

# Trash Talk!



THURSTON COUNTY  
WASHINGTON

Public Works

Fall 2022



## No Need to Rake? What a “Re-Leaf”!

Fall is a beautiful season. Across many parts of the country, leaves turn from vibrant green to flaming orange, red, and yellow. We love the crispy sound of walking through fallen leaves and the spicy smell of fall. In fact, we enjoy everything about autumn—until it’s time to rake. Raking your lawn can take a long time. What if you didn’t need to do it? Well, “be-leaf” it! Instead of raking and bagging the leaves, you can leave them on the ground. This will actually make your soil and grass healthier in the spring.

Here are two ways you can leaf-cycle:

- If your family has a mulching mower, run it over the leaves to chop them into small bits. If you don’t have a mulching mower, you can use your regular lawn mower. Just remove the part that catches grass (sometimes called the “bagger”) and have a grown-up put the safety cover on. Then mow over the leaves. Your lawn should now be “dusted” with leaf bits. They will protect the grass roots from winter weather. By spring, these bits will break down into the soil to “feed” your lawn.
- With the bagger attached to the mower, you can collect the leaves. When you’re done, empty the leaf bits from

your lawn onto your garden. This leaf mulch will keep the soil moist for plants in the spring. It will also protect insects and bacteria that help plants grow. In the spring, mix the material into the soil as a fertilizer. If you have a compost pile or bin, you can also put the leaf bits in there.

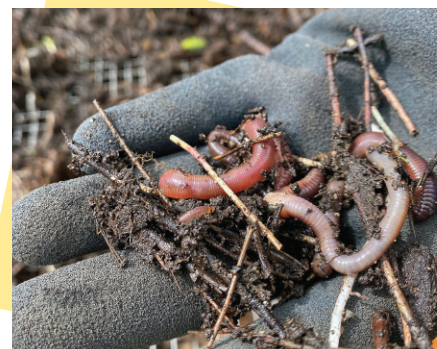
You may have heard older folks talk fondly about the “smell of burning leaves.” That may sound like a nice memory, but we now know that burning leaves is dangerous. The National Park Service estimates that 85% of wildfires start from people burning leaves and other trash.\* Burning leaves also releases greenhouse gases and air pollutants. This can cause serious health problems. Young children and people with allergies and breathing difficulties are at the highest risk. Because of this, burning leaves is illegal in many communities.

This autumn, share the benefits of leaf-cycling with the grown-ups in your life. Maybe you will make “be-leafers” out of them, too!

If you just can’t resist raking leaves and playing in the leaf piles, you should know what to do with them when you’re done. Lots of people in Thurston County have a special home bin for food and yard waste. This bin gets picked up at the curb,

just like trash and recycling. Food and yard waste can also be dropped off at the Waste and Recovery Center (WARC) near Lacey. The WARC is open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. The food and yard waste you drop off is made into compost at Silver Springs Organics near Rainier, Washington. People buy this compost to put on their gardens. That’s one more great benefit of leaves!

\* Source: [www.nps.gov/articles/wildfire-causes-and-evaluation.htm](http://www.nps.gov/articles/wildfire-causes-and-evaluation.htm)



Worms work hard to turn yard and garden waste into useful compost.

## Dare to Compare

**Instructions:** Use the clues to find the correct answers. Show your work.

The letter **B** stands for the number of plastic bottles that Carrie recycled last week.

Clues:

- A.  $B + B < 40$
- B.  $B > 10$
- C. B is an odd number.
- D. 5 is a factor of B.

1. Based on the first two clues, make a list of all possible answers. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Using the last two clues, cross out the numbers that cannot be the answer. \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is B? \_\_\_\_\_

The letter **C** stands for the number of cans that Javier recycled last week.

Clues:

- A.  $C < 10 + 8$
- B. C is not an odd number.
- C.  $C > 9$
- D. 6 is a factor of C.

1. To find C, which clue would you use first? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which clue would you use second? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is C? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How did you figure out the answer? \_\_\_\_\_



Credit: FatCamera | E+ | Getty Images

## Swap Shop

The Secondhand Safari is a community garage sale, swap meet, and craft fair. It will be held at the Thurston County Fairgrounds on October 22 and 23. The Secondhand Safari keeps hundreds of items out of landfills every year. Let’s make 2022 the best year yet! Learn more at [ThurstonCountyFairFoundation.com](http://ThurstonCountyFairFoundation.com).

# Good Reasons to Recycle

November 15 is America Recycles Day! Let's talk about why we recycle. Recycling saves energy and protects natural resources. It also creates jobs. When we throw things out, we waste a lot of good resources. Because some items are so cheap and easy to buy, that may not seem like a big deal, but it is.

Did you know that people have been recycling for thousands of years? In ancient civilizations, people would melt down broken metal items to make new things. Materials were harder to get back then, making recycling a no-brainer. Even though materials are easier to get today, it's still the smart thing to do!

So, if you aren't recycling, what are you waiting for? If you are just starting out, place a recycling bin (or bag or box) near the trash can. This will be a good reminder to check whether

something can be recycled. Next, make a list of what can be recycled and post it on the refrigerator. You can make your list by visiting [ThurstonCountyWa.gov/recycling](http://ThurstonCountyWa.gov/recycling) and clicking on the blue circle that says "Recycling." If you're still not sure about something, type the name of the material into the search bar at [WhereDoITakeMy.org](http://WhereDoITakeMy.org) to find out what to do with it. If you are already recycling, way to go! Take the next step by teaching others how easy it is to recycle.

To show that you are serious about recycling, you can take the America Recycles Day Recycling Pledge. So far, over 87,000 people have pledged to learn about recycling and share their knowledge with others. You can take the pledge at [KAB.org/programs/ard/pledge](http://KAB.org/programs/ard/pledge). You can also find fun activities on this website to celebrate America Recycles Day.

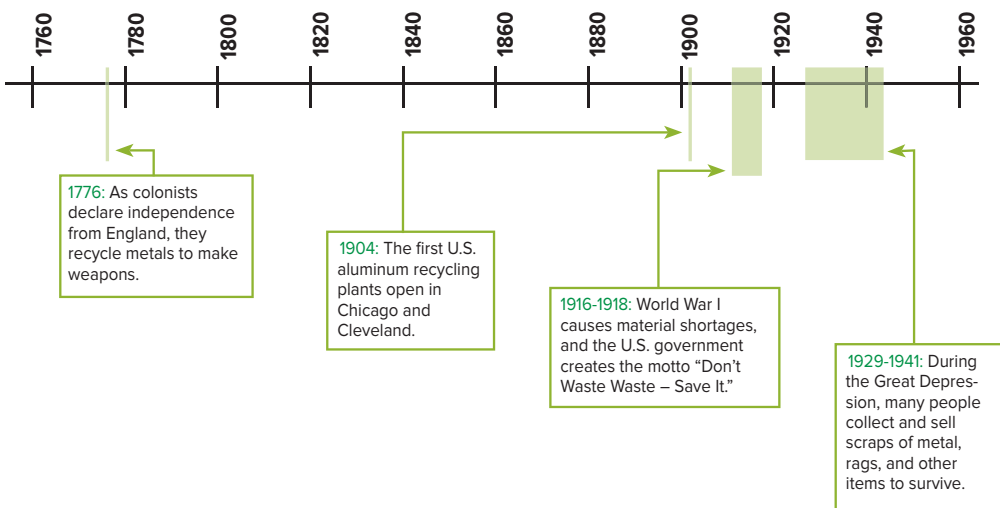


## Just in Time

A timeline is a graph that is used to show the passage of time in a straight line. Timelines are especially useful in showing historical events in relation to each other.

**Instructions:** Below is a timeline showing a small part of the history of recycling in the United States. Use the timeline to answer these questions.

### History of Recycling in the United States From 1776-1941



1. In what year did the first aluminum recycling factories open in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_  
In which cities? \_\_\_\_\_
2. During the period shown on the timeline, what were the major reasons that caused Americans to recycle and waste less? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Why is there a big, empty part in the middle of the timeline? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What was a U.S. government motto in World War I? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How much time passed between the end of World War I and the beginning of the Great Depression? \_\_\_\_\_

## How About a Contest — or Two?

This year, we want to help you get into the recycling spirit. So, leading up to America Recycles Day, we are hosting some contests.

We will have weekly challenges on our Facebook page from October 10 through November 15. To enter, submit photos showing how you reduce waste at home or on the go. Be sure to ask a grown-up for permission before posting photos online. To learn more, check our website in early October at [ThurstonCountyWa.gov/recycling](http://ThurstonCountyWa.gov/recycling).





# Learn From the Pros

What does a normal day look like for you? Do you spend most of it at home or school? Do you play on a sports team? Do you belong to a school club? Do you hang out with your friends in the park or at someone's house?

Sometimes it's hard to remember, but the chores you do at home, the work you do at school, and the activities you do in your free time all affect our environment. This fall, learn how to take better care of the Earth, no matter what you are doing.

We can answer your questions and provide books, videos, and display materials. We will even visit your school, club, or group and bring fun activities, workshops, or lessons. Here are some of our popular programs:

- **The Master Recycler Composter (MRC) Program:** This program offers workshops online and in-person at demonstration gardens. Come learn about backyard composting and composting with worms (called vermicomposting). You can also see how-to videos and composting guides at [Extension.WSU.edu/thurston/gardening/mc](http://Extension.WSU.edu/thurston/gardening/mc). For dates of upcoming workshops, visit [Extension.WSU.edu/thurston/gardening/composting/](http://Extension.WSU.edu/thurston/gardening/composting/).



- **Recycling Right educator kit:** Designed for students, Recycling Right will teach you about the benefits and challenges of recycling. You will also take part in a sorting activity to show you what can and cannot be recycled in Thurston County. Not only will you become a better recycler, but you will also become a recycling leader for your family and friends.

- **Food: Too Good to Waste educator kit:** Americans throw away a lot of food — as much as one-fourth of what we buy. During this program, you'll learn about food waste and work in groups to find solutions to enjoy more and waste less food.
- **Plastics in the Ocean educator kit:** Teachers, scout leaders, youth group leaders, and other adults can borrow the Plastics in the Ocean kit. Using the kit, you'll learn how plastic gets into our oceans, as well as how it impacts animal life. Then you'll get to discuss ways to reduce the amount of plastic that ends up in the ocean. Ask your teacher or leader to email [SolidWasteYouth@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:SolidWasteYouth@co.thurston.wa.us) to borrow the kit.
- **RRR Patch Program:** With our Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Patch Program, you will learn how to take better care of the environment in our community. Visit [ThurstonCountyWa.gov/pw/sw-grhome/Pages/sw-SchoolsYouth.aspx](http://ThurstonCountyWa.gov/pw/sw-grhome/Pages/sw-SchoolsYouth.aspx) to download the RRR Patch Manual and get started on earning your patch.

## Single-Use Plastics?



Credit: Mstudioimages | E+ | Getty Images

### How smart kids can help

Plastic straws are getting a lot of attention these days — and not in a good way. Lots of people think we should use fewer of them. Plastic straws are an example of something that is used one time and then thrown away. This is also true for plastic takeout containers, shopping bags, spoons, forks, cups, and lids. All these disposable items are called “single-use plastics” because they are made of plastic and used only once.

In today's world, there are many things we use just once. However, a lot of them break down easily in nature or can be composted or recycled. Single-use plastics take a long time to break down and cannot be composted or recycled. That's why it's important to try to use fewer of them.

The good news is that smart kids like you can help! All you have to do is remember that it is better to refuse, reduce, reuse, and recycle than to use something only once and then throw it away. You can start with simple changes. Just like lots of small straws can add up to be a big problem, lots

of kids can work together to help fix it. Start with a goal of changing one plastic habit per week or month. Then add new changes throughout the year. Talk to your friends and family about making these changes, too!

Here is how you can be part of the solution:

- Stay away from using plastic straws or stir sticks. If you really like straws, consider buying a reusable metal one and taking it with you when you go out.
- When you go shopping, take your own reusable bag. (Like any reusable item, reusable bags should be washed and properly stored after each use.)
- Try to use fewer single-use items. At fast food restaurants, take a refillable water bottle or cup and use it instead of a throwaway cup. When buying fruits or vegetables at the store, use reusable bags or consider not using bags at all.
- Make your own takeout kit. You can carry your own reusable containers instead of asking for single-use carryout containers.
- Did you know that many of our grocery stores sell bulk foods? These are foods that you can put into your own reusable containers. This reduces the amount of packaging on the food you buy. (Not all stores allow personal containers, so ask a manager or customer service person if it is OK.)

After you have refused and reused, recycle all the plastic you can. In Thurston County, things like dairy tubs (containers that hold foods like yogurt, cream cheese, or sour cream) are recyclable after being washed and the lid is put in the garbage. Unfortunately, plastic straws, forks, spoons, cup lids, bottle caps, and other small single-use plastic items are too small to recycle, so they must go into the trash. Please use our Recycling Guide at [ThurstonCountyWa.gov/recycling](http://ThurstonCountyWa.gov/recycling) for our searchable list of recyclables.

## Did You Get Your Recycling Guide?

We mailed out a new Recycling Guide to everyone in Thurston County earlier this year. This guide tells you what you can and can't recycle. It's also magnetic, so it can go right on your fridge or other metal surface. If you didn't get a copy, you can see it online by visiting [ThurstonCountyWa.gov/recycling](http://ThurstonCountyWa.gov/recycling) and clicking on the blue circle that says “Recycling”. You can also request a guide by emailing [ThurstonSolidWaste@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:ThurstonSolidWaste@co.thurston.wa.us) or calling the Solid Waste Info Line at 360-867-2491.

# Reducing Lunchtime Trash



Credit: ferrantraite | E+ | Getty Images

Lunch is one of the best parts of the school day. It's a chance to talk with friends, refuel our bodies, recharge our brains, and relax before heading back to class. Unfortunately, it is also when the school creates the most trash. Unless you bring your own lunch in a reusable container, you create about 67 pounds of lunchtime trash each school year. For an average elementary school, this is about 18,000 pounds of trash per year. That's about the weight of a small school bus! Across America, schools throw out about 530,000 tons of food every year. Much of what gets thrown out doesn't have to be. In an average lunchroom, about 12% of trash could be recycled, while 57% could be composted.

Here are some tips to reduce waste in the lunchroom:

- If you buy school lunch and are allowed to choose your foods, do not take too much. Only take what you will eat and eat what you have taken.
- If you bring your own lunch, use a reusable container, like a lunch box or insulated lunch bag.
- Use washable containers instead of plastic baggies for items you bring. You can even wash out and reuse tubs from dips, spreads, or deli food items.
- Bring your drink in a refillable bottle from home or a recyclable bottle. Don't forget to recycle the empty bottle at school or at home.
- Use washable silverware from home, not throw-away plastic. If you must use plastic, choose heavy-duty utensils that are washable.
- If you use single-serving containers, make sure the packaging is recyclable. Don't forget to recycle it at school or at home.
- If you do have leftovers, place them back into your reusable containers and take them home to eat later.

# What's Wrong?

*In a food web, living things can be classified as producers, consumers, and decomposers. Producers use sunlight, air, and soil to produce their own food (energy). Consumers get their energy by eating other living things. Decomposers get energy by breaking down dead plants and animals. Sarah was supposed to correctly identify producers, consumers, and decomposers on this list, but she was in a hurry and didn't check her work. Six of her answers are wrong!*

**Instructions:** Look at the answers. If an answer is not correct, cross it out and write the letter of the correct answer.

P Producer    C Consumer    D Decomposer

1. Cat	<u>P</u>	_____
2. Worm	<u>D</u>	_____
3. Lettuce	<u>C</u>	_____
4. Hawk	<u>P</u>	_____
5. Bush	<u>D</u>	_____
6. Bacteria	<u>P</u>	_____
7. Human	<u>C</u>	_____
8. Rose	<u>P</u>	_____
9. Mushroom	<u>D</u>	_____
10. Grass	<u>C</u>	_____

# Beginnings and Endings

**Instructions:** Add a prefix or suffix to each word and then put each word into the correct sentence below. (Hint: Change the "y" at the end of a word to an "i" before adding a suffix.)

\_\_\_\_\_ cycle                      \_\_\_\_\_ water  
compost \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_ uses  
rich \_\_\_\_\_                      healthy \_\_\_\_\_



Credit: Renata Angerami | E+ | Getty Images

1. In November, we celebrate how much we \_\_\_\_\_ as a country.
2. Ashley decided to mix compost into her family's garden to make the soil \_\_\_\_\_ for the plants.
3. Putting food scraps in a compost bin \_\_\_\_\_ food waste.
4. Microorganisms in compost help make the soil \_\_\_\_\_ in nutrients.
5. By \_\_\_\_\_, Marty's family threw away less food waste and reused more materials.
6. If you \_\_\_\_\_ your compost pile, it won't get enough air.

Funded by Thurston County Public Works, Solid Waste Division

## Thurston County Public Works Solid Waste Division

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