

Introduction

Welcome to Week 10 of the 2018 Certified Green Office Program! This week we will be wrapping up the Purchasing Actions section of our program with Elective Action #12, so if you've missed any past newsletters, be sure to take a look at them [here](#).

12. Stop purchasing disposable dishware for office use, and instead use either reusable dishes or leftover plates/cups from events.

As a reminder, completion of five Elective Actions beyond the Required Actions will earn you Bronze level certification, completion of ten will earn Silver level certification, and fifteen Elective Actions will earn Gold level certification.

Instructions

Elective Actions #12: Stop purchasing disposable dishware for office use, and instead use either reusable dishes or leftover plates/cups from events.

We've discussed at length in past newsletters the environmental dangers of over-consumption of both paper and plastic: the two most common materials in disposable dishware. Paper plates, paper cups, plastic silverware, plastic cups, etcetera abound in our offices. They are undeniably convenient, but also make up a significant portion of our waste stream.

By replacing these items with reusable versions, this output of waste will be cut, the long term carbon footprint of your office will decrease, less trees will be cut down, and you'll also be able to save money by not having to continue to buy disposable products. There is, obviously, one caveat to all of this: having to wash the dishware after. This is why disposable dishware was invented, after all: sometimes it's a whole lot easier to throw it away. But this kind of mindset is not conducive to having a sustainable planet. Being sustainable means having to make some concessions to the lifestyles and habits we are used to.

Of course, if you have access to a dishwasher, this really isn't all that much extra work. Having to wash all of these dishes only really becomes a challenge if it must be done by hand. It is helpful to keep in mind that the dishwasher is a relatively recent invention -- all of us used to make do without one, and billions of people around the world still do.

Here are some tips to hopefully make this conversion a little bit easier:

- For each event which will result in a lot of dirty dishware, assign rotating teams of office members to dishwashing duties.
- If you do have a dishwasher, try to make sure it doesn't get overused -- ie, don't run it every day if it's not filled with dishes every day, as this is a waste of water. In this case, ask that anyone who uses office dishware hand wash it when they are done with it.
- Consider choosing dish soaps and detergents made out of more eco-friendly ingredients. Common brands include [Seventh Generation](#) and [ECOS](#).
- Dry your dishes with regular cloth towels, not paper towels.
- Don't throw away the disposable products you still have on hand. They've already been purchased, so throwing them away unused or having them sit on a shelf forever won't do much good either. Save them for your biggest upcoming events where it will be the most difficult to wash the dishes.
- You don't necessarily need to go buy brand new reusable products either. Ask around at the office to see if anyone has any unused dishware they'd be willing to donate, or checkout what's at Goodwill or the Habitat ReStore. This will lower your environmental footprint as well!