



# HOW DO I... BECOME AN ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION?

Becoming an environmental champion doesn't have to mean an instant, complete lifestyle makeover. Small everyday actions, like using a refillable water bottle instead of buying disposables, will benefit the environment and help your wallet at the same time. Start with a few things that are easy to integrate into your routine, and then challenge yourself.

You can find ways all across your life and day to reduce your ecological footprint. The City of Hyattsville offers many resources ranging from free compost bins and recycling to bike sharing and tree rebates. This guide will orient you to a few ways you can fine tune your lifestyle to fit the planet's biocapacity and feel healthier to boot!

## WHAT YOU NEED



ENTHUSIASM



PERSISTENCE



CURIOSITY

## BENEFITS



Eco-Friendly



Reduce Footprint



Save Money



Build Community

## GETTING STARTED

✓ **EAT LOCAL!** Choosing locally grown food decreases your footprint because fewer miles are required to get food to your table, and it supports the local economy. Local food is fresher, so it tastes better and doesn't lose nutrients through long storage. Eating local food is a way to

✓ **BIKE IT (OR BUS IT).** Traveling around Hyattsville doesn't require a car for every trip. The City is becoming well-connected to the area bicycle network of protected bike lanes and off-road trails, including the Trolley Trail and Anacostia River Trail. In the Google Maps menu, turn on "bicycling" to see the cycling network. The City is installing bike parking and bike share stations in well-traveled spots around town to make bike commuting more convenient and accessible. Bottom line: you can get in a workout and not have to pay for fuel to get where you're going—saving money never felt so good!

There are multiple stops for Metrobus and Metrorail that get you nearly anywhere in the DC metro region. The Riverdale MARC station is a convenient option for travel to DC or Baltimore and in between.

When you need to use a car, find ways to carpool. There are now so many carpool and rideshare apps, online reviews have cropped up to help you choose the best. You just might make a friend in your new commute buddy!

✓ **SAY NO TO LITTER!** Litter is bad for many reasons: it winds up in our waterways, demoralizes our communities and invites even more litter. So don't litter in the first place, and if you see litter in the community, please pick it up. Join other Hyattsvillians at a community volunteer cleanup day (see *Resources*)! You'll stay active, make friends and your neighborhood will look great!

✓ **SHARE YOUR SUCCESSES.** Encourage others in a nonjudgmental, friendly way to try some of what you've successfully tried.

## RESOURCES

For a deeper understanding of your **ecological footprint** and how much we have overshot Earth's resources, learn from [www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint) and [www.overshootday.org](http://www.overshootday.org).

Check out **Hyattsville's farmers market**. [www.hyattsville.org/farmersmarket](http://www.hyattsville.org/farmersmarket).

Learn the "how" of the local food movement in Eco City Farms **urban agriculture, farmer training and nutrition** programs.

[www.ecoffshoots.org/education](http://www.ecoffshoots.org/education)

**Some plastics clog up recycling machinery** and must be recycled separately. Bags and wraps can be dropped off at a local recycling location. Enter your zip code here [www.plasticfilmrecycling.org](http://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org).

**The answer to trash in the oceans is prevention.**

[https://oceanoday.noaa.gov/trashtalk\\_garbagepatch](https://oceanoday.noaa.gov/trashtalk_garbagepatch)

**Can you recycle that here?** The county answers your questions. [www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/2641/Recycling-Toolkit](http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/2641/Recycling-Toolkit)

**Stormwater runoff basics** in the Chesapeake Bay: [www.chesapeakebay.net/issues/stormwater\\_runoff](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/issues/stormwater_runoff)

Learn from the Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council how to **convert resource-gulping turfgrass into diverse plantings** that are beautiful throughout the year and help the Bay! [www.chesapeakelandscape.org](http://www.chesapeakelandscape.org)

Composting information is all over the web. For the bookish, read Rodale Press's **"Composting: How Organic Gardeners Let it Rot** and Make Homegrown Humus" by Gaia Rodale.

Details on the City's **yard waste collection**.

[www.hyattsville.org/239/Yard-Waste](http://www.hyattsville.org/239/Yard-Waste)

How to **get around on bicycle and foot**: [www.anacostiatrails.org/bike-trails](http://www.anacostiatrails.org/bike-trails) and [www.trailink.com/trail/anacostia-river-trail](http://www.trailink.com/trail/anacostia-river-trail).

Put your neighborhood to **the walkable test** at [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com).

Hyattsville community **volunteer opportunities**: [www.hyattsville.org/volunteer](http://www.hyattsville.org/volunteer)

Learn from **past philosophies and new approaches**.

[American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau](#). 2008. Edited by Bill McKibben.

## REFERENCES:

- 1 [mde.maryland.gov/programs/Marylander/outreach/Pages/Scoop%20the%20Poop.aspx](http://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Marylander/outreach/Pages/Scoop%20the%20Poop.aspx)  
<https://fairviewgardencenter.com/blog/compostingbasics/>  
<https://www.cmu.edu/gelfand/education/k12-teachers/succeed/climate-environment-lesson-plans/1ct-personal-carbon-footprint.html>

appreciate the seasonal availability of fruits and vegetables—winter root vegetables, spring greens, summer tomatoes and fall squashes are a tasty way to celebrate each season. Plus, you can drop the peelings and leftovers in your backyard compost bin!

Find nearby farmers markets and “farm-to-table” restaurants that source local. There are more local purveyors every year—food co-ops and farm shares are great ways to connect with neighbors and diversify your family’s menu. At the grocery store, check labels for where items originated, and remember your reusable bags!

### How many Earths do we need if the world's population lived like...



Source: Global Footprint Network National Footprint Accounts 2017

Graphic adapted from www.footprintnetwork.org

We have gone far past the Earth’s biocapacity. This is the definition of unsustainable.

- ✓ **REDUCE AND RECYCLE!** Use refillable water bottles and travel coffee mugs instead of disposable. The amount of plastics and trash that ends up in the landfill and the oceans is so large it’s unimaginable. You can help stop the problem at the source by prioritizing use of refillable items and always recycling any disposables. And you might just save money: some coffee shops give a discount for bringing your own mug!
- ✓ **PICK UP AFTER YOUR PET!** Choose green for your pet too! Bag pet waste and dispose of it properly to keep bacteria and other pathogens out of our Chesapeake waterways. Nearly 25% of bacteria in waterways is from dog waste! (Ref. 1) Plus your neighbors will definitely appreciate you.

- ✓ **SAVE ON YOUR ENERGY BILL.** Energy efficiency is a huge way to reduce your ecological footprint. Some of the more bang-for-your-buck ways are: adjusting your thermostat a few degrees closer to outside temperatures; take showers over baths and keep them under 5 minutes; and getting Energy Star appliances when purchasing. See our “HOW DO I...INCREASE ENERGY EFFICIENCY?” guide for details!

- ✓ **PLANT A TREE...OR MANY!** If you own your property or have permission where you live, you can plant trees and other plants for a variety of benefits, like carbon sequestration, stormwater runoff reduction, wildlife food and habitat, and beauty. Generally, trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials perform these functions better than turfgrass. Replacing impervious surface with pervious also reduces stormwater runoff, can replenish groundwater and help water thirsty plants.

The City will reimburse residents for planting a native shade tree on their property—check out “HOW DO I ... APPLY FOR A TREE PLANTING REBATE?” guide for more.

- ✓ **BE A CONSCIENTIOUS CONSUMER.** When considering products to buy, remember everything has a life cycle from materials extraction to disposal. It’s not always easy or possible to learn the full life cycle, but educating yourself will only make your decisions more eco-friendly! If all else fails: reduce first, reuse if you must acquire something, and recycle if it’s not reusable. Reducing, reusing, and recycling keeps materials out of the landfill. Remember: there is no “away” in throwing away!



The steps in product life cycle analysis

Graphic source: Carnegie Mellon University

GREENS	BROWNS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit and vegetable scraps</li> <li>• Grass clippings</li> <li>• Bread and grains</li> <li>• Coffee grounds</li> <li>• Hair and fur</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaves</li> <li>• Twigs</li> <li>• Shredded newspaper</li> <li>• Cardboard rolls</li> <li>• Clean paper</li> <li>• Fireplace ashes</li> </ul>
<p><b>DO NOT ADD:</b> dairy, meat, fats, bones, oils, pet waste, seafood scraps, plastic, stickers from fruits and vegetables, metals, glass, treated or painted wood</p>	

Basic composting guidelines

- ✓ **COMPOSTING IS GREEN AND FREE!** Composting leftover fruits and vegetables is an economic and practical way to enrich your garden soils. The City Department of Public Works offers free backyard compost bins, which will help you keep your compost mix organized and pest free.

For garden soils, a good compost mix has both “green” material (veggies, coffee grounds, grass clippings) and “brown” material (leaves, woodchips, shredded paper). Add these materials at a ratio of about 30% green, 70% brown and sprinkle the pile lightly with water if it feels dry. Some composters like to alternate green and brown layers, maintaining a brown layer on top to keep away pesky bugs and critters. The finished compost will be usable in 6-12 months.

Harvest from the bottom of the pile. Some people use a compost tumbler to aerate the mix and make removal of mature compost simpler. If you don’t have one of these, and you want to speed up the process, pile compost material on soil that is loosened to allow earthworm access. Turn the pile every other week for improved aeration, which allows the aerobic microorganisms to do their decomposition work. Monitor and maintain moisture—aim for the dampness of a wrung-out sponge.

Yard waste that doesn’t fit in your compost pile can be recycled in paper bags or trash cans placed at your curb for weekly pick up. Leaf collection has special pickup dates from November to January, or it can be bagged and put out as yard waste. See *Resources* for a link with details.

Graphic source: Fairview Garden Center