



## GREEN YOUR HALLOWEEN GUIDE

Americans [spent an estimated \\$9 billion](#) on Halloween in 2018, an average of \$86.79 per person. From costumes and trick-or-treating to parties and donating leftover candy, there are many ways to practice a sustainable Halloween and still have fun each fall.

Promote zero waste for the planet and save money with these tips!

### PUMPKINS

#### Before Halloween

**Buy local and don't overshop:** According to the United States Department of Agriculture, [Illinois](#) harvests about 3-5 times as many pumpkin acres as any of the other top states. Support local farmers and connect your family with the pumpkin growing process. By visiting a local pumpkin patch, children can see for themselves how pumpkins grow and may even get to feed animals and participate in farm activities.



Even better - grow your own! Start planning now for sowing the seeds of next year's pumpkins this spring. Take into account that there are [suggested varieties](#) for carving and eating.

#### After Halloween

**Plan ahead for your pumpkin's afterlife:** Don't doom your pumpkin to eternity in a landfill! When pumpkins and other organic materials decompose in a landfill, they generate [methane](#), a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Landfills are the third largest producer of methane in the U.S., where an [estimated 1.91 billion pounds of pumpkins are grown annually](#). Keep your pumpkin in the cycle of life - eat it, or compost it!



**Eat your pumpkin:** Give your uncarved pumpkin a second life by turning it into a key ingredient of a delicious [meal, dessert, or hot beverage](#) to enjoy on a crisp fall night.

Pumpkins [are high in fiber and beta carotene](#), add flavor, and are a great source of Vitamin A and C. You can also scoop out the [pumpkin seeds](#) and roast them for a healthy snack.

**Compost your pumpkin:** If your pumpkin is already a jack-o-lantern, or you aren't interested in eating it, the best thing to do is to compost it. Composting is the natural process of recycling organic matter. Adding compost to soils not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions, it also returns nutrients to the soil, reduces the need for synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and helps prevent soil erosion.

- Join or host one of [SCARCE's Pumpkin Smash](#) events across Illinois. Take a look at their guide on [How To Host a Pumpkin Collection](#).
- Compost your pumpkin in your own backyard. Take a look at this [DIY Project](#) by SCARCE.



## COSTUMES



### Avoid buying new

**Use what you own:** Raid your closet and house to find clothing or items that could be used to create a unique costume. Find easy DIY costume ideas on [Pinterest](#) or websites with guides such as [Perfection Pending](#) or [Real Simple](#).

**Costume swap:** Gather your friends to swap costumes, clothing, and props to create your look this Halloween. Or consider renting a costume.

**Thrift an outfit:** Look for second-hand clothes at a thrift store, which will often have Halloween sections in the month of October.

### Shop sustainably

If buying new, keep these tips in mind:

- Avoid or minimize plastic and non-recyclable props. Instead of a plastic or rubber mask, for example, opt for non-toxic face paint that could be used for multiple years for different costumes.
- Pick costumes and items that you could reuse as everyday wear throughout the year or next Halloween.

### Make a green statement

Halloween can be a great opportunity to show everyone what you're passionate about. Choose a costume that raises awareness about sustainability and environmental issues. Several eco-friendly ideas can be found on [Planetsave](#).

## TRICK-OR-TREATING

### Candy

**Sustainable packaging tips:** Look for treats packaged in recyclable cardboard rather than plastic. When buying treats, try to buy in bulk to minimize the amount of packaging. If buying or eating candy with plastic packaging, consider collecting your clean, empty wrappers with a [Terracycle Candy and Snack Wrapper Zero Waste collection box](#) for upcycling.

**Leftovers:** Rather than throw away uneaten candy, consider donating leftovers. [Chicago-area leftover candy drop off locations](#) are increasing (be sure to check with your dentist). You can also donate through a [chapter of a national program](#).



### Bags and Transportation

Reuse household containers such as pillowcases, canvas bags, buckets, or other containers to collect candy rather than purchasing a new, plastic jack-o-lantern container or treat bag. Kids might also have fun decorating their reusable bags or containers with Halloween-themed colors or supplies. If so, be sure to save their finished artwork so it can be used again!

Trick-or-treat in your own neighborhood or a neighborhood within walking distance to save on gas and reduce emissions.

## PARTIES & DECORATIONS



### Supplies

**Inside:** Opt for decorations and supplies that can be reused each year. Don't be shy about using what you already have - be creative!

For parties or celebrations, use dishware rather than disposable plasticware or use recyclable or compostable products that reduce landfill waste. Purchase a variety of fall colors or Halloween-themed fabric napkins and table linens at a resale shop. Some examples of eco-friendly decor ideas can be found at [DIY Network](#) and [Green Child Magazine](#).

**Outside:** Avoid using outdoor fake cobweb decorations which can [harm wildlife](#) and are bad for the environment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SHARE YOUR SUCCESS STORIES, CONTACT US AT: [ZEROWASTE@SEVENGENERATIONS Ahead.ORG](mailto:ZEROWASTE@SEVENGENERATIONS Ahead.ORG)