



# Sustainability and Recycling

## A Thoughtful Valentine's Day, the Sustainable Way

In a world of never-ending consumerism and commercialized holidays, sustainability can seem like a losing proposition. However, rest assured that all the little efforts you make add up to a bigger impact, and all of us doing it together add up even more. This Valentine's Day, take a moment to be mindful of your consumption and choices. Even a few minor changes matter.



### Experiences Over Stuff

Perhaps it's cliché, but treating your sweetheart to a memorable activity can be far more impactful than buying them "stuff" from the store. Luckily for us, Helena has a wealth of things to do, including:

- Listening to live music,
- Going to the theatre,
- Visiting the Montana Heritage Center & Historical Society,
- Taking a lesson (cooking, painting, pottery, dancing, and more!),
- Participating in any number of outdoor adventures.

Plan a day or an evening activity, take lots of pictures, and you'll have something to remember the day long after the chocolates are gone and the flowers have wilted.

## The Impacts of DIY

Whether you are the handy or artistic type or completely lack creative talent, it's always the thought that counts and will be appreciated.

- If you're a welder, woodworker, potter, or artist, use your talents to make your loved one something special and one-of-a-kind.
- Even if your creativity is limited, the internet is full of DIY ideas depending on your loved ones' interests. A quick search will offer plenty of instructions for people of varying talents. From personalized coupon books to amateur paintings, a little creativity goes a long way.
- Be mindful and resourceful with the materials you use, aiming for reusable and recycled materials where possible.
- Even flowers can be DIY (see *Cutting Out Cutting Flowers*)!





## Valentine's "Cards"

Whether they're for kids or adults, there are plenty of ideas for sustainable, fun-to-make Valentines.

- **Remake Crayons:** Take old, broken crayons, melt them down, and pour them into fun Valentine's Day-themed molds.
- **Seed Paper:** Make sustainable Valentine's cards out of seed paper. It's a fun way for kids to make DIY Valentine's. Those on the receiving end can then plant them in the spring for a flowery surprise come summer!
- **Painted rocks, seashells, or other found objects:** Scavenge natural objects found in your local area and paint them with Valentine's or uplifting messages using markers or paint.
- **Personalized Bookmarks:** Using recycled cardboard and various repurposed materials, make bookmarks specific to each person you're gifting them to.



*The possibilities are endless for sustainable Valentine's Day ideas, limited only by your imagination. Whatever you choose, remember that every little choice adds up to making a big difference.*



## Recycling Numbers December 2024 vs. 2025

	All numbers are in <b>tons</b>	December 2024	December 2025
Aluminum/Tin/Glass/Plastics		27.8	31.9
Paper		10.4	3.1
E-Waste		0	0
Scrap Metal		48.2	56.9
Cardboard		78	91
Auto Batteries		.8	1.5
Lithium Batteries		.06	0
Oil/Antifreeze		7.2	0
Grass/Leaves/Wood Chips/Bio-Solids/X-mas Trees/Food		374.9	1.9



## Cutting Out Cut Flowers

While cut flowers are a traditional and beautiful Valentine’s Day gift, they carry financial and environmental costs. Energy intensive farming, long distance transportation, extreme water usage, land degradation, and packaging waste are just some of the harsh environmental impacts of the cut flower market.

This Valentine’s Day, why not think about your flowers differently? Here are some sustainable alternatives to cut flowers:

### Buy Flowering Plants

Plants are a great way to give the gift of flowers, while leaving a lasting impression. Check out local nurseries for a variety of indoor, outdoor, and native plants. Not only does a plant bring life to a room, but it also serves as a reminder of your feelings for years to come!

### Make Paper Flowers

Paper flowers are a fun and sustainable way to show your affection! Creating beautiful flowers using paper destined for the recycling bin is easier than you think. There are many tutorials online, and the result will leave your Valentine with a long lasting, thoughtful, and meaningful bouquet. As a bonus, you can also use seed paper to make flowers, allowing your loved ones to plant your gift and enjoy real flowers in the future.

### Gift Sola Wood Flowers

Sola flowers are not only elegant and beautiful, but super sustainable as well! Made from a fast growing, renewable resource, these flowers are compostable and typically stained with natural dyes.

### Support Local Artists

Helena is home to a vast number of talented artists that create everything from floral paintings to flowery pottery and more. While cut flowers last only a short time before being destined for the compost pile, art can last lifetimes and bring joy to any space.

***If cut flowers are imperative to your holiday celebration, shopping at local nurseries is your best option. They will happily help you find the perfect native flowers for the occasion and come with minimal to no packaging.***



## Helena Water Usage: November 2025 - January 2026

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
	<b>November</b>	74.9	19.1	9	103.1	5	3.4
	<b>December</b>	83.1	19.1	1.8	104	3.6	3.4
	<b>January</b>	89.8	18.8	0	108.6	4.6	3.5



## Love the Planet (And Your Wallet): Sustainable Valentine's Dinner Ideas

Valentine's Day is often associated with grand gestures, but the most meaningful celebrations don't have to cost the earth—literally or financially. If you're looking to skip the overpriced prix-fixe menus and the carbon footprint of imported roses, here are three ways to create a romantic, sustainable dinner on a budget.

### The "Root-to-Stem" Vegi-Valentine

The most sustainable meal is one that uses what's already in season and minimizes waste. In February, look for hearty root vegetables and greens, and consider a Roasted Vegetable Galette or creamy Seasonal Risotto. Root vegetables often don't get the love they deserve, so give your loved one a Vegi-Valentine's, you'll save significantly on the pocketbook as well as keep those organics out of the landfill.

### The Low-Waste, High-Sentiment Indoor Picnic

Who says dinner has to happen at the table? Clear some space on the floor, lay down a vintage quilt, and lean into a "charcuterie" style spread. Use real cloth napkins and candles you already have to set the mood without buying "single-use" décor. Shop bulk bins for nuts, dried fruits, and chocolates (to avoid plastic packaging). Shop local for fresh-baked bread and locally brewed craft beer, and, if leaning towards the "wine list," opt for boxed wine (many high-quality, sustainable brands now use boxes, which have a much lower carbon footprint than glass).

### A "Second-Hand" Supper

Elevate your sustainable dinner plans by inviting your loved one to visit a local thrift store together, a few days prior, to find a "new-to-you" vintage platter or unique wine glasses. It turns dinner into a curated experience. Giving kitchenware a second life is the ultimate circular-economy win.

***Sustainability isn't about being perfect; it's about making intentional choices. A candlelit dinner made with local ingredients, shared with someone you love, is the ultimate "green" luxury.***





## Introducing the City's Newest (and Quietest) Powerhouse!

Helena is plugging into the future! We're thrilled to introduce Unit 100, a 2025 Ford Lightning and the very first all-electric vehicle to join the City's passenger fleet.

This isn't just a new set of wheels; it's a two-year rolling experiment. We've added this truck to the lineup to see if electric power can handle the heavy lifting of municipal work. From hauling gear to remote sites to powering equipment in the field, we're putting this truck to the ultimate test.

### Why Unit 100 is a Game Changer:

- The "Frunk": With no engine under the hood, there's a massive front trunk for secure, weather-proof storage.
- Extended Range: Equipped with an extended-life battery to handle long days and even longer routes (up to 300 miles before needing to charge).
- A Mobile Power Grid: With an abundance of outlets, this truck is essentially a giant mobile battery.

### The Two-Year Challenge

Unit 100 is available for multi-departmental use, meaning anyone on City Staff can check it out and put it through its paces. While they drive, staff will collect data to answer the tough questions:

- **Performance:** Can the 220V outlet reliably run equipment for a good amount of time in the field?
- **Durability:** How does it handle steep, rugged climbs to places like the Red Mountain Flume or Chessman Reservoir and how well does the battery hold up in Montana's climate?
- **Infrastructure:** Are our current facilities ready for a seamless charging experience?
- **Efficiency:** How does the mileage hold up under real-world City workloads?
- **Shareability:** If feasible, would the City benefit from a motor pool system utilizing EV vehicles?

By the end of this pilot program, we'll be able to answer all of these questions and more, giving us an accurate picture of how the modern EV fits into our long-term fleet goals.

## Transfer Station Tip of the Month: Outlying Recycling Locations

Don't forget there are multiple recycling locations in Helena and the Helena Valley, including:

**Safeway** - 611 N Montana Ave \*Has been relocated to behind CVS\*

**Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds** - 98 W Custer Ave

**Boeing** - 3200 Skyway Dr, just past the Airport. **\*Temporarily closed due to construction\***

**Across from Dale Harris Park** (Dale Harris Park Address is 279 S Cruse Ave)

**Grub Stake** - 1450 Lincoln Rd West

**Canyon Ferry Mini-Basket** - 3012 Canyon Ferry Rd

**Laib-Ation Station** - 410 Lincoln Rd.

**Transfer Station** -1975 N Benton Ave.

## Transfer Station Hours

**CLOSED February 17 for President's Day**

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

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