

# the JOYFUL

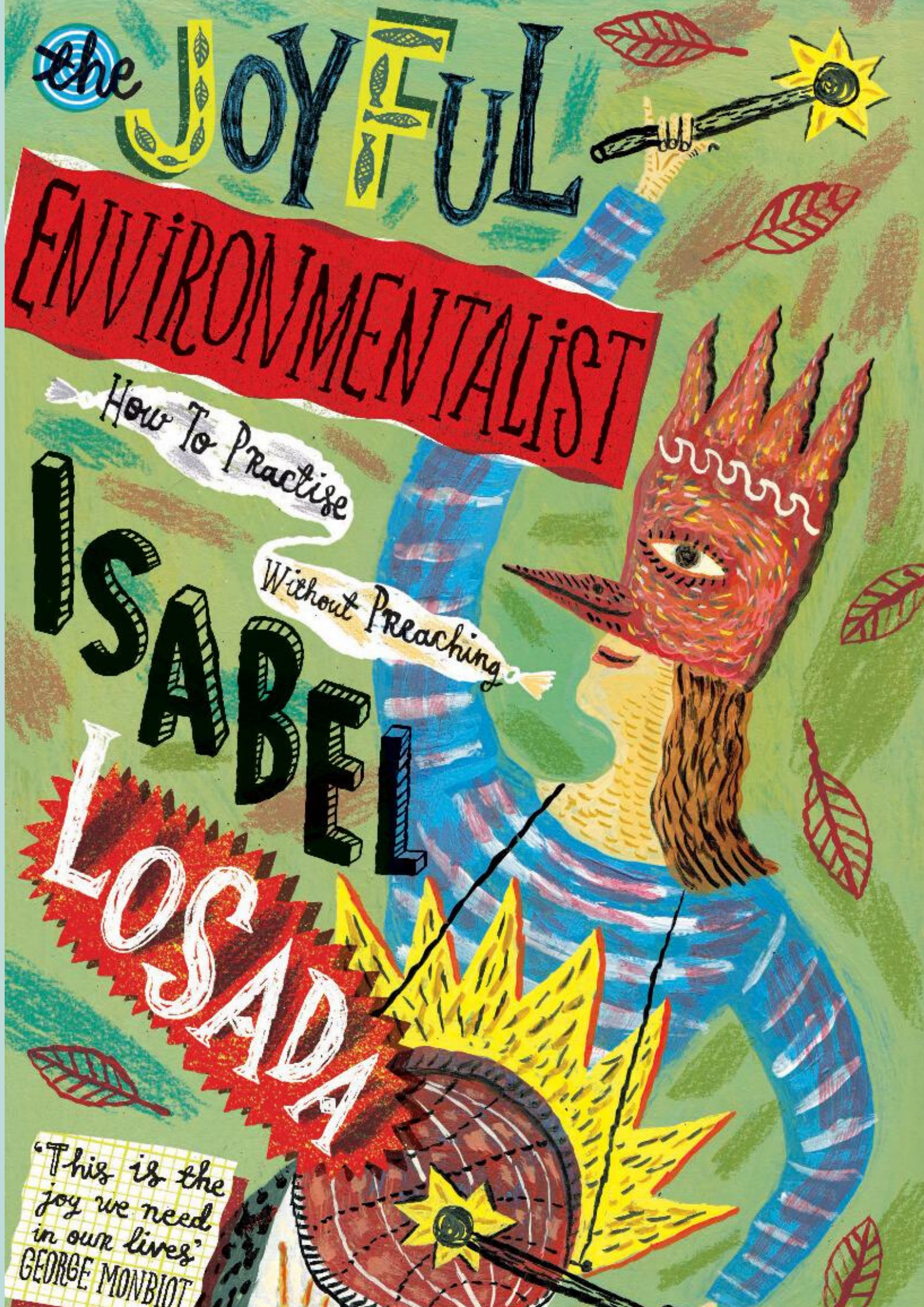
# ENVIRONMENTALIST

How To Practise  
Without Preaching

# ISABEL

# LOSADA

'This is the joy we need in our lives'  
GEORGE MONBIOT



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# THE BASICS:

# HOW TO REMOVE PLASTIC

# FROM YOUR HOME



## 36 STEPS FOR STARTERS

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*If you're not a starter, you can skip this – or just scan the headings.*

Make a game of it: start with the plastic that you only use once... Begin with the obvious stuff. You know all this already. But apparently some people don't. So just in case...

1. Plastic pens. No thanks. If you are a stationery lover, this is an instant joy: find an independent stationers that sells real pens. They still exist. Go there. Choose a beautiful pen made of metal. You don't have to spend thousands of pounds buying a top-of-the-range pen. But – if you have a birthday coming up then why not treat yourself to a metal pen that you love? It can certainly be an object of beauty. Mine is metal and fills from an ink pot – not with one of those old levers but with a screw-in section – so I don't even have to buy plastic cartridges. The nib of my beloved fountain pen is italic so it gives people the impression that I have good handwriting. I don't – but it works miracles compared to plastic bios. You won't lose it because you'll take care of it. Really.





2. Shampoo and conditioner. Commercial shampoos and conditioners ruin your scalp and your hair. They really do. I wouldn't have believed this until I swapped my shampoo in a plastic bottle for a more natural shampoo in a bar form. I didn't expect the shampoo to be very good to be honest with you – but to my amazement it felt mild and lovely on my hair. I found that my hair didn't get greasy and I now only have to wash it about once every ten days. Recently a guest of mine left some commercial shampoo and to avoid the waste I thought I'd use it up. Heaven knows what chemicals it had in it, but it sure did strip my hair of all its natural oils. For about a week afterwards my scalp felt dry and uncomfortable. I'm not doing that again. Stick to the bars – and use cold water. The conditioner bars are less satisfactory for me (so far), but there are now more and more alternatives on the market. My present favourite is homemade by a friend. A quick hunt around on Instagram for [#shampooobar](#) or [#conditionerbar](#) will give you lots of options. You won't be putting chemicals on your head any more either.

3. Razors. Be gone disposable razors forever. Buy yourself one of the beautiful metal ones that lasts a lifetime. They look great and, with their metal blades, they work better too.

4. Soap. In a plastic dispenser? You have to be kidding me. But a bar of soap with your favourite perfume in it will please you every time you use it. Use an old-fashioned soap dish (to drain the water off the soap) made from china, wood or enamel.



5. Fruit and vegetables. Plastic wrappers around fresh food like bananas, oranges and avocados? Just refuse to buy them. Sometimes you have to be prepared to inconvenience yourself. If you go to a supermarket and the food that you want to eat is wrapped in plastic, take ten minutes out of your day and ask to speak to the manager and explain why you won't be buying the



wrapped bananas because you don't eat banana peel. I did this last week and the manager said, 'You are the second person this week who has raised concerns about packaging and whose custom we have lost because of it.' Do they care? Yes, they do. This is capitalism and they care about every purchase. Meanwhile, go on adventures and find all the places locally where you can buy what you need without the plastic. Once you start this it brings the fun back into shopping. You are now an activist. We have a grocer's near where I live where I can buy 90 per cent of my fruit and veg package and waste free. Itell them this is the reason I shop with them and they tell me, 'People keep saying they come here for the waste-free shopping.' You may feel that just your shopping habits won't make a difference. But there are millions of us.


6. Dried products. We have our first waste-free shop locally. You take all your containers with you. They weigh the containers then weigh them again when you've filled them with nuts, lentils, muesli or whatever takes your fancy. To walk to this shop from my house takes 30 minutes but I find it so satisfying and enjoyable to shop there that I'm happy to do the walk. I'm aiming at zero waste which is an ideal that I don't expect to achieve but it's weirdly satisfying unpacking your weekly shop and having nothing to throw away.



7. Plastic bottles for water. Are you kidding? Tap water is perfectly safe and has to be rigorously tested. Do your own research. Come to your own conclusions, but buy one portable water carrier (not made of plastic) – and use it for the rest of your life. I have a local friend on benefits. She really struggles with money. But she buys two bottles on water in plastic bottles a day. She spends over £820 a year on buying water. I tease her that she must be very rich and point out that I drink tap water every day and don't seem to have died. But there is nothing I can do to persuade her to stop wasting her money and polluting the planet. As you may imagine, I've tried.





But please – don't buy water or any carbonated drinks in plastic bottles.

8. Shopping bags. Plastic bags? 'Bags for life'? Insulated extra-thick 'anti-bacterial' plastic bags from supermarkets? Enough already. Don't you agree? If we want to pick up some food from a corner shop and don't have a bag with us, we can't shop. Period. Surely we can learn to carry a thin cotton tote bag that we love? It can't be beyond the wit of humankind to accomplish this. We have a planet to save. And bin liners? Nope. You're not going to have much rubbish by the time we are done anyway.
9. Lip moisturizers. Can now be bought in waste-free shops in cardboard containers. And they are not filled with chemicals either.
10. Toothbrushes. Plastic toothbrushes litter beaches all over the world. Do you really want to buy an item that, once you've thrown it to that 'away' place, is likely to last hundreds of years after we have ourselves ceased to be? Bamboo is very fast growing and biodegradable. Some bamboo brushes are poor quality and badly made apparently (I've never had one of the bad-quality ones), but the good ones last just as long as the plastic ones. A bamboo toothbrush feels a bit strange at first if you've used a plastic one all your life. It takes about three days until you get used to it.
11. Toothpaste. I just can't buy those plastic tubes any more. You can buy toothpaste in tablet form from Lush in plastic bottles that they take back and reuse (they claim) up to 15 times before they recycle them. Or you can make your own; there are lots of recipes online. Store it in a glass jar. So much more satisfying.
12. Dental floss. If you enter the words 'Dental Lace' into Ecosia you will find dental floss that isn't plastic and even comes in a glass container.

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13. Hair brushes, makeup brushes – even toilet brushes. Just don't buy plastic. Alternatives can always be found. But if you also care about animals, beware of anything that says 'pure bristle'. Bristle is most often the hair of a special kind of pig that is factory farmed in Asia. So 'pure bristle' means the same as 'real fur'. Don't buy it and ask the supplier if they know the condition that the pigs are raised in. Sometimes avoiding both animal products and plastic can be a challenge but it's one worth pursuing. Buy wood and enquire carefully as to what the bristles are made from.
  14. Organic cotton flannels – such as your grandmother used – are making a comeback. Strangely comforting and they just get thrown in the wash with the towels. Also children love them. 'We don't need nylon 'scrunchie body puffs.'
  15. Women's sanitary protection. Sanitary towels with plastic backing, plastic tampon applicators and even tampons without applicators contain plastic. These products clog up our sewers, rivers and seas and are found regularly on beaches by beach cleaners. There is a huge range of alternatives available – again just put 'alternative sanitary protection' into Ecosia and find what works for you. While I almost always advocate avoiding plastic, if a moon cup of some kind works for you it can save the planet from oodles of plastic that gets thrown away, and save you a fortune, so they are well worth purchasing.
  16. Wet wipes of any kind. They contain plastic and are now a major pollutant of our rivers. If you care about the planet, just don't buy them in any form. If you are really concerned about being 100 per cent clean, do what Arab households do. (Put 'bidet shower' into Wikipedia.) These can be fitted very cheaply and won't pollute our sewers. Or if you have money in the bank, be French and have a bidet fitted.


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17. Washing powder. Buy an eco-friendly powder in an old-fashioned cardboard box. Use way less of it and do your washing on 30°C. Fabric softeners or anything at all that comes in plastic, including 'eco eggs' and various other bits of plastic nonsense – no thanks. Or you can stop washing any chemicals at all into our oceans by using soap nuts. These are a kind of nut grown sustainably in the Himalayan mountains and they contain saponin which is a natural detergent. I got mine from Green Frog Botanic. My clothes are clean, they don't strip the colour and they have saved me money because they last for months.
18. Cleaning products. White vinegar (bought in a glass bottle) and bicarbonate of soda (bought in a packet) will do almost all your household cleaning. A damp cloth made from old pieces of cotton sheets or similar will do the dusting just fine. Have fun seeing just how little plastic you can buy – and how many chemicals you will avoid at the same time – and how much money you will save.
19. Washing up pads. I've had difficulty finding something that works as well as those plastic-based sponges (which are not, of course, made of sponge but of plastic) with one scratchy side and one smooth side. Loofah pads work wonderfully though. And loofah is a plant so when they are past their best you can put them in the home compost bin.
20. Straws. If you have a child under the age of seven then I'd say the occasional use of a paper straw is OK and fun at a birthday party. If you have certain disabilities, a straw is essential. For the rest of us adults who have been weaned – I think we can drink out of a glass without using a straw. You have to remember this every time you are out: ask – very clearly – when you order a drink, 'A juice with no straw please.' Or 'A screaming orgasm cocktail (whatever you love best) with no straw please.' Once they serve you the drink and the straw arrives, it's too late. If you say,



I'm sorry – I didn't want the straw,' they will just throw it away. Every single time you order a cold drink you need to remind people not to give you a straw.

21. Body butters, etc. Just don't buy them in plastic pots. I'm lucky here as I have a friend who makes them. I give her glass jars and she fills them with her homemade body butter and returns them to me. When items need replacing, hunt around to find non-plastic alternatives. Slowly and imperceptibly your home will start to look and feel more – well, more real. You don't have to take my word for it. You'll experience it.
22. Food containers. If you need food containers for your house, please don't buy any more Tupperware. But stainless steel 'Elephant boxes' – they are just gorgeous. Take one with you if you are going out for dinner at a restaurant where you'd normally ask for a doggy bag to take home any left-over food. My local Indian is so good I always bring leftovers home but I don't want their plastic containers in my house.
23. Dry-cleaning. If you have clothes that need dry-cleaning, remove the hanger and the plastic cover before you leave the dry cleaner's and leave them there. Carry the clothes home over your arm. As well as using less plastic, you'll save your dry cleaner money, you'll help release the chemicals that are used to clean the clothes into the air on the way home instead of into your bedroom, and you'll save yourself a walk later to return the hangers. If you need to bring it all home (if it's always raining when you go to the dry-cleaner's), be sure to return the plastic covers as well as the hangers.
24. Lighters. Choose old-fashioned matches in boxes with designs that please you. Not only are plastic cigarette lighters one of the most common items found littering our beaches, but also, if you're a smoker, inhaling the butane gas which the lighter burns







off when lit adds to the collection of toxins you're inhaling. Plus matches are just nicer.



25. Toilet air fresheners. Also on the subject of matches: when you find a box, small or large with a label that pleases you, put some in the loo with an old ashtray that needs a job. If you strike a match it magically gets rid of any smell and there is no need to buy plastic aerosols with chemical perfumes in them.
26. Printing inks. Most of us print less and less. Hoorah. But when you do print (I'm assuming you buy recycled paper), set your printer to print on both sides of the paper as this will a) save paper and b) mean that you'll save money as it will be longer until you're forced to buy more ink in those plastic containers.
27. Glitter. I'm not suggesting – for those who love sparkles – that we need to live in a glitter-free world. But conventional glitter – made from a mixture of plastic and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) – washed down the drain from our basins into the rivers? Poor fish. These tiny specks pollute our waterways and our seas. Biodegradable glitter is made of eucalyptus tree extract and aluminium in some clever way. So, if you love wearing glitter, you can still do so ... just make sure that you have the right kind of sparkle.
28. 'Paper' cups with plastic lids for take-out drinks. Can you imagine how our parents managed when they went to meet friends? They sat and talked in coffee shops and tea rooms, with drinks served in elegant crockery. And then the establishments did the washing up. I recommend doing your research with this one. Find a place to meet your friends that uses china cups and reward them with your patronage.

You may notice that in many cafés you now have to have a plastic lid on your cup even to carry the drink across the room – in case you



spill it on yourself. 'Health and safety' (again). And, as I'm sure you know, those paper cups are mostly lined with plastic and like their lids are not biodegradable. If you absolutely have to carry your drink down the street (and I admit it's useful sometimes if you're in a hurry), then buy yourself a permanent small flask. (Your partner, grandparents, aunts, uncles or a friend will probably have one in the back of their kitchen cupboard that they rarely use.) They are fantastic and keep your tea or coffee hot all day. Most good cafés give you a discount if you have one. Or be more radical still and make your own coffee or tea before you leave the house and save yourself a small fortune. Just one take-away drink a day at around £2.50 x 365 days? I can do that much maths. It's £912.00 a year.

29. Clothes, shoes, handbags. In brief, let's avoid synthetic fabrics. More on joyful alternatives later. For now, if you absolutely have to shop, choose organic cotton.
30. Plastic pencils. Just no. Or highlighters. Coloured pencils do the job and they really are objects of joy. Just don't replace any of your stationery with plastic. I bet you have enough already anyway.
31. Plant pots. Garden centres are really taking a long time to catch up. There is a wonderful nursery called the Hairy Pot Plant Company in the UK that make their pots from the hair of coconut husks. But apart from them most garden centres still sell plants in plastic (with plastic plant labels too). The least we can do is take them back. My local centre has a big box for recycling them so that people who want plant pots can take them home. So this is a start at least – while we ask for plants in biodegradable pots.
32. Dog poo bags. Not all 'biodegradable' dog poo bags are good news. Some of them just call themselves that because they break down faster than others into smaller pieces of plastic. I pick up





unused dog poo bags almost every day that have been dropped in my local park and present them, as gifts, to surprised dog owners as I explain that I can't use them because I don't have a dog. If you want to take care of the planet, make sure your dog poo bags are plant-based – made of corn starch – then they really would break down and be harmless if left on the ground.

33. Blinds. If you are in the luxurious position of decorating your space, choose thick curtains over blinds where possible. Curtains are the old-fashioned way of insulating your home as the cold air collects between the window and the curtains, keeping you warmer. Blinds are often made of plastic. If you're a creative and clever with a sewing machine, many charity shops are full of amazing vintage curtains.

34. Coffee and tea. Nespresso coffee machines (owned by Nestlé) are designed so that you have to buy their significantly more expensive coffee – in pods. It's easier and cheaper if you just buy beans or ground coffee. They say that the pods should be recycled by being returned to them. If they're disposed of correctly, every single cup produces aluminium waste. The L'Or Espresso capsule, designed as an alternative to the Nespresso pods, are not aluminium – they are made of plastic. What insanity is all this? I have friends who use an old-fashioned French press. It will last a lifetime. Your kitchen will smell of coffee, you'll save a fortune and the grounds go in the compost. Tea bags? Yes, so many of them contain plastic. Another madness. So, don't put tea bags in the compost. Do what your granny did. Have a real tea caddy with real tea in. Use a beautiful tea pot you love. And then you can do the 'mindful tea drinking' thing. And celebrate the wonder of a really great-tasting cup of tea in the most joyful way: by pouring it.

35. Plastic shower curtains. You have to be kidding. Just don't buy



them. Everyone who has them seems to have a nightmare keeping them clean. They contain chemicals. And apart from anything else they are hideous. Save up and buy glass or you can even find them made of hemp. But plastic? Really – no.

36. Plastic laundry baskets and storage containers. My local charity shops always seem to be full of hand-made wicker baskets and picnic baskets of all shapes and sizes. They are SO much more beautiful.