

Waste not... want not!

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Since 2019, April has been designated as Food Waste Awareness Month. You may be more familiar with Earth Day- but food waste, environmental health, and your own finances are actually linked.

Food waste accounts for almost 25% of municipal waste. It is estimated that close to 40% of our food

supply gets thrown out, which equates to wasted land, water, labor, and energy that went into producing that discarded food. When food is disposed of in a landfill, it breaks down anaerobically (in the absence of oxygen) to create methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that is more than 25 times as potent as carbon dioxide (according to the USEPA). This means that landfill disposal of food is a driver of climate change.

There are substantial financial costs as well. Every year, the US throws away 80 billion pounds of food, or an average of 219 pounds per person. This means that an average American household disposes of over \$1800 worth of food- every year. What could your family do with an extra \$1800 every year?

So, what can we do to keep more cash in your pocket- and more food out of landfills?

- Store food appropriately. Learn how to properly store your herbs, lettuce, and other produce- there are lots of great hacks on the Internet!
- Understand expiration labels on food that's perfectly good to eat. **BEST IF USED BY** describes quality "where the product may not taste or perform as expected but is safe to consume" after that date. **USE BY** applies to "the few products that are highly perishable and/or have food safety concerns over time." If you are in doubt, compost it, or throw it out if you must.
- Take an inventory of your fridge before you head to the store. You'll avoid buying more things you don't need and can't use before they go bad.
- Plan your meals around what you've already got in your fridge and freezer to use up what you already have.
- Learn a repertoire of recipes to use up odds and ends in your fridge. Soups, salads, and stir fries are solid candidates.

- Learn food preservation techniques. Freezing, canning, pickling, dehydrating, and fermenting are all great ways to extend the shelf life of different foods.
- When you are freezing food to prolong its shelf life, make sure to label containers with the contents and date- and remember to eat it before it becomes an unrecognizable mass of freezer burn.

You'll reduce your food waste, help our environment, and save money, too!

Join us at our next meeting on April 6th! The GROW Ecological Commission meets in the Board Room at Village Hall at 6:30 on the first Thursday of the month.