

Think Green!

Reduce – Reuse – Recycle

Through the years, gardeners have been very creative and that is certainly the case today. Because they are invested in gardening, they are conscious of the footprint they are leaving on the earth and try, to the best of their ability, to leave their space better than when they found it. This type of “Earth-kind Gardening” leads to conservation – conservation of resources and improved preservation and maintenance of their property. Safeguarding our earth with sound tested practices are what most gardeners are about.

This should include management of our own household’s waste stream. Not everything should go to the landfill. With just a small amount of effort, we all can control some of our discards for the benefit of your garden.

Get Informed

Oklahoma State University produces a myriad of fact sheets for home garden use which teach us how to improve our gardens. These can be accessed at factsheets.okstate.edu/. A good place to start is with the [earth-kind-gardening-series](#). These sheets detail the best practices for reducing waste, preventing pollution and conserving resources. Another informative fact sheet is [OSU fact sheet HLA-6436 “Healthy Garden Soils”](#).

Let’s Talk Trash

Ever tried **composting** in your backyard? It’s not that hard and you have expert help at your fingertips with the [OSU fact sheet HLA-6448 “Backyard Composting in Oklahoma”](#). Reuse your lawn clippings and leaves in a compost bin instead of bagging them for the trash service.

About 9% of household trash is wasted food. What about composting by raising earthworms using fresh kitchen scraps (known as vermicomposting)? Try [OSU fact sheet BAE-1742 “Composting with Worms”](#) for more information. Earthworms are very beneficial in increasing nutrients in garden soil, thereby decreasing the need for fertilizer. They will eat coffee grounds and filters, tea bags and tea leaves, vegetable and fruit scraps, breads and grains, and uneaten dog and cat food. Buy some Red Wiggler worms and a bin to get started!

Rethink Disposables

Plastics now make up about 12% of the U.S. household’s waste stream. Burning these plastics releases dioxins and heavy metals, with pollutes our air and water. When they are sent to a landfill, how long does it take them to finally decompose? Answer, a very long time. One million single use plastic bottles are sold every minute around the world. What will we do with all these bottles? Throw them in the recycle bin to be repurposed into something useful. A beneficial goal would be to reduce our use of disposables and concentrate on items that are either reusable or compostable.

Watch Your Waste

The options for disposing of waste are limited. You can either recycle, burn, or send it to a landfill. Burning has its' limitations as it is banned in most urban areas and there is always the danger of wildfires in dry and windy Oklahoma. This leaves recycling or a landfill. Consider what else a landfill can be used for – not much for many years while waiting for the contents to decompose.

If you live in the City of Tulsa, do you have a blue recycling bin? If not, why not try it? The bins are free and it is just as easy to throw recyclables in one bin as the next. What is recyclable? Tulsa says to **“Focus on the Four”**:

- **Aluminum and steel cans (rinsed)**
- **Paper and cardboard**
- **Rigid plastic (#1-7)**
- **Glass jars and bottles**

More than 80% of household waste is recyclable! The more you recycle, the less waste you throw out. The less trash you throw out, the smaller the trash cart you need. The smaller the trash cart, the less you pay for monthly collection service.

Some Helpful Suggestions:

- ❖ Take a reusable bag to the grocery store instead a getting one of their plastic bags.
- ❖ Observe Ozone Alert days and don't gas up the car or use your lawnmower when the ozone levels are high. Keep our air clean.
- ❖ Keep usable goods out of a landfill. Donate or resell them.
- ❖ Stop junk mail and excess phone books by opting out of delivery. Check out the Direct Mail Merchandising Association online service to do so.
- ❖ Recycle computers and electronics. Some retailers will take them back if purchased through them.
- ❖ Consider Xeriscaping a portion of your garden by using plants with low water requirements.

Resources:

- Tulsa

cityoftulsa.org/recycle

- Environmental Protection Agency

epa.gov

Brochure - ["GreenScaping – the Easy Way to a Greener, Healthier Yard"](#)

- Oklahoma State University

Factsheets.okstate.edu

[T-4318 "Recycled Household Textiles and Clothing"](#)

[T-1801 "Recycle Your Clothes and Fabrics"](#)

[L-253 "Recycle Yard Waste – Don't Bag It Lawn Care Plan"](#)

- Texas A&M University

agrillifeextension.tamu.edu

["Ten Ways to make your Landscape Earth-kind"](#)

["Water Conservation Checklist for the Home"](#)

- University of Arkansas

uaext.edu

["Reduce Clutter! Feel Better!"](#)