

NOTHING NEW IN '22

The struggle to be a good environmentalist is real. As Unitarians, we are often very hard on ourselves and tend to feel an overwhelming sense of responsibility to do the right thing and often take on more than our share. In 2022 there are more than enough stressors that are beyond our control, so I have decided to take some of the pressure off my environmental efforts by simply not buying anything new this year. Pledging, Nothing New in '22. By nothing new I am referring to items other than everyday essentials, for those the Earth Ministries team has some suggestions. A few things that have motivated me to Stop shopping include the following:

An article by The Atlantic titled, Stop Shopping <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2021/10/stop-shopping-global-supply-chain-shipping-delays/620465/>. This article points out how an increase in consumption has contributed to the supply chain problem. We may not be able to help the container ships get to shore, but we can decrease our demand.

Another experience that has caused me to reevaluate what I buy is simply looking around my house. What's your experience when you look around? Does everything that you see bring you joy? Is it all necessary? What purpose does each item serve? I know that I have too much stuff, but I also know that I have far less stuff than many people that I know. I don't rent a storage facility or fill a garage so full that it no longer holds a car, I don't have closets bursting at the seams, but I still have a lot of stuff that I don't need.

Finally, the first rule of "R's" is to REFUSE. So, I will simply REFUSE to buy anything except essentials for all of 2022. Instead, I am reading books that have sat on my shelf (some for the first time, some for the second or third), I am finding new ways to wear old clothes, I am using up all the products that have been stored in my cabinets and drawers, and generally trying to use what I already have.

For the household items that we do need to purchase throughout the year, the best thing that we can do is attempt to shop smartly. As a start, you can be inspired by our own Bob Popp and simply pay attention to the packaging of the product. Aim for minimal packaging and choose items not wrapped in plastic when the choice exists.

For a comprehensive database of products, check out the Environmental Working Group's website... <https://www.ewg.org/consumer-guides>. Here you can find a plethora of information about various industries, their products and their environmental impact.

<https://byhumankind.com/> offers personal care products that "don't have to come at the Earth's expense" and <https://www.grove.co/> offers "sustainable choices to transform your home".

Looking for the best canned fish options? The two top brands for flavor and sustainability, based on research conducted by Gus Hadorn, are Cento (reasonably priced) and Fishwife (listed as best for sustainability and flavor but expensive).

And finally, here's an article listing The 10 Most Environmentally Friendly & Sustainable Companies (2021). <https://growensemble.com/environmentally-friendly-companies/?ignorenitro=a26fd5a00f9bd2d6e8b5cd41bdf70ed1>

To summarize, being a good environmentalist doesn't have to be hard work. Instead of trying to do it perfectly, simplify your efforts by reducing your consumption. When you do consume, aim for less packaging, and avoid plastic when possible. Finally, support businesses that make the Earth a priority.

~Jennifer Phillippi