



# Sustainability and Recycling

## Smash for Sustainability: Pumpkins Find New Life After Halloween

It's that time of year again when pumpkins are everywhere! But what happens to your jack-o'-lanterns once Halloween is over? Every year, over one billion pounds of pumpkins end up in landfills, creating a significant amount of waste. Instead of trashing your pumpkin, why not join the smash?



### Avoid the Trash, Join the Smash!

Join the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County for the first annual PUMPKIN SMASH on Nov. 7 from 4-6 p.m.! This family-friendly event is a fun and festive way to properly dispose of your pumpkins.

Here's what you can expect:

- **Jack-o'-lantern Drop:** Bring your unpainted, candle-free pumpkins to watch them fall in spectacular fashion.
- **Pumpkin Explosions:** Watch as whole pumpkins are dropped and exploded for a truly memorable show.
- **Compost for a Cause:** All the smashed pumpkins will be collected and transported to the Lewis and Clark County Landfill. There, they'll be mixed with green waste to be turned into nutrient-rich, garden-grade compost.
- **Fun for the Whole Family:** Enjoy hot cider, games, and other activities.

Don't let your pumpkin go to waste. Bring it down to the Performance Park, Downtown on the Walking Mall on Friday, Nov. 7 from 4-6 p.m. For more information call the Parks Department at 406-447-8463. We can't wait to see you there!

## Step, Pedal, and Roll: Helena Families Join National Walk, Bike & Roll to School Month



Finding ways to reduce vehicle usage and encourage more walking, riding, and rolling is a great way to build a more sustainable community. Helena families can take advantage of Montana's beautiful fall weather by participating in National Walk, Bike, and Roll to School Day. While the official day was Wed. Oct. 8, it can be done all month and most of the year as a fun way to promote active routes to school and healthy habits.

Visit [walkbiketoschool.org](http://walkbiketoschool.org) to register, be included in the national count, and explore a wide assortment of resources for planning an event.

According to the website, "The first National Walk & Roll to School Day – called Walk Our Children to School Day – was held in 1997. In May 2012, the first-ever National Bike & Roll to School Day – called Bike to School Day – was celebrated across the U.S."

In 2024, communities from more than 47 states and Washington, D.C., participated. Even without a planned event, families are encouraged to take part and, hopefully, make walking, biking, or rolling to school (when weather permits) a regular and sustainable choice for a healthier family and community.



## Stretching the Harvest: Low-Cost Food Preservation Methods for the Home Garden

A thriving garden often gives us more than we can eat in the moment. Preserving that abundance ensures you enjoy homegrown flavor year-round while reducing waste. Many people assume preservation requires expensive equipment, but some of the most effective methods are simple, low-cost, and have been used for generations. Below is a categorized guide to help you match the right preservation method to your crops.



**Root Cellaring & Cool Storage:** Some produce doesn't need processing at all—it simply stores well under the right conditions. Carrots, beets, turnips, and parsnips keep in boxes of damp sand or sawdust.



**Drying & Dehydrating:** Drying is one of the oldest, simplest, and most affordable preservation methods. It removes moisture, slowing spoilage and shrinking storage space.

- **Air/Sun Drying:** Works well in warm, dry climates. Herbs (basil, oregano, mint, thyme), hot peppers, and beans can be tied in bundles and hung indoors or placed on racks outdoors.
- **Oven Drying:** A home oven set to its lowest temperature with the door cracked can dry apple slices, tomatoes, or zucchini.
- **DIY Solar Dryers:** Simple frames covered with clear plastic or mesh screens can be built for a few dollars.
- **Dehydrator (optional investment):** Affordable models are available; efficient for large batches of fruit leather, jerky, or dried fruit.



**Freezing:** Freezing is quick, preserves fresh flavor, and doesn't require much more than a freezer and some sturdy containers.

- **Blanch and Freeze Vegetables:** Beans, broccoli, corn, peas, and leafy greens benefit from blanching (brief boiling followed by ice water) to preserve color, flavor, and nutrients.
- **Fruit Freezing:** Berries, cherries, and peach slices can be frozen on trays and then bagged to prevent clumping.
- **Herbs in Ice Cubes:** Chop herbs, pack into ice cube trays with water or oil, and pop into soups or sautés later.

**Canning:** Canning is more of an investment than drying or freezing but still affordable with basic equipment (canner, jars, lids).

- **Water Bath Canning (for high-acid foods):** Tomatoes (with added acid), pickles, jams, jellies, and fruits are safe for this method.
- **Pressure Canning (for low-acid foods):** Green beans, corn, carrots, potatoes, and meats require a pressure canner for safety.



*Reuse & Budget Tips: Jars are reusable for years, and canning supplies often show up secondhand at yard sales and thrift stores.*



**Fermentation:** Fermentation relies on beneficial microbes to transform fresh produce into tangy, probiotic-rich foods. It requires only salt, water, and clean jars.

- **Sauerkraut & Kimchi:** Cabbage is classic, but kohlrabi, carrots, and radishes also ferment beautifully.
- **Fermented Pickles:** Cucumbers, beans, and peppers develop a crisp texture and sour flavor without vinegar.

*Storage: Keep ferments in a cool, dark spot, then refrigerate or move to a root cellar for longer keeping.*

**When in doubt, make them into a meal!**

### Ratatouille

#### Main Ingredients (or whatever extra vegetables you may have)

- 1 medium eggplant cut into 1/4 inch thick slices
- 2 medium zucchini cut into 1/4 inch thick slices
- 1 medium yellow squash cut into 1/4 inch thick slices
- 1 medium red bell pepper cut into rings
- 1 medium onion thinly sliced
- 2 cups tomato sauce use your favorite kind
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 0.5 teaspoon salt
- 0.5 teaspoon black pepper freshly ground
- 0.25 cup fresh basil chopped for garnish



#### Preparation Steps

- Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C).
- Spread the tomato sauce evenly on the bottom of a baking dish.
- Layer the vegetables in the dish, alternating each one to create a colorful pattern.
- Drizzle the vegetables with olive oil and season with thyme, oregano, salt, and pepper.
- Cover the dish with foil and bake in the preheated oven for about 30 minutes.
- Remove the foil and bake for an additional 10 minutes until vegetables are tender.
- Garnish with fresh basil before serving.

#### Notes

Ensure to use fresh vegetables for the best flavor. Adjust seasoning according to your taste.

## Helena Water Usage: July-September 2025 Comparison

| City of Helena water usage comparison in millions of gallons. 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. |           | Ten Mile | Eureka | Missouri River | Monthly Total | Peak Day Demand | Average Day |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | July      | 128.1    | 20     | 176.1          | 324.2         | 11.8            | 10.5        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | August    | 126.5    | 19.6   | 157.2          | 303.3         | 11.7            | 9.8         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | September |          |        |                |               |                 |             |



## Put Your Garden to Bed for the Winter

As autumn sets in, it's time to start thinking about putting your garden to bed for the winter. This crucial process not only cleans up your yard, but also prepares the soil and plants for a long, cold winter, ensuring a healthy and vibrant start to the next growing season! Here are some key steps to get your garden ready for its winter nap.

**Clean Up:** This may be the most important part of buttoning up your garden for the winter. Start by removing spent annuals, clearing out any lingering root vegetables, and weeding thoroughly. By getting rid of pesky weeds now, you can save yourself from weeding next season!



**Amend and Protect the Soil:** Fall is the perfect time to enrich your soil. Spread a generous layer of compost or well-rotted manure over the surface of your garden to provide important nutrients to the soil. Once that is in, add a healthy amount of mulch (shredded leaves, straw, wood chips, etc) to insulate the bed and keep weeds at bay.

**Prepare Perennials and Shrubs:** Resist the urge to do a heavy prune on your perennials in the fall. It's better to wait until spring. However, you can tidy up by cutting back dead stems and foliage, but leave some standing for winter interest and to provide shelter for beneficial insects.

It is also important to apply a thick layer of mulch around the base of perennial plants, trees, and shrubs. This helps to insulate the roots from extreme temperature fluctuations and prevent frost heave, where the freezing and thawing of the soil pushes plants out of the ground.

**Tend to Tools and Hoses:** Give your gardening tools a good cleaning so they are ready to work in the spring! Remove any soil, rust, and sap, then sharpen blades and apply a light coat of oil to prevent rust. Disconnect and drain all garden hoses. Roll them up neatly and store them in a shed or garage to prevent them from freezing and cracking. Don't forget to drain your sprinkler systems and turn off the water supply to outdoor spigots!

By following these steps, you'll ensure your garden is well-rested and ready to burst forth with life when the Montana snow finally melts. A little effort now will pay off in a big way next spring!

## Helena Recycling: August 2024 vs. 2025



|                                                     | All numbers are in tons | August 2024 | August 2025 |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Aluminum/Tin/Glass/Plastics                         |                         | 24.8        | 22.8        |
| Paper                                               |                         | 4.2         | 5.2         |
| E-Waste                                             |                         | 0           | 0           |
| Scrap Metal                                         |                         | 62.8        | 84.5        |
| Cardboard                                           |                         | 78.7        | 88.1        |
| Auto Batteries                                      |                         | 2.3         | 2.0         |
| Lithium Batteries                                   |                         | 0           | 0           |
| Oil/Antifreeze                                      |                         | 7.6         | 3.7         |
| Grass/Leaves/Wood Chips/Bio-Solids/X-mas Trees/Food |                         | 45.3        | 196.2       |

## Transfer Station Hours

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

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