



# **RiverBender Blog: Going Green, Staying Lazy**

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Call me a hippie, but I'm scared of climate change.

Not only am I scared of climate change, but I'm also on the lookout for ways to solve it. I know this is a little ambitious — yes, me, a 23-year-old journalist with no scientific background and the lowest-effort recycling pile possible, will fix an age-old problem single-handedly.

Well, no, probably not.

But I can at least try to minimize my impact. Whether you're worried about climate change or not, we can all agree that it's a good idea to take care of the Earth as much as we can. So over the past several months, I've tried to be more intentional with my consumption and look for sustainable options where possible: my project to Save the World™, to varying degrees of success thus far.

First, I want to acknowledge that sustainability is expensive and often requires space, time and money that not everyone has. I'm lucky that I have access to space, a little bit of extra time, and occasionally some pocket money to put toward these efforts.

Second, one thing you must understand about me is that I am inherently lazy. Hey, I'm working on it. But the truth is that the easier something is, the more likely I am to do it. It's good to know this about oneself. With my character flaws in mind, I chose to find the simplest ways to help.

I started by paying more attention to what I buy. Fast fashion leads to textile waste, which is a major environmental issue that most people in the U.S. don't know about. This is a stereotype, but like a lot of young women, I like clothes. Nothing wrong with that, but I've been asking myself if I *really* need that cute sweatshirt I found in Target.

My friends and I have also started gifting the clothes we no longer wear, so most of my outfits are secondhand. Not only does it help the environment, but I've saved so. Much. Money. Considering the tiny wages that fast fashion companies pay their employees, it's impressive (read: ridiculous) how quickly the cost of new clothes can add up.

On the topic of consumption, I'm in the process of switching out some of my skincare products to products by companies like MyCHELLE, which is a natural, cruelty-free and vegetarian brand with less chemicals than your average skincare. Not only have I seen a legitimate difference in my skin, but it feels great to know my money is going toward a company that actually cares about the Earth and people on it.

It takes some time — and some cash — to research different products and replace your usual go-tos, so this part of my Save the World™ project has been several months in the making. But that's okay! Each step is still a step in the right direction.

Case in point: I'm also trying to eat less meat, but sometimes a cheeseburger just really hits the spot. And veggies are EXPENSIVE. This is one of my environmental efforts that I will have to do in phases. I implement more meatless days here and there, whenever I can afford fresh food and have time to cook (and the self-discipline to choose a salad over a steak).

One thing I realized early on is that sustainability is not sexy. I'm going to tell on myself here for really half-assing my environmental efforts. Dear reader, try not to judge.

In my last apartment, where I lived with three roommates, we had a pile in the corner of the living room with discarded papers, empty aluminum cans and smashed cardboard boxes. Every three months or so, we would fill up the trunk of someone's car and head out to a recycling center.

This wasn't a bad idea, except the recycling pile was objectively disgusting. We were living in squalor, but, look, it was in the name of the environment. (The worst part of this story is that I still do this.)

We also tried to compost. We were four people living in a tiny apartment, but believe it or not, it's still possible to compost with a little innovation. To kick off our green journey, I bought a tub of ice cream that we shared. When the plastic tub was empty, here was our new compost bin. We rescued some worms from their bait fate at a nearby farming store and began collecting food scraps.

It turns out that composting is also disgusting. I recommend finding a spot for your bin outside, as we learned after a few days of trying to keep the bin inside until the smell of rotting food was unbearable.

So, sometimes environmental efforts are pretty. Picture me in a thrifted dress, applying natural skincare products while simultaneously cooking fresh broccoli — that's the woman I masquerade as.

Other times, as I look around at the stack of old papers in a corner of my room and empty cans of Coke on my bedside table that I've been too lazy to put in the recycling bin, it's a little less cute.

Going green isn't easy, but it makes me feel better about my impact on the earth. If nothing else, it certainly has been an adventure.