



Reducing Waste At Home

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Daily people throw waste in the trash, from banana peels to soda cans, from cardboard boxes to milk jugs; these things are disposed of in our trash cans. Once thrown away these items take the long journey to their final resting place in landfills across the nation, where they are incinerated to never be seen again or they await the fate of decomposing for months or years. In 2014, Florida's municipal solid waste collection grew to 32.4 million tons, an increase of 1.2 million tons from the previous year.

However, this does not have to be the case, there are many things which can be done to lengthen or give new life of this so called "trash." For example banana peels can be giving a second life by being used as compost and all cans, boxes and jugs can be recycled to live another day.

While we are all familiar with the terms reduce, reuse and recycle, learning how to reduce waste at home will help to save natural resources.

Reduce, essentially means to make smaller or less in amount, degree or size. To reduce within the home one should buy and use long-lasting products—everything from clothes to power tools. The use of paper can be reduced by signing up for online statements or newsletters, printing double-sided and printing on the backside of old paper.

Energy-efficient light bulbs and rechargeable batteries will conserve energy and save money. Purchasing recycled products or recyclable products whenever possible cuts down on the waste of disposable products, along with encouraging manufacturers to make more recyclable products.

Eating all the food in your home before buying more helps reduce food waste and when shopping buying in bulk and/or in refillable containers minimizes packaging waste.

Reuse, the action of using again or more than once, can be accomplished in the home by buying items that can be reused, such as a reusable sports bottle, which cuts back on the waste of disposable plastic bottles or utilizing cloth/canvas bags when grocery shopping versus plastic bags. Sharing clothes, books and other reusable items with family and friends allows for a longer life of these objects along with saving on the cost and waste of these items.

Rather than throwing away unwanted or outdated clothes, electronics and other items, donate them. Keep in mind that one man's trash can be another man's treasure.

When cleaning in the home reuse certain cleaning utensils, such as mops, rags, and sponges, this will not only save the wallet but it also keeps the accumulation of these items in landfills down.

Reuse in the home can also be looked at in a creative way. Explore different websites, such as Pinterest and Etsy, to learn how to turn what might seem like "trash" into a fun craft for the family.

Recycle, to convert into reusable material, to return to a previous stage, or use again. Recycling within the home can easily be started by simply finding out if the community has a recycling program and learn what can be recycled—hint: this community has a recycling program. Recycling can be made easy by putting a recycling bin near the kitchen to easily separate recyclables from garbage.

Composting is another way to recycle. It is quite surprising how many different items can be composted versus thrown away. In fact more than 95 percent of food waste that could be composted is sent to landfills and incinerated. Instead try collecting all food waste and using it as compost fertilizer.

Taking these small steps of reducing, reusing and recycling within the home, families can help conserve and protect our planet for future generations.

