

## Recycling and Sustainability Tips For Individuals and Households



Looking for ways to reduce the amount of waste your household produces? Or practical ways to increase your “green footprint”? This checklist is meant to provide some ideas that your household can use to increase their “green footprint”. In 2014, the United States generated over 38 million tons of food waste<sup>1</sup> (problematic as food waste emits methane gas, a green house gas 20x more potent than carbon dioxide!), and approximately 258 million tons of municipal solid waste<sup>2</sup>. Recycling, waste prevention and energy efficient strategies can reduce the amount of trash headed towards landfills, save energy, and you money! While recycling is important, “up-cycling” materials, maximizing the use of what you already own, and looking for products made of recycled materials is also critical (using recycled materials in products reduces energy in production!). It may not be feasible to incorporate all of these ideas but a few may be incorporated into your household’s routine!

### ENERGY AND EFFICIENCY

- Use energy efficient appliances/unplug when not in use
- Invest in rechargeable batteries (recycle old ones)
- Install flow regulators for faucets, low flow toilets, selective toilet flushing, turn off water when brushing
- Use solar panels as source of energy/light source
- Dry clothes on a line (outside or inside)



### KITCHEN/FOOD

- Use local and seasonal ingredients (e.g. honey, milk, eggs, meat) to minimize transportation and packaging
- Buy in bulk, and can or freeze extra food
- Grow your own herbs/produce (e.g. on roof top garden, window boxes etc..), repurpose food scraps like beet tops and old bread in other dishes or as garnish
- Compost vegetable food waste
- Keep older foods at the front of the fridge
- Use reusable coffee/tea filters (Up-cycle old coffee grounds in home made scrubs, masks, candles...)
- Re-use glass, metal, and plastic containers/bags
- Use reusable lunch containers or silicon lunch bags



### TEXTILE/CLOTHING

- Look for local textile recycling drop-offs
- Use old clothes as rags for cleaning, or old sheets to protect your car seats and line your trunk
- Stuff pillows and cushions with old materials
- Donate old sheets and towels to animal shelters
- Look for jeans/clothing made using minimal water, eco-friendly washes and recycled materials like plastic, old polyester and cotton

### EATING AND DRINKING OUT

- Carry reusable chopsticks and straws in your car or purse/bag, specify no straw in drink orders
- Bring your own travel mug, reusable water bottle (some do have filters!), or a container for leftovers
- Limit the amount of napkins and condiments you take, refuse cutlery for home deliveries



#### Sources

1. E.P.A . 2018. Food: Too Good to Waste Implementation Guide and Toolkit (<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-too-good-waste-implementation-guide-and-toolkit>)
2. E.P.A. 2018. Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: Facts and Figures. Date Accessed: February 14, 2018. (<https://www.epa.gov/smm/advancing-sustainable-materials-management-facts-and-figures>)

## CLEANING

- Run dishwashers that are full
- Look for package free solid soaps, shampoos etc...
- Look for biodegradable cleaning products
- Fill a dish wand with half dawn dish soap and half vinegar to scrub your tub, counters...
- Wash clothes when they are dirty as opposed to one time wear



## RECYCLING

- Request recyclable/reusable containers
- Recycle as much as you can (e.g. glass bottles, cardboard, paper, plastic) and re-use boxes
- Recycle electronics and appliances (some stores and recycling facilities will take them for a small fee or free, some offer a rebate for fridges and ovens!)

## OUTDOOR/YARD

- Plant trees strategically around your house to provide shade and insulation
- Plant drought tolerant native plant species
- Compost leaves and grass, use as mulch on your lawn or in your garden
- Use biodegradable cleaning materials and non-toxic pest control options
- Use garbage bags/cans that are compostable or made from recycled materials



## Recycling Contamination

According to the EPA, approximately 89 million tons of municipal solid waste was recycled or composted<sup>2</sup>. However, not all materials can be recycled! Certain facilities do not accept bags, straws, glass, or materials that have grease or food waste in it. Recycling contamination is when dirty or unaccepted materials are mixed in with accepted materials. When this happens, the entire recycling bin can be sent to the landfill, or be rejected at curbside pick up. Rejection of the materials occurs due to the commercial value of the materials being reduced or potential damage to recycling equipment. Recycling contamination can be prevented by following instructions, ensuring products are clean and free of grease and food waste, and enforcing material segregation guidelines. If you are unsure if a product is recyclable, contact your local provider before throwing it out or placing that item in the recycling bin.

If you have any further questions related to recycling or would like more information, please feel free to contact program manager Dr. Shikha Singh at the Jackson County Conservation District via email at [shikha.singh@macd.org](mailto:shikha.singh@macd.org) or by phone (517) 395 - 2089.



This checklist is printed on paper manufactured from 100% bagasse (recycled sugarcane waste fiber), a by-product of sugar cane!