



# Make a Difference

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## REMAINING ON THE POSITIVE SIDE OF WASTE REDUCTION DURING COVID-19

There have been so many changes to our daily lives this year, which in some cases has brought about positive results for the environment. Our household waste has increased, but we've had reductions in commercial waste. We are limiting our travel, both by commuting less in our cars and traveling less by plane, and this decreases our carbon footprint. With events canceled and activities closed, we are spending more time enjoying our gardens, beaches, and hiking trails. In the wake of supply chain disruptions caused by COVID-19, more people are buying local produce from local farmers.

As the pandemic stretches on, we have settled into new habits, but what about good habits we have put aside, such as waste reduction and recycling? We rely more on single use take-out containers to support our local restaurants. Our grocery stores aren't packing into reusable bags we bring from home. We are using more disposable masks, wipes, and gloves in order to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe and protected. COVID-19 brings new challenges to our efforts at waste reduction, but there are still steps we can take, positive choices we can make and actions we can resume.

When talking about waste reduction, we want to focus on refuse, reduce, and reuse first. When we choose to refuse, reduce or reuse, we not only eliminate our possible need to dispose of something, we also eliminate the entire cycle of that item, from mining natural resources to manufacturing consumption to transport costs. Take-out containers and disposable masks may be unavoidable now, but COVID-19 has not removed most of our choices for lower impact purchasing or finding second lives for products. Don't worry if the actions you take seem small - every time you choose to refuse, reduce, and reuse you are making a difference.

Here are some of our favorite tips for reuse:

- First, you can reduce the amount of "want" purchases, focusing on "need" instead. If you feel Amazon calling your name, go outside instead, and take in the summer sun or starlit evenings.
- If you are buying something, consider quality over quantity, as well-made products tend to last longer. Avoid single-use, non-recyclable items as much as possible, choosing glass or aluminum containers, and reusable products when they're available. Reuse items whenever possible.

- You can now bring reusable bags to all grocery stores on Whidbey. Most stores will ask you to bag your groceries when using your own bags as a way to limit employee exposure. (Unfortunately, stores are not allowing you to bring in your own containers for bulk foods as yet). It may seem a little strange at first to pack your own groceries, but don't forget, at one point, it was a little strange to bring reusable bags into the store!
- » Choose disinfectant personal protective items when safe, such as reusable masks. Remember to treat your used cloth mask as a biohazard. Wash your hands before and after handling it. When removing it, fold it in on itself and launder either in the washing machine or by hand. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) website provides detailed, helpful information about washing cloth masks. Go to [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) for resources.
- » You can also make washable disinfectant wipes to replace single use disinfectant wipes. The [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) website has a list of household disinfectants that are effective to use during the pandemic as well as instructions to make your own wipes.
- Have you been sorting in your spare time? The thrift stores are all accepting used goods, but donation hours vary. In all cases, when their daily storage area fills up, they stop taking items, so arriving early is best. Thrift stores are also a great place to pick up something "new."

### » Garage of Blessings

- Closed for shopping and donations
- Emergency requests are taken

### » Good Cheer

- Donations: Only at donation center in Bayview, Thurs., 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Shopping: Good Cheer Ken's Korner, open Tues.-Fri., 12-5 p.m.
- Shopping: Good Cheer Langley, open Wed.-Sat., 12-5 p.m.

### » Habitat for Humanity

- Donations: OH and Freeland locations Mon.-Fri. 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Shopping: Freeland, Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Shopping: Oak Harbor, Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

### » Island Thrift

- Donations: Mon.-Thurs., 9 a.m.-noon, or until full, call ahead to confirm 360-675-1133, max 3-4 bags/boxes per car
- Shopping: Mon.-Sat., 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

### » Senior Thrift

- Donations: Sun., 9-11 a.m.
- Shopping: Thurs.-Sun. 12-4 p.m.

### » WAIF

- Donations: Freeland: Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m., earlier is better
- Donations: Oak Harbor Mon./Wed./Fri., 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

- Shopping: Freeland, Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun., 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Shopping: Oak Harbor, Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun., 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Recycling and composting are second-line options, meaning they are preferable to landfilling items but not as great as refuse, reduce, and reuse. Recycling, though it does reduce the need to consume virgin natural resources, is still an energy-consuming process. Composting is an excellent way to convert food and yard waste into valuable soil nutrients. However, avoiding as much food waste as possible is preferable. Here are some best practices still required when recycling:

- Check the Island County Solid Waste website for what is recyclable on the island, and if you have curbside service, make sure you're up to date about what can be recycled curbside.
- Remember, all items should be empty, clean, and dry. If it can't be cleaned, such as a greasy pizza box, it can't be recycled.
- Some cardboard isn't recyclable if it's lined with wax for refrigerated or frozen items.
- Many types of plastic are not recyclable, including plastic wrap, hard plastics, plant pots, and styrofoam. We can recycle #1 and #2 plastic on the island, which includes bottles, jugs, tubs, and jars. A good rule of thumb, although it's not always true, is if the container neck is smaller than its bottom, it is a #1 or #2 plastic.
- Island County Solid Waste is asking people to minimize trips to the dump because of staffing shortages. Keep in mind the best practice is to not create the waste or recycling in the first place.

When we cannot avoid single-use plastic or need to purchase something that can't be reused, repurposed, or recycled (as is the case with disposable gloves, for example), the most important thing we can do is to make sure it makes it into the trash. Bag small and lightweight items together so they won't blow away in a wind. Devote some time to picking up trash from your neighborhood, public spaces, and beach to make sure it gets to the landfill and stays out of the ocean.

Our focus on pandemic concerns has taken center stage, as it should, but our environment continues to struggle. The changes we've had to make to our lifestyles include an increase in our use of single use plastics like gloves, masks, and take-out containers, and we'll need to continue to rely on them into the future. It can be easy to feel discouraged, but remember every choice we make resulting in reducing, reusing, or recycling, is a step forward. We still have many opportunities to make an impact in every choice we make. With each one of these choices, we are choosing hope for the health of our planet.



## CELEBRATE LOCAL FOOD

Whidbey Island Grown Weekend is a celebration of local food with farm fresh specials from your favorite restaurants, virtual farm tours and videos, and farm open houses.

Local Eats - Patio Seats ... Island farmers and restaurants are teaming up to create delicious dishes for dine in or take out.

Virtual Farm Connect ... Island farmers are sharing videos of their farms, practices, and lives. Connect with the amazing people who grow our local food.

Farm Open Houses ... Have a weekend adventure meeting a local farmer and learning how our local food is grown, following safe social distancing procedures of course!

All the details are at [whidbeyislandgrown.com](http://whidbeyislandgrown.com)

## RECESSION PROOF YOUR HOME

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