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2020

Spider's Guide to Sustainable Living

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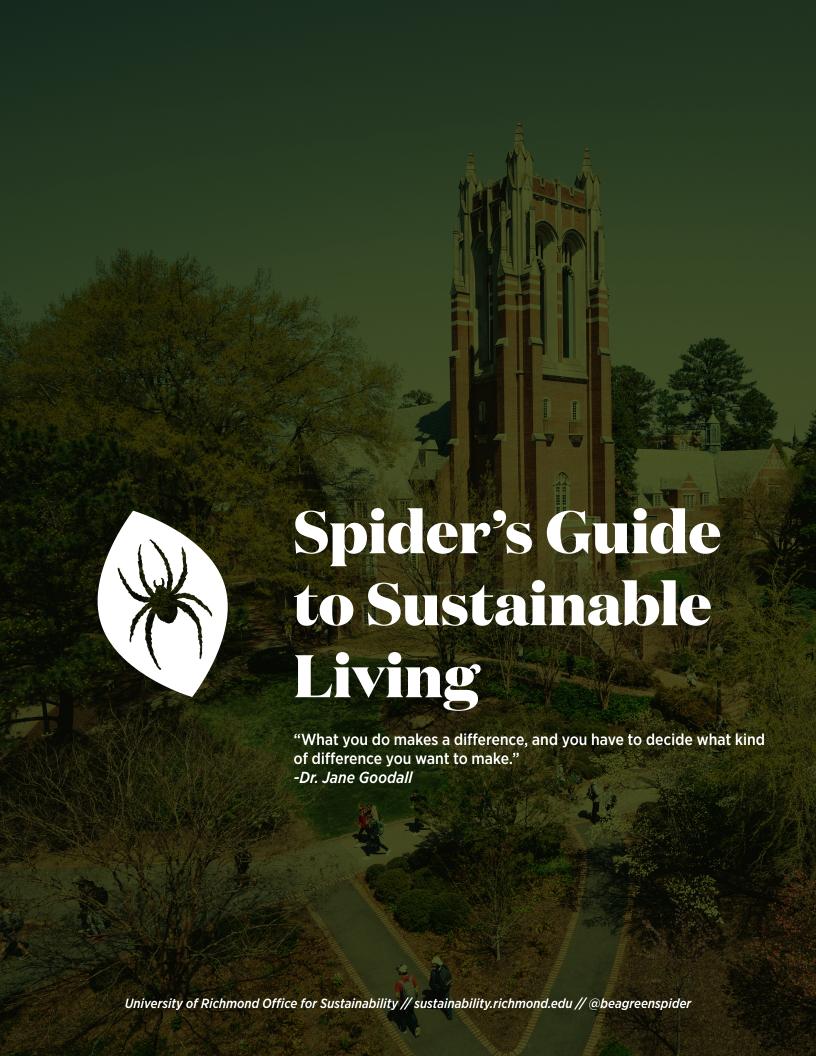


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Recommended Citation

University of Richmond. (2020). (guide). Spider's Guide to Sustainable Living (pp. 1–15). Richmond, VA.

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Introduction

Thank you for checking out this guide to caring for our future and ourselves. We're glad you did, because we need you. From the climate emergency to emerging health crises to social unrest, the need for change is all around us. The UR Sustainability Plan envisions "a future where sustainability is woven into the fabric of the University" in which we cultivate a culture of caring for people and the natural world. Consider this your invitation to join the movement to make this vision a reality.

Widening Circles of Influence and Action

The poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote, "I live my life in widening circles that reach out across the world." The University of Richmond Office for Sustainability has a "widening circle" model for creating change that we picture as ripples emanating from a stone dropped into Westhampton Lake.

The innermost circle, closest to where the rock hits the water, represents the person at the center (that's you!) creating the change. At this individual level, each of us has the most control over the change we're trying to create. but our influence is relatively small. The next ring out symbolizes groups of people. Magic happens in small groups connected by purpose; it's where change can catch fire. The next ripple is the organization, followed by the local community, the wider region, the country, and outward all the way out to the whole world. The further out from the center, the less direct influence each of us has, but also the greater ability to create lasting change by working collectively with others committed to the same purpose.

Too often we are told that we must change our individual behavior to address massive issues like rising global temperatures, systemic racism, or Rhode Island-sized plastic garbage patches in the ocean.

These widespread and urgent issues were not created by a single person and are beyond the ability of any one of us to address them meaningfully. Trying to take action by ourselves can lead to feelings of inadequacy, overwhelm, and guilt. While it is true that our individual actions have consequences and our personal

appropriate level of response. Thinking about sustainability and societal issues using the widening circle model can

help you do just that.

Many of the suggestions in this guide exist at the innermost circle, because individual actions are a great place to start. However, the momentum for change (and fun) kicks into higher gear when a group of people come together around a common cause. All of the most important movements vou've ever learned about started there. Anthropologist Margaret Mead captures the power of the people brilliantly: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

The ability to affect change at the campus level — something that requires partnership building and can be a much longer-term commitment — is also within your grasp. The further you go toward policy change and collective action, the more support and connectivity you will need, but there are resources available to vou.

A University of Richmond education provides students with the capacity and willingness to create new and better ways of living, but getting started and figuring out how you can contribute can be daunting. This guide was made to help with that.

Throughout the Spiders Guide to Sustainable Living, we will point out actions you can take as an individual, a part of a group, and a community member. Thank you for the work you are doing and will do to create a tomorrow in which we all care for our future together. We can't wait to see the difference you make!



Be Like Nancy

Nancy Propst is committed to sustainability. As the Administrative Coordinator for multiple UR departments, including Environmental Studies, Nancy has been practicing ways to reduce her environmental footprint for a long time. Nancy was frustrated that she couldn't recycle plastic bags on campus, despite being able to at the grocery store. So, she decided to do something about it. She discovered a plastic bag recycling program sponsored by a company that makes plastic lumber out of recycled grocery bags. For every 500 pounds of bags collected, this company would provide a bench to the University. All UR had to do was sign up and get the bags to store drop-off locations.

Nancy reached out to a few offices who liked her idea but didn't have staff to help. That didn't slow her down one bit. She placed plastic bag collection boxes on campus and called on colleagues within her network to help out. She wrangled students to drive cars stuffed full of grocery bags to the store drop-off sites. After seeing her early success, Facilities staff took on the task of emptying the bins and offered to store the plastic that hadn't made it to drop-off locations yet. Dining Services staff began collecting shrink wrap from food deliveries in Nancy's bins. Before long, dozens of people were helping make Nancy's vision a reality.

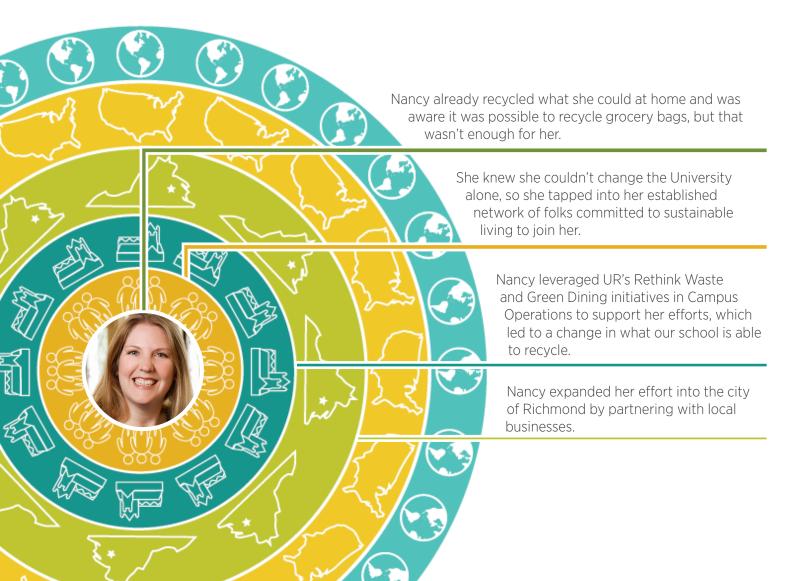
After less than two months, Nancy and her partners collected enough bags - more than 40,000! - for a

bench. The next 500 pounds came even more quickly and a partnership with a nearby Publix grocery store made the drop-offs easier. Today,

recycling
plastic bags
is something
anyone on
campus can
do. The next
time you're
on the
Eco-Corridor
on the south
end of
campus,
check out the

Wondering where to get started but aren't sure quite where you fit? Check out the activity at the end of this guide!

park bench near the pollinator meadow. That's Nancy's bench, a symbol of someone combining their interests, influence, and power to implement a change for the better.





Your residence hall is your home base. It's where you study, sleep, shower, eat, unwind, hang out, and get ready for the day. Sustainability starts here. To make sustainable living part of our everyday lives, it helps to make the right choice the easy, default option, especially at home.

Let's break down ways you can make your residence hall a sustainable hub.

4 1. Dining In

- Keep some real dishes (plates, bowls, cups, utensils) in your room and a stash of reusable containers for food storage.
- Limit your disposables: replace paper towels with dish towels, use reusable water bottles, opt for reusable k-cups and coffee filters if you need a caffeine fix, and repurpose/reuse durable items like glass food jars!
- Compost your food scraps. You can utilize the composting bins at dining locations on campus.

2. Power Down

• Be smart about electricity use to reduce your energy consumption. Turn off the lights, use energy efficient lighting, opt for natural light, set the thermostat properly, choose efficient appliances, unplug chargers, and use smart powerstrips.

3. Bathroom Break

- Save water by taking shorter showers and turning off the tap to shave and brush your teeth. Bonus points if you opt for cold showers and use low-flow/low-flush toilet options.
- Choose environmentally friendly personal care, bath, laundry, and cleaning products. Check out the Environmental Working Group's (EWG) Product Guides.

1 4. Greener Laundry

- Wash full loads of laundry and opt for cold water. Combine with your roommates or wash your sheets and towels with your clothes to make a full load.
- Dry your clothes on low or delicate heat settings. Air dry if you're hardcore.
- Use dryer balls (wool dryer balls are best) and ditch dryer sheets and fabric softeners (these contain air pollutants, harmful chemicals, and create unnecessary waste).

5. Get Green Room Certified

• UR's <u>Green Room Program</u> walks you through a list of daily habits and one-time actions you can take to make your living space on campus more sustainable. This action is both a personal and a group level activity, because you have to collaborate with your roommates to get certified. You'll learn collectively and can help keep each other accountable for daily sustainable living!

6. Take the Be A Green Spider Quizzes

• To learn more about sustainability on campus and personal actions you can take to reduce your environmental impact, take <u>Be a Green Spider quizzes</u> on topics like waste, water, food, and transportation.

Does turning off the lights really matter?

Absolutely! Reducing your energy consumption matters. It saves money and reduces carbon emissions, but what's even more important is understanding what type of energy powers your lights. Most electricity in the US comes from burning fossil fuels, but to address climate change, we need a quick transition to renewable energy. With the newly constructed 20MW Spider Solar array, UR matches 100% of its electricity needs with solar energy. Investing in solar increases the amount of renewable energy going into the grid and supports UR's goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

Are my actions really going to change anything? I'm just one person so it's not like I can solve a giant challenge with my reusable water bottle.

None of us can stop overconsumption or cool the planet on our own, but we can change our daily practices and adopt more environmentally and socially responsible habits. Small changes can have a big impact, especially when individual actions are nested inside of larger movements.

As Mother Teresa said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."

Collectively, we can advocate for change on campus, in our communities, and in our nation. Working with friends on something you care about can actually be a lot of fun.

Dozens of recent UR grads who are now in careers in food justice, renewable energy development, transportation policy, responsible investing, and community resilience got their start working on these issues with friends in UR clubs or through internships with local agencies. There are many entry points to effective action. As Dr. Jane Goodall reminds us, "What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

A big part of sustainable living involves examining your relationship with stuff. Near-instant access to just about anything we want to buy has become a norm our society, but most of us don't think enough about the planetary and societal impact created by the manufacturing and delivery of the products we buy. Take single-use disposable plastics. They're everywhere, made from fossil fuels, and are rarely disposed of responsibly. Instead of breaking down in the environment, plastic breaks up into smaller pieces called microplastics that pollute our oceans and waterways. The solution isn't simply recycling either; we need to Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Repurpose, and Reuse before we get to Recycle. You can be a part of the solution by thinking critically about your consumption habits, limiting the amount of unnecessary waste you

create in your daily life, and working with others to push UR to meet its waste reduction goals.

Living low-waste or shopping more consciously may appear difficult at first, because it is a departure from the way most people live. Like any new skill, it takes practice.

We recommend using items you already have and tapping into your

most important resource – your mind! When you're considering a purchase ask yourself these questions: Do I really need this? Can I repurpose, reuse, repair, upgrade, or refill something I already have? Does this item have multiple purposes or fulfill multiple needs? Can I buy it used instead of new? Just slowing down for a minute of mindfulness can prevent you from buying what you don't need.

To make ethical and environmentally responsible purchases, consider used or refurbished items, buy durable and long-lasting products, buy in bulk to reduce packaging waste, and when possible, buy eco-friendly and ethical products from brands that are certified fair trade and sweat free.

"If it can't be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurbished, refinished, resold, recycled or composted, then it should be restricted, redesigned or removed from production."

-Pete Seeger

Sustainability on the Go

College life is super busy. You've got places to be. You've got a whole city to explore. We're here to help you practice sustainability on the go.

Richmond is the River City!

The James River is central to Richmond's culture and identity. With Class I to Class IV rapids, the James River also makes Richmond the only city in the US with white water flowing directly through an urban area. Pretty rad! There are tons of opportunities to explore, protect, clean up, and steward the river. You can even use the Gambles Mill **Eco-Corridor** as a connector to the James. Connect with **Outdoor Adventure and** Recreation for a tubing, kayaking, SUP, or rafting adventure.

Living the sustainable Spider life on the move is all about intentionality. If you like spending time outdoors, you might be familiar with the principles of Leave No Trace (LNT). To reduce our impact on the environment, LNT asks us to plan ahead and be prepared, pack out trash and dispose of waste properly, respect wildlife, and be considerate of others. We can borrow LNT principles

for everyday life, too! Planning, preparation, reducing waste, and being a respectful, considerate human being go a long way.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare with a To-Go Kit

Having a few key essentials with you will make it much easier to avoid creating unnecessary waste in the first place. We recommend tossing the following five items in your backpack to make them easy to access any time: a water bottle, a travel mug, a utensil set, a metal straw, and a reusable container.

2. Walk, Bike, or Bus

UR is located in a car-dependent country; driving where we're headed is often the default. Unfortunately, the transportation sector now generates the largest share of greenhouse gases in the US. Replacing some driving with walking, biking, and/or riding public transportation is an important action you can take to cut down on your personal carbon footprint.

- Walking and biking are often the fastest way to get around campus.
 No bike? No problem. Check out the <u>Green Bike Program.</u> If you do have a bike, be sure to <u>register</u> it with Parking Services.
- If you're headed off campus, public transportation is a great option.
 Richmond has been working really hard to improve its bus lines and

offer better public transportation options. All full-time faculty, staff, and students may obtain a bus pass for ridership on GRTC buses, paid for by the University of Richmond. You can ride the GRTC Bus and use Campus Shuttle Services to access popular off-campus destinations. Biking off campus is another option; just be sure you know the rules of the road and know how to access bike lanes from campus.

• If you're traveling beyond the city, consider flying less and opting for the train or plan to road trip with multiple people instead.

3. Rethink Waste

When we throw something "away" it doesn't just vanish; everything ends up somewhere. To reduce the amount of waste going to landfills, UR established a goal to recycle, compost, donate, and reuse at least 75% of the waste disposed of on campus and created the Rethink Waste program to achieve this aim. UR offers composting at dining locations to reduce the amount of food waste going to landfills. Food donations are also made to local food banks regularly. And let's not forget about recycling! Campuswide recycling began back in 1990 and we've streamlined our practices so that all recyclable materials can go into the same blue recycling bins. Take a look at the next page to see what you can recycle and compost.

What exactly can you compost and recycle?



Compost



Compostable Dishes & Cups



Wooden Coffee Stirrers & Paper Straws





Napkins & Paper Towels





Compostable Utensils



Food-Contaminated Paper & Cardboard

Recycle



Clean Paper



Plastics Bottles



Plastic Containers & Cups



Glass Bottles & Jars



Metal Cans



Flattened Cardboard

We all have to eat to nourish ourselves. With nearly eight billion mouths to feed on our planet, it won't surprise you to learn that what we choose to eat and how our food is grown contributes to environmental issues. Food production accounts for a vast amount of land, water, and energy use and is responsible for about a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions. Adopting a sustainable diet is one of the single most effective individual actions you can take to lessen your personal impact on the planet.

• Important Note: Changing your diet might not be possible or be the best choice for you, and that's totally okay! You should always discuss dietary changes with a healthcare professional.



Innermost Circle: Eat Lower on the Food Chain

Not all foods are f has the highest

created equal! Beef has the highest environmental impact of any single food as cattle production releases a ton of carbon emissions and involves deforestation, land degradation, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, high water and land use, and water pollution. Meat in general has quite a high environmental impact and eating lower on the food chain (reducing animal products and increasing plantbased foods in one's diet) is the way to go. That means eating less beef, lamb,

pork, farmed seafood, chicken, fish, cheese, and other dairy products is a helpful action you can take to reduce your environmental footprint.

There are two key strategies to nurture ourselves and the planet: Eat more plants and make some swaps.

1. Eat More Plants: You don't have to follow any particular diet or cut out meat and dairy entirely to reduce your food-related carbon and water footprint. Simply focus on eating more whole, plant-based foods, including fruits, veggies, beans, legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains. Compared to animal proteins, plant-based protein sources like soy, beans, and nuts generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions and use fewer land and water resources to produce. In general, whole plant foods are highly nutritious and have a lower environmental impact, so focusing on eating more plant-based foods is a great way to nourish vourself and be kinder to the environment.

2. Make Some Swaps: If you're a meat lover who wants to try some new foods, experiment with swapping out carbon-intensive foods for those requiring fewer resources to grow. Try having a black bean, Impossible Burger, or turkey burger in place of a beef burger. Swap beef for chicken or fish. Swap chicken for tofu or beans. Do what works for you! Dairy milk drinkers can try a variety of non-dairy milks, like soy, oat, or almond milk, to

see what tastes best. And it's not all about meat and dairy! There are other high-impact foods to pay attention to including coffee, palm oil, and chocolate. Consider swapping coffee for teas like matcha for your next caffeine fix.

Sustainability Intern Tip: Take it easy!

It's easiest to create new, long-lasting habits when you make them highly achievable and keep yourself accountable. Bringing it up to the community level is highly recommended! For example, start by choosing one meal per week to eat meatless. Then, level up to one day per week. Start small and make it a rewarding experience. Team up with some friends to join you for Meatless Mondays! Research suggests that going meatless alongside others encourages lasting behavior change, builds accountability, raises awareness, and encourages others to make changes to their own diets.

Organic, Local, and Responsible Foods

Sometimes food labels add transparency to the products in the store, making it easier to make healthy, ethical choices. Other times, the food labels are just plain confusing. "Natural" foods, for example, are as likely to come from the farm as from the lab. We've tried to simplify this for your next trip to the grocery store. Three food designations to look for to help you choose planet-healthy foods are organic, local, and responsible.



Organic foods are grown using more environmentally responsible practices. USDA Certified Organic foods follow federal guidelines that address improving soil fertility, supporting biodiversity, and using low-intensity pest and disease control methods. When done right, organic farming helps support healthy land, water, food, and people!



Eating local food is a great way to support nearby farmers and cut down on the number of miles and amount of fuel it takes to transport your food. According to CUESA, the average meal travels over 1,500 miles from where the food is grown to your plate. There is no single definition of what "local" means, but generally speaking, it refers to purchasing from small farms or businesses within our geographic area (which could be Richmond, Central Virginia, or even further out) to cut down on food miles, gain access to in-season foods, and keep money in the local economy.



Responsibly grown food refers to farmers, brands, and companies that are not only open and honest about their agricultural and labor practices, but back up their claims with third-party certifications. Labels like USDA Organic, Fair Trade, and Rainforest Alliance, and resources like the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch can help inform you of a product's socio-environmental impact.



Organizational Circle: UR Sustainable Dining

University of

Richmond has a number of sustainable dining initiatives and goals.

• Expanded Plant-Based Options:

Over the years, students have advocated for increased vegetarian and vegan options and retail and eatin dining locations have responded! You can find a dedicated vegetarian station at Dhall and lots of delicious veg-friendly options at every dining location.

- The Green Box Program: Reusable green boxes are available at the dining hall to encourage spiders who regularly take their Dhall food to-go to minimize their landfill waste.
- Local & Sustainable Food: Retail dining locations buy from local vendors with commitments to sustainable practices like Twin Oaks Tofu and Blanchard's Coffee. Dhall works to find opportunities

to regularly purchase locally grown produce and sustainable seafood.



Community Circle: Richmond is Delicious

Take advantage of living in one of the best food cities in the country with these local resources

the country with these local resources that anyone can enjoy, regardless of dietary needs and preferences.

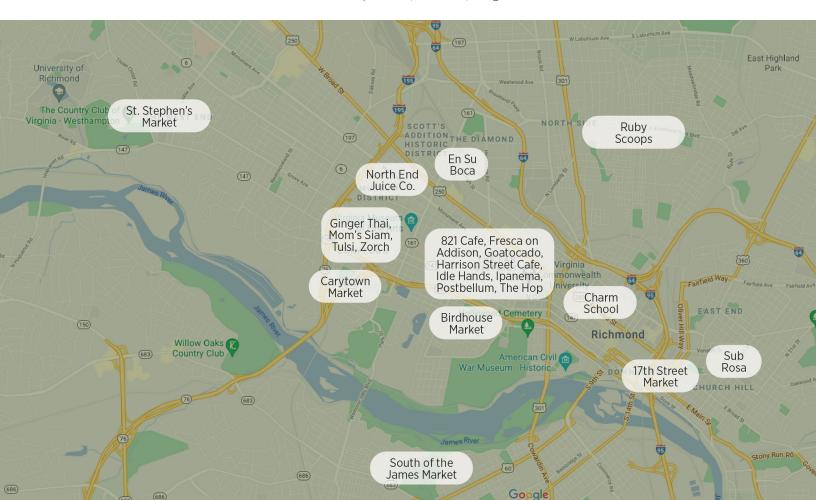
Shop at local farmers markets:

Popular markets include South of the James (Saturday), St. Stephen's (Saturday, closest location to campus), Carytown (Sunday), Birdhouse Farmers Market (Tuesday), and 17th Street Farmers Market + RVA Black Farmers Market.

- Try out some of the Sustainability Interns' favorite local vegan and veg-friendly food establishments (that also have food that everyone will eniov);
 - Some favorite veg-friendly and generally awesome restaurants include Ipanema, 821 Cafe, Ginger

Thai, Mom's Siam, Phoenix Garden, En Su Boca, Tulsi, Kregger's, 1115 Mobile Kitchen, Fresca on Addison, Hang Space, Harrison Street Cafe, Goatocado, North End Juice Co, and Postbellum.

- For vegan ice cream, check out Scoop (best combo: coconut ice cream + vegan hot fudge), Charm School (vegan soft serve and dole whip!), and Ruby Scoops (a Blackowned shop with a number of vegan options).
- For vegan bagels and cream cheese, gotta go to Nate's Bagels and for bread and pastries, swing by Idle Hands and Sub Rosa.
- For vegan pizza, The Hop or Zorch have some of the best!
- Visit Ellwood Thompson's, a local natural foods market, for lots of plant-based, organic, and sustainable food options: Ellwood's is also a great place to shop zerowaste as they have lots of bulk and plastic-free options.





There's no way we could ask our students to adopt a sustainable lifestyle without taking actions at the institutional level to be better stewards of the environment and community. This is just a taste of what UR is doing.



Spider Solar Project and Climate Neutrality Goals

The University

of Richmond became the first institution of higher education in the Southeastern USA to match 100% of its electricity needs with solar energy from a single project, achieved through the construction of a 20 megawatt solar array referred to as Spider Solar. Spider Solar went live in January 2021 and will enable UR to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions profile to 60% below 2009 levels. UR also constructed 205 kW rooftop solar array above the Weinstein Center for Recreation. Installed in 2016, this was the first solar array constructed in the Commonwealth under Virginia's new Power Purchase Agreement pilot program. Investing in renewable energy plays a huge role in reaching UR's goals to achieve climate neutrality, or net-zero emissions, by 2050.



Gambles Mill Eco-Corridor

Completed in 2020, the Gambles Mill Eco-

Corridor is a prime example of sustainability in action on campus! In an effort to address stream bank erosion and improve downstream water quality while simultaneously creating recreation and education opportunities, the restoration of Little Westham Creek and the creation of the Gambles Mill Eco-Corridor demonstrates what it means to think about sustainability in a holistic manner that supports environmental. economic, and societal and human wellbeing. Be sure to visit Abby's Garden, three pollinator meadows, and the outdoor classroom in this park-like setting on the south side of campus.



Commitment to Building Green

All new buildings constructed on campus are

required to achieve green building standards equivalent to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver status. Building green influences the design, construction, and maintenance of UR buildings to provide a safe and healthy workspace while minimizing impact on land, air, and water. In 2004, Weinstein Hall became the first LEED certified building in Central Virginia and we now have 16 LEED certified buildings on campus along with 2 EarthCraft Light Commercial buildings.



Achieving STARS Gold

The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment,

and Rating System (STARS) is a voluntary self-reporting assessment that provides a common standard of measurement for sustainability in higher education. STARS measures sustainability performance and the progress we have made toward our sustainability goals in four key areas: academics, engagement, operations, and planning & administration. University of Richmond earned a Silver STARS rating in both 2013 and 2016, and most recently earned a Gold STARS rating in 2019.

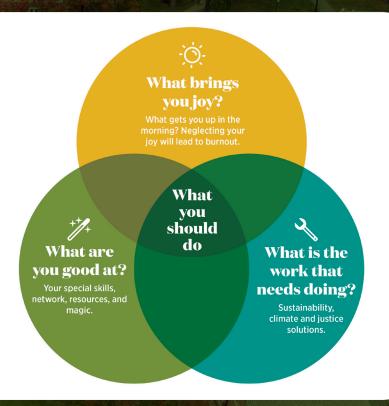
Find Your Niche

You might still be wondering what you should do to make a positive difference. You want to get more involved, but aren't sure where to start. Well, the brilliant minds at the podcast "How to Save a Planet" suggest asking yourself three questions and plotting them on a Venn diagram to identify where you can be most effective: What brings you joy? What is the work that needs doing? What are you good at?

It's not always that straightforward, but asking yourself these questions can help identify ways for you to get involved in environmental and social justice movements in a meaningful and fulfilling way!

Use this diagram as a way to figure out where you fit in and what you should do.

Adapted from Dr. Elizabeth Ayana Johnson





Kate, a 2021 UR grad, used these questions to help her discover the work she wanted to do. Many of the people in the community where she grew up live in food deserts—areas with limited access to healthy food—and struggle with food insecurity. Kate was drawn to food justice as the work that needs doing. Kate found joy in being outside, connecting to nature, and doing something meaningful to connect with people in her community. She also recognized that she could do physical labor for a long time, had more success with hands-on jobs, and preferred working on a team. Kate thought about the intersection of her talents, her joy, and what the world needs. Though it didn't come into focus immediately, all of the pieces fell into place when a friend suggested a local food access farming internship. She worked for Shalom Farms for two summers and was the caretaker of Abby's Garden on campus the summer after she graduated.

Campus Opportunities

When we are in community with others, we have a much bigger influence. Community provides support, wider resources and connections, and leverages everyone's diverse skillsets, backgrounds, and passions to generate more powerful movements. There are many great ways to find your people.



Go to SpiderFest

Find environmental, outdoor, and social justice groups that are active on campus and fit in with your passions!



Register for a <u>Sustainability</u> Course

There are dozens of sustainabilityrelated courses across many majors

and departments, including the new Introduction to Sustainability now being offered.



Take the Be A Green Spider Quizzes and get Green Room Certified

Both are steps in joining <u>URSA</u>, the University of

Richmond Sustainability Advocates program.

Local Organizations Need You, Too

Your first stop on the way to connecting with Richmond organizations is the <u>Center for Civic Engagement</u> on the first floor of the Tyler Haynes Commons. They can help you find an organization (and even help with an internship when you're ready) that is focused on everything from access to healthcare to zoning for affordable housing. In the meantime, we've identified some local groups doing good work Richmond.



Interested in energy justice, solar advocacy, or fighting pipelines? Look into Virginia Interfaith Power & Light, VA SUN,

Solarize RVA, and the Virginia Energy Efficiency Council.



Want to be a good steward to the James River?

Check out the James River Association, participate in clean-

ups with Keep Virginia Cozy, and look for opportunities with the James River Park System or Friends of the James River Park.



Want to improve food access?

Look into volunteer and internship opportunities at Shalom Farms, GrowRVA, Sankofa

Community Orchard, and Feed More.



Passionate about outdoor recreation and environmental education?

Check out Blue Sky Fund, Rise RVA, Lewis Ginter

Botanical Garden, James River Outfitters, and Beyond Boundaries just to name a few different options!



More into advocacy?

Get involved with the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Sierra Club VA Chapter.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative.

Office for Sustainability Contact Information

The Sustainability Office address is Puryear Hall Room 114. To schedule an appointment or if you have any questions or comments, please direct them to sustainability@richmond.edu. For more information, visit sustainability.richmond.edu.

Use this form to submit a Sustainability Idea.

Fill out this <u>form</u> to request a Sustainability Presentation to your class, office, department, or club.