

Salt Lake County Sanitation Division

www.sanitation.slco.org • 801-562-6435

Source Reduction

Do you love your garbage and recycle cans? Probably not, but consider what they do for you: everything you don't want from pizza boxes and dirty diapers to grass clippings and old newspaper disappears into your cans. You never have to see it or think about it again.

When we stop to consider the true costs of what we throw away, garbage, recycling, and even green waste are expensive in more ways than one. There are the obvious costs of fuel and equipment to collect garbage. Then there are the less obvious costs like the testing and monitoring the landfill does to protect our health and air and water quality. Or the cost of grinding and composting green waste to turn it into mulch for your garden. Or the cost of sorting recyclables and shipping them around the world for processing into new products.

And there are environmental costs of waste. At each step of the way the equipment used to collect and process waste uses fossil fuels, which emit carbon into the atmosphere and contribute to air pollution. The more we put into our garbage cans, the more fuel, energy, and money we spend to dispose of it. Reducing waste at its source is the very best way to prevent those costs in the first place.

Salt Lake County Sanitation is dedicated to picking up your garbage in the most cost effective and low-impact way as possible. On our website, www.sanitation.slco.org, there are helpful hints for reducing, reusing, and recycling. We include a link to the Environmental Protection Agency's Consumer's Handbook for Reducing Solid Waste that is full of useful information on source reduction.

Some simple steps you can take to reduce in your home are:

- Mulch your lawn clippings and let them fertilize your lawn.
- Mow your leaves into your lawn or compost them each fall. The leaves of one large shade tree can be worth as much as \$50 of plant food.
- Reuse grocery bags or buy reusable bags and remember to take them into the store. Grocery bags are difficult to recycle into useable materials.
- Give old but still useable items away. Your old items can have a second or even third life with someone else.
- Avoid excess packaging when you buy. Containers and packaging account for about 28% of the waste stream.
- Make a compost pile for vegetable waste. Compost is good for everything in your garden.
- Recycle everything you can. Make a game with your kids of trying to fill the recycle bin instead of the garbage can. We will provide a second recycle can at no cost.



Reducing waste at its source makes good environmental and economic sense for all of us.

