



Sustainability and Recycling

Love the Earth, Love Your Valentine

Valentine's Day is about showing your friends and loved ones how much you care, but it doesn't have to come at the cost of the environment. Whether it's children's Valentine's at school or adult Valentine's gifts and flowers, we can reduce waste in many thoughtful ways.



Consider the Packaging

Minimize packaging: Avoid cards and gifts with excessive plastic wrapping or packaging. Use reusable bags and recycled materials for gift wrapping.

Recycled/compostable envelopes: Look for envelopes made from recycled materials or that can be composted. Create your own using recycled paper—a quick Google search provides tutorials.



Sustainable Gifts

Shop Local: Buy gifts from local artisans and small business owners. It helps cut down on transportation emissions and supports Montanans.

Skip the Cut Flowers: Go for potted plants instead. They last longer and clean your home's air.

Experiences: Give concert or movie tickets, cooking or dancing lessons, or do something outside like skiing or snowshoeing.



Digital Alternatives

Create a digital card: Use a graphic design program to create unique cards to send electronically.

Send e-cards: Skip the physical card and send a heartfelt e-card, which can be found on many websites for free or low cost.

Be the Star: Record and send a personalized video message with your phone camera.



Sustainable Materials

Use old greeting cards: Cut out the best parts of past cards and collage them into new designs.

Repurpose cardboard and paper: Use cereal boxes, old envelopes, or scrap paper to create card bases.

Embellish with natural materials: Use twine, dried flowers, leaves, or pressed plants for a natural touch.

We will continue to showcase the Greater Helena area's monthly recycling performance. This month, we'll analyze December 2023 and 2024 recycling data to set a new benchmark and strive for even greater recycling success this year.

All numbers are in tons.	Dec. 2023	Dec. 2024
Aluminum/Tin/Glass/Plastics	27.5	27.8
Paper	15.1	10.4
E-Waste	0	0
Scrap Metal	14.7	48.2
Cardboard	90.5	78
Auto Batteries	0	.8
Lithium Batteries	.06	.06
Oil/Antifreeze	0	7.2
Grass/Leaves/Wood Chips/Bio-Solids/X-mas Trees/Food	412.7	374.9



Earth-Friendly Valentine's Day Dinners

Valentine's Day in Montana is a bit of a breath of fresh air in what can be a long, grey winter. It's a chance to celebrate those you love, whether it's a romantic candlelight dinner for two or a Galentine's Day gathering with your besties. If you're looking for ways to make your Valentine's Day meal a little more eco-conscious, here are some ideas for you.

Grow Your Own (or Buy Local!): February in Montana isn't exactly prime growing season, but the more you can focus on locally sourced ingredients, the more you help reduce the transportation emissions that come with shipping food long distances. Plus, you're supporting local farmers! If you're feeling ambitious, try growing some winter greens like spinach or lettuce using indoor hydroponics. Get creative with window herbs to add a gourmet touch to your meal. Don't forget about those root vegetables like potatoes, winter squash, and carrots – they store well throughout the winter (if stored properly!).



Source Your Meat Locally: Montana is a fantastic place to find locally sourced meat. Beef, pork, and even chicken is readily available from many local processors, and many have storefronts. As with produce, buying local reduces transportation emissions and supports our local ranchers. You can also thaw that venison from your fall hunt for a true grass-fed, locally sourced Montana meal!

Dine Out Responsibly: If you decide to treat your sweetheart to a night out, choose a restaurant that prioritizes sustainability. Look for places that source their ingredients locally, compost their food waste, and minimize packaging. Remember, restaurant portions can be generous! Consider sharing an entrée to reduce waste and avoid the need for a to-go container.



Sustainable Accoutrements: Other ways to make your Valentine's Day meal more eco-friendly:

- Swap disposable napkins for cloth ones.
- Say no to single-use plastics, including food packaging and utensils.
- Decorate with natural elements like candles and potted plants.
- Set the mood with soft lighting and music.

Small choices add up! By incorporating these ideas into your Valentine's Day you can show your love for the planet while celebrating your loved ones.

Even though winter still has a grip on us, let's start thinking about summer water conservation now! To help you understand how water usage changes throughout the year, we'll be sharing monthly water treatment data in this newsletter.

City of Helena December water usage comparison in millions of gallons for December 2023 and 2024.

	Ten Mile	Eureka	Missouri River	Monthly Total	Peak Day Demand	Average Day
2023	89.2	13.4	0	102.6	3.5	3.3
2024	0	0	101.6	101.6	3.7	3.3

Lithium-Ion Battery Safety: Tips for Handling and Recycling

February 18th is National Battery Day! Let's celebrate the power behind our devices while recognizing the importance of safe handling and proper disposal. Lithium-ion batteries, found in everything from smartphones to electric scooters, energize many items we use every day. As you explore Valentine's Day gifts, remember the role batteries play in our modern world and consider how to handle and dispose of them safely and responsibly.



When improperly handled, overcharged, or the battery becomes defective or damaged, lithium-ion batteries have the potential to swell, overheat, combust, and cause high-heat scenarios known as "thermal runaways," which cause thousands of fire incidents each year.

When handling and recycling lithium-ion battery-powered products, it is essential to understand the risks, incorporate proper handling techniques, and know how to dispose of them properly. Below are some helpful safety tips and disposal options:

Signs of a damaged/defective lithium-ion battery: Unusual device or battery behavior, failure to hold a charge, loose or damaged wiring, discoloration, corrosion, swelling, or overheating. If the device/battery begins getting too hot to hold or touch, is smoking or sparking, or flames are visible, evacuate the area immediately and call 911.

New Purchases/Replacements: When purchasing products with lithium-ion batteries, look for marking on the packaging that the battery was tested in a qualified lab. When replacing your device's battery, only purchase batteries from a qualified manufacturer and products designed for your specific device. For details, visit <https://tinyurl.com/LithiumBatterySafety>.

Recalls: Monitor lithium-ion battery recalls in your existing devices and check for them when purchasing new ones. For recall information visit www.cpsc.gov/Recalls.

Handling/Storage/Charging: Avoid dropping, rough handling, or vibrations that could crush, puncture, or disassemble your device's battery. Monitor your device/battery for a few hours if it has been dropped. E-bikes or e-scooters should not be stored inside the home; however, options for fire-proof battery bags are available (check the product manufacturer for details and options). Never overcharge your device's battery, and do not charge the device on a bed, couch, or soft surface.

Disposal options: Lithium-ion batteries can be disposed of at the City of Helena Transfer Station's lithium battery drop-off in the recycling area. Local options include Lowes, Home Depot, or Batteries Plus. Additional options include contacting the manufacturer of your device.

The Transfer Station will be closed and there will be no trash collection on Monday, February 17 for President's Day.