

SUSTAINABILITY TODAY NEWSLETTER

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ABOUT US

The Texas Tech University Recycling Center is housed within the Student Housing Services. The center has been in operation for over 6 years and has continually grown year after year.

Today the Recycling Center collects all forms of recyclables from plastics, glass, foam, cardboard, paper, aluminum, tin, electronics, and anything in between! The money collected goes back into the students through Sustainability Scholarships!



SHOPPING!

This week's newsletter is focused on being sustainable during your shopping trips with tips from *The Green Book*. Also, we are excited about the annual RecycleMania Tournament that begins in just a few short weeks. We will need your help in competing with over 600 colleges and universities including several Big XII schools!

The Bigger Picture

The United States is the world's top consumer nation. Americans spend about four times more per person than any other country does, mostly by shopping. We shop, on average, about twenty-four minutes (HOW FREQUENTLY?), spending a total of about \$4 trillion per year—on everything from waffles to Wiffle balls.

Every time we hit the mall, we spend an average of \$113. We want lots of stuff and create huge demands for consumer products of all types. A new car is made every second, 2.3 million shoes are purchased every day, and 2.6 billion toys are bought every year.

The psychology of shopping is embedded in our brains: more, more, more. This mentality fills the closets and the ego but doesn't take into account the other side of the shopping equation—where does all that stuff go?

Each of us produces about 4.54 pounds of trash every day through our consumption and disposal habits, amounting to 1,657 pounds per person per year. As a nation, that adds up to about 500 billion pounds annually.

The disposal burden is enormous—so much so that if you look at North America from space, the highest point on the eastern seaboard is a landfill.

How does a pile get that high? Consider that every month, one hundred thousand CDs are tossed or that fifty million pounds of toothbrushes are scattered throughout the country's landfills every year. Soon, you get the picture. And this truly is a big picture.

We use tons of materials, water, and energy to make the things we buy—only to discard them later; ours is a disposable society.



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With 6.6 billion people on the planet (and growing), most of whom are buying and discarding, shopping poses a real hazard. Think of it this way: there is more man-made stuff than people on the planet. The average family around the world has at least 127 items in their home. In the United States, the number of objects in an average family home can amount to 10,000.

So how does all that stuff come to exist? It is manufactured. The manufacturing industry alone sucks one-third of the energy and 13 percent of the water supply in the United States, never mind all the additional waste (7.6 billion tons of it) that's produced before the products even reach our hands.

Later, we toss these products back in to the planet. More than 1.5 billion tons of household solid waste is produced every year around the world. That's equivalent to almost three times the total weight of every person alive! Disposal is such a big issue that the United States often ships its waste to other countries. More than half of the electronics we import end up being exported to third world countries as waste. The other half continues to pile up right here at home.

Keeping all of that in mind, we have created the "Simple Steps" to be just that, simple. Taking into account all the points of the Bigger Picture, they give you the biggest impact with the least amount of effort.

"Be mindful of the impact your actions leave behind, take responsibility for your actions, and have respect for the world around you"- Tyra Banks

THE SIMPLE STEPS

1. Try to buy products with minimal to no packaging. If just one out of ten products you bought had little or no packaging, it would eliminate more than fifty pounds of waste per household per year. This small reduction could save you at least \$30 annually, as \$1 of every \$11 that you spend at the supermarket pays for the packaging of products you buy. If every household did this, 5.5 billion fewer pounds of waste would enter landfills. This is enough garbage to cover all of New York City's Central Park to a depth of twenty-seven feet.

2. If you're asked, "paper or plastic?" at checkout, choose paper. While neither is an ideal choice, grocery baggers usually fill paper bags with more items than they do plastic bags, and paper bags can be easily reused. Moreover, paper bags have a better chance of being recycled. Of course, the best choice is sacking your groceries in reusable cloth or canvas bags.

3. Switch to bathroom tissue made from 100 percent recycled paper. If every household replaced just a single twelve-roll pack of regular bathroom tissue with a recycled variety, it would save almost five million trees and enough paper waste to fill seventeen thousand garbage trucks!

TIPS FOR USE AT HOME!

Bulk: Consider buying items in bulk. You will pay up to 50 percent less and significantly reduce the amount of energy needed to transport all that extra packaging waste to landfills and recycling facilities. If by buying in bulk every U.S.

household generated 10 percent less packaging waste, the volume of diesel fuel saved by garbage trucks annually would be enough to take a busload of schoolchildren on a field trip to the moon and back every day of the school year.

Canned Goods: Instead of purchasing several cans of the same product, look to see if a larger can is available. If you buy a 28-ounce can of stewed tomatoes instead of two 14.5-ounce cans, you will not only save up to 50 percent on the price, but you will reduce waste and conserve resources. If every month each U.S. household substituted a larger can for two smaller ones, the annual savings in steel could build an Eiffel Tower on each of the six other continents.

Cheese: Buy block cheese instead of presliced individually wrapped servings. The energy used to make the plastic wrappers for slices of American cheese amounts to the equivalent of more than 13.8 million gallons of gasoline per year — enough for the entire population of Milwaukee to carpool out west to visit the happy cows of California.

Coffee: When you buy ground or whole-bean coffee, look for varieties with organic, Fair Trade, Bird Friendly, or Rainforest Alliance certification seals. These labels represent coffee farms that practice sustainable agriculture to preserve or restore rain forest ecosystems. Just one household's switching to certified coffee for a year is enough to protect 9,200 square feet of rain forest. If everyone in Seattle switched to certified coffees, a rain forest area the size of that city could be saved every year.

Fruit: Try to limit purchases of canned fruit, and substitute fresh fruit whenever possible. The process involved with the canning of fruit is at least ten times more energy intensive than the picking of fresh fruit. If every U.S. household replaced just one pound of canned or jarred fruit with one pound of fresh fruit during each of the three summer months, the total energy saved could operate the kitchen appliances of over twenty-one thousand households for an entire year.

Meat: If you have the option, choose your meat at the butcher counter and purchase only as much as you know you'll use. You'll reduce food waste, save money, and conserve resources. The average person wastes over twenty-two pounds of edible store-bought meat each year. Given that it takes five pounds of grain and 2,500 gallons of water to make one pound of beef, that's more than one hundred pounds of wasted grain and 55,000 gallons of wasted water per person! If all households decreased their beef purchases by just one pound per year, 250 billion gallons of water would be saved. It would take five days for this amount of water to pour over Niagara Falls.

Milk: Buy a single gallon jug instead of purchasing multiple smaller containers. On a volume basis, it takes less energy to produce the bigger containers and generates less waste. If the residents of the average household purchase sixty-three gallons of milk per year, including flavored milk, the energy saved by buying plastic gallon milk jugs instead of paper cartons could run their refrigerator for thirty-six hours. Empty plastic milk jugs are also recycleable, so consider purchasing milk in plastic containers rather than the paper cartons.

Poultry: When you buy poultry, try to buy as much as you think you'll need. On average, each American throws away about twelve pounds of uneaten poultry per year. If over the course of a year each household purchased just one less pound of chicken, the total water saved by not having to package and produce it would be sixty-six billion gallons — more than all of the residents of California use in a week.

Paper Bags: Reuse your paper bags from the grocery store as trash liners. By reusing a paper grocery sack three times before recycling or retiring it as a trash can liner, the average U.S. household could reduce the production of virgin-forest-derived papery by fifty-five pounds per year. If just 5 percent of U.S. households adopted this habit, the effect in terms of trees saved per year would equal a mature forest the size of Manhattan. After thirteen years, the forest would cover all of New York City! We would also prefer that you recycle those paper bags after you have used them as trash can liners, so bring those along with your other recyclables to the Recycling Center!

Plastic Bags: Use fewer plastic bags. U.S. households dispose of nearly one hundred billion plastic bags annually, millions of which end up littering the environment and harming endangered marine animals. By reducing plastic bag consumption by just two bags per week, each person will throw away at least one hundred fewer bags per year. If tied together handle to handle, these plastic bags would make a rope long enough to wrap around the earth more than 126 times!

RecycleMania

In lieu of Fun and Games this newsletter, we wanted to pass along some information on our participation in the upcoming RecycleMania tournament. This information along with more information can be found at recyclemaniacs.org

RecycleMania Mission: Using fair and friendly competition, RecycleMania provides tools and opportunities that inspire, empower, and mobilize colleges and universities to benchmark and improve efforts to reduce or eliminate waste.

RecycleMania is a friendly competition and benchmarking tool for college and university recycling programs to promote waste reduction activities to their campus communities. Over an 8-week period each spring, colleges across the United States and Canada report the amount of recycling and trash collected each week and are in turn ranked in various categories based on who recycles the most on a per capita basis, as well as which schools have the best recycling rate as a percentage of total waste and which schools generate the least amount of combined trash and recycling. With each week's updated ranking, participating schools follow their performance against other colleges and use the results to rally their campus to reduce and recycle more.

National recognition is provided to the winning school in each category on the RecycleMania website and in a national press release. Winning schools receive an award made out of recyclable materials, and win the right to host that category's special traveling trophy for the coming year.

Overall Goals for RecycleMania

1. Motivate students and staff to increase recycling efforts and reduce waste generation.
2. Generate attention and support for campus recycling programs.
3. Encourage colleges to measure and benchmark recycling activity in their effort to improve their programs over time.
4. Have a fair and friendly competition.



A Thank You Goes A Long Way

We extend our thanks to everyone who recycles! No matter how much or how little you recycle, every little bit helps and your efforts are greatly appreciated!

In closing, we would like to share with you a letter that was posted to a Sustainability Message Board. The letter recognizes the need to express appreciation for others' recycling efforts:

With all the recent attacks on recycling, I am concerned that it is breaking down some of the public's confidence in participating in recycling. I am glad there are folks writing op-eds, letters to the editor etc...after these nasty attacks on front pages of NY Times and other papers (we've had a few here from unknown people who don't even live here!).

Anyway, I was travelling this weekend and flying on United. For each flight I was impressed to hear them announce that they are "Eco Skies" and recycle all paper, cans and plastic.

I was walking off the plane and I said to the flight crew "Thanks for Recycling" as I was de-planing. I was shocked when the flight attendant got excited and said "NO ONE has ever said that and thank you for appreciating this effort".

I realized that it's this little thing "Thanks for Recycling" that really can make a big difference. IF we keep thanking people for taking the time to do this, it somehow creates value and appreciation and finally/hopefully ENGAGEMENT and support for doing this.

As with many people, recycling is an extra duty when these folks have so many other things they are responsible to do. Flight attendants have a bunch of things they need to accomplish in these flights and adding recycling to the mix, might seem like a big pain and something that is just a waste of time to them.

I encourage all of you to take a minute to say "Thanks for recycling" whenever you can - it's not only appreciated BUT it is something we can all do to provide support for recycling and keep it being something that is making a difference and is supported.

Just a thought. It's the little things and gratitude is something that really sustains us...and motivates us to keep going.

Have a great day in the universe and THANKS for recycling!
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What goes around comes around, thanks for thinking zero waste!