Slow Weekender Writing Examples

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My Indie Life Blog

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3 Vegan pate recipes: great for canapes, picnics or sharing platters

Pate is a tasty accompaniment to any picnic, buffet, or canape platter. Long considered exclusive to meat-eaters, pate has many alternatives for those looking to stave off meat for a meal or become vegetarian, or vegan long-term. In fact, it was one of the pleasures I most missed at Christmas when I first became vegan some years ago. Today I want to share a few simple vegan pate recipes I have tried and love!

[image]

Walnut Pate: A delicious alternative to meat

Missing meat at Christmas was when I first really noticed that I had changed my diet. The traditions of variety in meat dishes, trimmed with all of the vegetables made me hanker for replacements that really tasted as good as the real deal.

Pate was one of my sticking points. I wanted it to taste and feel like the real thing because Christmas wasn't Christmas without a wedge of warm toast, buttered and slathered with a double helping of pate and quince jelly. I tried so many pre-made alternatives and nothing, but nothing tasted even close. It was time to make my own.

This is when I came across Philipp from Exceedingly Vegan, who created, by accident, a walnut pate. It looked simple enough and I had most of the ingredients in my store cupboard.

[button - Find the full recipe here https://www.exceedinglyvegan.com/vegan-recipes/soups-starters/vegan-walnut-pate-easy-a nd-delicious]

I tweaked my version to omit the lemon juice, garlic and onion powder because I didn't have those ingredients. I followed the instructions and dutifully waited throughout the setting time to dive in and taste it. OMG, this simply has to be the closest to meat pate I have ever tasted!

Thank you Philipp xx

Mushroom Pate: earthy goodness!

I'm a huge fan of mushrooms. I love the texture, the earthiness and the unexpectedly meat-like quality of a pile of steaming sauteed mushrooms on toast. Having found a love for meat-free pates I knew that searching for a mushroom option was my next move.

Alissa at Connoisseurus Veg had the best recipe I tried. Full of savoury mushroom flavour, I enjoyed the delicate differences using varying mushroom varieties.

[button - Find the full recipe here https://www.connoisseurusveg.com/vegan-mushroom-pate/]

I have made this several times with a number of different mushroom combinations and I usually leave out the sherry, purely because I don't drink, or use it in cooking frequently enough to warrant buying a bottle. I have enjoyed eating it on every single occasion. It is great as a canape too.

Thank you Alissa xx

Sundried Tomato Pate: deliciously Mediterranean

As you know Christmas for me is the best time to enjoy pate, but it isn't the only time I enjoy eating it. I also love pate in the summer, piled on open sandwiches, or as a highlight on sharing platters.

Thinking of the summer I often switch my taste from warmly spiced curries and hearty English and French cuisine to more Mediterranean delights, African or eastern flavours. Sun-dried tomatoes are something to adore during this time, all tangy and full-bodied. I use them in pasta dishes, in homemade bread and on salads. I hadn't tried them in pate. So when I came across Kimberly of One Green Planet's recipe I knew I had to try it.

[button - Find the full recipe here https://www.onegreenplanet.org/vegan-recipe/sun-dried-tomato-pate-vegan-grain-free/]

This recipe is so easy to make, honestly, you can't go wrong. There are just a handful of ingredients with a two-step making process. Bliss!

Thank you Kimberly xx

Have you tried vegan pate before? What is your favourite recipe?

10 Practical Sustainability Tips for the Kitchen

Kitchens create more waste than any other space in the home and are the easiest place to get started making more eco-friendly and environmental changes. You don't need to be zero-waste by the end of the year, but making a start on your kitchen sustainability journey today really does help make a big difference.

Best Tips for Creating a Sustainable Kitchen

1. Choose natural cleaning products

When shopping, choose eco-friendly cleaning products that avoid parabens, synthetic ingredients, and petrochemicals as these are harmful to our families, homes and the environment. Consider the packaging as well, avoid plastics and look for refill options that reduce waste. Brands are hotting up to climate demands and making changes, but some are further behind than others. Voting with your money shows them how much more work you need them to do.

If you want to be greener still, then you can create a disinfected surface with vinegar and baking soda. You'll be surprised by the results. Want some cleaning product recipes? Try reading "The Organically Clean Home" by Becky Rapinchuk.

[amazon link]

2. Upgrade appliances wisely

If your appliances are more than ten years old, you can significantly cut your kitchen's energy use by incorporating new technologies and eco-efficiencies into your routine. Whilst we make no suggestion that you opt to purchase new products, it is wise to start looking for a preferred shopping list. This way when your appliance gives out you have researched options ready to go.

3. Better dishwasher use

Dishwashers require less water than hand washing, but it helps to run the appliance when it is full to reduce consumption.

Choosing to run your appliance at an off-peak time will save you money on the electricity your dishwasher uses. Off-peak electricity times here in the UK are between 10pm and 8am.

4. Refrigerator and freezer placement and defrosting rituals
A fridge, or freezer should be away from your stovetop or oven and out of direct sunlight. It'll
run more often to protect your food when it senses more heat, so it makes sense to consider
kitchen placement.

It also helps to defrost this appliance three or four times per year to help improve its efficiency. If you have a newer appliance, or are looking for one, consider "no-frost" technology, where the appliance avoids ice build-up altogether.

5. Better bins

Everyone is more likely to sort their trash if they are prompted to do so. You can set up a simple recycling system at home by using several coded bins for every recycling concern your local authority asks of you. In no time, not only do you have a handle on the litter

sorting, but you also have a very clear idea about your consumption habits, helping you to prompt more research into buying choices.

It also matters what you line your bins with. Consider degradable liners.

6. Use Renewable Products

Many scouring pads and sponges come from non-renewable sources. They contain synthetic disinfectants and dyes that could be harmful when they get past wastewater treatment structures. Invest in materials made from coconuts and other sustainably-grown crops to create a more environmentally-friendly routine.

[amazon link]

7. Start a Compost Pile

Instead of throwing your food waste into the food waste container for the bin men, consider investing in a compost bin you can keep outside. It helps to have a locked container to prevent pests from stealing or digging through the items for food. You can use these materials for future gardening efforts to create a sustainable food cycle that reduces your overall costs.

If you are particularly into gardening and want to make use of worm castings in your compost, then I recommend a wormery. I got mine from Wormcity. It is made from plastic, unfortunately, but I have had mine for at least 5 years at this point, not needing a replacement.

[amazon link]

8. Reduce Container Use

Only an estimated 25% of all plastics from the kitchen go into recycling programs. Work with you-pick farms, organic producers, and local suppliers to reduce your reliance on pre-packaged (and probably preserved) foods. Look for brands who use recycled and recyclable packaging and ideally plastic free options.

9. Buy Sustainable Kitchenware

Traditional kitchenware is remarkably harmful to the environment. Some of it can even hurt you. Lead is found in some ceramic items and glazing, which you can release when preparing acidic foods.

When you add the various packages and containers used in the modern kitchen, a remarkable amount of non-recyclable waste gets generated.

Natural options, such as Bamboo create a warm look for your kitchen while using sustainable materials. You'll notice an immediate change to the flavour of your sauces when using this natural option for food storage and utensil.

Packed lunches can be wrapped in beeswax wraps, or stored in stainless steel containers.

[amazon link]

10. Repair Broken Items

Why buy new when used will do? It often costs less to repair an appliance than to replace it. Try to purchase second-hand goods whenever you can to reduce your environmental impact.

When we all take steps toward sustainable living, we work together to create a healthier planet. These ideas for the kitchen can significantly reduce your local impact. Share your ideas in the comments for better kitchen practices.

Follow the blog for more sustainable tips!

6 Ways to Get More Restful Sleep

Sleep is essential for good physical and emotional health. But many people struggle to get enough sleep at night. Here are some tips on how to improve your sleep habits, so you can wake up each day feeling more refreshed and ready to go!

Here are six ways to help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.

1) Create a relaxing environment

Make sure your bedroom is dark and quiet. Invest in blackout blinds or curtains to give you extra shade from any outside light, or try a sleep mask.

Avoid using electronics such as TVs, computers, phones, tablets, etc., right before bedtime.

2) Try going to bed earlier

If you're having trouble falling asleep at night, try creating a bedtime routine. This might mean turning off electronics an hour before bedtime, taking a warm bath, listening to calming music, reading a book, praying, meditating, or doing yoga.

It might also mean actively going to bed earlier. We aren't all built the same and some of us require more sleep than others. If you are feeling like a night of good sleep is what you need, take yourself off to bed early and relax into a good night's rest.

3) Exercise regularly

If you're having trouble sleeping, try exercising regularly. This will help you relax and release endorphins, which will make you feel happier.

Another thing I do is take myself off for a 30-minute walk around my neighbourhood before bed. The walk relaxes my mind from the day's events and helps me wind down.

4) Eat well

Eating a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables will give you energy throughout the day.

Try to eat at least six small meals throughout the day instead of three large ones. You'll also need to exercise regularly. A good rule of thumb is to do 30 minutes of moderate activity five times per week.

5) Learn to relax

Learning to relax if you are tightly wound, worrying, or working and parenting is the hardest thing to do. It's so hard that sometimes you feel like snapping the neck of anyone who asks you to relax!

It's also a sign. A sign that you aren't coping well and may be more tired than you think. If this sounds like you, then it is time to take some proactive steps.

Try taking a warm bath or shower before bed, listening to soothing music, reading a book, meditating, praying, or doing yoga. Whatever you try make sure that it is intent on shaking the focus from your day to being present and in the moment. Focus on your breathing. Allow yourself this time. Soon you will start to feel your shoulder's ease and relaxation taking over.

If you are still struggling to relax, then you need to understand what is keeping you on edge.

6) Avoid Stimulants Before Bed

You should avoid caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, and other stimulants before bedtime because these substances can keep you awake longer than usual.

Restful sleep is a wonderful thing!

Although it sometimes alludes us, getting a restful night's sleep is incredibly important. It helps us feel more refreshed and ready to tackle what life has to throw at us. It helps us keep up with relationships, parenting and productive work. Take some time today to ask yourself if you are getting the sleep you need to fire on all cylinders.

Follow the blog for more self-care tips!

Climate change: That shocking IPCC report and what you can do today at home!

Yesterday I found myself watching a lot of news stories about climate change and in particular the shocking IPCC report, highlighted by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in his public address.

Unfortunately, I'd love to say that it was shocking because I didn't think things were that bad, but sadly I was shocked that we simply haven't done enough (or was I shocked that I was shocked we hadn't really done enough?!) I don't think I'm the only one that feels this way. I am sure you are too. In today's article I wanted to dive into simple changes we can make, at home, to help stand up to our responsibilities to reduce carbon emissions significantly.

What are the main takeaways from the March 2022 IPCC report

The IPCC report, "Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change" was published in March. The aim was to publish findings based on assessments of greenhouse gas emissions and the removal of these gases from our atmosphere. Working Group III, as the task force of bureau members were called, was headed by Co-Chairs, Jim Skea, based at Imperial College London, and PR Shukla, based at Ahmedabad University; also responsible for contributions and aspect management of other reports, including Climate Change and Land, and the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C.

Here are the key points we need to consider.

1. Destabilisation of our climate is happening faster than we thought

Modellers have agreed we are simply emitting far more greenhouse gases than they forecast. In 2021 global CO2 emissions grew by 4.9% according to <u>Carbon Brief</u>. Coal production and its use being the main problem area, increasing with China's energy sector and industries choosing to use this fuel more and more.

[<iframe scrolling="no" frameborder="0" marginheight="0px" marginwidth="0px" style="display: initial; margin: 0 auto;" src="https://cbhighcharts2021.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/global-carbon-project-2021/em issions_by_country.html" width="770px" height="500px"></iframe> - chart from Carbon Brief https://www.carbonbrief.org/global-co2-emissions-have-been-flat-for-a-decade-new-data-rev eals]

Why haven't we been investing more in replacing fossil fuels? I'm dumb struck. Instead what we will bear witness to is a fight to rule over that last stockpile until it is gone (if that hasn't been started already by Russia's invasion of the Ukraine - political opinion is entirely my own here).

We also saw land structures and ecosystems decaying much faster too. From giant glaciers breaking up to increased coral reef bleaching and habitats disappearing. The worst of this is the wealthiest countries simply aren't doing enough to help those more vulnerable, to make the change that will help their higher impacted areas. These same poorer areas of the world also happen to be where climate change is having a larger effect, despite these countries not being the main global CO2 emitters. Are we playing dangerously with our "out of sight, out of mind" stance? Simply put, yes!

Most recently I wrote about the UK carbon footprint in tonnes for the average household, sharing with you that we are more than double the global average at around 12-13 tCO2e per person. So right here, right now we need to do something about this and go beyond our government's target to be carbon neutral by 2050, which may not be early enough.

There is hope though, hope that if we act accordingly, that we can avoid the worst effects of climate change.

2. Loss and damage is now endorsed by the IPCC

The IPCC have given a scientific-backed endorsement to the concept of legal ramifications for "loss and damage", meaning that this could open the door to developing countries seeking legal recourse for the responsibility of wealthier and more polluting neighbours. Up to now this notion has been pooh-poohed by wealthier world leaders.

3. We need a mix of natural and tech-based solutions to make a difference

The report from Working Group III also outlined its thoughts on technologies part in addressing the climate crisis, by warning that not all technology would be fit for purpose. Some of the tech in early proposal stages may actually lead to higher emissions by encouraging natural emissions to rise as a consequence. This is called the <u>"outgassing effect"</u>, which is the process of releasing gases from frozen, trapped, or absorbed materials and environments, on land or sea. We need to seek balance with nature to achieve our emission reduction goals.

4. We can make bigger changes in cities with the right investment

Cities are the fastest growing human habitats and therefore the IPCC says are our biggest chance to make an impact fast. We can tackle this in legislation for building, investments in existing infrastructure and challenging human behaviour.

What can we do today to make an impact on reducing climate change?

Firstly, we need to start taking responsibility for our own houses. How we consume, fuel and manage our everyday lives will ultimately play a key factor alongside government and industry change. This means being more mindful with what we regard as easy and convenient decisions. We need to be more knowledgeable about our impact and how we can control it. Here in the magazine I hope to write a string of articles monthly to help you by researching alternatives and looking at leading research.

A list of simple things we can start with today

1. Be mindful who we vote for and how we empower and challenge them

Too long have we felt apathetic towards our voting rights. A collective "what's the point?" has rung in our ears. Now is the time to start afresh and start voting for leaders who are forward thinking and climate conscious. We need to actively challenge our leaders to seek the best outcomes for our future and future generations, not just allow them to u-turn when it suits their political or campaign needs, or dare I say their personal business associations. For example the <u>Uk government's recent u-turn on bee killing pesticide use</u>.

2. Research our buying decisions to make better choices

As a capitalist nation here in the UK we enjoy the act of consuming. We all want more than we really need. It is time to pare that back and really consider what we actually need and how useful it will be. When we have figured that out we need to consider how and where a product we wish to purchase was made and what consumables go into that service we want to order. Do we understand provenance and the impact on our environment?

Budget will continue to be an issue until more sustainable options are made popular and the increase in demand decreases production costs, but if we reduce our consumption, we have more money in the kitty to make slightly more expensive choices that we trust to last, perform and reduce emissions of our usual less green choices.

3. Learn that you don't need the latest model

Let's take our mobile phones as an example. The industry pushes a new model every single year and is reported to reduce speeds on older models. In fact Apple was fined for this in 2020 and although they state this was for operating benefits, others argue it was purely in order to entice upgrades.

The truth is we do not need that shiny new model each year, we really don't and that's something we need to discourage in our own purchasing practices and the mindset we need to encourage in younger generations. We simply cannot sustain this out of control consumerist behaviour.

<u>Friends of the Earth have some great in depth facts on landfill issues</u> with lots of ways you can combat it.

4. Understand our utility options

Utilities are a big issue right now as our cost of living spirals out of control. For those of you who can afford to invest, now is the perfect time to embrace solar, wind and water energy production in your own home, of which costs are at an all time low. The UK government has also reduced the VAT to a zero rating for renewable energy installations (see Spring Budget section 3.12), meaning renewable energy is more realistic for average households.

We could take this further by turning down our thermostats by 1 degree, saving an estimated £80 per year in the process. If we also reduced the time our heating is on for each day even by a few minutes, we could reduce our energy consumption further, which not only lessens our bills, but dramatically reduces our CO2 emissions.

There is also the option of switching providers if we do our due diligence and work with our greenest options.

5. Consider what we eat and drink

The more convenient our food the more production it needs before it gets to our homes. Booking takeaways as home deliveries may have felt like an option during the pandemic, but it is not sustainable for our carbon footprints. One of the unlikely things that came out of my transition into veganism in the last three or four years, is that I became more adventurous in my cooking and learning new ways to cook tasty and nutritious meals in minutes is really more fun than you'd think!

My planted-based diet is not guilt free when it comes to emissions, forced polytunnels of vegetables can be seen scarring the Spanish landscape from space apparently, which is a pretty damning indictment for the alternative to the emission rich meat industry. How I choose to tackle this at the moment is based on a budgeted attempt to a) remove plastic from my groceries shop, b) to grow at least some of my food myself from my backyard (which also doubles as my car port! I'd love a full garden or an allotment, but for now this is what I have), and finally c) to choose local producers where possible.

6. Travel less

Travel is one of our biggest consumption areas for most households. Whether it is travelling to work, for pleasure or off on holiday, travel is a part of our everyday lives. There are several ways to look at this. Firstly, we can simply choose to travel less, maybe consider continuing to work from home (especially with all of those work/life balance rewards we have from staying local). Then we could consider how we make those trips, is a car really necessary? Of course we could take that even further and bike or walk on those more local trips.

7. Offset where we cannot reduce

I mentioned the Tree App in a recent article, which is a tool I use to offset the carbon I emit. I plan to overplant and create a negative impact each month to help the environment around me. There are many apps like this which you can try.

I have this option last on my list today purely because I want to encourage reduction over offsetting as a long term plan. We simply have to reduce our emissions first.

How your impact matters

Governments simply aren't doing enough to tackle climate issues and so we need to make a stand. In order to facilitate the change we need, we need to start in our own homes: vote with our feet, reduce demand for wasteful consumer products and services and make swaps, or offset where we can.

We can absolutely find ways to make a positive impact on a lower budget and increase our greener actions as our finances grow again.

Join me and let's make this a home-based greener revolution!

Treeapp: How to plant a tree for free, every day, in less than a minute

We are all too aware of how carbon emissions affect the world around us these days, but finding a simple way to make a difference feels like pulling teeth, doesn't it? Introducing Treeapp, a free way to offset your carbon emissions.

Currently available in the UK and Ireland, Treeapp is an easy to use phone app, that takes a minute to use, making a real impact possible directly from your home.

[You can find Treeapp here - https://www.thetreeapp.org/ button]

How does Treeapp work?

Every time you tap "plant a tree" an order goes to the local nursery working on the project you have chosen to support. The orders are paid for by the sponsor of the ad you have to scroll through or watch.

The sapling you effectively order on behalf of the sponsor is a native variety recommended for the environment that it will serve. The aim is that as it grows it will help rebuild and reclaim habitats, as well as offset your emissions.

The nursery spends 3 months tending your sapling before it is delivered to your chosen site for planting (unless it requires direct planting). Projects are carefully selected and currently run through South America, Africa and Asia, areas that have been hardest hit by deforestation.

Are there ambitions to plant in Europe?

I have not seen news of further projects, but I have seen people ask this question. I think it would be a strong consideration for the company as the app grows.

You said it is free but is there a paid version of this?

Yes. You can either gift trees to friends, or set up a monthly payment to plant extra trees each month. This starts at £1 per tree. The app states you can cancel this at any time, allowing you to budget when and where you need to, whilst doing your bit for the planet.

This does not stop you from watching ads though, your monthly or one-off payment acts purely as an addition to the main app use.

How to get set up Treeapp

I downloaded the Treeapp from the Apple Store, but you can also use this app if you are on an Android device. From here you simply follow the instructions to get set up. What's great is this is very intuitive, so it takes only a minute or so to plant your first tree. Once you have planted that first tree, I recommend revisiting your settings, because you will want to make sure you understand your actual carbon footprint and how much your tree planting impacts this. To do this hit the impact button, bottom right - the big smiling face.



On your impact page, you will see your push to reduce your carbon emissions as a percentage based on your monthly or annual target. In my screenshot, you can see that in February 2022, by planting 15 trees I planted more than my carbon neutral target.

To the right of your avatar, on this page, is the total trees planted on your account and your carbon footprint in tonnes. If you select the footprint amount by tapping on it, you will be taken to a screen where you can enter

your footprint calculation.

You'll find this is preset to 10 tonnes (tCO2e). <u>Carbon Independent stated that 10 tonnes</u> <u>was the national average here in the UK in 2021</u>, which is more than double the world average.

Let that set in for a moment, 10 tCO2e is more than double the world average!

This is also far more than the UK Government advertise. They suggest the figure is just 6 tCO2e per person, according to Carbon Independent, which goes on to say that if we included Greenhouse gasses, we would much more likely be at 12-13 tCO2e per person.

I recommend taking a <u>survey by WWF</u> to work out what your annual footprint is likely to be. Using technology created by the Stockholm Environment Institute at the University of York, and the University of Leeds, this survey is based on several sets of data: food, which covers diet, waste and purchasing, the home which covers energy usage and methods, travel and consumable purchasing.

There is another factor that makes UK measurements easier to establish on this survey, this is the addition of our government's consumption. This includes infrastructure, education, defence, health and other areas in which carbon may be a byproduct. This figure is then split among the 65 million residents of the UK within this survey for you, accounting for about 2.75 tCO2e per person.

Once you have your much more accurate tCO2e figure you can enter this into your Treeapp to give yourself a more rounded figure to work toward offsetting. I have heard said that the app settings won't go below 4 tCO2e, but if my research proves correct, I would suggest it doesn't need to.

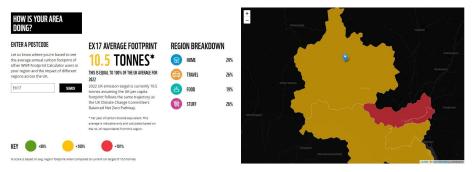
My shock results on the WWF Footprint Calculator

Ok, so I like to think of myself as pretty good at being environmentally friendly. I work from home, I travel infrequently, I don't travel overseas regularly, I'm vegan, I'm a mindful shopper, I'm a mindful cook and I try to work towards better and more sustainable choices (and of course, I know there are arguments for and against some of my choices).



I still ended up at 8.35 tCO2e per year, less than the 10 tCO2e UK average, but still way over the world average. Whilst the survey results patted me on the back, I was crushed. I'm creating way more emissions than I thought! Worse still, I don't think as a nation we have a true understanding of just how bad the situation is.

I also realised that my region wasn't doing so great either. My area of Devon is producing on average 10.5 tCO2e per person.



I need to pay more attention to this and try to do my bit to make more of a difference here.

What I did appreciate, was the final chart that gave me detail of where my carbon was the most problematic. Some of which can be explained away. For example, in an average year, I wouldn't have bought a new fridge and freezer. My twenty-year-old appliances had come to their natural end and needed replacing this past year. This is reflected in my purchasing survey answers. Still, it seems I have a lot of work to do!





Choosing where to plant your trees

The great thing about the Treeapp is that you have choices in where you'd like to plant and which projects you'd like to support.

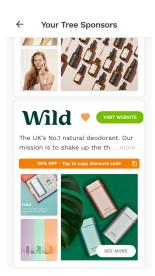
The app gives you details of what they will be planting, what that planting may impact, whether it is other plant species or animals and you can also see the app-wide contributions to that same project. On the top right of the project screen, you will be able to view pictures from the project, showing you behind the scenes of the work you are supporting.

Supporting sponsors who want to make a difference

Ultimately, aside from the projects you support and the ease of use of the app, the one thing that will be the downfall of any app like this is the perception of participating sponsors.

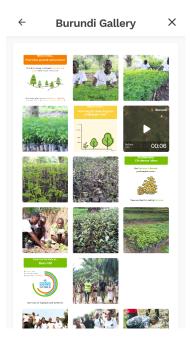
As a user, now concerned more than ever with my carbon emissions I want to make sure that the sponsors supporting my efforts are

bonafide. Treeapp has made it clear that they are looking for sponsors who have eco, or sustainable credentials and vet based on this. For me, time will tell. So far I have to admit I have been pleased with sponsor offerings. Some might be currently out of budget and some I may have already found alternatives for, but certainly, there are more than a few I am glad I came across and may not have found otherwise.



My app rating for Treeapp

5 out of 5 stars.



It's an easy way to make a difference in just one minute!

Please note that this is NOT a sponsored post, opinions and research is entirely my own - Sara Millis.