

Paper, paper, everywhere!  
Conservation Corner – June 2019

Are you concerned about climate change caused by global warming? One contributor to global warming is the production and use of paper products. In the world as a whole, 300 million tons of paper are used per year. Of that paper, 38% is recycled, 7% is not made of wood, leaving 55% made from trees cut down for that purpose. Hundreds of thousands of acres of trees are cut down every year for paper products. When a tree is converted to paper products, all the carbon that has been stored in the tree is released and contributes to global warming.

In addition to cutting down trees, paper production requires large amounts of water and electricity, plus chemicals such as bleach. Many toxic chemicals are released into the air and water during production of paper. Packaging and transportation of paper products also requires resources that contribute to global warming: plastic for packaging, gasoline or other fossil fuels for transportation.

**What can you do to help?** Here are some tips that will help the environment and also may help reduce your costs over time. Many of these actions will help reduce your trash also!

1. **BUY LESS STUFF.** Much of what we buy has some paper in it, even if it is just packaging or a paper price tag. If you buy less, you use less paper (and other materials) and contribute less to global warming. Learn to consider whether you really need something. And consider the true cost of products: the trees cut down, the energy used for packaging and transporting the goods, the energy and water and other materials used to create what you are buying. The cost to you may be low; the cost to the environment may be much higher.
2. **BUY RECYCLED PAPER PRODUCTS.** Recycled products do not use trees, and use less water and electricity in their production. Many paper products are available using recycled paper, at approximately the same price as products using “virgin” paper made from trees. Look for paper towels or toilet paper that use a high percentage of recycled paper.
3. **USE LESS PAPER.** Use both sides of printer paper (after one side is used, the other side can be printed on or used for scratch paper). Avoid printing documents if possible; if you feel you need a printed copy of something, print only the pages you need. Pay bills electronically, so no paper bill is sent and no envelope is used to mail in payments. Bring your own cup instead of using a paper cup. Opt out of getting printed catalogs and ads in the mail. Here’s a website to help reduce catalogs and junk mail: <https://www.catalogchoice.org> . Or you can register on the National Do Not Mail list: [www.directmail.com/mail\\_preference](http://www.directmail.com/mail_preference) .
4. **REDUCE ONLINE SHOPPING.** When you buy online, individual items are packaged and sent to you. The packaging includes cardboard, and often plastic is used for packaging materials. When you buy locally, multiple items are packaged in one box and shipped to the store, reducing the use of both cardboard and packaging materials.
5. **CONSIDER PACKAGING WHEN YOU SHOP.** Choose products that have less paper (and plastic) used for packaging. Buy in bulk if possible, using your own reusable containers.

6. **REPLACE PAPER MADE FROM TREES WITH CLOTH.** Years ago, many paper products, such as paper towels, diapers, napkins, and tissues, replaced reusable cloth products such as dish towels and cloth handkerchiefs. Consider going back to using cloth for hankies, napkins, diapers, and dish towels.
7. **RECYCLE THE PAPER YOU USE** – as much as possible.

Never underestimate the power of an individual! Even though you are only one person, or one family, your choices CAN make a difference.