

Planning a Zero Waste Event

Frequently Asked Questions



[What is Zero Waste?](#)

[How do I start?](#)

[Should I send out an announcement or invitations?](#)

[How do I know how much food to get if it's a non-RSVP meeting?](#)

[What type of food should I supply?](#)

[What types of decorations are zero waste?](#)

[What types of gifts are zero waste?](#)

[Where can I rent dishes, linens, utensils, cups or drink coolers?](#)

[Are there special compostable dishes, utensils and cups?](#)

[Where do I get bins, bags and signs?](#)

[Which bins will I need?](#)

[Which caterers are familiar with the concept of zero waste?](#)

[What venues are familiar with the concept of zero waste?](#)

[Do I need to stand by the bins to help people with where to put items?](#)

[Where do I take my compostables after the event?](#)

[Where do I take my recyclables after the event?](#)

[For more one-on-one assistance with planning my event, who do I call?](#)

[Zero Waste Event Planning Worksheet](#)

[Zero Waste Event Planning Flyer](#)

Q. What is Zero Waste?

A. Zero waste is a philosophy and a design principle for the 21st Century. It includes 'recycling' but goes beyond that by taking a 'whole system' approach to the vast flow of resources and waste through human society.

Zero waste maximizes recycling, minimizes waste, reduces consumption and ensures that products are made to be reused, repaired or recycled back into nature or the marketplace.

[Click to return](#)

Q. How do I start?

A. Create a planning group well in advance to begin brainstorming ideas. Think about the venue, food, drinks, decorations, awards/prizes and disposal of waste that will achieve your personal zero waste goals. Do you want to have bottled drinks that will be recycled? Sustainable gifts from local retailers? A catered event? It is important to avoid excess packaging from start to finish.

[Click to return](#)

Q. Should I send out an announcement or invitations?

A. Yes! A paperless email invite or announcement is the best way to go. If you send out announcements and receive RSVPs from attendees, you can more accurately forecast your food/drink needs. This will avoid running out or having a lot of leftovers.

[Click to return](#)

Q. How do I know how much food to get if it's a non-RSVP meeting?

A. That is a difficult question. You don't want to run out, yet you want to avoid excess leftovers. Buy enough food for the maximum amount of people you think will attend. Any leftovers you have can be distributed among guests, be taken home or (as your last option) taken to the compost facility with the other compostables.

[Click to return](#)

Q. What type of food should I supply?

A. Whether you decide to have the event catered, supplied by organizers or potluck-style, think about food with little to no packaging. Finger food, sandwiches, fruit (without wrapping) and pizza are good choices. Forget the frills and opt out of fancy garnishes and decorative foods that will be thrown away later.

[Click to return](#)

Q. What types of decorations are zero waste?

A. Get creative! Brainstorm some ideas such as homemade items, live plants, reusable decorations or recyclable decorations. Some items that are not sustainable are balloons and confetti.

[Click to return](#)

Q. What types of gifts are zero waste?

A. Think about sustainability and usage: will the person throw it away? Is it something that comes with a lot of packaging? Tickets to an event or experience (sporting

events, plays), items made from recycled materials, reusable cloth bags or coffee mugs are some ideas. Novelty or gag gifts are usually not sustainable and end up in the garbage.

[Click to return](#)

Q. Where can I rent dishes, linens, utensils, cups or drink coolers?

A. For a list of local stores that rent these items, [click here](#).

[Click to return](#)

Q. Are there special compostable dishes, utensils and cups?

A. For paper products (cups, napkins, plates), no. Basically any food-soiled paper is compostable. We prefer to use the Solo “hot cups” because they have very little plastic coating; however, Dixie cups and paper packaging with a little plastic or wax coating is still okay.

Then there are the “bio plastics” which look and feel like plastic, but are actually corn or potato-based, and will compost at a commercial facility (not for use in your backyard, worm bin or a landfill). For a list of vendors who sell these types of compostable items, [click here](#).

[Click to return](#)

Q. Where do I get bins, bags and signs?

A. Contact Kim Johnson at Waste ReSources, 570.5837, or email kjohnson@ci.olympia.wa.us to rent (for free) your bins, bags and signs.

[Click to return](#)

Q. Which bins will I need?

A. This depends on your individual event. For almost any event, we recommend at least a recycling bin, food waste (and food-soiled paper) bin, and garbage bin. Depending on your dishes and linens, you may need more. [Click here](#) to go to our worksheet.

[Click to return](#)

Q. Which caterers are familiar with the concept of zero waste?

A. For a list of caterers who have participated in a zero waste event or are familiar with the concept, please [click here](#).

[Click to return](#)

Q. Which venues are familiar with the concept of zero waste?

A. The Olympia Center and The Washington Center for the Performing Arts

[Click to return](#)

Q. Do I need to stand by the bins to help people with where to put items?

A. We have found that most people will have questions about where to put what, even when you have signage. A volunteer to “man” the station is a good idea so you can avoid having to pick through the bags after the event.

[Click to return](#)

Q. Where do I take my compostables after the event?

A. Silver Springs Organics in Tenino is our current composter. Visit their website at: www.silverspringsorganics.com, or [click here for directions](#) to their facility. We'll pay the dump fees; just have them bill Waste ReSources.
[Click to return](#)

Q. Where do I take my recyclables after the event?

A. If your building recycling cart is full or you have more than it can handle, take your recyclables to the Maintenance Center. Contact Kim Johnson at 570.5837, or email kjohnson@ci.olympiawa.us to arrange drop off.
[Click to return](#)

Q. I need more one-on-one assistance with planning my event. Who do I call?

A. Contact Kim Johnson 570.5837, or email kjohnson@ci.olympia.wa.us.
[Click to return](#)

Rental Stores:

Tumwater Rentals (Celebrations! The Party Store)

6135 Capitol Blvd. SW
Tumwater, WA 98501
360.754.7368

www.tumwaterrentals.com

Party City

1200 Cooper Point Rd. SW, Suite 208
Olympia, WA 98502
360.352.3991

[Click to return](#)

Compostables Retailers:

The following companies carry biodegradable potato & corn and sugar cane products ranging from plates to utensils. Make sure you order these well in advance, as they may be out of stock on some items.

World Centric

www.worldcentric.org

2121 Staunton Ct
Palo Alto, CA 94306
650.739.0699

Earthware Biodegradables

www.earthwarebiodegradables.com

PO Box 473

7282 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.

Lagunitas, CA 94938

800.211.6747

Biodegradable Store (Eco Products)

www.biodegradablestore.com

303.449.1876

Preferred brands of paper items:

Cups (hot/cold)

Solo brand (available at Costco, Cash & Carry and most grocery stores)

Plates/bowls

Chinette brand (available at Costco, Cash & Carry and most grocery stores)

Napkins (paper)

The following companies carry 100% recycled; 80% post-consumer waste paper napkins:

Natural Value brand (available at the Olympia Food Co-op)

www.naturalvalue.com

Seventh Generation brand (available at Ralph's Thriftway, Fred Meyer or online)

www.seventhgeneration.com

[Click to return](#)

Caterers:

Bayview Catering

www.bayviewcatering.com

516 W 4th Ave., Olympia

360.357.8016

Occasions Catering & Special Events

Jenny Hannah

www.occasions-catering.com

1615 State Ave. NE, Olympia

360.943.9494

[Click to return](#)