June 2023 Creation Care Green Tips

**The Products We Buy: Vote with your Dollars to Help Create a Set of Values that are Good for You *and* the Planet.**

1.  What you eat matters - not only to your own health, but that of the planet's. While more greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) come from the energy, industrial, buildings, and transportation sectors, **the production of food globally creates 25% of GHG** and uses nearly **70% of the world's fresh water.**Research at the Harvard T.H.Chan School of Public Health finds that beef is a "triple whammy" for emissions, partly due to the methane produced in the rumen of cattle, and partly due to producing the soy and grains that are fed to them.  Expanding consumption of red meat around the world means cutting down forests and plowing them into prairies to produce more grains for cattle to eat, releasing even more of the CO2 that is **increasing temperatures that lead to permafrost melting, to shrinking Arctic ice caps, and to even more Co2 from increased air conditioning.**A plant-based diet (unless it is high in refined starches and added sugars) not only emits the fewest greenhouse gases, but it uses the least cropland, irrigation water, and nitrogen-based fertilizer.  An added bonus is that a diet of **fruits and vegetables (1/2 your plate), whole grains, nuts and legumes (1/4 your plate) and a modest amount of  animal-based foods** is healthy, sustainable, and affordable -  for you.

2.  Reversing **biodiversity collapse** and slowing **climate change** will require us to transform agriculture from a major climate emitter to a **climate solution, protecting soil health** for generations to come.  Toward this effort, a number of organizations, including the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEPartnership.org), are working with farmers and companies nationwide to transition from industrialized agriculture (applying synthetic fertilizers, spraying chemicals to keep out weeds and pests, and plowing fields every year) to **organic and regenerative** methods that build soil health, moisture retention, increased nutrients, and help to keep carbon in the ground instead of released into the atmosphere.   You can help local farms and the local economy by shopping at small, locally owned businesses where you can request that they carry products from local farmers. Shopping at local food cooperatives (co-ops) that source products from other co-ops and green businesses as well as from local farmers is a way to continue support in addition to shopping at Farmers Markets and subscribing to Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs).

3.  A good rule of thumb when shopping for food is **knowing what's in season and where it grows.**For many products, grocery stores rely on a global supply chain, in which crops are being shipped from commercial agriculture operations and **adding more greenhouse gas emissions through transportation.**Not only does in-season produce taste better, it is more nutritious, with a report in the *International Journal of Food Science* finding that artificially ripened produce **lost nutrients like vitamin C and protein and tested higher for toxic chemicals.**To learn what grows when, explore the US Dept. of Agriculture's Seasonal Produce Guide ([snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide](http://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide)).  Four companies (Tyson Foods, JBS, Cargill and Marfrig) have monopolies on **meat production**, so it is difficult to source local products at most grocery stores, but by going to [**goodmeatbreakdown.org**](http://goodmeatbreakdown.org) you can find local meat producers to source from directly, with benefits like better nutrition, grass-fed, and hormone-free.  For **seafood,** look for products wild-caught in the U.S. or farmed sustainably.  Use Seafood Watch ([seafoodwatch.org](http://seafoodwatch.org)) to find ethical seafood choices.  Imported seafood (shrimp from Asia, etc.) have been linked to human rights abuses and overuse of antibiotics, as well as a large carbon footprint from shipping.

4.  In their publication *Nutrition Action,* the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) reports that while gas stoves have been critiqued for emitting nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde and methane, and for causing an estimated **12.7% of all childhood asthma in the U.S.,** all gas appliances (such as a gas or oil furnace) contribute to greenhouse gas emissions through the **two to three percent methane leakage** in the gas pipeline infrastructure.  Research done at **Rewiring America,** a nonprofit that helps people electrify their homes and communities, finds that over time, it is expected that "electricity from the grid will be 100% zero-carbon clean energy, powered mostly with renewables like wind and solar."  To make things easier, the Inflation Reduction Act will offer rebates or tax credits (depending on your income) to go electric by 2032.  For example, low- and moderate-income households can get up to $8,000 to switch to a **heat pump for heating and air conditioning,** which is vastly more efficient than gas or fuel oil furnaces.  There will also be rebates for electric clothes dryers, water heater heat pumps, and upgrading your electrical panel.  To see how much money you could save through the Inflation Reduction Act, use the IRA Savings Calculator at RewiringAmerica.org.