



Rethink Waste: Recycle

In today's disposable economy, it often seems easier to throw away old products and just buy brand new ones. Because everything we need can be produced so quickly and cheaply, we tend to ignore the repercussions of our waste stream.

Recycling doesn't take a lot of extra time or effort. What it takes to recycle is a change in mindset toward the value of our natural resources, and easy access to information on how to conserve these resources. Here are a few tips on how to "rethink" the notion of recycling.

Rethink: Recycle Metal and Glass

Facts

In the U.S. we use 100 million tin and steel cans every day and throw out enough iron and steel to supply all the nation's automakers on a continuous basis.

Recycling aluminum saves 95 percent of the energy needed to produce new aluminum from raw materials and the energy saved from recycling one ton of aluminum is equal to the amount of electricity the average home uses over 10 years. That means you can make 20 cans out of recycled material with the same amount of energy it takes to make one can.

Recycling metal saves enough energy to run a computer for 3 hours or a TV for 2 hours. A glass bottle takes around 1 million years to break down at the landfill, but it is easily recycled in most states (EPA 2013). Recycled glass can be transformed into new glass containers using 30 percent less energy than using virgin materials.

Strategies

-  Education is key. Communities may have recycling in place, but people need to know what they can recycle, where to recycle, and why it's important. Contact your local recycling center or waste management department for more information about recycling in your community.
-  States with bottle deposit laws have 35-40 percent less litter by volume. Become active and promote bottle deposit laws.
-  Local businesses may be more likely to use metal in their production processes if they know more about it. Be a proactive citizen and encourage business owners to establish recycling bins. They may be able to sell the material to end-users or reduce their waste collection costs.

Rethink: Recycle Plastics

Facts

If every American household recycled just one out of every ten High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) bottles they used, 200 million pounds of HDPE would not go to landfills each year. Recycling plastic saves twice as much energy as burning it in an incinerator.

Check your local recycling laws to see what type of plastics can be recycled. It doesn't help to put the wrong type in your recycling bin since it costs the recycling program time and energy to remove non-recyclable items.

Strategies

-  Become an active green consumer. Talk with your local recycling companies or local government to learn what they can and cannot recycle. It is often about the quantity of material they collect. For example, if not enough people recycle polypropylene (#5) plastics used for butter and yogurt, then there isn't a market for resale.
-  Promote programs that recycle plastics. Check online at www.earth911.com to see where you can recycle. There are also local drop-offs as well as some mail-in programs, like Gimme 5 (www.preserveproducts.com or 1-888-354-7296).
-  Organize a community recycling day for materials that can't be recycled or are hard to recycle, such as expanded polystyrene (Styrofoam), tires, and electronics. Hold it when there is a community event, such as a public concert, race, parade, or festival.
-  Participate in AmericaRecyclesDay which is usually in November.

Rethink: Recycle Electronics

Facts

The U.S. generates 3.4 million tons of e-waste each year. 17 percent of TVs, 40 percent of computers and 11 percent of mobile devices are recycled. The rest are trashed, potentially leaking harmful chemicals like lead, mercury or hexavalent chromium into the environment.

This is a growing problem as more households update to the latest consumer electronics. According to a U.S. Census report, in 2013 83.8 percent of U.S. households reported owning a computer. U.S. households continue to average more than two televisions per household. Consumer electronics contain valuable metals that can be recycled.

Strategies

-  Recycle or donate your old cell phone. Most stores that sell cell phones will take them back, yet less than 20 percent of mobile devices are recycled. Also, numerous charities take cell phones. Recycling 1 million cell phones saves enough energy to power over 185 million households with electricity for one year.
-  When you upgrade your television or computer, donate the old ones; If they are broken or very old, recycle. Find a recycling location near you at www.earth911.com.
-  When buying new electronics, think green. The Consumer Electronics Association provides information on how to “green” your electronics purchases. Please visit www.grenergadgets.org or contact: Consumer Electronics Association; 1919 South Eads Street; Arlington, VA 22202.
-  Buy only what you need.

Rethink: Recycle Paper

Facts

-  Most of Georgia’s 21 paper mills use recycled content; nine use 100 percent recycled materials.
-  11 percent of the total household garbage Georgians dispose of is cardboard.
-  28 percent of Georgia’s household waste sent to landfills could have been recycled. That’s nearly 2 million tons.

Strategies

-  When you have to print, print double-sided and recycle any paper waste you have.
-  Use reusable dish ware and flatware.
-  Switch from paper towels and napkins to reusable cloth ones.
-  Breakdown cardboard boxes for recycling.
-  Remember, you can recycle junk mail.

Georgia Recycling Facts:

-  Georgia has the second largest market for recycled material of any state.
-  Dalton is the carpet capitol of the world; and much of the carpet is made from recycled materials.
-  Recycling is good for Georgia’s economy. Georgia mills using recycled content employ 7,000 people.



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