

The Catalyst

Activating TN's Sustainable and Resilient Future

Office of Sustainable Practices



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Food Waste Prevention Week

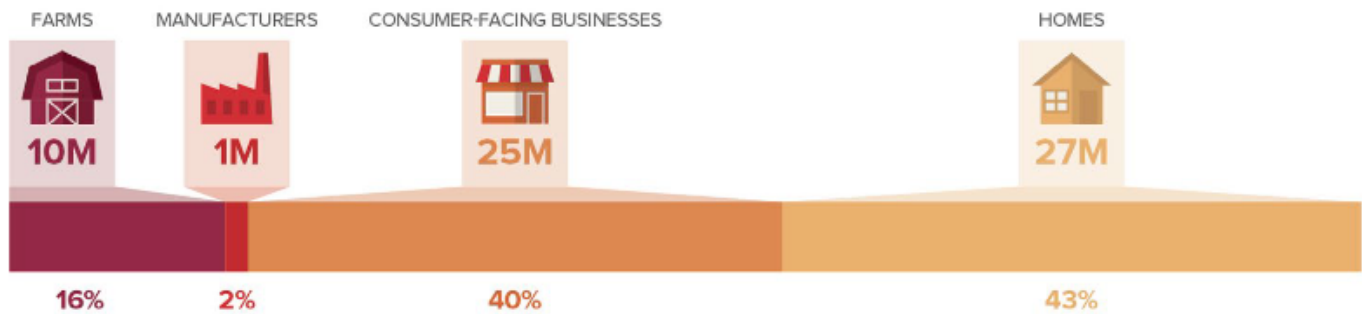
By: Kristen Privette

Approximately 40% of all food grown for human consumption is wasted. In the United States, if the land used to grow this wasted food were consolidated into one farm, it would cover an area larger than three-quarters the state of California. This farm would require more water than California, Texas, and Ohio have combined. Yet, despite this immense waste, 1 in 7 Tennesseans and 1 in 6 children face food insecurity, lacking consistent access to nutritious food. This food waste occurs at every stage of the supply chain from farms, to manufacturing plants, to grocery stores, businesses, and homes. Surprisingly, 43% of all food wasted in the U.S. comes from households. This amounts to 27 million tons of wasted food, which is costing Tennesseans millions. On average, a four-person household throws away about \$1,500 worth of food each year. Understanding food labels, meal planning, and proper food storage are all simple ways to help us reduce our food waste.

To raise awareness, celebrate food, and discover more ways to reduce food waste in your own home, join the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, alongside local businesses and organizations, for National Food Waste Prevention Week from April 7th to April 13th. This week will feature exciting events, including tastings, demonstrations, trivia nights, documentary screenings, a specialty food-waste-friendly beer, a panel discussion, and a community food drive all designed to inspire action and reduce food waste in our homes and communities. With events happening across the

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FOOD WASTED BY WEIGHT — 63 MILLION TONS



No Mow Month: You Can Do More by Doing Less!

By: Lexi Brown

This April, the Cumberland River Compact is inviting residents to participate in No Mow Month, a community initiative aimed at improving the local environment. By letting your grass grow, you can enhance water absorption, reduce pollution, and renew habitat for various Tennessee wildlife. Traditional lawns prevent water from soaking into the ground, causing runoff that carries pollutants into nearby waterways. When grass is allowed to grow taller, it improves water absorption, filters out pollutants, and can help replenish groundwater. Just one month of letting your grass grow can reduce erosion and support streams during droughts.

Participants will receive a No Mow Month yard sign to display in April. There are only a couple of rules, keep grass under 12 inches and make sure your sign is in a visible location. Participation in Davidson County is free but other residents outside the county can participate for a \$10 fee.

At the end of the month, simply mow as usual, but be prepared for taller grass, and place your sign where it's easy to collect. For those hesitant, try letting only a small section grow. It's a simple step to help our environment thrive this spring.



Practical Tips for Reducing Pollution and Saving Money in Your Business



By: Crystal Warren

Many pollution-reducing practices save money by reducing energy and waste disposal costs. The following tips can be useful to celebrate Earth Day or any day of the year.

Assess Your Business' Utility Bills

Review utility bills monthly. Sudden increases in usage (and costs) may indicate a water leak or inefficient energy practices. Tennessee Valley Authority offers [guidance](#) to help understand utility bills.

Know When to Repair or Replace

Inevitably, equipment will break down. When it does, do the research to learn if it's cheaper to repair the part or replace with a more [energy-efficient version](#). Each piece of equipment will be situation specific.

Indoor air quality can be more polluted than outdoor air quality due to lack of ventilation. Replacing traditional cleaning products and other chemicals with [non-toxic versions](#) can help reduce indoor air pollution and subsequently, the number of employee sick days.

TDEC's [Pollution Prevention Program](#) provides education and outreach to help manufacturers reduce pollution.

Small Business Environmental Assistance Corner

By: Ginna McWhirter

Does your small business produce any hazardous waste? If you produce less than 220 pounds of hazardous waste or 2.2 pounds of acutely hazardous waste per month, you are a [Very Small Quantity Generator](#) (VSQG)! If you haven't done so, you should notify the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's Division of Solid Waste by [filling out forms that can be found on their website](#) (Forms [HN-CS](#), [HN-EA](#), [HN-H](#), [HN-H\(Contacts\)](#), [NF](#), [WSR](#)). While you must notify that you are a VSQG, you are not required to send in an annual report. However, the Division appreciates if you send one in! For training on how to fill out a hazardous waste annual report, [watch their training](#). Got questions? Contact [SBEAP](#) or reach out to the Division's waste audit team at 615-532-0780 or Solid.Waste@tn.gov.

If you're a VSQG of hazardous waste, your business can participate in the [household hazardous waste collection events](#) that happen across the state during the spring and fall. Before going to an event, be sure to call Clean Harbors Environmental Services (615-643-3170) to get scheduled and a quote for disposal.



Tennessee Earth Month Events

By: Kristen Privette

Join in on the celebration of Earth Month at various events around the state! If you're near Nashville, check out the Earth Day Festival, where you can enjoy family-friendly interactive exhibits, booths featuring local growers and makers, and connect with environmental nonprofits. In Franklin, TN, participate in their Arbor Day event and discover the importance of trees! For those in Murfreesboro, the Earth Day Festival offers a chance to build community and gain inspiration to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. If you're in Memphis, don't miss the visiting Troll exhibit at the Memphis Botanic Gardens, where the trolls lead visitors through an immersive experience focused on rediscovering and living in harmony with the Earth. For more information on the events, [click here](#) or follow us on Instagram at [thestateofsustainability](#).

JOIN A TENNESSEE EARTH MONTH EVENT!

4/5	MEMPHIS: TROLL FEST @ Memphis Botanic Gardens	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	
4/12	FRANKLIN: ARBOR DAY @ Pinkerton Park	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	
4/19	NASHVILLE: EARTH DAY FESTIVAL @Centennial Park	11:00 AM - 5:00 PM	
4/22	COOKEVILLE: EARTH DAY CELEBRATION @Tennessee Tech University	10:30 AM - 12:30 PM	
4/26	MURFREESBORO: EARTH DAY FESTIVAL @Historic Square Downtown	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	

Tennessee
Department of Environment & Conservation

Recipe of the Month

Looking for a creative way to use your food scraps? Try dying your easter eggs this year with food scraps such as avocado skins and onion peels! Learn how to make your own egg dye [here](#).



Events:

[Food Waste Prevention Week](#)

[Earth Month Events](#)

[Tennessee State Parks Events](#)

[Household Hazardous Waste Collection](#)

[Environmental Education in Tennessee Events](#)

Funding Opportunities:

[TDEC Grants and Programs](#)

[Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program](#)

[TDOT Rural Planning Initiative](#)

[Grants.gov](#)

Conferences, Workshops, & Training Opportunities:

[green|leader - The Nation's First Localized Sustainability Certificate Ongoing Opportunity](#)

[Tennessee Environmental Network Show of the South \(TENSOS\)](#)
Chattanooga, TN
May 14-16, 2025

[ReFED Food Waste Solutions Summit](#)
Seattle, WA
June 23-25, 2025

[Drive Electric Momentum Summit 2025](#)
Middle Tennessee State University
June 24, 2025



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