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4 Ways to Save the Planet with 'Greener' Grooming

With the right men's grooming products, you can look good and do good at the same time.

What, exactly, is a gentleman? Someone who opens doors for others? Someone who says "please," "thank you" and "pardon me"? Someone who stands for the National Anthem, and slouches when he's the tall person in the front row at the movies? A guy who won't cheat at cards, and always pays his half of the check?

Yes. A gentleman is all of this. But also, he's a lot more than that. Beneath his impeccable manners is an ironclad moral compass that perpetually points him in the direction of noble causes that he proudly defends like a protective older brother.

Of course, in this day and age there's no shortage of noble causes that deserve gentlemen defenders. If there's just one that defines the modern era, however, it's probably climate change. And that makes the late Gaylord Nelson one heckuva gentleman.

In case you've never heard of him, Nelson was a U.S. senator from Wisconsin and the founder of Earth Day, which he created in 1970 to raise public awareness around air and water pollution. Fifty-one years later, more than 1 billion people in nearly 200 countries mobilize every year for environmental action on Earth Day, which this year takes place on April 22.

If you strive to be green, a gentleman or both, you should probably be among them. That doesn't mean you have to hug trees, but it does mean making little changes to your daily life that can have a big impact on the planet. And your grooming routine is as good a place to start as any. Here are four things you can do to make your time at the sink and in the shower more sustainable:

1. Pare down parabens.

Just like food, many men's grooming products contain natural ingredients that can biodegrade over time. And just like food, those products therefore need to have preservatives in them in order to keep them from spoiling. That's where parabens come in.

Parabens are a group of synthetic chemical preservatives that are widely used in cosmetics and grooming products. When they're absorbed by the body, they can interrupt hormone production, cause reproductive issues and perhaps even lead to cancer. They're equally toxic when they're absorbed by the environment, and by marine wildlife that encounter parabens that are washed down human drains and flushed out to rivers, lakes and oceans.

The fix: Look for paraben-free grooming products that contain natural instead of synthetic preservatives, like Billy Jealousy's Fuzzy Logic Strengthening Shampoo, Beard Wash and White Knight Gentle Daily Facial Cleanser.

2. Choose sustainable scents.

Something else that can degrade in grooming products over time is their scent. In order to keep your soap smelling sweet and your face wash smelling fresh, some manufacturers formulate their products with synthetic chemicals called phthalates, which make scents last longer.

Like parabens, phthalates can be absorbed by both the body and the environment, and can be toxic to both.

The fix: Look for phthalate-free grooming products that use natural scents like those from essential oils. Billy Jealousy's Devil's Delight Beard Oil, for example, smells of black pepper and sandalwood, while its Beard Control leave-in conditioner smells of lavender, tropical fruit, sandalwood and oak moss. Both are phthalate-free.

3. Go vegan and cruelty-free.

Don't panic, guys: You don't have to give up meat and dairy on your plate. But you might want to give up animal products on your face. One reason why is that the use of animal byproducts supports the practice of animal testing in laboratories. Another reason is that animal agriculture can be environmentally harmful.

Think about it: If there are animal byproducts in your bathroom, farmers have to harvest them from livestock. And in order to do that, they have to clear land on which to raise animals, and acquire feed with which to sustain them. The former removes trees that clean the air while the latter requires factories and transportation that pollute it.

The fix: Buy vegan and cruelty-free grooming products that contain no animal byproducts — including vegan deodorant like Billy Jealousy's Funk Buddy Deodorant, vegan shampoo like Billy Jealousy's Monsoon Mist Tea Tree Shampoo and vegan shaving cream like Billy Jealousy's Hydroplane Super-Slick Shave Cream.

4. Streamline your showers.

A long, hot shower in the morning can make you feel clean, relaxed and ready to take on the day. That is, until you start to think about all the water you're wasting, and all the energy you're using to heat it. Then your long, hot shower might make you feel guilty.

The fix: Taking shorter, colder showers can reduce the environmental footprint of your grooming routine. But if you can't bring yourself to part with your morning steam bath, there's another, different way that you can streamline your showers to make them more eco-friendly: You can use fewer products, which means less packaging, less pollution from producing it and less waste from throwing it away. For example, consider using Billy Jealousy's Gold Standard All Over Wash, which you can use on your hands, body, face and hair — potentially replacing four different products with just one.

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