But I’m Just One Person

Saving the planet, begins with you, and yes, just one person can start making a difference.

Simple lifestyle changes will have a lasting impact for you and new generations to come.

The choices you make in your commute, your travel, your eating, your shopping and even how you throw away your waste, all can make a difference in reducing the planet’s carbon footprint.

It does not have to be difficult. It can be as simple as taking a shorter shower, recycling as much as possible or even composting to reduce the trash sent to the city landfill.

Little changes have big impact and it begins with you.

What’s my carbon footprint?
You can find out by taking the quiz for you and your family at The Nature Conservancy website. http://www.nature.org/greenliving/carboncalculator/index.htm
A Barrel of Fun – Catching Rain

Next time the forecast calls for rain, don’t let it run down in the gutters. Catch some for your garden.

Rainfall is considered greywater — unsuitable for human consumption without further processing, but immediately useful for a variety of garden and household needs. Plants love rainwater, thanks to its softness and lack of chlorine treatment. So let’s start there, with a simple and inexpensive system designed to take a little load off your water bill while keeping your garden green.

While you can spend more for a large commercially produced system, setting up a basic rain barrel system is the kind of project you can complete in an afternoon for less than $100. Since even a light rain can produce several hundred gallons of rooftop runoff, you’ll have little trouble filling your barrel. An inch of rain on a 1,000 square-foot roof will put over 600 gallons into a gutter system — much more than most people collect.

A contemporary rain barrel system is a simple affair. They’re also getting easier to find. Your local home improvement store is likely to have a couple ready-to-install models to choose from, and there are dozens of varieties available online. A typical setup is a diversion line which runs from your rain gutter downspout, a length of tubing, and one or more barrels with a cover.

As green home improvements go, rain barrels are a fairly simple, low-cost project with long-term returns. They help take some load off municipal water and waste treatment systems, add value to your home.

Invest a few hours next weekend and get started.

Tea From a Tree?

Willow trees are one of the most commonly used landscape trees, and are also common in the wild environment too. Willows are members of the Poplar family (Salicaceae) which is composed of poplars, cottonwoods, aspens and willows. The genus of willows, called Salix, is very broad and is one of the largest families of trees in the world. Most willows are shrubs, but some grow into trees.

Willows also have an incredible practical use, few people of which know what it is. Native Americans used the bark as a pain killer, the salicin compound is very similar to commercial aspirin.

But did you know you can also make tea? If you do not have a willow tree growing in your back yard, you are likely to find some at your organic store.

Place 1 or two teaspoons of willow bark bits per cup of water in a pot.

Simmer for 10-15 minutes, being careful not to boil it.

Remove the brew from heat and let it sit and steep for half an hour.

*Not recommended if you have aspirin allergies, consult your physician first.*
Make Compost from Kitchen Scraps

Compost like a champ by throwing in your vegetable waste, instead of allowing it to be trucked off to the landfill.

Known as "gardener's gold," compost enriches soil fertility by giving it a shot of high-powered, plant-loving nutrients.

Aside from stimulating healthy root development, the addition of rich and earthy compost also improves soil texture, aeration, and water retention. Speed up the process with the help of earthworms or go wriggle-free (if you're the squeamish sort).

Grow Your Own Food

Buying organic produce can admittedly get pricey, so how about growing your own food instead of painstakingly manicuring that lawn for the umpteenth time? An estimated 40 million acres of the 48 contiguous American states are covered in lawns, making turf grass the United States’ largest irrigated crop. American homeowners apply a cringe-worthy tens of millions of pounds of fertilizers and pesticides to their lawns, often at many times the recommended levels. All that for little more than ornamentation. It's time to return to the use of gardens as food sources--you won't find fresher (or cheaper) eating anywhere else.

Join a Community Garden

Urban dwellers bereft of a yard shouldn't fret: You can still get in on the hoeing and growing action by signing up for a plot at your local community garden.

Community gardens typically have a communal composting area, as well, so if you don't have room for one of those triple-duty rotating barrel composters in your home, here's your hookup.

Harvest Rainwater

Adding a rain barrel is an inexpensive and effortless way to capture mineral- and chlorine-free water for watering lawns, yards, and gardens, as well as washing cars or rinsing windows. By harnessing what's literally raining from the sky, you'll not only notice a marked dip in water costs, but also a reduction in stormwater runoff, which in turn helps prevent erosion and flooding. Pop a screen on top of your barrel to keep out insects, debris, and bird missiles, and make frequent use of your water supply to keep it moving and aerated.

Home grown produce tastes better and can be chemical-free.

If you're a new gardener, keep things simple. People have a tendency to plant a garden that's too large and then end up with a backyard mess. One of the benefits to growing a small garden is that it lends itself to a more positive experience.
Composting – Is Not a Dirty Word

Composting is a natural process, similar to the way nature breaks down leaves and other dead material on the forest floor. A combination of green and brown vegetable matter kept barely moist and turned regularly will “rot” into a dark, aromatic material filled with the beneficial bacteria, microbes and fungi that your plants need to grow like champs.

Special equipment is not necessary.
You can use a clean trash bin, or other container to get started.
However not all of your waste is suitable for composting.
You should use vegetable, fruit and even paper waste.
Do not use meat or grass clippings that have been treated with herbicide.