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## 1 Vegetable patch in the city



Allotments, balconies, windowsills and growing boxes in the housing company yard are all potential places to grow things for the green-fingered urbanite. The environmental organisation Dodo has taken city growing also to wastelands.

Anybody can grow things to eat in an urban environment: on allotments, balconies, windowsills, housing company yards and nearby land.

“The more people see where food comes from, the keener they are to grow it themselves.”

**Minna Ritoluoma** puts city growing in a nutshell. Ritoluoma is one of the urban growers of the environmental organisation Dodo. Their goal is to have a vegetable plot in the yard of every housing company by 2030.

### Guerilla plots on wastegrounds

Getting a municipal allotment may involve years of waiting, and this awakened Dodo members’ creativity. Why not make use of housing company yards and urban wastegrounds? Could berry bushes and fruit trees be planted in city parks instead of ornamental shrubs?

A couple of years ago, Dodo members took over the wasteground in Keski-Pasila railway yard and established a guerilla vegetable garden there. They built high containers from untreated boards and pallets and isolated the soil using strawberry matting. Growing in containers ensures that no hazardous substance is taken up from the soil, and city rabbits can’t reach the plants either. But what about air pollutants in city conditions?

“We have sent plant samples for analysis. They contained nothing that was harmful,” Minna Ritoluoma says.

Last summer, Dodo also utilised wasteground in Kalasatama in cooperation with the City of Helsinki. The plots were built from large cement sacks filled with growing compost from HSY Water. The growers each rented a sack, in which they grew the goodies they wanted: radishes, peas, broad beans or salad crops. The City organised water for the plots.

### Containers full of root veg

Anybody can establish a container plot in the communal yard of a housing company. At least five residents should ideally be involved. This way, the growing and watering does not become an inordinate burden on any one person.

“A wooden container can be placed even on asphalt. The base should be lined with matting that lets water through. If the soil depth is 50 centimetres, you can even grow fruit bushes in the box.

Potatoes also grow well in containers such as a bucket or double thickness sugar bag.

“When night frosts are over, the potatoes can be moved from the windowsill to the yard or balcony.

The balcony of windowledge is a good place to grow lettuce and delicate herbs. Slugs and insects can’t reach them there.”

*continues on page 2*

## 2 Recycling ideology fits the bill at energy company

Biowaste, mixed waste or energy fractions? I am probably not the only one to whom waste-sorting is a headache. The number of waste components to be sorted increases constantly, and every property has its own sorting procedures. The trouble taken is not wasted: through sorting, the materials can be recycled, and at the same time the growth of landfill mountains is reduced.

As well as in a diminishing waste disposal bill, sorting is evident in the environment. Paper recycling saves trees, metal can recycling saves ore resources. In addition to saving raw materials, recycling reduces environmental impacts resulting from activities such as mining and logging.

Recycling also saves energy. For example, manufacturing products from recycled aluminium saves up to 95% in energy at the production stage. So it really is worth sorting cans and tins! If the waste cannot be reused as material, it can be utilised as energy, reducing the need for other fuels and the size of landfill sites.

At Helsingin Energia, recycling is a part of everybody's work. An office worker gets away with sorting a few waste components. At power plants, more than a dozen types of waste are sorted: tyres, hazardous waste, empty oil containers... Correct sorting of waste is a part of the workers' job description. An excellent example of materials recycling is the dismantling of the Hanasaari A power plant a couple of years ago: more than 99 per cent of the materials were reused.

Alongside materials, Helsingin Energia also recycles energy. Katri Vala Heating and Cooling Plant recovers the thermal energy from purified effluent on its way to the sea and uses it to heat homes and domestic hot water. The heat waste from computer halls can also be recycled into the district heating network, saving both cooling and heating energy. And reducing the environmental impacts of energy generation.

Pirjo Jantunen  
Environmental Planner



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Ritoluoma takes an active part in Dodo's activities by guiding city dwellers into the secrets of growing at 'growing box working parties'. Dodo is also proactive in making use of wastelands.

"Container growing plots can be established on wastegrounds. They are also habitats for wild plants and weeds that can be used in cooking. Space can be cleared for wild raspberries, yarrow tastes good with new potatoes, and dandelion and nettle are well-known wild herbs.

### Communally and together

The beauty of urban growing is in the doing and of course the harvesting, but also in its community spirit.

"A communal plot with the neighbours requires cooperation and discussion. In the autumn, the people can hold communal harvest festivals," Minna Ritoluoma says. She believes that community spirit is reawakening. It is also important for children to see where food comes from.

Urban growing proves that one doesn't have to have a detached house and a garden, but urban spaces can be thought of as shared spaces.

Dodo members have negotiated with the City of Helsinki about the possibility of planting useful plants, such as berry bushes and fruit trees, in parks. Children could eat berries straight from the bushes, and anybody could pick apples for a pie.

The idea is brilliant, but there are challenges. For example, it is important to clear away the crop of fruit trees, or it attracts rodents. Dodo has thought of a creative solution to this, too, with its tree godparent project.

"Together with the City of Helsinki, we are looking for people who could undertake to look after a fruit tree in their area."

### Interested?

More about urban growing and growing box working parties: [www.kaupunkiviljely.fi](http://www.kaupunkiviljely.fi)  
Further information also: [www.martat.fi](http://www.martat.fi) and [www.hyotykasviyhdistys.fi](http://www.hyotykasviyhdistys.fi)

## 3 Stay cool with online shopping

THE WORLD IS SHRINKING,  
RETRO IS POP  
THE WINDS OF  
FAR-AWAY LANDS  
PREVAIL IN THE ELECTRICAL  
GOODS SECTOR.



**A lot of electrical goods, particularly entertainment electronics, are bought online from abroad. Some things are worth remembering when shopping online.**

All kinds of electrical goods are to be found on the internet: from small computer accessories and mobile phones to huge flat screen television sets.

Leena Lindström, head of the European Consumer Centre, stresses that it is important to make sure that you are dealing with a reliable supplier when shopping online.

“You can buy good products where they are the cheapest in the European Economic Area on the internet. Having found what you want, you need to check carefully who is selling the product.”

Leena Lindström doesn't recommend buying anything from private individuals, as such purchases are not subject to consumer protection. And if the only address for a company is a PO box, the alarm bells should be ringing. It also pays to run a Google check on other customers' experiences of the business in question.

Study the terms and conditions of supply: do they specify the procedure in the event of a complaint and the right to cancel? Or how the cancellation is effected in practice, and who pays the costs of returning the goods? Is the guarantee for the item valid in Finland, and where is the nearest authorised repair shop?

“Finland has comprehensive consumer protection. The purchaser has the right to return the goods free of charge. The situation is already different in Sweden, where the costs of returning the goods are paid by the customer.”

The Finnish importer does not automatically accept liability for repairs under guarantee, if the item was purchased abroad.

“If the vendor wants to have the goods returned or sent elsewhere for repair under the guarantee, the consumer may have to pay the costs incurred. The shipping costs of a flat screen TV may be high.”

### Pay by credit card

Leena Lindström advises that internet purchases should always be paid for by credit card through a secure connection (https), and not by methods such as bank transfer.

“The consumer can get his money back from the credit company or bank that supplied the credit card, if the purchase fails to arrive at all or the vendor demands a higher price than was agreed.”

In such cases, the purchaser must first request a refund from the vendor. If no refund is forthcoming, the purchaser must notify the credit company within four months of the payment date.

“If a company does not accept a credit card as a payment method, it may be a sign that it is not reliable.”

Moreover, you should only give your credit card details through a secure connection, at the time of a payment transaction.

### Check immediately for transit damage

One of the stumbling blocks with online purchases and electrical equipment is damage in transit.

“The package should be opened immediately and the condition of the product checked. Ideally, the representative of the carrier should still be present to witness the situation. The claim for possible transit damage should be made immediately.”

What if the product is found to be faulty later in use, and the purchaser suspects a manufacturing fault?

“A written complaint should be sent both to the vendor and the guarantor. If nothing happens, you should cancel the purchase in writing and demand a refund.

You have the best chance of a satisfactory resolution of the dispute if you stay calm, despite being annoyed. It pays to use courteous language in complaints,” Leena Lindström tips.

In individual disputes, the European Consumer Centre can try to bring about a resolution.

“We have managed to resolve about 60 per cent of the complaints we have taken up. But even we don't always succeed in finding the vendor. Companies do not need to reply to our communications, they are only obliged to answer letters from courts.”

If an electrical item is bought outside the EU, perhaps at an airport in Thailand or the United States, the consumer is on his own. USA has a very advanced consumer legislation, but the same cannot be said for the Far East.

“Another thing to establish when ordering goods from outside the EU area is the amount of customs duty and costs to be added,” Leena Lindström reminds us.



## Green cleaning

Helen's pick of environmentally friendly tips for spring cleaning

- Favour environmentally friendly, eco-labelled chemicals and phosphate-free detergents.
- Choose a detergent based on soap and soft soap.
- Use a mild general cleaning agent instead of special cleaners.
- Vinegar is an excellent general cleaning aid. You can use it to clean both windows and toilet bowls.
- Use detergent sparingly.
- Scrub and let the detergent do its job.
- Use microfibre cloths and mops, with which you don't need any detergent at all.
  - Don't let your home get dirty. When the dirt isn't allowed to become ingrained, strong chemicals are not necessary for cleaning.
  - Don't allow detergents to get into waterways. Wash rugs at wash places specially made for the purpose.
  - Give rooms a good airing rather than using artificial air fresheners.

Source: WWF



## Domestic appliances compared

If you are considering buying a new household appliance, get the guide to the appliance from Helsingin Energia Energy Advisory Centre or its website. There is a guide for each appliance group, containing comparison information for the models sold in Finland. The appliance guide contains e.g. the dimensions, electricity consumption and accessories, as well as their programs and features.

You can also visit the extensive household appliance exhibition at the Energy Advisory Centre. The Energy Advisers will give you impartial information and advice in the selection, positioning, care and use of domestic appliances.

The services and guides of the Energy Advisory Centre are free to all.

Home appliance guides from [www.helen.fi/energia/kodinkoneoppaat.html](http://www.helen.fi/energia/kodinkoneoppaat.html)

## Where should I take an old television set?

A TV set is classed as electrical and electronic waste (SER or SE waste), in common with all small and large consumer electrical equipment. They can be taken free of charge to an SER collection point, of which Finland has almost five hundred. In addition, SE waste is collected in some areas by collection vehicles.

Energy-saving light bulbs containing mercury can be taken to SER collection points or to hazardous waste points. Energy-saving light bulbs are hazardous waste and must not be put in with mixed waste.

Retailers are not under statutory obligation to accept SE equipment, but must direct the customer to the nearest official collection point. If the store accepts an old appliance from the consumer in conjunction with a sale, no separate charge is payable.

Helsinki Metropolitan Area Reuse Centre (Pääkaupunkiseudun Kierrätyskeskus) accepts SE waste in some of its units. The Reuse Centre also collects refrigeration equipment, washing machines, cookers, and IT equipment in any condition that is no more than five years old, as well as flat screen television sets in any condition, free of charge in the Helsinki area. Modern equipment is used for spare parts needed for repairs.

Nearest recycling points [www.kierratys.info](http://www.kierratys.info)  
[www.kierratyskeskus.fi](http://www.kierratyskeskus.fi)



## When you move house...

...remember to notify the start and termination of the electricity contract in good time. Two weeks' prior notice is sufficient.

In dwellings with a remote-readable meter, the power is automatically connected and disconnected through the remote connection in accordance with the term of the electricity contract.

If the notification is delayed and forgotten, the power may not be connected when you move in. In such an event, telephone the Helsingin Energia customer service, who will arrange for the power to be connected.

## ● AT YOUR SERVICE Service numbers and price info

**Helsingin Energia**  
Telephone 09 6171  
Sähkötalo, Kampinkuja 2,  
FI-00090 Helen  
[www.helen.fi](http://www.helen.fi)

**Customer service, 3rd floor**  
Mon-Fri 8.30-16  
Telephone service Mon-Fri 8-18  
Domestic customers 010 802 802  
Business customers 010 802 803  
Electricity meter readings 010 802 804

**Fault reports**  
Breakdowns in electricity supply  
08001 80808

Breakdowns in district heating supply 08001 60602  
Faults in outdoor lighting 08001 73173  
Telephone calls received by Helsinki Energy customer service are recorded.  
Call charges for numbers beginning with 010:  
• from landlines: 8.28 c/call + 5.95 c/min.  
• from mobile phones, all operators: 8.28 c/call + 17.04 c/min.  
The prices include VAT at 23%.  
Our free e-services are available on our website: [www.helen.fi](http://www.helen.fi)

**Advisory services**  
Energy Advisory Centre 09 617 2726

Advice on how to choose and use domestic appliances. You can also borrow energy, moisture, structural, surface temperature and light meters from us: [energiakeskus@helen.fi](mailto:energiakeskus@helen.fi)  
Advice on electricity use and energy saving 09 617 4010

**District heating**  
New connections to district heat 09 617 2961  
Advisory service on heat use 09 617 2969  
Billing and consumption enquiries 09 617 2856

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