



# SUSTAINABILITY



## The beginner's guide to composting

The term “compost” refers to any organic material added to soil in order to aid plant growth. A substantial amount of the waste that a typical household produces could be used for composting – particularly yard waste and table scraps.

### Why should I compost?

- Composting prevents the waste of materials that would otherwise take up space in landfills and release greenhouse gases as they decay.
- The nutrients and microorganisms in composted material can be extremely beneficial to plant growth, helping you keep your garden healthy.
- Compost helps keep the soil itself rich, healthy and more resistant to infectious agents.

### What should I compost?

Compost these...:



**Food scraps** (fruit and vegetable peels, eggshells, tea bags, coffee grounds)



**Paper products**  
(cardboard, newspaper)



**Yard waste**  
(grass clippings, wood chips, leaves)



**Fireplace ash**

...but not these:



**Animal by-products**  
(meat, bones, feces)



**Dairy products**  
(butter, milk, sour cream)



**Fats**  
(oils, grease, lard)



**Charcoal ash**

### Where should I compost?

- **Outdoors:** Place your compost bin or compost pile in a dry, shady area that's close to a water source.
- **Indoors:** Buy a compost bin (they should be available at your local garden supply or hardware store) or make your own.

### How do I compost?

- Composting requires three essential elements:



**Browns** (such as dead leaves or paper items)

**Greens** (such as leftover produce or grass trimmings)

**Water**

- Use equal amounts of browns and greens, and be sure to alternate layers.
- Keep your compost damp, not wet.
- Remember: composted items must be fully decomposed before you use your compost.
- Your compost will be ready to use when the matter at the bottom has grown dark and rich in color.

This health and wellness program should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. The information provided through this health and wellness program is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for your doctor's care. Your health information is kept confidential in accordance with the law and may be used to provide health and wellness recommendations as applicable. The health and wellness program is not an insurance program and may be discontinued at any time. © 2022 Optum, Inc. All rights reserved. 359328



# Greener living: One month at a time

We often hear about sustainable living, but may not always do as much as we could to practice it. With this in mind, we're challenging you to take one action each month to help our planet. By the end of the year, we hope you'll have accumulated 12 new earth-friendly habits. Choose one or try to practice them all — it's up to you.

## JANUARY

### Reduce plastic use.

- ☐ Purchase a reusable grocery bag.
- ☐ Use a reusable mesh produce bag.
- ☐ Buy a reusable water bottle.
- ☐ Purchase stainless steel straws.
- ☐ Don't use plastic utensils or stirrers.

## FEBRUARY

### Conserve water.

- ☐ Turn off the tap when you are brushing your teeth or shaving.
- ☐ Take showers instead of baths, keeping them under five minutes.
- ☐ Water the yard first thing in the morning.
- ☐ Use a bucket and sponge when washing your car, instead of a hose.

## MARCH

### Reduce food waste.

- ☐ Plan your meals each week.
- ☐ Freeze leftover fruits and vegetables — they're great for smoothies!
- ☐ Keep leftovers or foods that are getting older at the front of your fridge so you use them first.



## APRIL

### Get involved in the community.

- ☐ Participate in local cleanups.
- ☐ Research and use any recycling programs your community offers.
- ☐ Organize a recycling drive.
- ☐ Talk to family and friends about sustainable living.

## MAY

### Reduce paper product use.

- ☐ Opt out of junk mail.
- ☐ Only print materials if absolutely necessary.
- ☐ Take a reusable cup to the coffee shop.
- ☐ Use cloth napkins.

## JUNE

### Be energy-efficient.

- ☐ Seal air leaks around your home.
- ☐ Make sure that your home is well-insulated.
- ☐ Use energy-efficient light bulbs.
- ☐ Turn off lights when you leave a room.

*continued >>*

## JULY

### Think second-hand.

- \_\_\_ Purchase clothes at a consignment shop.
- \_\_\_ Save money and help the environment by shopping for home improvement items at a reuse center or salvage store.
- \_\_\_ Donate used items or have a yard sale

## AUGUST

### Purchase recycled content.

- \_\_\_ Look for terms such as “recycled-content product” or “post-consumer content.” Common items often made with recycled materials include aluminum cans, car bumpers, carpeting, cereal boxes, comic books, egg cartons, glass containers, laundry detergent bottles, motor oil, nails, newspapers, paper towels, steel products and trash bags.

## SEPTEMBER

### Be conscious about lawn and garden care.

- \_\_\_ Consider composting.
- \_\_\_ Wait to cut grass until it is at least 3 in. tall.
- \_\_\_ Leave grass clippings on the lawn.
- \_\_\_ Share healthy plants from your home with others.
- \_\_\_ To deal with weeds and pests, try non-chemical solutions.



## OCTOBER

### Practice sustainable eating.

- \_\_\_ Eat less red meat and processed meat.
- \_\_\_ Grow your own food.
- \_\_\_ Shop for food locally and eat seasonally.
- \_\_\_ Reduce food waste.

## NOVEMBER

### Recycle.\*

- \_\_\_ Try to remember to recycle items such as cardboard, food boxes, food cans, mail, paper, batteries and glass.

## DECEMBER

### Think greener for the holidays.

- \_\_\_ A lot of gift wrap can't be recycled, so find recyclable options or reuse the paper.
- \_\_\_ Share goodies in reusable containers.
- \_\_\_ Consider sending holiday e-cards instead of paper cards.
- \_\_\_ Buy gifts with minimal packaging.
- \_\_\_ Save and reuse holiday decorations.

*\*Be sure to check out all your local recycling options.*

# Eco Bingo



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Shop at a local farmers' market	Drink out of a reusable water bottle	Go paper free (emails, e-bills, e-receipts)	Try plant-based meals for a day	Walk or ride your bike for an errand instead of driving
Check your thermostat, adjusting the temperatures when you are away	Use old t-shirts or towels as rags	Take shorter showers	Use green products for cleaning	Fully rinse out cartons, cans and glass before recycling
Check your carbon footprint: <a href="https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/">https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/</a>	Look for programs that recycle batteries or other electronics	<b>FREE</b>	Turn off the water when shaving or brushing your teeth	Clean up at a local park or beach
Plant fresh herbs	Purchase products made from recycled materials*	Read a newspaper or magazine online instead of purchasing a print copy	Check your tire pressure for proper inflation	Create a compost pile**
Turn off electronics when you're not using them	Use glass storage containers instead of plastic	Bring reusable bags to the grocery store instead of using paper or plastic bags	Use cloth napkins instead of paper ones	Donate old clothes instead of throwing them away

\*Common products often made with recycled content include aluminum cans, car bumpers, carpeting, cereal boxes, comic books, egg cartons, glass containers, laundry detergent bottles, motor oil, nails, newspapers, paper towels, steel products and trash bags

\*\*Things to compost: fruits and vegetables, eggshells, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, nut shells, shredded newspaper, cardboard, paper, yard trimmings, grass clippings, houseplants, hay and straw, leaves, sawdust, wood chips, cotton and wool rags, hair and fur, fireplace ashes