

## Don't Let This Halloween Go to Waste

Halloween is just around the corner, and with it comes a lot of excitement and anticipation! However, it's important to remember that such festivities often come with a hefty environmental cost. Did you know approximately 35 million costumes are thrown away annually in the US alone? This is an alarming statistic, considering that it can take up to 200 years for these costumes to decompose.

It's not just costumes that contribute to the environmental impact of Halloween - US consumers bought more than 600 pounds of Halloween candy in 2021. That's a lot of bags and candy wrappers! Since candy wrappers are often made of multiple layers of different materials, they are not recyclable in your curbside or regular recycling drop-off sites.

We know our actions impact the environment; here are some tips to keep in mind to celebrate Halloween in a more eco-friendly way.

- Host a costume swap: Instead of buying a new costume every year, consider hosting a costume swap with your friends and family. Or consider purchasing second-hand costumes from a thrift store or making your own from items you already have at home.
- Reduce candy waste: Choose bulk candy with minimal packaging or candy packaged in paper or other biodegradable materials. You can also hand out non-candy treats like stickers, pencils, and small toys - just be sure they're not individually wrapped in plastic! Some programs offer a solution to collect wrappers and keep them out of landfills, like Terracycle and Rubicon - details at the end. And as always, leftover candy can be donated to your recycling coordinator.
- Use eco-friendly makeup: Many Halloween makeup products contain harsh chemicals that can harm the environment. Opt for eco-friendly makeup products made from natural ingredients that won't stay in the environment or irritate your skin.
- Choose sustainable decorations: Instead of purchasing disposable decorations that will end up in a landfill at the end of the season, opt for sustainable decorations such as real pumpkins, gourds, or reusable decorations that you can store and use year after year. You can also get creative and make your decorations using natural materials like leaves, acorns, and branches. Remember to compost your pumpkins and other organic waste when Halloween ends!

By making a few small changes to our Halloween habits, we can help reduce waste and protect the environment while still having a spooky good time.

Rubicon's Trash or Treasure program: <https://www.rubicon.com/trash-or-treasure/>

Terracycle's program:

<https://shop.terracycle.com/en-US/products/candy-and-snack-wrappers-zero-waste-pouch>

*Rachel Frantz serves as Barry County's Recycling Coordinator and writes columns to answer commonly asked recycling questions. Have a question about recycling or a topic idea for this column? We want to hear from you! Email [recycle@barrycounty.org](mailto:recycle@barrycounty.org) or visit [www.barrycountyrecycles.org](http://www.barrycountyrecycles.org) for more information and to get all your recycling questions answered.*