

10 Simple Green Things

Although New Year's Day has passed, it's still not too late to make a resolution or, better yet, just make some helpful little changes. Merleanne Rampale, SWALCO's Public Information and Education Director, would like to offer some simple, sustainable, economical and easy green things any of us can do to conserve and make a difference in 2013 and beyond. Here are her suggestions for 10 simple green things we can do for ourselves, our family, our community and our planet.

Pick 1, 2, or more, and make 2013 a great one!

1. **Stop Waste.** Recycle at home, work, school and play. *Before you go to throw, think **Recycle First, Trash Last**.* The good news is that we're able to recycle more items than ever, from every room in the house. Some of the items that are now recyclable may surprise you. Visit swalco.org or recyclefirsttrashlast.org for a list of the new Recycling Guidelines (*also available in Spanish*) for Lake County communities and keep them handy on your fridge. Recycling is one of the best and easiest things we can do. Its impact reaches beyond just keeping items from landfills, which is a great thing in itself. Recycling paper can conserve forests and habitat, which protects plant and wildlife species that live there. Recycling a cell phone or other electronics at one of SWALCO's collections can potentially prevent mining for metals in areas where endangered species like gorillas live. For additional recycling opportunities and programs visit www.swalco.org.
2. Make a pledge to **keep reusable bags handy for shopping**. There are so many sizes and designs available everywhere and most are fairly inexpensive. Some collapse down to fit in your glove box, purse or pocket.
3. **Clear out the clutter/stop junkmail**. Each year 19 billion catalogs, are mailed to US consumers. These require more than 53 million trees and 53 billion gallons of water to produce. Visit Catalogchoice.org. Contact your bank and credit card companies and ask them not to forward or use your name and address for any promotional or marketing lists. Don't forget to recycle junk mail you do get. Virtually 98-99% of all the paper in our homes and workplaces is recyclable, including window envelopes, phonebooks, shiny-covered catalogs and more.
4. **Buy recycled** bath tissue and other products made from recycled materials.
5. **Give up conventional paper towels** - purchase a pack of microfiber cleaning cloths. Assign one or two for the kitchen, one or two for the bathroom, and for other projects around the house.
6. **Conserve water**. Make a promise to run your dishwasher only when fully loaded.
7. **Purchase a rain barrel** and use captured rain water for gardening, car washing and other household activities and chores. SWALCO, Lake County Stormwater Management Commission and Lake County Forest Preserves will sponsor a Compost Bin, Rain Barrel and Native Plant Sale in May of this year. Visit SWALCO's website for more information.
8. **Purchase a compost bin** and create wonderful mulch for your garden, while keeping food waste that would normally end up in the landfill, out of it. Composting and using captured rain water provide numerous other benefits as well.
9. **Learn about and purchase ocean friendly and sustainable seafood**. Download a pocket guide or app from the Seafood Watch program on the Monterey Bay Aquarium's website at montereybayaquarium.org for a list to take with you at the grocer's or when dining out.
10. **Minimize the use of chemicals you use in your home and on your lawn**. There are so many natural and affordable cleaning products now available. You can also do a little research and investigate minimizing or eliminating the use of herbicides and pesticides on your lawn. Good for you and for wildlife. Search online for easy organic lawn care and check it out. For chemical items you do have at home, including cleaning supplies, pesticides, old prescription medications (people or pet) and other household chemical waste products, bring them to one of SWALCO's HCW collections to be disposed of safely. Visit swalco.org to find out when and how.