

Cornell Cooperative Extension Columbia and Greene Counties

Adopting a Zero Waste Lifestyle Webinar outline

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Welcome & Learning objectives

- Define what zero-waste means
- Identify how zero-waste can be achieved (general & specific sectors)
- Review why it matters (for each person/family/communities/planet)
- Share where to go for additional information
- Parting thoughts, call to action

What is zero-waste?

“The conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse and recovery of products, packaging and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water or air that threaten the environment or human health.” – Zero Waste International Alliance

What are the Seven R's of Zero Waste?

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rehome, Replant & Rot -- (www.skipthebag.com)

Getting Started

- The average person generates 4.4 pounds of garbage daily; of that amount, only 1.5 pounds is recycled or composted
- Calculate your carbon footprint at www.earthlab.com/carbon/ or at www.footprint.calculator.org
- Embrace the free movement – Freecycle, Craigslist, swaps, exchanges and repair cafes
- 100% zero-waste might not be totally realistic but we can all aim for zero-ish

General tips

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- Think minimalism or voluntary simplicity
- Ditch disposables – water bottles, single use items
- Adopt a “do with less” attitude – source reduction or pre-cycling
- Declutter & save time, money, energy & natural resources
- Recycle to the fullest extent possible – check your county public works or solid waste management webpage
- Banish junk email – sign up for National Do Not Mail list at <https://dmachoice.thedma.org>
- Borrow, barter or rent something rather than buy it outright
- Go paperless – digital newspapers, magazines, books, billing statements

Transportation

- Increase fuel economy – purchase a car with higher mpg, no jackrabbit starts, no idling, drive the speed limit, use cruise control
- Upgrade to a hybrid or electric vehicle – check out state rebates & federal tax credits – or go biodiesel
- Follow suggested maintenance – tune ups, tire rotation, etc.
- Don't use the trunk as a storage locker
- Consolidate errands – don't make multiple trips
- Walk, bike, car pool or use public transportation when possible
- Get rid of a vehicle especially if you live in a walkable community or have public transit

Home Environment

- Get an energy audit – visit <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov>
- Beware of vampire energy losses
- Install a Smart thermostat; dial it down in winter and up in summer
- Reduce drafts (caulk & weather-strip); add insulation; replace broken windows
- Buy renewable energy from your supplier – visit NYSERDA's or your utility's website
- Buy Energy STAR rated appliances
- Switch to LED bulbs
- Use green building materials and paints
- Consider installing air-source or ground-source heat pumps; solar or wind
- Compost yard and garden waste; plant native shrubs, trees, flowers & grasses
- Go off the grid

Grocery Shopping/food preparation & storage

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- Shop with a list, buy in bulk when feasible
- Opt for less or no packaging
- Bring reusable produce bags to store/farmer's markets
- Eat less red meat (adopt meatless Mondays)
- Grow your own herbs & vegetables
- Shop with your pantry & freezer in mind
- Love leftovers – 40% of all food in US goes to waste
- Use recycled content/compostable paper products if you must
- Use metal, wooden or bamboo cooking utensils
- Ditch plastic containers for glass ones, use biodegradable or metal straws
- Use silicone cupcake liners/muffin tins; bar soap rather than plastic pump containers
- Use non-toxic cleaning products (white vinegar, baking soda, hydrogen peroxide)
- Green your décor – buy used, use natural products/items; repurpose
- Buy local – roadside markets, farmer's markets, CSA's, co-ops

Clothing

- Repair garments when they need mending
- Beware of “fast fashion” costs – quality vs. quantity
- Shop second hand – consignment, thrift stores, tag sales, online
- Buy cold water wash clothing & items that don't need dry cleaning
- Patronize companies that accept their products for recycling into new items (Nike, Levi's)
- Patronize companies that use recycled materials to create outerwear (L.L. Bean)

Holidays & Celebrations

- Find alternatives to paper gift wrapping
- Give earth friendly gifts
- Send digital greetings
- Focus on traditions & experiences not possessions
- Use the good china not disposables
- Find companies that recycle holiday lights
- Buy a live tree or go artificial if warranted

At the office

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- Bring your lunch to work
- Shut down your computer at night or use sleep mode
- Consider online options for trainings
- Telecommute; green your business travel
- Think before you print
- Recycle office paper, cardboard packaging, plastic & print cartridges
- Hold zero-waste meetings or events

Miscellaneous

- Give to green causes
- Support green thinking companies & organizations
- Get involved with local groups -- zero waste communities
- Keep current on proposed legislation & other environmental news
- Consider carbon off-setting
- Pledge to make every day Earth Day

Moving toward a circular economy

- This is when products are designed for reuse and are made with renewable energy. It's an alternative to the "make, and dispose" mentality of a linear economy. A circular economy is based on three principles:
 - designing out waste & pollution
 - keeping products & materials in use
 - regenerating natural systems

Resources

- www.dec.gov
- www.epa.gov
- www.Earth911.com
- www.Freecycle.com
- <https://www.facebook.com/marketplace>
- <https://www.nature.org/en-us/>
- <https://zerowasteconnection.org>
- <https://ecocycle.org/zero-waste-global/299-organizations>

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Some books to get you started

- 101 Ways to Zero Waste – Kathryn Kellogg
- The Conscious Closet – Elizabeth L. Cline
- The Everything Green Living Book – Diane Gow McDilda
- Go Green, Live Rich – David Bach
- Green Metropolis – David Owen
- The Story of Stuff – Amy Leonard
- Waste Free Kitchen Handbook – Dana Gunders
- The Zero Waste Lifestyle – Amy Korst

Some parting thoughts

- *“If it can’t be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurbished, refinished, resold, recycled or composted, then it should be restricted, redesigned or removed from production.” – Pete Seeger*
- *“Only when the last tree has been cut down, the last fish has been caught, and the last stream poisoned, will we realize that we cannot eat money.” -- Cree Indian Prophecy*
- *“Buy, buy, buy says the sign in the shop window; why, why, why says the junk in the yard.” – Paul McCartney*

While this program has been offered free of charge, please consider financially supporting the work of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties, by visiting www.ccecolumbiagreene.org/donate. Thank you!

For more information, contact:

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