

# SustainAbility

A joint publication from Audubon Lifestyles and The International Sustainability Council

## Practicing Waste Prevention

Waste prevention means using less material to get a job done—and ending up with less waste to manage. In addition to environmental benefits, waste prevention saves money. Take a good look at your recycling collection data to see ways to reduce waste first. The most common forms of waste prevention are reducing, reusing, and donating.

### Reduce

Modify current purchasing practices to reduce the amount of waste generated. For example:

- Set printers and photocopiers to default duplexing and make training manuals and personnel information available electronically to reduce the amount of office paper used.
- Purchase products that use less or no packaging materials.
- Purchase products made with recycled-content materials.
- Purchase products in bulk.
- Switch to reusable transport containers.

### Reuse

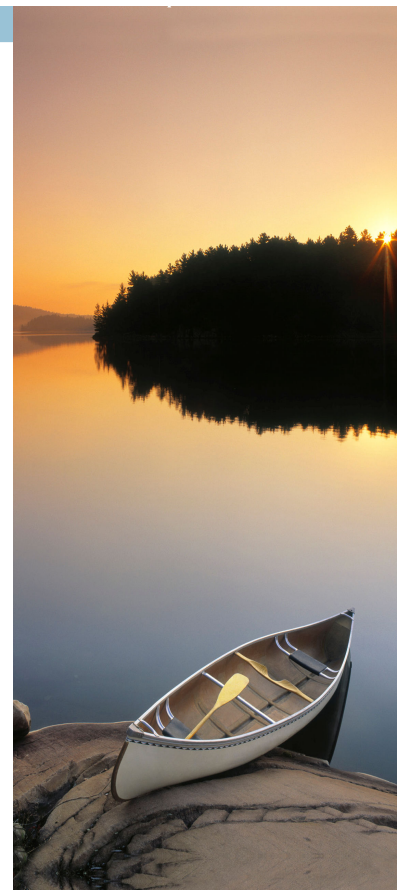
Reusing products and packaging prolongs their useful lives, delaying final disposal or recycling. Reuse is the repair, refurbishing, washing, or recovery of worn or used products, appliances, furniture, and building materials. You can, for example:

- Reuse corrugated moving boxes internally.
- Reuse office furniture and supplies, such as interoffice envelopes and file folders.
- Use durable rather than disposable towels, tablecloths, napkins, dishes, cups, and glasses.
- Use incoming packaging materials for outgoing shipments.

### Donate

Prevent waste by donating products or materials to charities or nonprofits. For example:

- Donate unwanted supplies to local schools or nonprofit organizations.
- Donate food scraps for use as animal feed.
- Donate uneaten food to local food banks.
- Advertise surplus and reusable items through a commercial materials exchange.
- Donate excess building materials to local low-income housing developers.



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## Fast Facts

- One recycled tin could offset the environmental impact of 3 hours of watching television.
- Recycled Paper uses 70% less energy to produce.
- 16% of energy consumption in manufacture goes into the packaging.



## Conventional vs. Organic

The word "organic" refers to the way farmers grow and process agricultural products, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products and meat. Organic farming practices are designed to encourage soil and water conservation and reduce pollution. Farmers who grow organic produce and meat don't use conventional methods to fertilize, control weeds or prevent livestock disease. For example, rather than using chemical weedkillers, organic farmers conduct sophisticated crop rotations and spread mulch or manure to keep weeds at bay.

### Organic or not? Check the label

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established an organic certification program that requires all organic foods to meet strict government standards. These standards regulate how such foods are grown, handled and processed. Any farmer or food manufacturer

who labels and sells a product as organic must be USDA certified as meeting these standards. Only producers who sell less than \$5,000 a year in organic foods are exempt from this certification.

If a food bears a USDA Organic label, it means it's produced and processed according to the USDA standards and that at least 95 percent of the food's ingredients are organically produced. The seal is voluntary, but many organic producers use it.

Some people say they can taste the difference between organic and nonorganic food. Others say they find no difference. Taste is a subjective and personal consideration, so decide for yourself. But whether you buy organic or not, finding the freshest foods available may have the biggest impact on taste.

*"Organic foods meet the same quality and safety standards as conventional foods. The difference lies in how the food is produced, processed and handled."*

### Fast Facts

- Don't confuse natural foods with organic foods. Only those products with the "USDA Organic" label have met USDA standards.
- Buy fruits and vegetables in season to ensure the highest quality. Also, try to buy your produce the day it's delivered to market to ensure that you're buying the freshest food possible. Ask your grocer what day new produce arrives.



Products that are completely organic — such as fruits, vegetables, eggs or other single-ingredient foods — are labeled 100 percent organic and can carry a small USDA seal. Foods that have more than one ingredient, such as breakfast cereal, can use the USDA organic seal or the following wording on their package labels, depending on the number of organic ingredients:

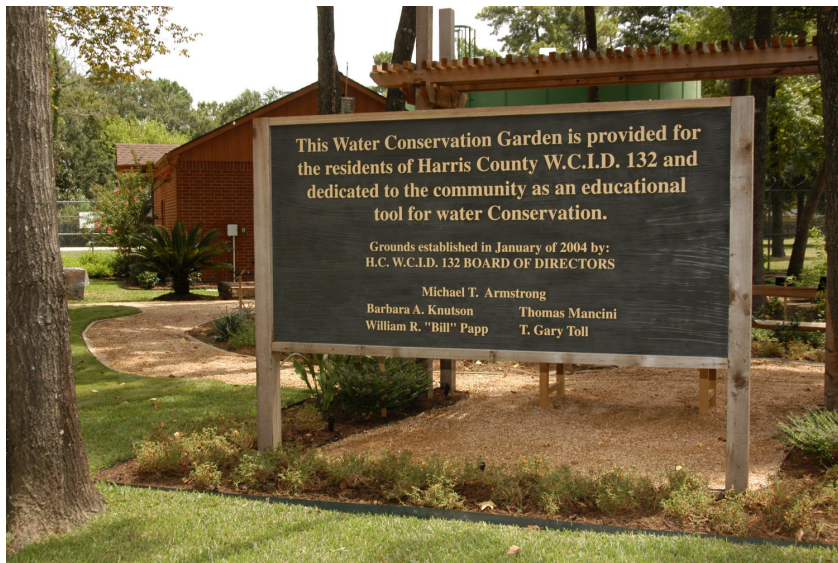
- 100 percent organic. Products that are completely organic or made of all organic ingredients.
- Organic. Products that are at least 95 percent organic.
- Made with organic ingredients. These are products that contain at least 70 percent organic ingredients. The organic seal can't be used on these packages.

Foods containing less than 70 percent organic ingredients can't use the organic seal or the word "organic" on their product label. They can include the organic items in their ingredient list, however.

You may see other terms on food labels, such as "all-natural," "free-range" or "hormone-free." These descriptions may be important to you, but don't confuse them with the term "organic." Only those foods that are grown and processed according to USDA organic standards can be labeled organic.

Organic foods meet the same quality and safety standards as conventional foods. The difference lies in how the food is produced, processed and handled. You may find that organic fruits and vegetables spoil faster because they aren't treated with waxes or preservatives. Also, expect less-than-perfect appearances in some organic produce — odd shapes, varying colors and perhaps smaller sizes. In most cases, however, organic foods look identical to their conventional counterparts.

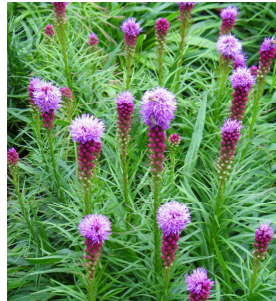
Most organic food costs more than conventional food products. Higher prices are due to more expensive farming practices, tighter government regulations and lower crop yields. Because organic farmers don't use herbicides or pesticides, many management tools that control weeds and pests are labor intensive. For example, organic growers may hand weed vegetables to control weeds, and you may end up paying more for these vegetables.



*The Harris County Texas Water Conservation Garden demonstrates how to implement water conservation strategies in your own backyard.*

## Choosing Plants for Low Water Use

You are not limited to cacti, succulents, or narrow leafed evergreens when selecting plants adapted to low moisture requirements. Many plants growing in humid environments are well adapted to low levels of soil moisture. Numerous plants found growing in coastal or mountainous regions have developed mechanisms for dealing with extremely sandy, excessively well-drained soils, or rocky cold soils in which moisture is limited to months at a time. Following is a list of low water use plants from various parts of the country:



*\*Always check with your local State extension service when selecting plants to avoid the potential of selecting a plant that is considered invasive in your particular location.*

### North West

Saskatoon serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*)  
 Blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*)  
 Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*)  
 Oregon white oak (*Quercus garryana*)

### South West

Four-wing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*)  
 Fairy Duster (*Calliandra eriophylla*)  
 Penstemon (*Penstemon* spp.)  
 Pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*)

### North Central

Aromatic aster (*Aster oblongifolius*)  
 Sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)  
 Bluegrama (*Bouteloua gracilis*)  
 Pale purple coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*)  
 Compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*)

### South Central

Aromatic aster (*Aster oblongifolius*)  
 Sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)  
 Bluegrama (*Bouteloua gracilis*)  
 Tall blazing star (*Liatris aspera*)  
 Bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpus*)  
 Aromatic sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)

### North East

Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)  
 Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)  
 Blazing star (*Liatris spicata*)  
 Pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*)  
 Beach plum (*Prunus serotina*)

### South East

Tall blazing star (*Liatris aspera*)  
 Longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*)  
 Sand Live oak (*Quercus germinata*)  
 Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)  
 Compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*)

## Efficient Watering Methods

Trickle irrigation and drip irrigation systems help reduce water use and meet the needs of plants. With these methods, very small amounts of water are supplied to the base of the plants. Since the water is applied directly to the soil, rather than onto the plant, evaporation from leaf surfaces is reduced. The water is also placed where it will do the most good, rather than sprayed over the entire garden.

Trickle irrigation systems are frequently used by farmers dealing in high value crops such as vegetables, and small fruits such as grapes and berries, where lack of moisture can mean the difference between a profitable harvest or costly failure. These systems are similar to those used by the home gardener.

## Fast Facts

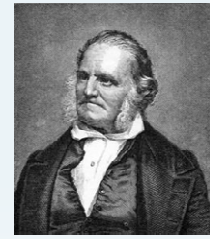
- Wise use of water for garden and lawn not only helps protect the environment, but saves money and provides for optimum growing conditions. Simple ways of reducing the amount of water used for irrigation include growing xeriphytic species (plants that are adapted to dry conditions), mulching, adding water retaining organic matter to the soil, and installing windbreaks and fences to slow winds and reduce evapotranspiration.
- Watering in the early morning before the sun is intense helps reduce the water lost from evaporation. Installing rain gutters and collecting water from downspouts also helps reduce water use..

## The Audubon Movement

Today there are over 500 Audubon societies, and thousands of organizations, sanctuaries, centers, and businesses around the world using the Audubon name. Each of these groups is independent and separately incorporated, and each is free to establish its own programs. Audubon organizations vary greatly in their scope and missions: some remain small bird clubs or societies, while others focus on state, national, or international bird conservation and environmental issues. Through a diversity of approaches, Audubon organizations today carry on the conservation ethic that began at the turn of the 20th Century.

## The Origins of Audubon

John James Audubon was born on April 26, 1785, in Haiti (then called Saint Domingue). He grew to become a famous American ornithologist, naturalist, hunter, and painter. He painted, catalogued, and described the birds of North America in the early nineteenth century, and published *Birds of America*, a massive book containing 435 hand-colored plates of 1,065 individual birds.



Audubon became the chosen name and symbol for a movement that began in the late 1890s to stop the unrestricted slaughter of birds. Early Audubon Society members pledged to shun the fashion of the day of wearing hats and coats adorned with bird feathers and wings, and to hunt birds for consumption only, rather than sport or trade.

Early Audubon members studied birds, improved their habitats, and fought for bird protection. Their activism fledged a broader conservation movement and eventually led to passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918. The Act ended trade in migratory birds, and was among the first federal protections ever afforded to wildlife.

### Audubon Lifestyles

Audubon Lifestyles accomplishes its goals by developing partnerships with individuals and businesses that embrace the same set of principles and ethics. By linking together individuals, businesses, universities, communities and not-for-profit organizations we work to create a unified team approach based on the International Sustainability Council's Principles of Sustainability. It is our belief that together we collectively accomplish more than any one individual, business or organization can accomplish alone. The Audubon Lifestyles mission is to assist people in how they live, work, play, and learn to promote sustainable living and lifestyles.

### For more information

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## Additional Resources & Sources

### Audubon Lifestyles

[www.audubonlifestyles.com](http://www.audubonlifestyles.com)

### The International Sustainability Council

[www.thesustainabilitycouncil.org](http://www.thesustainabilitycouncil.org)

### The US Environmental Protection Agency

[www.epa.gov/compost](http://www.epa.gov/compost)

### Organic Farming

#### Organic Farming Research Foundation

[www.ofrf.org](http://www.ofrf.org)

#### United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/bacyyard](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/bacyyard)

#### Natural Resources Defense Council

[www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org)