offices, energy-efficient compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) are a bit pricier than incandescent bulbs. But they consume as much as 66 percent less energy and may last up to 10 times longer. According to Energy Star—an efficiency effort launched by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy—if every U.S. household replaces five traditional incandescent light bulbs with CFLs, the environment will be spared greenhouse gases amounting to a year's worth of driving for more than 8 million cars.

CFLs are sold all over, even in those tempting big-boxes like Wal-Mart and Ikea.

Cleaning Services

Typical cleaning supplies are a big mix of toxins. Many contain phosphates, the chemicals that cause algal blooms and subsequent fishkills. Others have high concentrations of volatile organic compounds (VOC) that produce smog and ozone. Green Seal, a nonprofit environmental product certification organization, estimates that cleaning products account for about 8 percent of all nonvehicular VOC emissions. Instead use products that are biodegradable and nontoxic, or find a cleaning service that does.

Service: Organic Home. 856.337.0091. www.organichomedesign.com

Products: Norristown-based Sun & Earth. 800.298.7861. www.sunandearth.com

Landscaping

A verdant landscape isn't always the environmental plus it seems. Most lawns are maintained with chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and trimmed at the expense of fossil fuels. Burning bush—the Asian shrub that turns a bright red in autumn—is now so popular and widespread that it's spreading into forests and squeezing out native species. Instead of creating such destructive outdoor spaces—which, repetitive as they are, aren't all that great to look at anyway—plant native trees, shrubs and wildflowers to keep the local ecosystem intact and prevent unnecessary chemical runoff.

Redbud Native Plant Nursery 1214 N. Middletown Rd., Glen Mills. 610.358.4300.

www.redbudnativeplantnursery.com

North Creek Nurseries 388 N. Creek Rd., Landenberg. 610.255.0100. www.northcreeknurseries.com

Natural Landscapes Nursery 354 N. Jennersville Rd., West Grove. 610.869.3788

Clothing

Thanks to widely publicized campaigns against Nike, Gap and Levi's, most people are well aware of the unfair social conditions that exist in sweatshops. But what's rarely discussed is the environmental strain caused by clothing production. Cotton farming, like most agricultural processes, is energy-intensive and heavily dependent on chemicals. Wool-producing sheep are often treated with pesticides. And most fabric production uses high quantities of water, contaminating the liquid in the process. But clothing alternatives are now available that utilize organic cotton, hemp, soy left over from tofu production (replacing goat-originated cashmere and thereby reducing overgrazing) and highly sustainable bamboo.

Satya Boutique 701 S. Ninth St. 215.627.3440. www.satyaboutique.com

Revelations 711 S. Fourth St. 215.925.4022. www.revelationsboutique.com