

Act Local!

To accompany our Earth Day theme of “Think Global, Act Local,” here are a few ideas for protecting the environment by acting in your local area!

Organize or volunteer at a local cleanup event – A cleanup event makes a quick and substantial difference to a very targeted area. These events allow the areas in direst need to receive attention, which increases the effectiveness of cleanup efforts. Look in your local area for volunteer opportunities ([like these through Montgomery Parks](#)) or [organize your own cleanup](#).

Learn and tell others about local recycling rules – The rules that govern which recyclables are allowed in curbside collections change based on where you live. Recycling programs are often setup by county, meaning people living in Montgomery County, Maryland likely have slightly different rules than people living in the District of Columbia. For example, [this webpage](#) describes what is and isn’t allowed in blue curbside bins in Montgomery County. Learn about your local recycling rules and share them with your neighbors to improve your local recycling rates!

Plant native trees or other plants in your yard – Plants provide a variety of benefits to the environment, like preventing erosion, reducing air pollution, sequestering carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. Native plants also provide food sources and shelter for native fauna. Plant native trees or other native plants in your yard to support the local ecosystem!

Buy local produce – Buying groceries from local producers is a great way to reduce greenhouse emissions associated with transportation. Utilizing this practice can also eliminate packaging waste from shipping, helps ensure your food is fresh and supports local businesses!

Pick a few locations to walk or bike to – If you live near a few places that you frequently visit, like a grocery store or restaurant, choose to walk or bike to those locations whenever possible. Enjoy some fresh air and a reduction to your greenhouse gas emissions!

Place a birdfeeder in your yard or on your balcony – A birdfeeder can be used to attract native bird species even without a yard! Supporting the local bird population helps control insect populations, improves plant seed dispersal and reinforces the local ecosystem!

Identify a few products you could purchase in a different quantity or packaging to minimize waste –

Attempting to minimize our waste generation can be a tricky task. Many items can be purchased in larger quantities (rather than single-use quantities) to reduce packaging material. However, purchasing more of an item than you can use before it expires can also generate excess waste. This balance is hard to achieve and varies from person to person. One tip for minimizing your waste generation is to buy in larger quantities (with less packaging) for items that do not expire for a long time or items that you use daily. This way, you are less likely to throw away expired products. Choose a few products that you could purchase in different quantities to minimize your waste generation! On the Bethesda campus, the Surplus Chemical Redistribution Program (through [NIH FreeStuff](#)) is a great way to contribute and/or obtain unopened and unexpired chemicals to minimize waste!

Identify a few practices you could adopt to decrease your energy consumption –

There are many quick and easy practices to reduce our energy use, such as turning off lights when the room is empty, replacing old appliances and fixtures, installing LED lightbulbs and reducing HVAC use when nobody is home. Adopt a few of these practices to reduce your monthly energy bill and the emissions associated with your energy use!