



15 Must-Read Books That Will Forever Change How You See the World

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Some say print books are *passé*, but I still like curling up on the couch with a mind-expanding read. Here are my top picks for ecological and sustainable reading.

 **Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things** by William McDonough & Michael Braungart. Why settle for a throwaway culture? This book inspires elegant design solutions, stating that every single product must either go back to the earth or back into industry to be made into something else. A revolutionary way of upgrading the Industrial Revolution.

 **Introduction to Permaculture** by Bill Mollison. The classic text on permaculture design (which is not limited to gardens, but can also be used to design homes, communities and societies in general). An excellent introduction for the aspiring student or someone who just wants to know what it's all about.

 **The World Without Us** by Alan Weisman. What exactly *would* happen to the earth if human life disappeared? The author explores a few different scenarios in great detail (including a suddenly depopulated Manhattan). Absolutely addictive reading.

 **Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life** by Barbara Kingsolver. A great read for the locavores. The author spends a year eating only from her garden, or that which is locally grown or raised. A foodie's delight, this book proves how richly one can live off the land.

 **Eating For Beauty** by David Wolfe. Leading raw foodist David Wolfe takes that old adage "you are what you eat" to a new level. He describes how what you eat literally creates who you are, and which foods will create the most beautiful you – in body and in spirit.

 **Lifeplace: Bioregional Thought and Practice** by Robert L. Thayer, Jr. In a world gone insanely global, this book takes us deeper into the microcosm. A

bioregion is defined by nature, not by politics, and having intimate connection with your home means living within that context – historically, geographically and culturally.

 **Green Building & Remodeling For Dummies** by Eric Corey Freed. Written by the founder of organicARCHITECT, this book is a comprehensive guide to green building materials and techniques, energy and water systems, and the pros and cons of everything. Check out a sample chapter [here](#).

 **Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth** by James Lovelock. First published in 1979, this book sets forth the Gaia Hypothesis, stating that our planet is more than a sum of its resources, but rather a fully integrated living being, with systems of life more complex than previously imagined. I wonder what Gaia's thinking about us now?

 **The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals** by Michael Pollan. Follow a McDonald's meal back to a cornfield in Iowa. Learn about the differences between large and small organic farms. See what it's like to hunt and gather for oneself. Food is what builds our bodies – we ought to know what it takes to build our food.

 **Ecovillages: A Practical Guide to Sustainable Communities** by Jan Martin Bang. Documenting some of the successful Ecovillages around the world, the author shows us how groups of people have come together to live out the permaculture model in both rural and urban environments.

 **Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves** by McCamant, Durrett and Hertzman. If you think intentional communities are too much like communes, but typical modern housing creates too much isolation, cohousing may be the answer you're looking for. Explore these European neighborhoods built with the aim of fostering community while simultaneously respecting each family's personal space.

 **The Findhorn Garden: Pioneering a New Vision of Man and Nature in Cooperation** by The Findhorn Community. The founders of Findhorn were guided to begin growing a garden (including tomatoes, roses and tropicals) on an infertile, sandy plot in cold coastal Scotland. The quality and quantity of what they grew stunned horticulturists around the world. Enjoy this photo-filled book and learn the surprising secret of their success.

 **Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature** by Janine M. Benyus. We've thus

far created a modern world based on artificial ideals, but nature, which runs on sunlight and creates no waste, holds the solution to many modern problems. This isn't a "back to nature" book, but rather a book proposing thoroughly modern technologies that copy nature's best traits.

 **Holistic Management: A New Framework for Decision Making** by Allan Savory and Jody

Butterfield. A great read for businesspeople and managers – particularly those in charge of large areas of land. This book views people, economies and the environment as interconnected. Using holistic management techniques, we can make decisions that take all factors into account, for both short and long term. I'd like our government leaders to read this book.

 **Voluntary Simplicity** by Duane Elgin. Living with less "stuff" can mean living with more purpose, balance and connection. Here's the inspiration you need to scale back on material goods and make more room for the priceless things that money can't buy.

Now if all these books were printed on tree-free paper (like Cradle to Cradle) with soy-based ink, we'd be another step towards true sustainability. Otherwise, the audio or e-book will suffice. However you do it, you'll be inspired. Let us know any other books that are on your list of eco essentials.

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