

Waste Reduction

For more information visit www.sustainableliving.org.nz

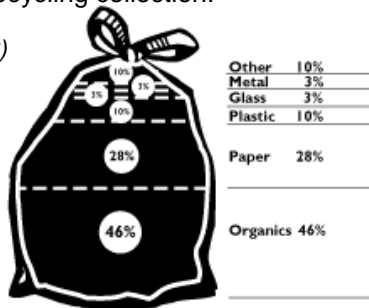
What a Waste!

About 93% of the 'raw materials' we use were thrown away during the production process, and about 80% of the stuff we buy is thrown away after one use: a sobering thought! New Zealanders throw away more rubbish per person than people in most other developed countries. The wealthier we have got the more we have wasted.

How much rubbish do you throw away from home?

This example of a typical domestic rubbish bag in Christchurch (2002) is very similar to what you'd find in many places in New Zealand. 'Organics' here means kitchen scraps and garden clippings. Christchurch City has a kerbside recycling collection.

(Picture from CCC)



Of this typical bag of rubbish much of the organic waste could be composted and many of the other items could be reused or recycled.

Why are landfills a problem?

An earth-sealed landfill means that the **land is permanently lost** from agricultural, housing or business use. It is an **expensive** process – safeguards are needed to prevent toxic leachate. It is a **waste of nutrients** and it is a **waste of many other materials**, which if separated at the source, instead of being mixed, could be recovered affordably.

The Government's '*The New Zealand Waste Strategy at a Glance*' (see www.mfe.govt.nz) aims to: minimise and manage hazardous waste; upgrade landfill disposal facilities so that older and dirtier sites can be closed; upgrade waste water treatment plants (which will help clean up the beaches), promote composting and recycling of garden and kitchen wastes; and encourage re-use/recycling of building site and demolition materials. Waste generators are to be charged the environmental cost of treatment and disposal: this is the principle of **the polluter pays**.

Influences upon our growing wastefulness

- ▶ We live busy lives.
- ▶ We eat canned and bottled food even when the shops are full of fresh 'seasonal' food.
- ▶ Composite or mixed materials are becoming more common in packaging.

- ▶ 'No deposit – no return'.
- ▶ Some items are intentionally 'throw-away'.
- ▶ Waste from our homes includes liquids as well as solids.

How does NZ compare on resource recovery?

Nationally we recover lower proportions of useful materials from our waste than many other countries. By the late 1990s New Zealand was reclaiming 46% of aluminium, 30% of steel and 40% of glass (for bottle re-use as well as glass making), plus 33% of steel. The *NZ Packaging Accord* aims to improve on this with targets set for 2008 of 65% aluminium, 70% paper and 43% steel cans. If voluntary action does not achieve this legislation is likely to follow. See details at www.packaging.org.nz

There are many very successful community initiatives to reduce waste and promote recycling. A directory is published by the Recycling Operators of New Zealand listing recycling business contacts all over the country: Phone 09 488 9449 www.ronz.org.nz

How do we cut down on rubbish? Think of the five R's!

1. **REDUCE** by shopping using different criteria, thinking about things like packaging.
2. **RE-USING** - includes refilling containers, repairs and maintenance (of houses, vehicles, equipment and clothes); and the salvage of useful working parts.
3. **RECYCLING** – using kerbside recycling programs and recycling drop off centres. Call your local District Council for information on recycling in your area.
4. **RECOVERY of materials** often involves collecting sufficient quantity in one place to make re-processing financially viable, so households are dependent on business or local authority initiatives to handle metals, plastics, oil, batteries, etc. but savings can be significant - each aluminium can that's recycled saves enough electricity to run a TV for 3 hours!

BUY IT BACK



Buy Recycled

Of course, **you are not fully recycling unless you buy recycled products too**. Website users, see the *Buy it Back Guide* at www.zerowaste.co.nz

5. Only after the first four, Reduce, Re-use, Recover and Recycle, have been considered, should the fifth 'R' for **RESIDUAL DISPOSAL** apply. Residual material tends to be land-filled. Burning it is air-polluting!

Action on Waste – Reduce, re-use and recycle!

No-cost actions to reduce waste

1. Keep cardboard, newspapers and advertising paper separate – most can be recycled, or reused around the home.
2. Discourage junk mail delivery.
3. Avoid buying canned, frozen or processed food, such as ready-made meals – favour fresh, seasonal local produce.
4. Start making compost or consider a worm farm or EM Bokashi bucket.
5. Try refusing plastic carrier bags in shops and instead reuse the ones you already have (or make or buy stronger cotton or canvas bags).
6. Recycle as much as you can.
7. Save certain packaging containers, once you have found a friendly re-user for them (e.g. preschools/schools can often use ice cream containers).
8. Find users for your surplus unbroken items – have a garage sale or donate to local charities.
9. Re-use mail envelopes that you receive – although you may have to buy labels, it will save the cost of buying new envelopes.
10. Use e-mail as an alternative to some of your letters and cards.
11. If you're a computer user, don't print out all the emails you receive – keep print-outs to a minimum in general.
12. For arts and craft activities reuse your own waste or materials from resource centres which stock industrial waste paper, plastics and fabrics in an amazing variety.

Investing now in order to reduce waste long-term

1. If you regularly need AAA, AA or D size batteries consider buying rechargeable instead of disposable batteries and either a mains-powered or solar-powered charger.
2. Vehicle battery required? Select one from a firm who will accept your old car battery for recycling.
3. Baby in the house? Use washable real cloth or modern comfy fitted nappies.
4. Make your own bread, biscuits and cakes, yoghurt, ice cream, and bean-sprouts etc.
5. Use home-made cleaners instead of brand name varieties – see below.
6. Buy recycled paper products.
7. Avoid toxic garden chemicals. Home gardeners often apply much higher doses of fertilisers, herbicides, fungicides, pesticides, than farmers do.
8. If you need party plates use, as a first choice, hired or borrowed washable real crockery, or consider using 100% compostable starch ones.
9. Now that milk is no longer available in glass at least ensure you buy milk in packaging that can be recycled, such plastic #2.

Still have questions? Ask your local council or visit <http://www.ccc.govt.nz/quickanswers/waste>

For more detailed information refer to the website www.sustainableliving.org.nz

—————Alternatives to Hazardous Chemicals at Home—————

Previous generations survived very well without the range of manufactured chlorine bleaches, aerosol sprays, ammonia cleaners and petroleum-based detergent powders we use. By making your own household cleaners you can avoid buying so many plastic containers, as well as reducing potentially toxic chemicals at home and in the environment.

Four basic ingredients will serve most of your household cleaning needs:

- ▶ **Baking Soda** (bicarbonate) Alkali - cleans, deodorises, softens water, good scouring powder.
- ▶ **Pure Soap** Biodegrades completely, non-toxic, available in liquid, flakes, powder or bar form. Liquid soap can be used as simple cleaner by itself or as an ingredient in other recipes.
- ▶ **Washing Soda** Stronger than bicarbonate (use gloves) Cuts grease, removes stains.
- ▶ **White Vinegar** (less smelly than malt, cider or wine vinegars) Acidic - cuts grease, freshens.

Essential oils

Add some drops of your favourite essential oil to your household cleaner to give it a pleasant smell. Eucalyptus, tea tree or lavender are excellent as they also possess antiseptic properties.

Some examples:

All Purpose Household Cleaner Add 2 tbsp of white vinegar to a cup of water. Mix well and add 1/4 cup of liquid soap. Add 1/2 tsp of essential oil. To use - spray and wipe.

A Bench-top Shaker for General Cleaning Add a few drops of essential oil to baking soda and put in a shaker container. Keep dry. To use - sprinkle on any surface you wish to clean and wipe with a damp cloth.

Toilet Cleaner Mix 1/2 cup of liquid soap together with 2 cups of baking soda. Dilute with enough warm water to dissolve, then add 2 tbsp vinegar. Add 1/2 tsp of tea tree or eucalyptus oil. Place in a squirt bottle and leave for 24 hours before first use. Shake well before each use.

Mint Fresh Oven Cleaner Mix 1/4 cup salt with 1/4 cup baking soda. Add 1/4 cup water and 1 tbsp mint juice for a pleasant smell. Make 'mint juice' is by soaking 5-6 mint leaves in a cup of boiled water for 5 minutes. To use - apply the paste mixture to the interior of the oven, leave overnight and remove with a damp cloth.

Disinfectant Cleaner Add 10-15 drops of an essential oil with antiseptic properties to 1 litre of white vinegar. To use - place in a spray bottle, apply and wipe off with a cloth.

Glass Cleaner Put three tablespoons vinegar into 1 litre warm water. To use - spray and polish off with a soft cloth or newspaper

Environmentally friendly dishwasher powder Put bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) in the soap powder container, and white vinegar in the rinse aid dispenser. You may need to occasionally use baking soda paste on the inside of tea mugs.