



Sustainable solutions: your guide to healthier homes and communities

December 2022



Tips to reduce waste over the holidays

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, the people of greater Portland generate millions of tons of garbage. Fortunately, there are many ways to reduce the half-eaten party platters, the mountains of bubble wrap, and an estimated 38,000 miles of ribbon – without cutting back on holiday cheer.

If you are wondering what you can do to cut down on waste, read these tips or ask Metro at 503-234-3000.

Choose quality over quantity – instead of giving multiple small gifts to someone, consider combining your budget into one main present.

Give experiences, nurture relationships – create memories that will last a lifetime when you give experiences like Oregon Zoo tickets, museum memberships or park passes. You can also give the gift of your time when you volunteer for family or friends.

Consider giving preloved items – regifts, vintage gifts or even second-hand gifts are fine if they are perfect for that special someone.

Skip the packaging, buy local – making your purchases at a local shop can reduce unnecessary bubble wrap, Styrofoam and plastic from shipping.

Try an alternative Christmas tree – decorate a live plant, [create a tree](#) with materials found at home or scavenged from a place like [SCRAP Creative Reuse](#).

Create your own Menorah – if you don't have an heirloom to light, [create your own menorah](#) using materials you have around the house.

Get creative with gift wrap – use old maps, reusable gift bags or fabric to wrap gifts. Check out [Furoshiki](#), a Japanese gift-wrapping tradition – think origami for cloth – that is beautiful and reusable. Decorate [your own wrapping paper](#) using the inside of brown shopping bags. You can even make gift tags out of last year's cards.

Reduce holiday food waste – plan meals that keep guests happy without waste food with these [online resources](#). For the food that is leftover, invite your guests to bring reusable containers to take food home.



Natural home scents

Air fresheners and scented candles seem like harmless ways to make your home smell nice, but many products contain unhealthy chemicals that can harm adults and children. Fortunately, there are easy-to-make alternatives that are safer for the whole family.

Homemade Potpourri

Ingredients:

- 5 cups water
- 2 navel oranges, peeled
- 1 apple, sliced in half
- 3 cinnamon sticks
- 3 star anise pods
- 1 teaspoon-sized knob of fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon cardamom pods
- 1 teaspoon whole cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon dried orange peel

Directions:

Combine all ingredients together in a saucepan and heat on low until simmering. Keep this going for a few hours, adding additional water when needed. You can also use a crockpot on any setting and heat the mixture with the lid off.



Tips for improving indoor air quality

Maintaining indoor air quality is more important than ever, especially during the winter when homes are sealed tight against the cold.

- Clean your home regularly with non-toxic or [homemade products](#).
- Use exhaust fans or open windows while cooking or cleaning to let in fresh air.
- Choose natural ways to scent your home, such as with an essential oil diffuser instead of plug-ins or room sprays.
- Change the furnace filters frequently; consider a room air purifier with a HEPA filter to help boost air quality.
- Bring your infrequently used cleaning products to a [hazardous waste facility](#) or [collection event](#), since these can off-gas and affect air quality.

Find more tips on the [Environmental Protection Agency's](#) indoor air quality webpage.



Tips for protecting your plants this winter

Winter weather can harm frost-tender plants, but these simple tips can help protect your plants and provide nutrients to the soil.

- Save time by allowing fallen leaves to remain on bare soil. As they decompose, they will add nutrients back to the soil.
- Apply 4-6 inches of [mulch](#), like wood chips, to protect the soil and roots from winter weather, and leave space around the plant stem to prevent disease.
- Pull existing weeds before spreading mulch to reduce weed growth in the spring.
- Choose [plant varieties](#) that grow well in your climate.



Photo courtesy of ReBuilding Center

2023 Investment and Innovation grants coming soon!

Metro will open applications for [2023 Investment and Innovation grants](#) in early January to support businesses, nonprofits, and colleges and universities working to reduce the impacts of waste in greater Portland. Grants are available for efforts that include waste prevention, reuse and repair, recycling, and composting. The grants foster economic opportunities and other benefits for people who have been left out or harmed by the garbage and recycling system – particularly communities of color.

Metro expects to award up to \$2 million in 2023 Investment and Innovation grants. Priorities for funding include reuse and repair, food waste prevention and rescue, and recycling infrastructure.

The pre-proposal application opens on Jan. 3 and closes on Feb. 13, 2023. Details will be posted on the [program website](#) on **Tuesday, Jan. 3**. Contact investmentandinnovation@oregonmetro.gov to receive application updates in your inbox.

See the Calendar of Community Events section at the end of this email to register for an optional informational webinar in early 2023 (sessions will be recorded).



Get crafty with SCRAP Creative Reuse

With support from a [2022 Metro Investment & Innovation program grant](#), [SCRAP Creative Reuse](#) is providing free quarterly outreach events in underserved communities around the Portland area. An expansion of SCRAP's Fill Minds Not Landfills program, which collects waste materials from businesses around Portland for creative reuse, will provide family-oriented community donation and education events.

Through the youth outreach program, SCRAP invites youth to develop, plan, and create murals at their schools and within their communities. Adult skill-building workshops are available to BIPOC community members, adults living with low incomes, and artists to build marketable or otherwise useful skills. All these events increase access to reuse opportunities and teach creative reuse skills to youth, families and adults. The grant project kicked off in August 2022 and will continue through 2023.

Learn more at portland.scrapcreativereuse.org.



Student volunteers help clean up litter in the Lloyd district.

Regional Refresh Fund supports local cleanup efforts

The Regional Refresh Fund just wrapped up its first full year in operation, supporting over 75 trash and graffiti cleanup projects in the greater Portland area. Nonprofits like [Cultivate Initiatives](#) used funding to cover disposal costs for the over 39 tons of trash they collected in August. Local community development corporations like Rose CDC hosted bulky waste collection events for their residents, helping them get rid of hard to dispose of items. Others are tackling graffiti through abatement efforts and commissioning community murals.

Is your nonprofit, school, business district association or public agency interested in organizing a trash or graffiti cleanup effort? Visit www.oregonmetro.gov/regionalrefresh to learn more. For specific questions about eligibility, contact program coordinator Cayla Pruett at cayla.pruett@oregonmetro.gov.

Calendar of Community Events

Be sure to visit our [website calendar](#) to learn more about upcoming community events, educational programs and volunteer opportunities. Follow the links below to connect directly with our community partners to find out how you can support their work, find upcoming events, classes and volunteer opportunities in your neighborhood.

Interested in hearing more about the Investment and Innovation Grant Program? Attend one of our upcoming webinars by registering using the links below. **Capital grants** fund projects up to \$500,000 for the purchase of large equipment, machinery, and/or construction of facility infrastructure. **Program grants** fund projects up to \$100,000 for personnel costs, operations and/or equipment for projects or programs.

- [Capital grants webinar](#): Tuesday, Jan. 10 at noon
- [Program grants webinar](#): Thursday, Jan. 12 at noon

Access affordable supplies and fuel your artistic expression by visiting SCRAP's [Creative Reuse Center](#) to shop in person or look at the [online store](#) for a curated selection. Check out the public [events calendar](#) for a variety of offerings for youth and adults alike.

Interested in supporting [Cultivate Initiatives](#) in your community? [Get involved!](#)

[Get connected with your neighborhood by volunteering with Rose Community Development](#)

[Sign up for volunteer events with Lloyd Eco District](#)

Stay Informed

Subscribe to Metro's quarterly newsletter, Sustainable Solutions, which provides resources for waste prevention from Metro and community partners. Learn helpful tips for recycling, gardening and reducing toxic chemicals in your home and yard.

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