

Weekly Environmental Tips – C4C 2019/2020

October 26/27 – Buy clothing secondhand! There are many secondhand and consignment stores and websites that cover everything from infant clothing to outdoor gear. Wondering what to do with your old wardrobe items? Mend any damaged items; pass unworn items along to friends, the STM Free Store, donate them, bring them to a textile recycling center, or sell them to a consignment shop. Have any items that are too worn to pass on? Turn them into cleaning rags!

November 2/3 – Buy clothing and products made from natural materials – wood, fiber, metal, glass – rather than from plastics and synthetics/acrylics, etc. You might also choose to focus on sustainably made products (compost-able phone cases, sunglasses made from recycled ocean plastics, etc.)

November 9/10 – Buy local and buy quality; avoid fast fashion or poor-quality purchases. This will reduce the carbon spent on transporting/producing goods, as well as the need to frequently replace items.

November 16/17 – As the holiday shopping season approaches, consider reducing the number of gifts you plan to purchase. Coming to an agreement with family or friends on a limit to the number of gifts and/or dollars spent is a great way to reduce waste and take the focus away from consumerism.

November 23/24 – Buy secondhand or re-purposed gifts. Feeling crafty? Make your gifts from re-purposed materials. If you must buy new, avoid gag gifts and instead focus on quality gifts that will last.

November 30/December 1 – For gifts that have a lasting impact, consider giving the gift of a donation or an experience, particularly one that involves the gift of your time.

December 7/8 – Sending out holiday cards? Consider sending e-cards. If you still prefer print, search out companies and organizations that offset their carbon footprint by planting trees for each card order and/or commit to using 100% post-consumer waste for their cards.

December 14/15 - As you prepare for your holiday gatherings, consider reusable plates, cups, napkins and silverware. Don't want to invest in more place settings? Pick up extra dishes at a vintage or thrift store and keep them on hand for company. If you must use disposables, use compost-able cups, plates and utensils; then collect them after use and compost at a Ramsey County collection site.

December 21/22 – Recycle your gift wrap. This holiday season make a point to save all the bags, boxes, tissue and wrapping paper that you can for next year. Fun fact: ironing your tissue can make it look brand new. You could also get crafty and make your own cloth gift bags from re-purposed textiles!

December 28/29 – Expecting company for New Years? When serving your guests, remember to “underserve”. American portions are meant to feed the eye, but frequently result in waste. Give portion sizes that are adequate, and if your family or guests want more, serve seconds.

January 4/5 – Happy New Year! As you begin your New Year’s resolutions, consider revamping your self-care routine with the purchase of bar body soaps, bar facial soaps and bar shampoos. Choose products that list natural ingredients and come in paper or compost-able packaging. Some co-ops and zero waste stores even sell these products with no packaging whatsoever!

January 11/12 – Take a look at additional self-care products in your routine. Consider replacing your lotions with lotion bars, and your facial creams with jojoba oil or argon oil. Items such as lip balm and deodorant can now be purchased in metal or paper containers. If you are feeling adventurous, try out an apple cider vinegar rinse instead of conditioner; many have added essential oils to cut the scent, and come in glass containers.

January 18/19 – Ever wonder how many toothbrushes you go through in a year? It may be time to switch to a bamboo option. In addition to your new brushes, try out some silk dental floss; many come in refillable glass containers. You can even opt for toothpaste tablets and ditch the plastic tube altogether. To further reduce your plastic waste in the bathroom, consider ditching your plastic razor for an all-metal safety razor.

January 25/26 – To reduce your overall bathroom waste, contemplate switching to reusable personal products, cloth diapers for little ones, and handkerchiefs instead of Kleenex. Yes, it means a few more items to toss in the laundry basket, but cutting these items out will have a huge impact on the waste stream.

February 1 /2 – Go green in the kitchen! Replace plastic garbage bags with compost-able liners, plastic food bags with reusable containers (preferably glass or metal), and plastic wrap with bees wrap. If you need to use disposable food coverings, stick with foil or wax paper (make sure to check this as many brands use a plastic coating instead of wax).

February 8/9 – Ditch the paper napkins and paper towels. Invest in cloth napkins for everyday use, and keep an extra stack of dish clothes handy for cleaning spills, etc. Save old dish clothes, towels, etc. and repurpose as cleaning rags.

February 15/16 – Going shopping? Invest in reusable grocery bags, produce bags, bulk food bags, and any necessary containers to buy bulk items (olive oil, eggs, maple syrup, sugar, coffee). Many co-ops and Whole Foods have bulk aisles with a wide range of items. Avoid packaging whenever possible. If you buy packaged items, always choose paper/glass/metal over plastic.

February 22/23 – Finding it tough to avoid the packaging on certain food items? Start cooking these items from scratch! Many prepackaged items we purchase are very easy to make. Consider making your own pizza crusts, hummus, guacamole, quick breads, etc. Better for your health, better taste, and less waste!

February 29/March 1 – Dining out? Food waste is a significant contributor to CO2 emissions. Try to avoid ordering more than you can eat. Stick with appetizers or small plates or ask your server for a ½ portion. Still have leftovers? Bring your own reusable container to transport leftovers home.

March 7/8 – Spring is in the air! Or is it? As you begin to feel the cleaning itch, examine your household cleaners and consider making your own! Save money, reduce your exposure to harmful chemicals, and produce less waste. Find recipes on line for natural cleaners that can be used for everything from counter tops to toilet bowls.

March 14/15 – Switch to bar dish soap, bar or refillable hand soap, refillable dish/laundry detergent, etc. Co-op bulk aisles often have refill stations, but if you aren't able to get to them choose natural detergents/soaps that come in paper or compost-able packaging.

March 21/22 – As the snow melts and you prepare for your yards and gardens to wake up, make the commitment to go chemical-free; no more pesticides, herbicides or synthetic fertilizers. Sure, you'll have some dandelions and your grass may not be as thick, but the endangered honeybee population will love you for it! Worried about the neighbors? Buy a sign and let them know you aren't lazy, you're doing it all for a good cause. Who knows, maybe you'll enlighten someone else!

March 28/29 – As you over-seed your yard this spring, consider adding white clover seed to your grass mix. This combination was quite common before chemical treatments, as clover keeps your yard looking green during dry periods and produces nitrogen to help fertilize your soil. It also helps keep other weeds at bay and feeds our beloved bees!

April 4/5 – Help the dwindling bee population and put up a bee hotel! Hang it anywhere in your yard that is protected from strong winds and gets significant sun exposure, and watch these tiny creatures go to work!

April 11/12 – Happy Easter! This week we'd simply like to ask you to find a small patch in your yard and plant some wildflowers. They are beautiful sign of life and create necessary habitat for our pollinators.

April 18/19 – As warmer weather approaches, consider planting a veggie garden. It doesn't get much more local than that! Cut down on emissions from food transport and eat healthier at the same time. Don't have a plot to plant? Join a local CSA.

April 25/26 – As the variety of fresh produce in the store begins to expand, keep the emphasis on organic and local; this goes for meat consumption as well. While you're at it, try replacing one or two meat-based meals with a vegetarian meal per week.

May 2/3 – Have the weeds started sprouting in your garden? Think twice before pulling them all! Milkweed provides necessary food and habitat for our dwindling monarch population. Also, being “too neat” about weeding can mean eliminating necessary habitat for pollinators who winter over.

May 9/10 – Are you ever amazed by the amount of water you go through trying to keep your lawn green and flowers perky? This year invest in a rain barrel to collect water from your downspout, hook it to a hose, and water away! Save money, save water and keep your lawn and gardens healthy. Live in an apartment? Use your dishwater to water houseplants.

May 16/17 – Let your grass go brown this spring/summer. Water is a precious resource, particularly when it's dry. Grass will naturally go dormant until the rains return, and if you plant clover seed (earlier tip) your lawn will generally stay greener.

May 23/24 – As the weather gets warmer and you spend more time outdoors, look for sunscreens and bug sprays made from natural ingredients. Bonus points for metal, glass or paper packaging!

May 30/31 – As you head to any picnics or outdoor events this summer, consider carrying your own reusable items. Lunch bags, utensils, straws, napkins, plates, containers and coffee mugs all come in reusable options and are small enough you can store them in your car or bike bag. Be prepared!

June 6/7 – With the warmer weather under way, consider drying your laundry on a clothesline. They save energy and your laundry will smell fantastic! Don't have one? Many umbrella styles are now available online, and some can even be stored in your garage or shed when not in use. Don't have a yard to put a clothesline? Reduce your carbon footprint by only running your dryer when it's full (every 2-3 wash loads).

June 13/14 – Summer travel is under way. Look at ways to reduce your carbon footprint. How many vehicles do you use in your household? Could you get by with fewer? Do you need to drive solo, or could you carpool? Consider public transit options, biking, or walking, when possible.

June 20/21 -Do you ever get stuck at the drive-thru? Think about turning off your car while you wait. The amount of gas used to start your car is equivalent to approximately 30 seconds of idling.

June 27/28 – With the 4th of July holiday fast approaching, consider ditching the fireworks. Find other ways of celebrating to reduce your carbon footprint.

July 4/5 – Examine your water use. How often do you shower and for how long? Think about reducing the number of showers you take and/or reducing the amount of time spent.

July 11/12 – Examine your water use. Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth. Rather than rinsing dishes before placing them in the dishwasher, fill a small basin and place it in your sink to pre-soak dishes before washing. Only wash laundry items when necessary; you can get more than one wear out of most clothing items before they are in need of cleaning.

July 18/19 – Watch your thermostat. Air conditioning is a contributor of harmful emissions in our environment. If you must use the AC, keep it on the warmer side (around 75 degrees). If you can manage without, fans and lots of ice water can work wonders!

July 25/25 – Have an appliance or car on the fritz? Consider energy efficiency/gas mileage and purchase the best available option in your budget.

August 1 /2 – Examine your energy use. Are you still buying conventional light bulbs? Make a plan to switch to LED! They are a bit pricier but will help you save money in the long run.

August 8/9 – Examine your energy use. How often do you turn a light on when not needed? Or leave a light on in an empty room? Make a point to only turn on lights and appliances when they are needed and turn them off when you are done. Extra credit: unplug any lights or appliances that don't get regular use.

August 15/16 – Have you ever examined what goes into your garbage or recycling? What are the items you dispose of most? Do a waste audit in your household and track your waste for the next week. Where can you make changes to reduce your impact?

August 22/23 – Examine your trash and recycling. How much of your recycling bin is filled with paper bills? Most companies and organizations now have paperless billing/notification options. Time to make the switch.