

## How to Have a Sustainable Fourth of July

The Fourth of July is almost upon us! As we celebrate our nation and the many freedoms we have, let's aim to take a few steps to care for this great land. Whether we're going camping for a week, having a cookout, or hosting a bonfire, we can all make small choices in favor of nature.

***Reduce.*** Make a list of what you need and check it twice before you pack. Making a list and double-checking it will help with two things: First, this practice will help you avoid over-buying food and other supplies. Second, this practice will help you avoid forgetting things you need, which would likely lead to buying disposable alternatives once away from home. By avoiding both of these things, you will save money and help the planet!

***Reuse.*** Minimize the amount of single-use plastic and Styrofoam you're purchasing by investing in reusable coolers, water bottles, cutlery, and dishes. Lightweight steel, tin, and bamboo options are easy to transport, and bamboo is naturally anti-bacterial. Bring reusable containers to pack leftovers in so that the food isn't wasted and isn't packed in Styrofoam or plastic wrap. Reusable items save you money over time too.

***Recycle.*** Buy items that come in recyclable packaging. For instance, buy pop in cans because the metal is more easily recyclable than plastic bottles. Remember! Michigan has a generous \$0.10 deposit on most beverage cans and bottles, so round those up and take them back to your local grocery store after your Fourth of July celebrations. Whether your garbage is recyclable or not, be sure to pack up everything that you bring with you to a campsite or a cookout. Leaving garbage behind can harm local wildlife, so consider involving the kids in cleanup by making garbage-gathering a game.

***Bonfires.*** If you're heading out camping or planning a bonfire, make sure to use local wood. The best choice is to always leave firewood at home and buy it where you plan to burn it. This stops the spread of bad bugs and pests, like Emerald Ash Borer, that can kill trees and damage forests in just one summer. If you need a local source for wood, check [FirewoodScout.org](http://FirewoodScout.org) for locations of firewood sellers throughout the state! Have leftover wood? Leave it on site for the next camper. If you bring extra firewood home, you could bring pests with you, threatening your trees, and the local parks you love!

As you're preparing for your Fourth of July celebrations, remember to make a list, invest in reusable items, gather your garbage, and use local wood. Together, we can be thankful for our nation by taking care of it! Have a Happy (and Sustainable) Fourth of July!