Further Ruminations of an Environmental Shopper

By Susan Crosby

"Think Globally, Shop Locally, and Mean It", our last column, introduced some green shopping guidelines for necessities. Today's article continues with a few more essentials, always with these basic guidelines: shop with your eyes open, bring your own bags, shop in person when possible, and ask yourself: Do I really need more stuff?

Cleaning Products

First, consider making your own spray cleaner with this one-two formula: combine equal parts rubbing alcohol and distilled white vinegar in a spray bottle. The alcohol disinfects; the vinegar makes glass and metal surfaces shine.

When shopping, consider BlueLand's plastic-free, eco-friendly, competitively priced cleaners, including dishwashing and laundry detergents, sold at local stores like Costco, Walmart and Target. Planet Products and Seventh Generation are two long-time, independently certified environmental leaders in the category, and are found in many local supermarkets. Good Pantry and Juniper Station carry other excellent brands, without the excess packaging.

Personal Care Products

It's worth spending some time researching company sustainability commitments and how they translate into practice. Among big cosmetic brands, for example, Aveda excels, featuring 100% vegan, cruelty-free products manufactured using renewable energy and with recycled packaging. L'Oreal has cleaned up its production facilities, reusing the water needed to run its factories rather than dumping it into rivers, and now offers a line of REFILLABLE products, becoming the first major company to break free of waste.

An excellent independent resource for identifying responsible choices is the non-profit, Environmental Working Group (EWG). They conduct extensive research on a wide range of personal care products and maintain an exhaustive consumer guide online: www.ewg.org/areas-focus/personal-care-products

Food and drink

The biggest users of plastic packaging in the world are – guess who? – the soft drink and beverage industry. Number 1 is Coca-Cola, followed by Pepsi-Cola. Unless you're in a country where Coke still comes in glass bottles – Mexico, Germany, Spain, France, The Philippines, Argentina, Iraq, or Switzerland – choose drinks that come in metal or glass.

This raises the larger issue of who is responsible for all this excess plastic packaging. Cal Recycle, the state agency responsible for waste management, is all over this. Its website explains the important and common-sense idea of Extended Producer Responsibility. EPR "holds businesses responsible for end-of-life management of their products or packaging". (https://calrecycle.ca.gov/epr/)

For groceries, shop the periphery of the store where fresh produce, dairy, and proteins live, and be careful in the central aisles, where processed foods dwell in their unrepentant iniquity. Choose certified

organic fruits, vegetables, grains, and nuts. Bring containers and shop the bulk food aisle. Drift away from red meat for all the obvious reasons, including the toll beef takes on land and water use. Dairy products from local sustainability leader Straus Family Creamery include milk in returnable glass bottles, or look for larger reputable sustainability co-ops like Organic Valley.

Fish? Sparingly, both for the toxins now in our oceans and to conserve fish populations. Sardines and other small fish contain less mercury and other toxins, but take it easy on the little guys. Farmed fish is not the sterling environmental choice it claims to be, but that's (scary) research you can do on your own. Always look for Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified seafood.

Patronize Napa Businesses

Napa has a wealth of businesses offering sustainable choices, such as:

- Napa Wild – delivers organic, sustainably sourced produce to homes and restaurants; order online.
- Good Pantry – committed to zero-waste, offering a large selection of bulk foods like grains, dried beans, oils, nuts and seeds, along with bread, eggs, self-care and cleaning products.
- Hudson's Greens and Goods – fresh, local organic produce, essentials like milk, yogurt, and bread, and a wide range of other foods.
- Juniper Station – personal care and home cleaning products, a selection of towels, sponges, and gift items, all organic and plastic-free.
- The Farmers Market – Tuesdays and Saturdays, for fresh local produce, cheeses, yogurt, food trucks, and more, including friendly people.

It's easier than ever to make sustainable choices. Future generations – heck, some that are already here – will thank us.

Susan Crosby is a former teacher and volunteer with Napa Climate NOW!

Photo credit: Susan Crosby
Photo caption: Local produce at Hudson's Greens and Goods

