



Go Green Northbrook

is a non-affiliated, grassroots organization composed of residents of Northbrook, IL. Our mission is to bring about initiatives and education in our community that promote environmental consciousness, outdoor enthusiasm, and a healthy, sustainable approach to living. We are a group for anyone willing to make an effort — small or large — towards encouraging and leading an environmentally thoughtful life.

How to Host a Zero-Waste Event

When you entertain a crowd you use a mix of disposable and recyclable goods, which invariably all end up in the trash. Why not try to minimize the items destined for the trash and attempt to go zero-waste? Here's how:

Plan for a waste station with three bins.

- **Landfill** – dirty plastic bags/film, dirty foil and Styrofoam are often unavoidable
- **Recycle** – good for aluminum cans and glass bottles, especially
- **Compost** – you may want to have a couple receptacles for this so that things like cups can have the liquid dumped and cup then nested with other empty cups and composted

Call a commercial composter. All food waste, including animal fat (meat, dairy) can go in the compost bin with a commercial composter. On Chicago's North Shore, call Collective Resource (www.collectiveresource.us), a company dedicated to "reducing landfill through commercial composting" in offices, restaurants, schools and at events. For a fee, they will drop off your containers and pick them up after your event. Containers are 5-gallon buckets or 32-gallon totes, and are labeled as being bagged for compost. At time of this writing, Collective Resource was also available (for a fee) to staff your event. However, with a few signs, this may not be necessary (see below). Call Collective Resource for a quote. Also, visit www.findacomposter.com for assistance with your event.

Consciously source your place settings, especially utensils and cups. Whole Foods and Party City carry compostable lines. It's true that they're slightly more expensive than other, sturdy items. If you're having a large crowd, the internet offers volume discounts. Here's a helpful hint: April is an excellent month to be looking for values in green-ware because of Earth Day. Online, try LetsGoGreen.biz and AbesMarket.com, both of which have offered free shipping with minimum purchase. A few plugs:

- EcoProducts 6" Plantware Cutlery stood up to cutting skirt steak and cutting corn off the cob. (LetsGoGreen.biz)
- GreenWare 18 oz. Cold Cups are sturdy and not skimpy. Their designs make them stand out from other, non-compostable cups. (AbesMarket.com)
- Wasara makes beautiful, compostable serving pieces. (BranchHome.com)

And of course, consider using your home's washable dishes as much as possible.

Deal with your drinks. Buy and serve in bulk where you can.

- Water/lemonade: buy a thermal 2-gallon or 5-gallon water cooler with spout so guests can refill their cups.
- Soft drinks: buy in bulk such as 2 liter bottles, so that you run out of one container before starting another. You can also easily return any unopened bottles to the store.
- Beer/wine: these are some of the most recycle-friendly drinks already in that they come in glass and aluminum.

Make signs to go with your waste stations. Ideas may include:

- Recycle: glass, aluminum cans, cardboard, paper, plastic 1–5 and 7
- Compost: all food, napkins, plates, special cups and utensils
- Landfill: anything that cannot be composted or recycled

Party time! On the day of the event, post your signs, take a quick minute as the gathering gets started to educate your guests, and get ready to feel great about what you're doing for the earth. Keep totes and buckets outside or in the garage until your composter picks them up.

Smile! You just kept the earth healthier and exposed your guests to doing good, too.

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