



Sustainability and Recycling

Cultivating a Sustainable Montana Garden

Dreaming of a vibrant garden that thrives without constant watering? Curating a healthy and sustainable Montana garden is an incredibly easy way to save water, time, and ultimately, money! By choosing drought-tolerant and native perennials, you can ensure your garden remains stunning year after year, all while actively supporting vital conservation efforts and fostering a thriving local ecosystem. This smart approach to gardening is called **Xeriscaping**.



A great example of xeriscaping is a project the City of Helena embarked on last summer, installing a beautiful Xeriscape Garden right at the Law & Justice Center.

Thanks to a generous design donation from Devon Malizia, landscape designer and owner of Trellis + Trowels, the Law & Justice Center now boasts a breathtaking new look! While this project will soon enter its second phase, it stands as a fantastic local example of what a garden can achieve using only native and drought-tolerant plants.

This Xeriscape thoughtfully demonstrates how grouping perennials with plants with similar needs, such as Blanketflower and Little Bluestem, leads to less maintenance, significantly reduced water use, and even improved soil structure. It's a win-win for your garden and our environment!

Another effective strategy for minimizing water usage in your garden is to mulch. Mulch is a loose material, typically composed of organic matter like tree bark, wood chips, or compost. When added to garden beds, it works wonders by helping with moisture retention, protecting delicate plant roots from extreme temperatures, and effectively reducing weed growth. It's like a cozy, protective blanket for your plants!

Choosing the perfect plants for your unique landscape can feel overwhelming, but don't worry – there are many fantastic local resources available to help you. Visit any of the local garden centers around the Helena Valley for guidance and native plants!



For more inspiration and guidance, check out these helpful websites:

- [Montana Native Plant Society](#)
- [Growing Friends of Helena](#)
- [MSU Extension – Agriculture and Natural Resources](#)

Let's work together to make Helena even more beautiful and sustainable, one drought-tolerant plant at a time.

Speaking of water conservation, here is the City's latest water usage data. Differences between treatment plant outputs are typically due to maintenance or the need to utilize additional water sources as natural water flow fluctuates throughout the year.

City of Helena water usage comparison in millions of gallons for March-May 2025		Ten Mile	Eureka	Missouri River	Monthly Total	Peak Day Demand	Average Day
	March	0	18.8	89	107.8	3.7	3.5
	April	19.2	18.9	74.6	112.7	4.9	3.8
	May	156	19.2	9	192	9	6.2



Stars, Stripes, and Sustainability! Your Guide to a Greener Fourth in Helena

The Fourth of July is a time for celebration, community, and honoring our freedom – and here in Helena, we love a good celebration! As we gear up for BBQs, dazzling lights, and patriotic cheer, let's also remember the beautiful environment that makes our city so special. With a few mindful choices, we can make this Independence Day a win for freedom and for Mother Earth!

Sizzle Sustainably: Your Eco-Friendly BBQ Blueprint



A Fourth of July feast is practically tradition! Here's how to fire up the grill with a lighter footprint:

Local Flavors, Lower Impact: Think local first for your BBQ bounty! Sourcing meat from Helena-area co-ops or your neighborhood butcher means less travel time for your food (goodbye, extra emissions!) and more support for our fantastic local economy. Feeling plant-powered? Grill up some delicious veggies, maybe even some superstars straight from your own garden!

Grill Green, Not Mean: Ditch the old-school charcoal, which can pump out more greenhouse gases and isn't great to breathe. Opt for cleaner grilling with propane, electric grills, or even sustainably sourced wood. Feeling adventurous? Explore the power of the sun with solar grilling options!

Dish Up a Difference: Say "no thanks" to single-use plastics. Embrace reusable plates, cutlery, and festive fabric napkins. If you're in a pinch, look for biodegradable options (like those made from corn, sugarcane, or sugar beets) – they're a step up from traditional plastic.

Red, White, Blue, and Green All Over: Deck Out Your Celebration Creatively!

Showing our patriotic spirit with decorations is a must! Let's get crafty and eco-conscious:

Dress the Part, Naturally: Instead of buying a mountain of single-use decorations, let your guests be the decor! Encourage everyone to wear their best red, white, and blue. For table settings, think simple and beautiful – locally gathered wildflowers can make a stunning statement.

Edible Artistry: Let your food do the decorating! Create vibrant red, white, and blue fruit skewers, layered drinks, or festive desserts. Delicious and decorative – that's a win-win!

Shine On, Season After Season: Invest in decorations you can love for more than one holiday. Those classic red and white string lights? Perfect for the Fourth, charming for Valentine's Day, and festive for the Christmas season!

Swap 'Til You Drop (the Waste!): Host a holiday decor swap with friends, family, or neighbors. Everyone brings their gently used decorations, and you all get to refresh your holiday style without buying new. It's a fun way to connect and reduce!

DIY Sparkle: Unleash your inner artist! Craft flags from fabric scraps, cut stars from used cardboard or paperboard (and paint them with non-toxic paints!), create charming window paintings, or design a beautiful wreath using natural materials.





Beyond the Bang: Brilliant Firework Alternatives



The "oohs" and "aahs" of fireworks are iconic, but they can release heavy metals, colorants, and propellants that impact our air, water, and soil. Consider these brighter ideas:

Light Up the Night (Responsibly!): Why not skip personal fireworks altogether and go all out with reusable lights? String them up, project them, get creative! They can be enjoyed year after year and even add a magical glow to your yard all summer long.

Community Sparkle in East Helena: Let the pros handle the big show! Attending the community fireworks display in East Helena is a fantastic way to experience the magic. You can even consider contributing to their fireworks fund to support this wonderful community effort.

As you prepare for your 4th of July celebration, please remember that fireworks use is prohibited within the City limits. You must also be 18 years or older to possess fireworks in the City and can't have more than \$50 worth of fireworks in your possession at a time. Find the complete City Code at www.helenamt.gov/city-code/.

This Fourth of July let's show that Helena's spirit of independence includes a commitment to protecting our incredible environment. The sky's the limit (and not just for fireworks!) when it comes to celebrating sustainably. Here's to a joyful, safe, and green Independence Day!

Keeping Helena's Alleys Clear for Efficient Garbage Collection

With the Montana sunshine finally gracing us, Helena is buzzing with spring cleanup! As you tackle your yards, let's also give some love to our alleys. First, as you trim those trees and bushes, remember the branches belong at the Transfer Station, not in your garbage cans (check [April's newsletter](#) for the scoop on what we do with them!). Next, help us keep the alleys clear for our garbage trucks.

The City of Helena is dedicated to making garbage collection as smooth and safe as possible for every resident. To truly shine in this effort, we need your partnership in keeping our alleys clear and readily accessible for our hardworking garbage trucks.

You might think, "My garbage gets picked up just fine!" but behind the scenes, our drivers often face a challenging obstacle course of blockages, misplaced containers, and cans packed with tricky items. By embracing a few simple guidelines, we can collectively transform the collection process, making it safer and more efficient for everyone.

Helena Recycling: April 2024 vs. 2025

All numbers are in tons	April 2024	April 2025
Aluminum/Tin/Glass/Plastics	24.8	5.6
Paper	13	3.4
E-Waste	2.3	2.4
Scrap Metal	125	69.7
Cardboard	78	81.8
Auto Batteries	2.7	2.5
Lithium Batteries	0	0
Oil/Antifreeze	0	7.5
Grass/Leaves/Wood Chips/Bio-Solids/X-mas Trees/Food	429.8	70.4



Clear the Way: Obstruction-Free Alleys Are Happy Alleys!

Imagine navigating a massive vehicle down a narrow path – that's often the reality for our garbage truck drivers! One of their biggest hurdles is encountering alleys choked with various items. To ensure our trucks can drive through without delay, please help us keep your alleyway clear of all obstructions. This includes, but is certainly not limited to:

Raised garden beds and landscaping: While alleys seem like a good space for these, they create issues for our large trucks trying to navigate to your garbage cans.

Recreational and passenger vehicles, and boats: Alleys are for access, not long-term parking or storage.

Wood piles and other stored items: Let's keep our alleys free of clutter.

Overhanging branches: Even when they don't seem that overgrown, they can cause costly damage to our valuable garbage trucks. Trim them further back than you think is necessary.

In essence, let's reclaim our alleys as clear pathways, not storage units to ensure our trucks have the ample space they need to operate safely and efficiently.

Proper Container Placement and Contents



Believe it or not, how and what you place in your garbage can makes a huge difference for our collection crew. Let's make their job a breeze:

Face the Opening: This is crucial! Always position your trash can so its opening faces the alley or road.

No Branches, Please! We love green Helena, but branches are a no-go for garbage cans. Remember, green waste has a special home at the Transfer Station.

Even Weight Distribution: Ever seen a top-heavy can take a tumble? Smaller cans are especially prone to tipping. Help us out by distributing the weight evenly, placing heavier items at the bottom.

Bag Your Garbage: This is a big one for a cleaner Helena! Always bag your garbage and tie it securely. Loose trash is a nightmare, especially on windy days, and our drivers simply don't have the time to chase after rogue debris.



By embracing these simple yet impactful habits, you're not just helping with garbage collection; you're actively contributing to a safer, more efficient, and ultimately, a cleaner Helena for all of us.

**The Transfer Station will be closed Thursday, June 19 for Juneteenth
Regular Hours**

Open daily, 8 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

Vehicles must be unloaded and out of the facility by 4:30 p.m.