

## **MAKING 2015 THE YEAR OF SUSTAINABLE GREENING**

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According to a recent article published in Infrastructure and Service Delivery News, President Jacob Zuma stated the following at the opening of a green building: “South Africa has relatively high emissions for a developing country and we should make the most of every opportunity to change this trajectory – hence we have since developed the National Climate Change Response Policy. With the opening of this building, we are showing a bold commitment to lower emissions as well as our commitment to the green economy.”

As focus is shifting to green at governmental level, there are many levels of “going green” – from laypeople to green experts; every person can make a difference through their own actions. As the Christmas season begins, it may seem that eco-friendly holidays are difficult to achieve. However, you don’t have to sacrifice your traditions or your enjoyment of the holiday spirit in order to be kind to the environment and have a sustainable holiday.

While it is important to look forward to 2015, plot resolutions and make plans to improve ourselves, our lives and our environment, it is as important not to procrastinate and wait for the New Year to make those changes. How can you make your holiday sustainable? Easy. A sustainable holiday is one that holds a true meaning for you. Whether it's a spiritual or religious belief, or a family or personal tradition, enjoy and prioritise!

Start by identifying your own sense of tradition or importance within any holiday. What matters most to you? What do you not wish to lose and what do you wish to gain? Refine your focus by identifying stress and waste and eliminating these elements from your life or your holiday. Remember to involve others; the holidays are about spending time with others. Talk to friends, family members, neighbours and co-workers. Work at changing your sustainability status, but don’t let that in itself become a source of stress. It isn’t all going to come together in one holiday season; take on your goals one at a time and your sense of achievement will spur you on to success in tackling the next goal.

As the New Year approaches, why not consider New Year's resolutions with a different, more holistic perspective? Changing your life can change the world! A resolution is only truly sustainable if it serves a bigger purpose. In order to focus on the “big picture” (the environmental, social and political issues) we need to first focus on ourselves. It's absolutely imperative that we first become the people that *can* create real change in the world. How

can we expect to make or have an impact, stand up to corruption or get involved in helping others when we're overworked, stressed, unhealthy, exhausted or overwhelmed?

Don't ask yourself what you want to do in 2015; first ask yourself *why you want to do it*. If your resolutions fail, then part of making them sustainable will be to plan and execute them differently. This year, as you consider what you're ready to create in the coming year, think about these top New Year's resolutions from a new perspective.

When deciding to *improve your health*, acknowledge that often personal and environmental health are interlinked. When you think about improving your health this year, consider things like eating fresh, local foods and support organic farming. While you're kicking that smoking habit, go chemical-free in other areas of your life with natural household cleaners and organic pest control.

When committing to *reorganise your home and life*, focus on making order out of the chaos that creates stress. Remember that the accumulation of all that "stuff" harms our natural resources. Donating excess to a good cause keeps it out of a landfill, and by decreasing the consumption of new "stuff" our environmental footprint is made infinitely smaller.

Nothing is less personally sustainable than debt. *Getting out of debt* and decreasing spending is usually the first step to decreasing debt. There are many green habits that will actually save money! Once you're debt-free you can start investing those savings in even more sustainable changes.

*Improve your lifestyle* by spending more time with loved ones, getting involved with a charity, or reconnecting with your spiritual beliefs. Doing this will foster a healthy, happy life. Create that purpose by getting involved with the things that matter most to you.

"Going green" is on everyone's mind these days and if it's your New Year's resolution, you're in the right place. Green living involves many steps, but that's what sustainable baby steps are all about; taking small steps toward greener living in recognition of the fact that every small contribution really does count!

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**Boilerplate:**

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