

Make a Green Resolution for the New Year!

As we begin a new year, resolutions are sure to be popular for many areas of our lives. We would like to encourage our readers to focus on the environment for the upcoming year, during your working hours and in your personal life! There are many ways each of us can make a measurable difference to the environment and often these changes do not involve a great deal of effort. Even the smallest change, like bringing your own cloth bags to the grocery store or consolidating lab orders, can help us decrease our environmental footprint.

To provide some ideas for resolutions for 2021, we have recapped some of actions documented by our articles from 2020! Even in a year as challenging and unique as 2020, many NIH staff found new and creative ways to benefit the environment. Here are a few such actions to help drive your creativity:

- [Improve your freezer management with the NIH Freezer Challenge!](#) In 2020, the NIH Freezer Challenge produced some very encouraging results for energy conservation and freezer reliability. The Challenge included initiatives like discarding old samples and retiring old freezers. The 2020 Freezer Challenge received recognition at the international level for its strong results! If improved freezer management sounds appealing to you, [sign up for the 2021 NIH Freezer Challenge](#) happening right now!
- [Volunteer to monitor the wildlife population with the Bird Box Program!](#) There are over 150 bird boxes on the Bethesda and Poolesville campuses to support native bird species like bluebirds. A small group of volunteers regularly check these boxes to measure population growth, make repairs and remove invasive species.
- [Improve your mental and physical health with biophilia!](#) Humans have a natural connection to nature that can improve various aspects of our health, such as reduced stress and lowered blood pressure. Research has investigated [ways to incorporate nature into buildings](#), but there are also ways for each of us to do this on an individual level. Incorporate aspects of nature into your home or office to reap these benefits!
- [Join \(or start!\) a community garden!](#) The RML campus has created a community garden that allows for staff to reserve their own plot to use as they like. This gives people that may not have the space to garden at home an opportunity to put their green thumbs to work.
- [Clean up your lawn equipment!](#) The small engines in lawn equipment can negatively affect the environment and human health through production of particulate matter, volatile organic compounds and ground-level ozone. Consider altering how and when you use this equipment or consider purchasing cleaner alternatives to help yourself and the environment stay healthy!
- [Stay safe with green products!](#) There are many green alternatives to the items we need to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. These are products like biodegradable gloves and cloth facemasks. These green options can keep you safe and reduce waste generation!
- [Eliminate products that use ozone-depleting substances!](#) Many old products like refrigerators and air conditioning units use coolants that can deplete ozone if released from containment. Proper management and disposal of these appliances is crucial to maintain progress towards reducing the ozone hole.

- [Have you considered an alternative fuel vehicle?](#) There are many benefits to these vehicles depending on their fuel type. For example, electric vehicles offer decreased emissions and cheaper fuel, while Flex Fuel vehicles offer less reliance on fossil fuels with similar performance to gasoline.
- [Dispose of waste correctly with the NIH Drain Disposal Guide!](#) Waste at the NIH should not be disposed to the sanitary sewer unless explicitly approved. All staff should become familiar with the Drain Disposal Guide to ensure they are disposing of waste properly.
- [Save money and the planet with a pipette tip washer!](#) The Automation Team at NCATS has incorporated a pipette tip washer into some of their processes to greatly decrease their plastic waste generation and save \$240,000 over the past 3 years. They have observed no contamination in their experiments from washed pipette tips.