Have a Green Halloween

Pollution is a scary thing.

This year, keep the Wicked Witch of the Waste at bay by reducing the amount of waste generated by your Halloween celebrations. You'll be preventing pollution before it occurs and saving precious natural resources. Who could ask for a better treat? Just follow these simple tricks:

🕷 Make your own costume using recycled materials, clothes from second-hand stores or items you already have around the house.

🕷 Donate old Halloween costumes to charities or to friends for reuse.

🕷 Buy an organically grown pumpkin for your Jack-o'-lantern. After the holidays, toss old Jack into the yard for the birds and squirrels, or add him to the compost pile.

🕷 Don't throw away those pumpkin seeds! Roast them in the oven for a tasty seasonal treat or put them out for the birds and other wildlife.

🕷 Use a soy or natural beeswax candle in your Jack-o'-lantern to reduce air emissions. Alternatively, consider using a battery-operated flashing light made for Jack-o'-lanterns instead of a candle. These lights are readily available at grocery and department stores and are safer than candles because they reduce the risk of fire. They create an effect that looks just like a flickering candle. If you use one of these lights, put rechargeable batteries in it.

🕷 Make "Can-o'-lanterns." Kids, you'll need an adult to help you with this craft. Wash out an empty soup or coffee can. Fill it with water and freeze it; you'll be punching holes in the can and the ice keeps the can from being dented as you work. Draw a Jack-o'-lantern face or other design (like the outline of a cat, for example) on the can. Use a hammer and a nail or sharp screwdriver to punch holes in the metal on the lines you've drawn. Space the holes out a bit. Then, let the ice melt. You can place a candle or electric light in the can and the light will shine through the holes you've punched. This is a great way to decorate using recycled materials!

🕷 Use cloth bags to collect treats and reuse them after the holidays as shopping bags--or, use a reusable bucket to collect your treats.

🕷 Use rechargeable batteries in the flashlight you carry with you for trick-or-treating (You should always have a flashlight to help you see at night. A light also makes you more visible to people driving cars at night.)

🕷 If you wear make-up instead of a mask, use non-toxic face paints or hypoallergenic cosmetics.

🕷 If you're planning a Halloween party, use non-disposable items. For example, use real plates, silverware, and glasses, cloth napkins, etc. Provide recycling containers for all items that can be recycled if they must be used (plastic bottles and cans).

⚛ Reuse your Halloween decorations year after year (except for the pumpkins, of course!)

⚛ Purchase treats to pass out that have the least amount of packaging. Excessive packaging equals more waste.

⚛ Don't litter with the wrappers from candy eaten along the trick-or-treating trail. Put those wrappers in your bag or your pocket and dispose of them properly when you get home.

⚛ Save paper by sending electronic Halloween cards or party invitations.

⚛ If you decorate with strings of lights or other lit objects, don't leave them plugged in all night long. Place these items on an appliance timer that will save electricity by controlling the amount of time they're on.

⚛ If you're a parent, accompany your children on foot or by bicycle for trick-or-treating. If a car must be used, consider carpooling with friends/neighbors and their children.

⚛ Organize a community trick-or-treating event in your neighborhood to reduce the amount of travel. Talk to the other parents and neighbors and share these suggestions and encourage them to consider providing a Green Halloween for all this year.