

Carbon Poor life at Boskanter

We are careful with the use of water.

For rainwater and groundwater[] We use a hand pump.  
No, we don't. Because it's very unpractical not to have your hands free.  
We pump the water with an electrical pump, and we are grateful that we still have this option. In summer, also rain water becomes scarce and the ground water starts to smell.

Drinking water is a rare and precious good that will become a cause for war in the near future. We use rainwater for everything in the house. We only have two taps, one in each kitchen, with cold drinking water.

In a carefully isolated house, the moisture is trapped. We can evaporate the moisture trough the dampopen shield and to ventilate it out of the house. This uses a lot of energy and is often not enough, so we prevent to add to the moisture in the house.

- We put a lid on the pot when cooking and put the pot on a lower fire when boiling.
- We leave wet towels, shoes and raincoats outside.
- We dry clothes outside and only bring them in for removing the remaining moisture.

Except when the sun is shining abundantly, a lot of energy can be saved by not using hot water. A quick wash of face and hands with cold water. Rinse pots with cold water.

We engage the dog to do our pré dishes. We need less water to wash the dishes after. Washing is more comfortable because the water is less dirty and the dirt does not stick to the pots. This takes less time then doing it ourselve (lick our plate and clean the cooking pots).

We use a compost toilet.

- it's a source of nutrients and organic matter for our fruit trees and berries if we would set up a collection system and a composting installation on district level, we would have a perfect compost for the garden
- shit in water rots in stead of composting and spoils both air (with gasses) and water
- we don't have to provide
  - water supply (requiring a pump using electricity) and a drain for the dirty water to install the toilet
  - a sophisticated dirty water evacuation system
  - sophisticated, expensive and energy consuming water purification installation
- we don't need to flush the toilet after every pee to prevent a terrible smell
- In Belgium, about 3250 liters of (mostly drinking)water per person per year is normally used to flush the toilet. By using a compost toilet, we save that water and we also don't have to purify it.
- we bring in saw dust and carry out the full bucket daily
- we go for saw dusts at the neighbours place every some weeks (they have a wood cutting business) or collect leaves in the forest

We only wash laundry when necessary.

A laundry machine is one of this luxury things that we find hard to let go. We try to use it not more then necessary. We only wash with a full machine. We lower the temperature as fas as still effective. We use only a little bit of soap.

We use our nose and eyes to find out if something is dirty.

We don't dry in the house because that causes humidity and the evaporation consumes energy.

- This prevents excessive moist in the house.
- It saves us time for sorting out, filling the machine, hanging, post-drying on the stove, sorting out, ...
- We use a lot less electricity and a lot less water and soap.
- We don't have to be out in the cold to hang wet laundry more often then necessary.

In winter, drying laundry without dryer is not evident.[] But we also sweat less, so we can do longer with the same clothes and sheets. We use the following ways to prevent dirty laundry:

- (Re)use different clothes for outside and for inside.
- (Re)use a cover layer for dirty work outside.
- Don't have to much clothes in the running. As soon as we lay them away for a while, they start to smell like 'old sweat'.
- Wool is very difficult to dry, but does not take up odors and can last a whole winter when we use this outer layer for dirty jobs and change only the lowest layers.
- We rince our body before sleeping when we did sweaty work, so the sheets can last longer.

● less pollution of organic matter (sugar, soap, fat, starch...) and nutrients (nitrogen, phosforus, potash)

We let the temperature in the house drop with some degrees.

to an average of 17° to 18° with two degrees variation

We don't heat the sleeping rooms.

Actually, there is no heating...

We use a rocket mass cooker to heat the house in winter.

In summer we cook on a small rocket cooker, a solar cooker or gass.  
In summer we can also avoid more cooking by eating raw salads.

We only take a shower when necessary.

Some of our volunteers even only take a bucket of water and a washcloth

We clean the house not more then necessary.

We take turns in two-weekly cleaning of toilet, bathroom, fridge.  
We wash dishes daily.  
We sweep the floor every some days.  
We wash the floor with water before we make bread.  
We only use soap when dirt is to fat or sticks when we don't use soap.  
We take of dust when necessary.  
We wash windows perhaps once per year.

We choose a small insulated heated house and a lot of space outside.

We use electricity carefully.

We turn things off when we don't use them.

What we eat is connected with culture, beliefs, addiction, influenced by commercials, close related with how we feel and often used to cope with difficult situations. With all these excuses we maintain eating habits that are devastating for our health and our planet. When staying on Boskanter, we leave everybody the freedom to deal with this devil at their own pace, with their own exceptions, as long as everybody commits to at least try deal with it. We find it very valuable to talk about this, to learn from each other, to share believes and fears and hopefully to help each other to get further.

We make food from basic ingredients and are economical with refined food and food that we could not easily produce ourselve. In that way we

- use less package material
- can buy at a beter price
- know what we eat
- are more healthy and fit
- are more satisfied with how and what we eat
- can vary the taste so things don't taste the same all the time
- can choose ourselves, for example how much sugar we put in something

For example:

- mayonaise and dressing
- curry mixture
- herbal tea
- cookies and cake (if you want them, you can to make them in your free time)
- yoghurt
- breadspreads

We buy all our food (with few exceptions) organic.

We eat products when the season is there. We enjoy moments of real abundancy and accept scarcity at other moments. In that way we feel the rim of nature.

For example:

- in early springtime, the apples are shriveled but we have the first asparagus
- in late spring and early summer, there are no apples but abundant strawberries and raspberries and we find elderberry flowers
- tomatoes are there in late summer and are abundant in early autumn
- in early summer we enjoy zucchini and a lot of greens
- in autumn we have chesnnuts and walnuts
- in winter there's abundancy in Brussels sprouts and Brussels Iof, red and white cabbage
- ...

We use only a little bit of meat now and then. We kill a sheep and some chickens once in a while. Do you want to help killing them in order to eat meat?

We try to eat raw what can be eaten raw. It saves time and energy in preparation and washing dishes and it is more healthy.

Starch (grain, potatoes) is a wonderfull crop to store for winter and to provide a lot of very concentrated energy. But without a lot of fossil fuel, it's a lot of work to grow or harvest them. And we can perfectly do with a lot less of them then we are used to. When there is abundancy of vegetables (such as pumkins) it makes sence to leave to starch completely or partly out of our diet for a while.

David is an organic farmer who uses our fields to grow vegetables to sell on the marked in Brussels. Some food that can no longer be sold on the marked is still perfect for us. So we have often abundancy of some vegetables (from the market, on the field) while we don't see other vegetables for a long time.

We search local food, for example in the network of www.voedselteams.be. This saves transportation and often we can (re)use our own package.

We reservate 'special' food for a special occasions such as a celebration, to reward ourselves for a good job, ...

We make our own bread with sourdough (does not taste sourel) from local organic grain that we grind on Boskanter. We usually make 85% bread, which means the bran is removed.

We don't grow everything ourselves, but think about what we could exchange with others in the neighbourhood if we would work together in a network.

We are very interested to learn recepies from other cultures that follow this principles. It's less interesting to learn the typical cultural dishes that are made of a lot of meat, sugar, refined ingredients, ...

For example: we learned a really good and simple technique to make sour cabbage from our Estonian volunteer. We can make a very tasty variation of the typical Belgian carbonades using zucchini in stead of meat. Who will teach us to prepare chesnnuts, acorns, wild mushrooms?

Examples of food that we limit and/or use as a treat on special occasions

- sugar,
- oil,
- cheese,
- butter,
- chocco (the agreement with the kids is they always first eat a bread with something else)
- cofee,
- black tea
- waffles, chocolate

Food (production, preparation and transportation) consumes over 1/3 of fossil fuels in this wold, so here is a lot to win.

- The difference with outside is not so big. We warm our body (wearing some more clothes) in stead of our house, so we are ready to go out without having to change so much clothes.
- Our body adapts to the temperature; it keeps our temperature regulating system fit and ceeps us more healthy.
- We try to mix sitting with activity; as long as we are busy, even with simple activities, we are comfortable with 12 to 14° C; as long as we sit no longer then one hour in a row, we don't get cold.
- If everybody will be very active for half a day, we don't heat the stove.

- We use less fuel so we cause less air polution, save some trees and save ourselves a lot of work in collecting wood (cut trees, clean, split, build sorage, store, ...), in heating the stove and in cleaning the ashes.

We use hot water bottles and enough blankets to heat our body in stead of the room, so we only have a short discomfort when we have to get in and out of our bed.

- This saves us a lot of time, money and materials because we don't have to build out an extensive heating system. It also saves electricity for the circulation pump, and time and money for maintenance.

As the roof and the walls are insulated, the rooms are never really cold.

We find fresh air more important then heat in the sleeping room.

We spend the evenings together in the warm living room or the office. We reservate the living room for noisy things (talking, games, meetings, kids, skype) and the office for silent and calm activities (reading, studying, working on the computer).

△ This requires skills that are important if we want to live more sustainable in the future: to have respect for each other and to be assertive enough to say what we need, for example that we don't want to talk but read, or that we rather have the kids in another room because they are noisy, ...

- We use less fuel so we cause less air pollution, save some trees and save ourselves a lot of work in collecting wood (cut trees, clean, split, build sorage, store, ...), in heating the stove and in cleaning the ashes.

- The heat produced by cooking is recuperated for heating the house and vise versa. We also heat water for dishes and tea and dry the last moisture out of the laundry on the stove.

- As we cook in the evening, the house is warm for the quiet activities of the evening.

- The rocket stove burns so effectively that we don't need much wood and we have not much poluting exhaust. The heat is recuperated so effectively in the mass, that the gasses are cooled down till 60° C when they leave the chimney, so we don't spoil any heat.

- The rocket stove can be made by hand with mainly local material such as clay and straw and recycled iron.

- The radiation heat of the mass heater is very comfortable (like the radiation of the sun).

- A mass heater is heated only once, twice or trice per day so there is a bit up and down in temperature during the course of day.

- We can not quicly cook something inbetween. We have to plan our cooking. When the stove is burning, we use the opportunity to heat the milk for making yoghurt or the water for the thee after diner.

- Cooking on a woodstove is great, but it is different from a gass or electric fire.

- We have to bring in wood and heat the stove.

- Water and soap drie out our skin and disturb the natural regulation of tallow (skin fat production) and slime (around the genitals), so we use it not more then necessary.

Salt of sweat and mudd can be washed of simply with water and need no soap. Dead skin particles can be removed by rubbing with a not to soft towel after a shower with water.

- Water needs (most of the time) heating and electricity for the pump. In summer, water is sometimes scarce.

We enjoy a warm bath or shower from time to time as a real treat.

- We win time.

- Less shower means less water in the air that needs to be evacuated from the house.

The daily shower or the taboo of the smallest body smell are cultural 'habits' that could only grow thanks to the abundant use of fossil fuels in a quantity that is not sustainable.

- Soap takes a long time to break down in the ecosystem, comes in polluting plastic packages, needs chemicals and energy in production and is usually transported a long way before it arrives in our bathroom.

We clean the house not more then necessary.

- Saves us time.

- Is beter for the imune system.

It's more fun to clean if you see the result of what you do.

- It takes less time, money and materials to build.

- We take a more normal 'share' in the world division of place, energy and materials.

- We use less fuel so we cause less air polution, save some trees and save ourselves a lot of work in collecting wood (cut trees, clean, split, build sorage, store, ...), in heating the stove and in cleaning the ashes.

- Living together on a small place asks some more organisation. We have to make clear arrangements together, give everything a good place, think twice before we buy unnecessary things that take place, put things in the reserve that we don't need every day, ...

We have a second building, arranged for activities and groups. There, we have a comfortable, isolated kitchen with a rocket stove that can also be heated, so there is a comfortable place to escape to if people feel the need for it.

- We only turn on lights where we need it at that moment.

We use methods that don't need electricity where a reasonablebe alternative is available.

We turn things off when we don't use them.