

JULY 2021 – 4th EDITION

THE COMBROKE EC_hO

MAKING COMBROKE EVEN GREENER!

Welcome to the latest newsletter from the Combroke Climate Change Club. CCCC meetings are on hold for now, but the newsletters will continue. In this issue we're going to talk about decluttering and why we should do it, and how we can help the planet by welcoming more wildlife into our gardens – even the caterpillars...



2021 brought another lockdown, but looking on the bright side – less miles travelled by car, train or plane, more time at home to perfect your sourdough technique, (if it needed any more perfecting) time to make (more) banana bread, time to declutter that cupboard/room/house (delete as appropriate) you've been threatening to do, and now that summer has officially arrived more time to spend in the garden – hurrah!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

NO MOW MAY – DID YOU MOW?

HAS LOCKDOWN INSPIRED YOU TO DECLUTTER?

BEE NICE TO THE WILDLIFE IN YOUR GARDEN

TOO MUCH STUFF?

At the second CCCC meeting, we talked about our carbon footprints, and why we should reduce them. (Go to [WWF Footprint Calculator](#) to work out yours.) We learned that they are generally composed of 4 elements:

1. How we choose to travel
2. The food we eat
3. How we heat and power our homes
4. Our possessions - otherwise known as **stuff!**



Stuff relates to the consumable items that we buy, from furniture to Fitbits, fairy lights to phones, toilet roll to tracing paper, carpets to candles...Most of us can relate to having too much stuff in our homes, and during the past year or so it seems that some people have found solace in online shopping, even reporting addictive behaviours towards clicking the ‘buy now’ button, and a ‘thrill’ when the latest delivery arrives, only to leave parcels unopened and even forget what is inside the boxes. Read on if you’re looking for some inspiration to reduce your ‘stuff’.



We have talked about Reduce, Re-Use, Recycle before, but Bea Johnson (author of *Zero Waste Home: The Ultimate Guide to Simplifying Your Life by Reducing Your Waste*) added two more, REFUSE, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, ROT (and only in that order, ensuring that she only acquires items that are absolutely necessary). She went on a mission to reduce the amount of waste her family creates. She has managed to reduce her family’s annual rubbish to a jar since 2008, and consequently recycles less rather than more.

Remember Marie Kondo – she of ‘sparks joy’ fame? Her best-selling book ‘The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying’ first published in 2014 taught us how to declutter our lives in order to clear our minds. We all know that we should probably have less stuff, but it’s not always as easy as she made it sound. In fact even Marie herself seems to have succumbed recently – her new range includes a rose quartz crystal with tuning fork, a goat hair and walnut body brush, and Japanese picklestones...



CUSTODIAN OF THINGS

Following a few simple steps can help you start consuming less, says Lucía González Schuett. *This post is part of TED’s “How to Be a Better Human” series, and it all started when she looked at her junk drawer.*

She made a radical decision: She vowed to go for a year without buying anything except for food.

Her experiences caused her to rethink consumption - on a personal and a societal level - and become aware of the invasive, ongoing pressures to acquire new stuff...Her tips include:

Let yourself run out of something before you re-buy.

Keep an item in your online shopping cart for a few days - or weeks - before buying it. You’ll reduce your chance of regretting an impulsive purchase...or realize you don’t actually need it at all.

Instead of immediately replacing something that’s broken, try fixing it first.

When you do buy, consider second-hand.

Choose quality over quantity, especially when it comes to fashion.

Share what you have, and find others who will. Rather than buying a tool...“knock on your neighbor’s door when you need a screwdriver”

Shift your mindset about stuff. As González Schuett puts it, “Consider yourself a custodian of things, rather than an owner.” When you think about it, you’ll realize that there are ways to enjoy things without owning them.



DOES THIS LOOK FAMILIAR?

Lots of us have noticed an increase in litter over the last few months. A huge **THANK YOU** to every villager (you know who you are!) who ever picks up litter around Combroke. It's sad to see the full binbags that some of you have returned home with. Some of this is due to extra footfall in the village, some of it is due to PPE carelessly disposed of, and some of it is due to takeaway food.

Many hospitality outlets have had to diversify to stay afloat during lockdown, and for many this has meant offering takeaway options. Takeaway food obviously needs some kind of packaging - this extract from an article highlights the environmental downsides to all of this extra packaging, and looks at some of the options available.

'TAKEAWAY PACKAGING – WHAT'S THE MOST SUSTAINABLE OPTION?' (taken from citytosea.org)

CHOOSE TO REUSE - THE SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

We've always said that the most sustainable solution is reuse over single-use. And now [125 scientists have confirmed](#) that single-use plastics are no safer than any other material (*in terms of hygiene*) and reusable containers are safe to use provided they are cleaned properly.

WHICH DISPOSABLE TAKEAWAY PACKAGING IS BEST?

Bagasse - these soft paper-style boxes are not lined with any plastic or other material and will decompose naturally if they end up becoming litter. Bagasse is slightly absorbent but does not leak sauces. This can also go in home compost bins (but not food caddies – see explanation on bioplastics below).

The reality is that in areas like parks and beaches there are usually only general waste bins which quickly overflow. All the waste in these bins will generally end up going for waste-to-energy incineration. So the focus for places offering takeaways should be on what happens if their item becomes litter.



FOOD EATEN AT HOME

Cardboard packaging. This usually has a thin plastic lining but can still be washed out and put in cardboard recycling, as long as it's clean and free from grease marks – check out [WRAP's guidance on cardboard packaging](#) for packaging that can be recycled.



Remember, whatever packaging you use, food and grease contaminates all recycling (aluminium, plastic, glass, paper) *meaning that even if consumers put it in their recycling, it will be rejected at the recycling plant.*

WHAT ABOUT COMPOSTABLE BIOPLASTICS?

Whilst they might sound like the solution to plastic pollution, we have extensively researched compostable – here's what we discovered:

- They **won't compost or biodegrade** if they become litter or marine litter as they need temperatures of 60 degrees plus – which obviously is not found in our parks, rivers or seas!
- They aren't accepted in most household food recycling (the food caddy that gets collected) because the plants that process food can only process food and can't tell a bioplastic from a petro-chemical plastic. It's all just plastic to them! The conditions aren't right for these bioplastics to compost either. To get your head around this, check out our guide to [bioplastics](#).
- If compostable materials end up in a general waste bin, they will end up going to waste-to-energy incineration (this is where most general waste goes) so they will not compost at all.
- The reality is that to actually get these materials composted, you'd need to find a recycling plant that will accept them.'

So how can consumers help?

- ✓ Many takeaways have already swapped their plastic packaging for something more planet-friendly, but if they haven't, why not (politely!) suggest they have a look at the options?
- ✓ Ask your favourite takeaway venue if they mind you taking your own clean reusable container.
- ✓ Say no to extra cutlery if offered - unless you *really* need it. If you are regularly eating takeaway food away from home (at work for example) keep a re-usable set of cutlery in your bag.





A PLANET-FRIENDLY GARDEN

ALTHOUGH GARDENING AT FIRST GLANCE SOUNDS LIKE A PLANET-FRIENDLY HOBBY, PLASTIC COMPOST BAGS, SEED TRAYS AND POTS, TOGETHER WITH NASTY PEST AND WEED CONTROL CHEMICALS SOMETIMES GIVE GARDENERS A BAD REPUTATION IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL WORLD. HERE ARE SOME TIPS THAT WILL MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE.

(article source – unknown)

WHERE SHOULD YOU GET YOUR PLANTS FROM?

START WITH SEEDS

Growing your own from seed is a cost-effective and plastic-free way of stocking up your garden, and avoiding unwanted plastic pots. Look out for seed swaps in your local community, or via plant societies and this will help to add unusual, or more native varieties to your collection without buying new packets each time. Plus, it's a great way to meet other gardeners and share tips.

GET TO KNOW YOUR ROOTS

Buy your plants bare root – by mail order or contact your local garden centre. Plastic-aware nurseries will send your bare roots wrapped in newspaper so they arrive without a plastic pot for you to deal with (the original pot will be reused back at the nursery)

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Increase your stock of plants in autumn or spring for FREE by cutting your existing perennials into two, three or four pieces and replant each as a new plant.



The Combroke Plant Sale in May was a brilliant way to add to your collection of plants without damaging the environment too much...think re-used pots, zero miles, and supporting the restoration of the rose window in the church!

...AND ONCE YOU'VE GOT SOME PLANTS?

KEEP IT PEAT-FREE

Protect habitats and wildlife by choosing peat-free compost. Peat extraction is really damaging to wildlife and releases a lot of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Make your compost plastic-free by seeking out garden centres who offer compost bags for life which you refill each time, or look out for [locally produced compost](#) and take your own refillable container to collect it.

GET COMPOSTING

Make your own compost with a compost heap. It's basically a free way to use up your vegetable scraps, newspapers, grass clippings, and other compostable materials and turn them into gardener's gold. (More on this in future issues!) Be wary of compostable or biodegradable food bags as they can take years and years to degrade despite claims. [Composting](#) makes a fantastic soil conditioner for your garden, which you can use as a mulch or as part of a potting mix.

MAKE YOUR OWN POTS

Now you have your seeds and soil sorted you need a place to put them. Every year around [500 million plastic pots and seed trays are sold in the UK](#), so switching to a plastic-free option could have a MASSIVE impact.

Get crafty and make your own pots. Seed pots can be made from newspaper wrapped around a jug or a cup, you can even try out toilet rolls (push the bottom to create a cup). Cardboard egg boxes or the bottom half of a tissue box make great seeding trays just simply fill with compost, pop in your seeds and watch them grow. Reducing waste and saving money!

OR CHOOSE PLASTIC-FREE ONES

You can buy pots made from natural coir or harder-wearing terracotta, or even wooden seed trays lined with newspaper. These can be reused many times over so long as you take extra care of them. If you find you've already got a stack of plastic pots, don't just throw them away; try to reuse them as much as possible or see if a local school or allotment need them. Find out here if your local garden centre offers a [pot recycling service](#).

REMEMBER WHAT YOU'VE PLANTED!

Use wooden, slate or metal rather than plastic labels to help remember what you've planted, or repurpose household items like wooden lolly sticks, yoghurt pots or tomato paste tubes (Cut off the top and bottom of a tomato paste tube, then cut down the middle so you can flatten it, and wash it. Cut it into strips of a desired size and write on it with a ballpoint pen.)



A HELPING HAND

Your plants may need extra support so they can continue to grow and bloom. Natural twine, bamboo canes and plastic-free wire are the best helpers to help your garden grow. You can also use coffee grounds or broken eggshells at the base of your plants to help keep slugs and snails at bay and act as a natural fertilizer for your plants – double win! (Also removes the need to use harmful chemicals in plastic bottles).

Warwickshire County Council has several deals available for home composting equipment - have a look at [Council Deals - See what's available in your area - Great Green Systems](#)

Did you mow in May?

UK gardeners are known for taking pride in their lawns, but Monty Don caused uproar in gardening circles earlier this year when he called on people to support 'No Mow May'

Research undertaken by citizen scientists across the UK who have taken part in Plantlife's [Every Flower Counts](#) - the largest-ever survey of the humble lawn - reveal not only the astonishing diversity of wild flowers growing on Britain's lawns, but that incredibly simple changes in mowing can result in enough nectar for ten times more bees and other pollinators.

- Over 200 species were found flowering on lawns including rarities such as meadow saxifrage, knotted clover and eyebright
- The top three most abundant lawn flowers are daisy, white clover and selfheal. Over half a million flowers have been counted, including 191,200 daisies.
- First ever National Nectar Score for our lawns: all lawn flowers in the survey combined produced a colossal 23kg of nectar sugar per day, enough to support 2.1 million - or around 60,000 hives - of honeybees.
- 'Mohican' lawn cut suits all: Highest production of flowers and nectar were on lawns cut every four weeks, whilst longer, unmown grass had a wider range of flowers.

Plantlife asked participants how often they mowed their lawns and those who had left their lawns unmown for *No Mow May* revealed very different – and exciting – results for our beleaguered pollinators:

- The highest production of flowers and nectar sugar was on lawns cut *once every four weeks*. This gives 'short-grass' plants like daisies and white clover a chance to flower in profusion, *boosting nectar production tenfold*.
- Areas of longer unmown grass were, however, more diverse in their range of flowers, with other nectar-rich plants like oxeye daisy, field scabious and knapweed increasing the range of nectar sources for different pollinators and extending nectar availability into late summer.



For more information about Plantlife, the British conservation charity working nationally and internationally to save threatened wild flowers, plants and fungi, go to <https://www.plantlife.org.uk>

Other Environmental News

Climate scientists have said nowhere is safe from the kind of extreme heat events that have hit the western US and Canada in recent days and urged governments to dramatically ramp up their efforts to tackle the escalating climate emergency.

The devastating "heat dome" has caused temperatures to rise to almost 50C in Canada and has been linked to hundreds of deaths, melted power lines, buckled roads and wildfires.

Experts say that as the climate crisis pushes global temperatures higher, all societies – from northern Siberia to Europe, Asia to Australia – must prepare for more extreme weather events.

Another local farm offering fresh milk without plastic bottles – bring your own bottles and fill them up from the milk vending machine.

Head to the Harbury Milk Shed,
Mill Lane, Harbury CV33 9HR.

Open every day from 6.30am.
Call 07733 158680 or look at their
Facebook page for more info.

They also sell a range of other local
treats from cheese to patisserie, and
you can even add a flavour shot to your
bottle of milk to turn it into a milkshake!



Good News for parents of small children – and the planet! Morrisons recently announced that they are to stop stocking children's magazines that come with those plastic toys that are so appealing to little ones and so bad for the environment. Yay!

Get in touch! Let us know about the changes (big or small) that you have made to help the planet. What would you like us to discuss at future meetings? What would you like to know more about?

Drop an email to parish-clerk@combroke.co.uk

Please note this newsletter is the editor's best attempt at presenting accurate information. Not definitive, all E&OE. No products or companies mentioned in this newsletter are endorsed by CCCC or the Editor.

Last word. Hope you have enjoyed this edition of the Combroke Echo. Apologies if you were hoping to get some tips on perfecting your sourdough – the editor has none to offer. If you are reading this on paper, please remember to re-use – pass it on (in a socially distanced manner) to someone else to read, or use it to practise your new origami skills. If it's printed with planet-friendly ink you could even put it in your compost heap (maybe tear it up or shred it first) At the very least, please put it in your recycling bin.

Thanks for reading!



People around the world marked Earth Hour on 27th March by switching off as many lights as possible – next year's event will be held on Saturday 26th March – put it in your diary - an excuse for a candle-lit dinner maybe? Go to [Join One Of The World's Largest Movements for Nature | Earth Hour 2021](#) for more information.

STOP PRESS!

An eagle-eyed resident spotted this beautiful otter in our stream on Saturday 3rd July. No-one knows if he/she was just passing through, on holiday or just escaping the ALSO festival!

