

Repurpose, Reduce, Rejoice: A Guide to Landfill Diversion

Nikki Way, GROW Commissioner

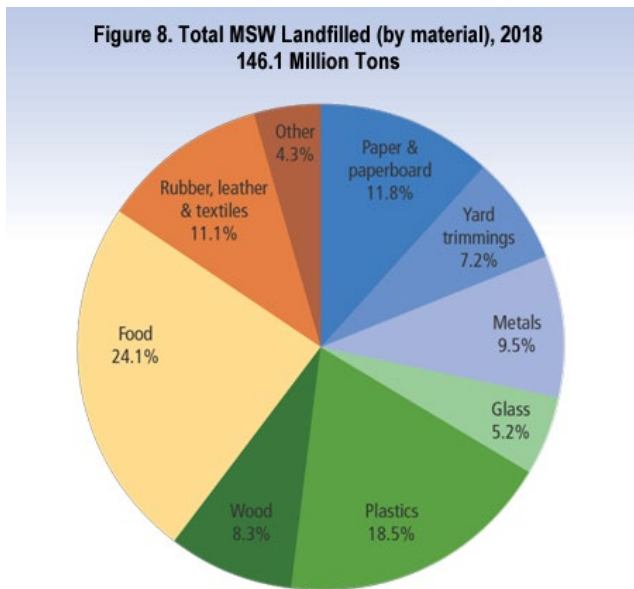
Our consumer-driven society has generated a staggering amount of waste, putting immense pressure on our planet's resources, and creating methane, which contributes to climate change. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, landfills are among our nation's largest sources of methane, a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon dioxide and a major contributor to global warming. Food waste, paper, plastics, and paper together account for over half of all landfill content.

However, by adopting a more mindful approach to consumption and waste management, we can significantly reduce our environmental impact while saving money.

A crucial step is to minimize buying new items. Opting for secondhand treasures not only saves money but also diverts waste from landfills. Additionally, repurposing existing items breathes new life into them, extending their lifespan and reducing the demand for new products.

Below are a few ideas on how you can repurpose, reduce consumption, and rejoice in saving money!

Image description: Piechart of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) type for 2018 from the Environmental Protection Agency website "Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: Facts and Figures Fact Sheet"



Reuse items to extend their life and reduce demand for new products:

- **Paper and Cardboard:**
 - **Compost material:** Shredded non-glossy paper can be added to compost piles to increase carbon content and improve soil structure.
 - **Wrapping paper:** Create decorative gift wraps from old newspapers or magazines.
 - **Fire starters:** Combine shredded paper with wax and dryer lint to create easy-to-light fire starters.
 - **Craft materials:** Cut and shape cardboard for creating models, kids' playhouses, puppets, Halloween costumes or decorations.
 - **Gift bags:** Save and reuse gift bags or decorate paper bags for gift wrapping.

- **Notepads:** Create homemade notepads by stapling together used paper.
- **Paper mache:** Paper can be pulped and used as a base for paper mache projects like decorative bowls.
- **Old clothes and bed linens:**
 - **Rags for cleaning:** Cut old clothes into rags for cleaning various surfaces.
 - **Sewing projects:** Repurpose old clothes into new garments, accessories, or pillows.
 - **Insulation:** Shredded fabric can be used as insulation in winter clothing or home projects.
 - **Pet bedding:** Create cozy bedding for pets from old blankets and sheets. Or donate them to an animal shelter.
- **Plastic containers:**
 - **Food storage:** Reuse plastic containers to store food in the refrigerator or pantry. Clean prescription bottles make great storage for food like nuts or salad dressing. Small plastic containers can also be used for organizing craft supplies, or pots for plants.
- **Food scraps:**
 - **Compost:** Many food scraps can be composted to create nutrient-rich soil.
 - **Make stock or broth:** Freeze your scraps until you have enough to create flavorful stock or broth by boiling vegetable scraps.
 - **Fertilizer:** Coffee grounds can be added to compost or soil as a natural fertilizer.

Local reuse and repurpose resources & events

- **Reuse-A-Palooza Village Wide Yard Sale:** The Village of Westchester is hosting the third annual yard sale event, on September 22 & 23! Host a sale or attend to browse for new-to-you treasures
- **CAG Wholesale:** This local Westchester business has patches to upcycle your clothes and other craft supplies needed to give new life to your clothes. Visit them at 10311 Roosevelt Rd, Westchester, IL 60154 or online at patchpartyclub.com
- **Christos Furs & Leathers:** Designer Christos provides the world with responsibly sourced sustainable fashion using biodegradable, natural fibers; cotton, linen, wool, cashmere, silk, fur, and leather. While combating the issues synthetic fibers create (polyester, acrylic, nylon, etc) through upcycling. Visit the store at 10411 W Cermak Rd or online at <https://www.christosfurs.com>
- **ReUse Depot:** This Maywood-based nonprofit offers interesting salvaged building materials and furniture. Donate to their collection, or find a treasure at their warehouse at 50 Madison St, Maywood, IL 60153.
- **Westchester Public Library and Park District:** These organizations often offer sewing and crafting classes, providing opportunities to learn new skills and repurpose materials.

- **Buy Nothing Groups:** Join a local Buy Nothing group on Facebook to find free items, give away unwanted possessions, and build community connections.

The Benefits of Repurposing

Let's work together to create a more sustainable future. By following these guidelines and utilizing local resources, you can significantly reduce your environmental impact, save money, and declutter your home.

You can start by taking a look at what's in your trash bin to figure out what you're throwing away regularly and figure out a plan to repurpose. Inspire others to join the movement and make a positive impact on our planet - email me with ideas on what you're doing to reduce and reuse your items!

Nikki Way is a GROW Ecological Commissioner, visual artist, and writer passionate about reducing waste.

Participate in Our Community-Wide Yard Sale!

Visit www.westchester-il.org/reuseapalooza to register your sale and see a map of all registered sales!

Every year, thousands of useful items end up in landfills, while the cost of new items continues to rise along with the environmental impacts of manufacturing...

On September 21 and 22, join your neighbors as hundreds of Westchester households host yard sales and giveaways. You can choose to participate on one or both days. No registration or ticket is needed if you're just shopping.

Reduce your trash and earn some cash by joining our yard sale and giveaway event!



REUSE-A-PALOOZA

YARDSALE BONANZA & REUSE FEST

Register & View the Map:

www.westchester-il.org/reuseapalooza

GROW Ecological Commission invites you to participate in a community-wide yard sale! Reduce your trash by keeping useful items out of landfills, and/or shop for deals on unique, pre-loved items that reduce the impacts of buying new. Register your sale to be added to the official map.

September 21-22, 2024

Recipe of the Month

Whether for health, religious, or environmental reasons, or simply just because, for those times you're abstaining from meat or simply want to try a new plant-based recipe, GROW (Green Residents of Westchester) Ecological Commission will be sharing a monthly featured plant-based recipe.

This month put your home-grown tomatoes to use, or buy local at The Farm, with this easy and versatile Roasted Tomato Sauce recipe. Serve it with your favorite pasta or veggie noodles, and snip fresh basil, oregano, or other herbs on top. It freezes well and lends itself to making it your own by adding other vegetables, herbs, etc. Have a plant-based recipe you'd like to share with the community? Send it to GROW@westchester-il.gov for consideration for future newsletters.

Roasted Tomato Sauce

hands-on time: 15 minutes | total time: 1 hour

makes 3 cups

3 pounds plum tomatoes (about 15)

3 cloves garlic, peeled

½ teaspoon crushed red pepper

¼ cup fresh basil leaves, chopped, or 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

½ teaspoon kosher salt

1 cup kalamata olives, pitted and coarsely chopped (optional)

Heat oven to 425°F. Cut each tomato in half length-wise. Arrange in a shallow baking dish, cut-side down, with the garlic and crushed red pepper. Bake about 40 minutes or until the garlic is soft and the tomato skins pucker and brown. Remove from oven. (Optional step: Peel off the tomato skins and discard.) Using the back of a fork, smash the garlic and break up the tomatoes in the baking pan. Blend in the basil, vinegar, and salt (and optional olives). Serve over pasta.

Credit: Real Simple, September 2003

