

## Parties and Celebrations

### Why we care

Holiday gatherings, birthday parties, and other celebrations tend to produce a lot of trash. Disposables, decorations, and wrappings often end up in the landfill. Helium balloons can blow to the ocean where wildlife mistake them for food, latex balloons take six months to degrade, and mylar balloons don't biodegrade. Flowers often come from overseas where they have been treated with pesticides. With a little advance planning, a party's environmental impact can be greatly reduced.

### Simple, positive steps

- Use washable plates, glasses, and utensils. (Note that “compostable” ware is not compostable in Portland.) Don't have enough? Consider borrowing or renting.
- To avoid packaging, prepare food from scratch, or purchase ready-made food in returnable or recyclable containers.
- Use pitchers, punch bowls, or growlers for drinks rather than purchasing single-serving beverages.
- Make natural decorations, such as flowers, sprigs and branches, dried leaves, pinecones, cranberry and popcorn chains.
- When you're at thrift shops, pick up party decorations and store in your holiday boxes.
- Consider a no-gift party. Have guests bring items for a Food Bank or swap books or toys. For young kids, hold a “toonie party” (a \$2 coin in Canada) where each guest includes \$2 in their card for one gift the birthday child chooses. Or just say “no gifts, please” and take the kids on a non-commercial outing.
- Reuse gift-wrapping paper or wrap with kids' paintings or the newspaper comics.
- Play classic party games that don't require materials like musical chairs, fish bowl, and charades.

**Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at [jeanne@ecoschoolnetwork.org](mailto:jeanne@ecoschoolnetwork.org).**