

PLEASE KEEP THIS GUIDE AS A REFERENCE.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

ECOSYSTEM PRESERVATION

WASTE PREVENTION

ECO-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPES

HEALTHY RIVERS

DUMP NO WASTE → DRAINS TO WATERWAYS

HOME ECO-GUIDE

10 Environmentally Friendly Tips for your Home and Garden



WHEN WE ALL DO OUR PART, WE CAN ADDRESS THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS.

Being “green” isn’t only about recycling. In our homes and on our properties we can make many adjustments to protect the environment. Sustainability, in fact, can be incorporated into practically anything. Your everyday choices make a difference.

This guide is designed to help all residents contribute to the sustainability of our community.

1 KEEP OUR RIVER CLEAN AND HEALTHY

The Township of Cranford is located in the Rahway River watershed. A watershed is an area of land that drains or “sheds” water into a specific body of water and, in the case of Cranford, that body of water is the Rahway River.

Residents are responsible for keeping their river clean, and it begins with sustainably managing stormwater on our properties.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater, from rain or melted snow, can become “runoff” flowing over the ground surface. As stormwater runs over rooftops, walkways and streets and into storm drains, pollutants are carried along. Stormwater runoff eventually discharges into the river causing water pollution and, in some cases, localized flooding. Common pollutants include lawn fertilizers, pet waste, trash and grass clippings.



If your home’s drainage system directs stormwater to the street, consider these options, collectively referred to as “Green Infrastructure,” to reduce or eliminate runoff from your property.

- **Redirect gutter downspouts** and sump pumps to drain into your grass and/or plants.
- **Choose permeable pavements** and reduce paved surfaces on your property.
- **Install a rain barrel** to collect stormwater for reuse.
- **Plant a rain garden** to capture, filter and infiltrate stormwater runoff. A rain garden is a landscaped shallow basin that captures water and provides for a garden of plants. Rain gardens are beautiful and low maintenance. See the Rain Garden Manual of New Jersey: issuu.com/rutgerswater/docs/rain_garden_manual.



Storm Drains

Naturally, not all stormwater runoff can be redirected, so residents should also keep properties, streets and surrounding areas, including the nearest storm drain, free of debris such as litter, pet waste, chemicals and yard waste.

- **Dump no waste into a storm drain.**
- **Secure the lid of your trash can** to avoid unintentional litter due to wind or animals.
- **Keep leaves, dirt and grass clippings away from and out of storm drains.** These materials, although organic, increase levels of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus in waterways, causing harm and leading to increased algae creation in lakes, making them unfit for many recreational uses.



2 FOOD IS TOO GOOD TO WASTE

Whether it is grapes that have turned moldy before you remembered to eat them, leftover soup that was forgotten in the back of the fridge or more bananas than you know what to do with, wasted food is unfortunately very common. When food is thrown out not only is the food itself wasted, but also all the resources it took to produce and transport it. Follow these helpful tips to get more out of your food and budget.

- **Smart Shopping:** Plan meals and food shopping trips and buy only what you need.
- **Smart Storage:** Store food for maximum freshness and organize items in the refrigerator and freezer by oldest to newest.
- **Smart Serving:** Watch portion sizes and avoid overserving by offering only the right amount of food and drink to be eaten during each meal.
- **Smart Leftovers:** Keep tabs on leftovers and older ingredients and eat them before they spoil. You may even develop a new favorite dish in the process.



3 CONSERVE WATER

When we reduce our water usage, we also reduce the amount of energy required to process and deliver it to our homes. Whether in the kitchen or bathroom, small changes in water use can add up to large savings on our water bills as well as significant water conservation.

- **Choose products with the WaterSense** label for water-efficient items such as shower heads, faucets and toilets.



- **Check for leaks** in sinks, toilets and outdoor hoses and fix them.
- **Turn on the faucet only when rinsing** during dishwashing, tooth brushing or bathing.
- **Always run full loads** in the clothes washer and dishwasher to optimize water use.

4 REUSE, REPAIR AND SHARE

Always choose items that can be reused and repaired instead of single-use things that end up as piles of garbage.

Choose to Reuse and Avoid Single-Use Plastics

- Opt for reusable party ware and ditch single-use forks, plates and cups for entertaining.
- Choose reusable containers for food storage and eliminate single-use plastic baggies.
- Avoid single-use bottled water.
- Use cloth napkins which can be reused for years.
- Borrow books and materials from your local library.
- Shop at consignment clothing shops and home salvage stores.
- Donate home goods, clothing and toys to charities, social service agencies or neighborhood swaps.



Repair It

Always try to repair an item before trashing it and buying new. In many cases, home goods can last for many more years after a small fix.



Sharing Saves Money for Everyone Involved

Maintaining a home often means a need for various home maintenance items. Consider sharing with neighbors and friends, especially occasionally-used items such as power tools, snow blowers, lawn mowers, ladders and garden tools.

5 SWITCH TO ECO-FRIENDLY CLEANING


Choose cleaning supplies that are not harmful to the environment to aid in reducing pollution and waste, especially plastics, whether you hire a cleaning company or do it yourself.

- **Carefully choose biodegradable and nontoxic products.**
- **Select supplies that minimize plastic packaging.**
- **Buy in bulk or refill** via a service or refill location.
- **Use washable cleaning cloths** instead of paper towels.
- **Try homemade cleaners.** Mix vinegar and water for an eco-friendly glass and mirror cleaner.



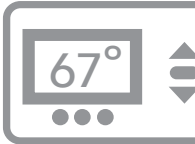
6 DECREASE PAPER USE

Paper production involves not only cutting down trees but using energy to manufacture and transport products. Therefore, by using less paper, we conserve trees and energy too.

- **Eliminate junk mail** by stopping prescreened offers via *optoutprescreen.com* and always request that your mailing address not be shared when signing up for new services or with new vendors.
- **Select paperless** options for bills, statements, notices and publications.  PAPERLESS
- **Reuse paper.** Use both sides of paper, reuse cardboard boxes, and repurpose newspapers and magazines as gift wrap.

7 BE ENERGY EFFICIENT

Conserving energy use at home is crucial to the environment and lowers energy bills.

- **Utility companies offer free home energy assessments** where the aim is “whole house” solutions to reduce both energy costs and carbon emissions. Via this program, a certified energy efficiency professional assesses your home and proposes energy efficient solutions. Check with your utility company.
- **Choose products with the ENERGY STAR label** to conserve energy and reduce your utility bills. These products are certified as energy efficient and include appliances, thermostats, heating and cooling equipment and lighting.
- **Adjust your thermostat.** An adjustment of only a few degrees can lead to savings, so try lowering the heating system temperature during the cold months and increasing the temperature of your air conditioning during the hot and humid months.  During the cold months, open the shades to bring in natural sunlight, adding heat to rooms. During the warm months, try a combination of ceiling fans, open windows and pulled curtains as an alternative to air conditioning.



- **Replace light bulbs with LED lights**, which last longer and use less electricity.
- **Always turn off lights when they are not needed, and keep away “energy vampires”** by turning off electronic devices when not in use and unplugging them once fully charged.



8 ESTABLISH AN ECO-FRIENDLY YARD

Your yard is part of the earth's ecosystem. Whether you hire a landscaper or do it yourself, incorporate the following methods into your yard's maintenance routines for ideal health of the earth and its systems. When using a landscaping company, be sure to review your sustainable choices with them ahead of each season.



- **Maintain your lawn naturally** by leaving grass clippings on the lawn after mowing. Grass clippings, once decomposed, supply the lawn with necessary nutrients.
- **Keep your trees healthy.** Trees do the heavy lifting of sequestering carbon dioxide, cooling our homes and neighborhoods, absorbing stormwater and increasing property values. If you must cut down a tree, check any local ordinance requirements before tree removal and always replant with a species native to the area.
- **Fallen leaves are beneficial to your landscape; keep them on your property.** Retain leaves on lawns and mow over them with a mulching mower to create mulch that provides essential nutrients to the grass. Leaves also serve as a mulch in landscape beds to improve the soil and provide shelter to beneficial insects.
- **Use rakes or brooms instead of leaf blowers** to remove leaves from walkways and patios. In addition to noise pollution, leaf blowers cause air pollution from both the exhaust they emit and the airborne debris they create.



- **Choose natural mosquito control** instead of toxic yard sprays. Effective methods include removing standing water where mosquitos breed, using outdoor fans to deter mosquitos and applying natural insect repellent to your skin and/or clothing.
- **When shopping at a nursery, select native plants.** Native flowering plants and grasses are well-adapted to the local climate and soil and, as a result, preserve natural ecosystems. Native plants are naturally low maintenance by requiring less water and eliminating the need for fertilizers and pesticides. For more information go to the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station's online Native Plant fact sheet: njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1140.



9 RECYCLING IS GOOD, CREATING LESS WASTE IS BETTER

Always aim to **reduce** waste and **refuse** items that will be discarded shortly after use or that you do not need. Items that are put in recycling and compost are waste, even if they have the chance of being made into something else. Strive to eliminate or reduce waste no matter if the materials are recyclable or compostable.

Compost

Food scraps (unavoidable food waste) and yard waste make up a large percentage of what we throw away, so keep them out of incinerators and landfills by composting instead. Think of composting as ‘recycling’—organic materials decompose to become an odorless black material and, when added back to the earth, compost enriches and restores depleted nutrients in the soil.



- **DIY composting** can be set up at home in compost bins, tumblers or piles. Tips and resources are plentiful. To get started, find the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station’s online Home Composting fact sheet: njaes.rutgers.edu/fs811.
- **Drop off food waste** at the Cranford Township Conservation Center for conversion to biofuels as part of the Food Waste to Energy Program.
- Alternatively, a **compost pick-up service** will collect residential food scraps to be composted at an offsite location.

Recycle Right

Follow local recycling guidelines that indicate what is accepted and what is not, as rules can vary from one town to the next.

- **Download the Recycle Coach app** to view a calendar of curbside recycling pick-up dates and lists of accepted items: recyclecoach.com.
- **Only deposit accepted materials for recycling.** Unaccepted items or items soiled with food will contaminate batches of recyclables. Plastic film, bubble wrap and plastic baggies are NOT accepted in curbside recycling and can cause damage to equipment.
- **Union County’s recycling program conducts regularly scheduled events** such as household hazardous waste, scrap metal collection and paper shredding: ucnj.org/recycling/.
- **Many other items are accepted at the Cranford Township Conservation Center, located at 210 Birchwood Ave.,** including electronics, motor oil, flexible plastic film, plastics #3-7, and styrofoam. Additionally, grass, leaves and brush are accepted with an annual permit. Items accepted for recycling can change, please check with the Cranford Conservation Center: cranfordnj.org/recycling.



10 GET INVOLVED. FOLLOW US. SUPPORT A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The **Cranford Environmental Commission** is an advisory body composed of resident volunteers appointed by the township committee, and its charge is to promote the conservation and protection of the township's natural resources. The commission reviews and provides recommendations on development plans and variance requests, pursues projects to educate the community regarding environmental concerns and solutions, and advocates to protect environmental assets.

The Environmental Commission partners with the **Cranford Green Team**, which is open to all residents who wish to pursue projects affecting the environment.

Join us! Meetings are held monthly and are open to the public.
Contact us! We welcome questions, idea sharing and new volunteers.

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