

New Year, New Green You

by Sheri Radford / Jan 11, 2021

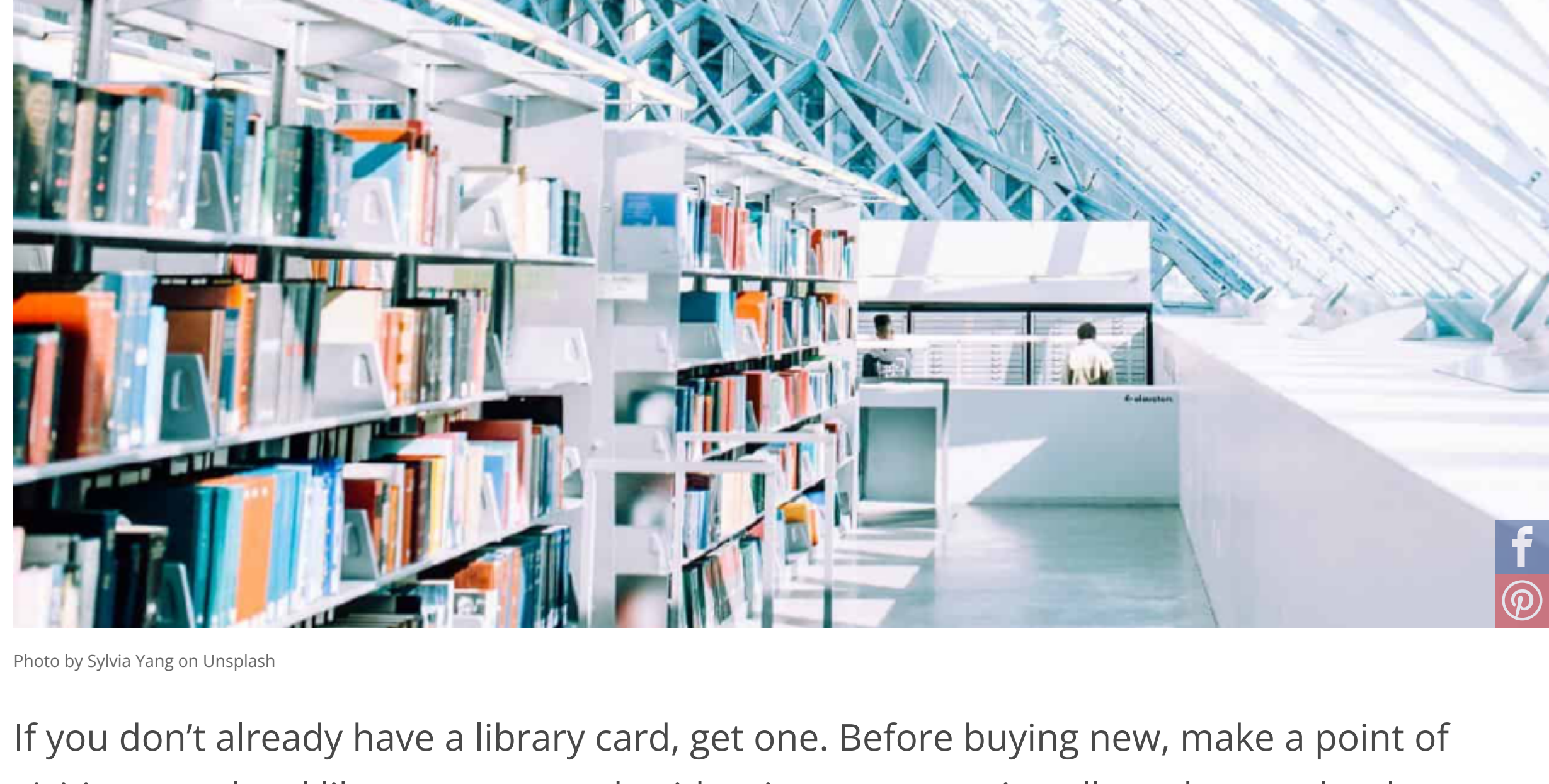
These 12 small changes can have a big impact on you and the planet

Why do so many New Year's resolutions fail? Because well-intentioned folks attempt to make too many radical changes at once—then end up abandoning them all pretty quickly. This year, try something different. Make just one small eco-friendly change each month. By the end of 2021, you'll have a dozen new habits that will help reduce your carbon footprint.

1. JANUARY

Turn down the heat in your home by a degree or two. Then use that as an excuse to wear your coziest sweaters, fleeciest pullovers and fuzziest slippers all winter long. Place a warm blanket (or several) in every room, and make a habit of reaching for a blanket instead of the thermostat whenever you feel chilly.

2. FEBRUARY



If you don't already have a library card, get one. Before buying new, make a point of visiting your local library every week, either in person or virtually, to borrow books, e-books, audiobooks, movies and music.

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3. MARCH

Switch from paper napkins to cloth napkins. They don't need to be fancy, and they don't even need to match. Find some colourful ones at a thrift store, or if you know how to sew a simple hem, you can repurpose an old sheet or pillowcase and make your own. While you're at it, switch from paper towels to cloth rags.

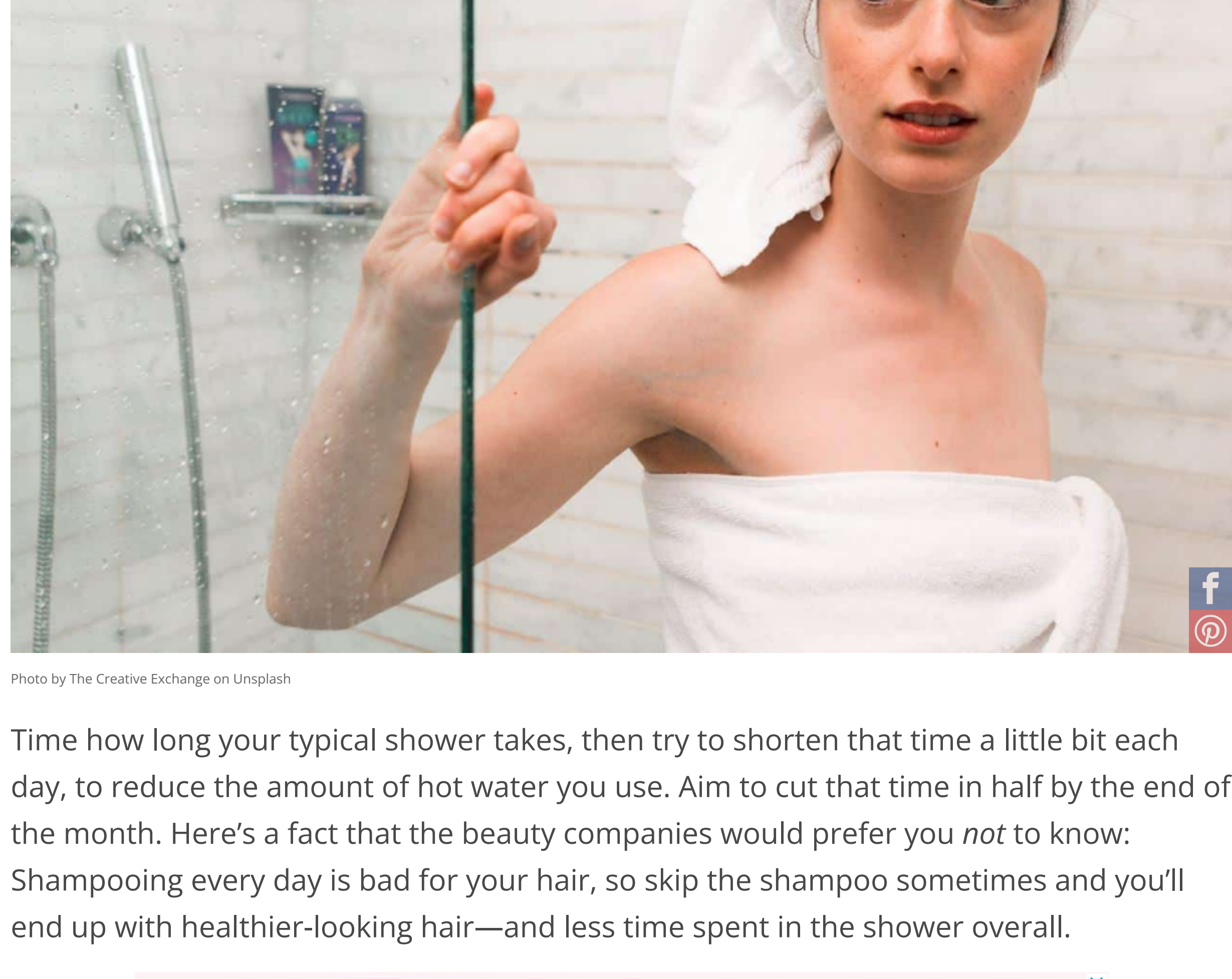
4. APRIL

Give away one item per day to a local thrift store or your area's [Buy Nothing](#) group on Facebook. It could be as small as a ballpoint pen or as large as a piece of furniture. By the end of the month, you will have eliminated 30 pieces of clutter. If you try this for a whole year, you may even find yourself able to move to a smaller home. You'll definitely start scrutinizing potential purchases more carefully. Also consider joining a clothing-swap or toy-swap group, and aim to give more than you receive.

5. MAY

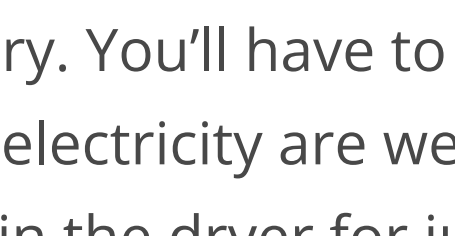
Get active for at least 20 minutes every day using exercise clothing, shoes and equipment that you already own. Unearth the inline skates buried in the back of your closet, dust off your hand weights, inflate the tires in your bicycle or just lace up a pair of walking shoes and get moving. If the weather is bad, try a yoga or Zumba video on YouTube. Give yourself permission to quit after 20 minutes if the activity makes you feel truly awful, but make sure you get those 20 minutes in.

6. JUNE



Time how long your typical shower takes, then try to shorten that time a little bit each day, to reduce the amount of hot water you use. Aim to cut that time in half by the end of the month. Here's a fact that the beauty companies would prefer you *not* to know: Shampooing every day is bad for your hair, so skip the shampoo sometimes and you'll end up with healthier-looking hair—and less time spent in the shower overall.

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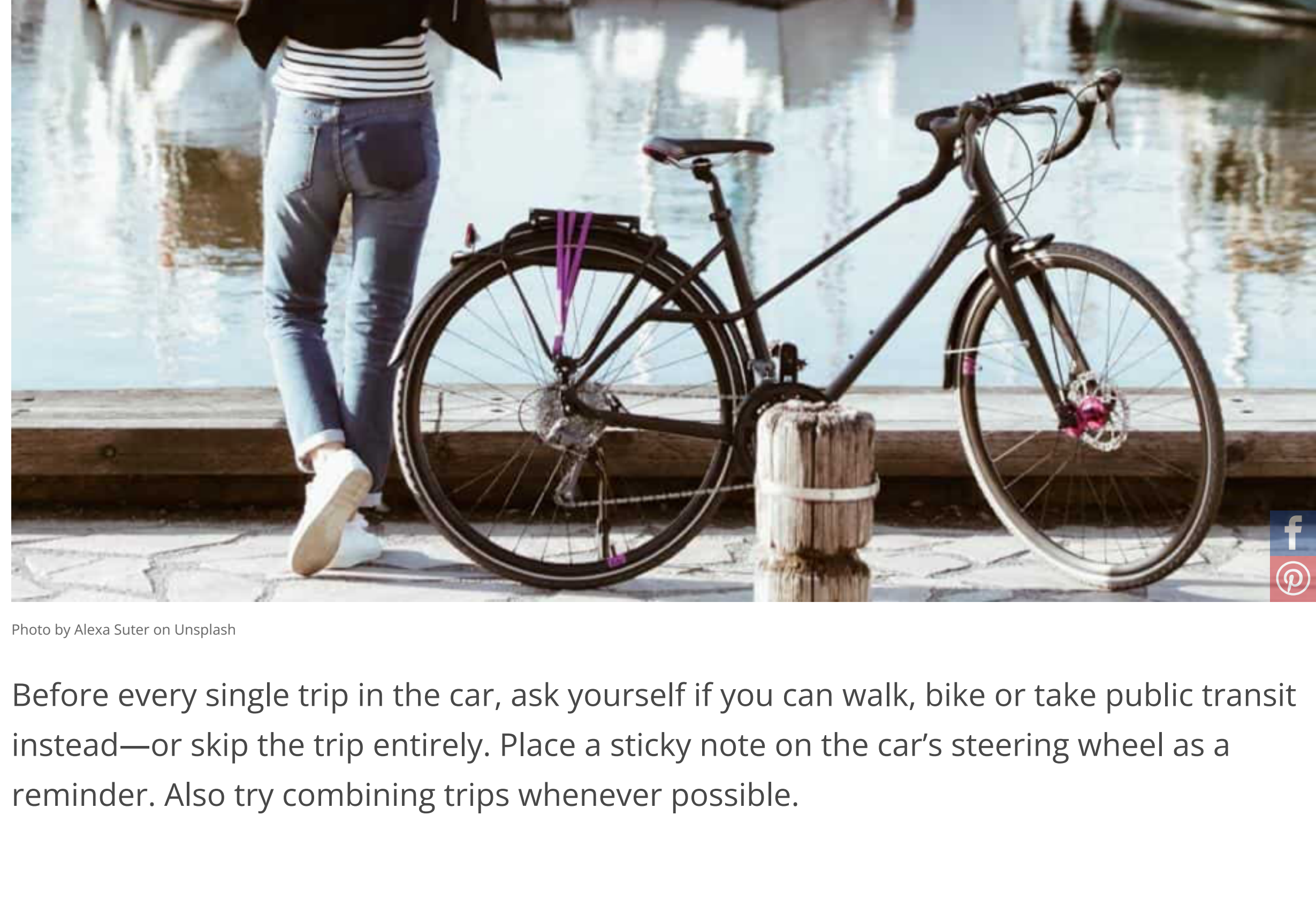
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7. JULY

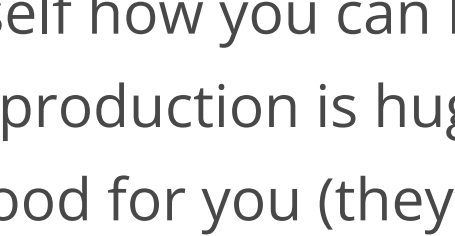
Hang your laundry to dry. You'll have to invest in a drying rack if you don't already own one, but the savings in electricity are well worth it. If you find certain fabrics too stiff after air drying, throw them in the dryer for just five minutes to soften them up. Bonus: Air-dried laundry doesn't have a problem with static cling.

8. AUGUST



Before every single trip in the car, ask yourself if you can walk, bike or take public transit instead—or skip the trip entirely. Place a sticky note on the car's steering wheel as a reminder. Also try combining trips whenever possible.

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9. SEPTEMBER

Eat less meat and more veggies. Every morning, think about the meals you plan to eat that day, and ask yourself how you can boost your veggie intake while reducing the amount of meat. Meat production is hugely harmful to the planet, and—like Mom always said—vegetables are good for you (they're cheaper than meat, too). Even if you have no desire to go vegetarian, you can still eat less meat, less often.

10. OCTOBER



Bring a reusable shopping bag and/or produce bag, plus a reusable water bottle or coffee mug with you every time you go out. Make it part of your last-minute check before leaving home: wallet, keys, phone, shopping bags, water bottle or coffee mug.

11. NOVEMBER

Unplug appliances such as coffee makers and microwaves when not in use, or turn off the power strip they're plugged into. What's known as phantom power use adds up to a waste of electricity—and an unnecessarily high electricity bill.

12. DECEMBER

During the holiday season, it's far too easy to focus on the things you want. Instead, try focusing on the things you already have. Every day, think of one person, pet, item, activity or memory that sparks joy. If we all focused a little more on enjoying the things we have, instead of lamenting the things we lack, the environment—and the whole planet—would be better off.

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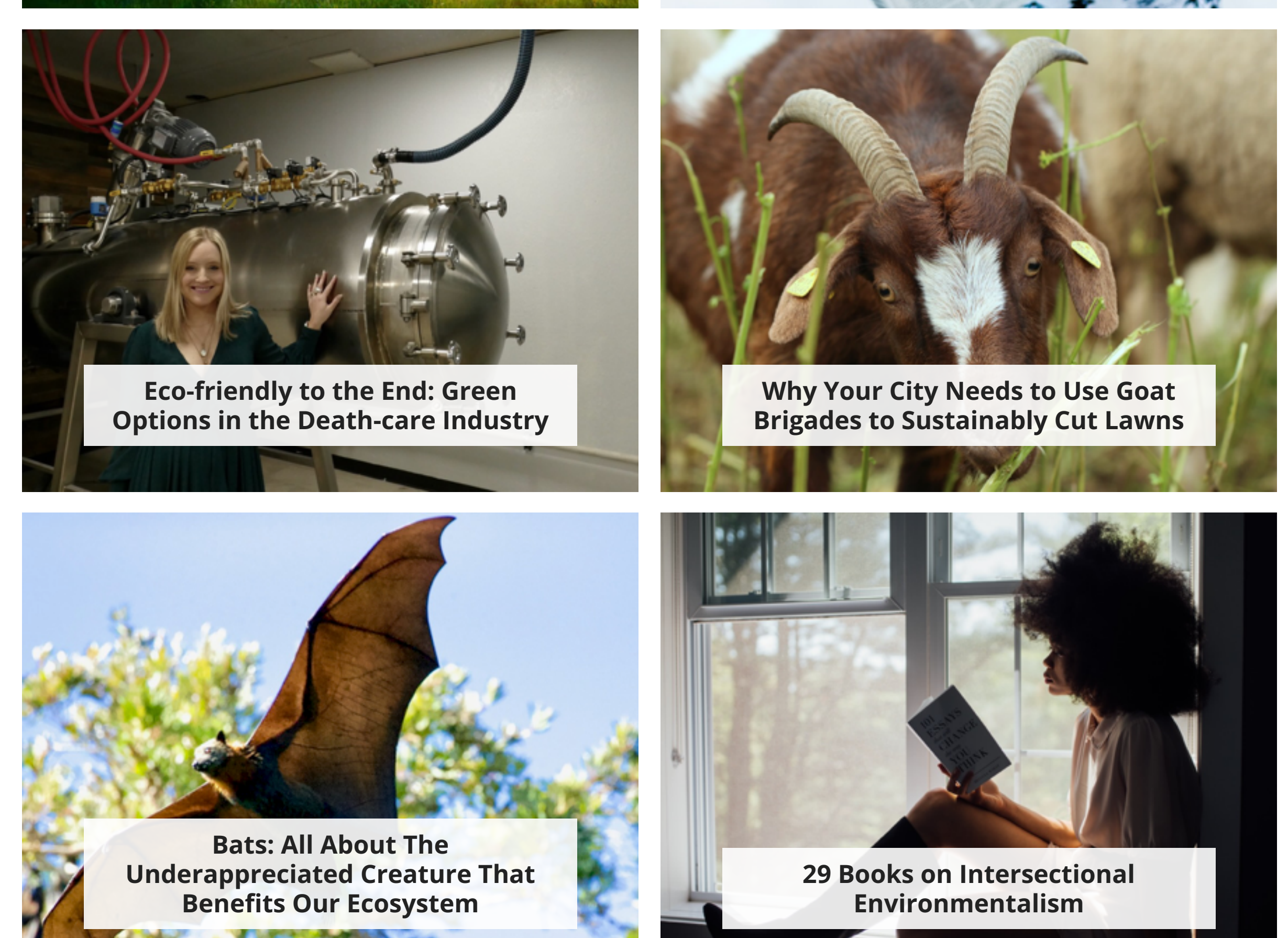
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