

GREEN EVENT POLICIES AT THE GARDEN

We ask you – our program leaders and participants, users and visitors – to please help us to pursue our mission and honor our LEED Platinum Certified Education Center. In an effort to conserve natural resources, we request that you hold sustainable, trash-free events when you rent our facility. We propose the following practices – some are required while others are suggestions – while preparing for your event.

REQUIRED GUIDELINES

The NCBG prohibits the use of any individually-sized plastic bottles or containers. For example, you may not provide your guests with bottles of water, but you may provide water in pitchers or bulk coolers. You can also encourage your guests to bring their own water bottle that they can refill in the water fountain! Also, distributing individually wrapped items (granola bars, bags of chips, snacks) is prohibited, and we ask that you serve food in bulk instead to event attendees to avoid contamination of our compost bin.

Any disposable tableware that you use **MUST** be compostable – from plates to utensils to cups to coffee stirrers! The NCBG Events Manager will be happy to provide suggestions of where to buy these items in bulk.

Please check which best green event practices you plan to implement at your event!

- Provide beverages in pitchers or bulk coolers
- Recycle! However, ensure that your plastic or other items can be locally recycled. Although many plastic products have a recycling logo, many cannot be locally recycled. Aluminum and steel can be recycled if they are clean of any food residue. Paper, newsprint and paperboard are all standard recycling items.
- Compost all food and disposable dishes. The NCBG will provide the compost bin! Most soiled paper products can be composted, but try to avoid those with waxed or foil layers.
- Use seasonal and locally grown food where possible or request that your caterer do so.
- Reduce paper. Provide handouts or other documents electronically – free wireless access is included with your facility rental!
- Use biodegradable tableware. Or even better, provide reusable tableware! The Event Manager would be glad to put you in touch with a rental company that can provide these items.
- Avoid overly packaged products, and instead use reusable containers or request that your caterer do so.



PLANNING FOR A GREEN EVENT AT NCBG: A HOW-TO GUIDE

Below you will find a step-by-step guide on how to plan for a low-waste event. Let us know if you have any questions about reducing waste at your event by emailing Janna Starr, Facilities & Events Manager at: jstarr@unc.edu

Before your event

- Choose an approved caterer from our Approved Caterers List (found on our website at <http://ncbg.unc.edu/facility-rental/>). All approved caterers have been trained in our Green Event Policies, and we also have collected critical insurance information from them.
- Decorate with green materials (reusable or natural items), and make sure your decoration plans are in compliance with the requirements listed under “Floral Arrangements”, “Decorative Materials”, and “Prohibited Equipment” on the event application.
- Plan on using compostable products for your service ware. Make sure to communicate with the caterer about the requirement of compostables (or even better- reusable!) materials. If you are bringing your own food, please make sure to order compostable service ware in advance.
- Buy in bulk! Be conscious of how much waste is produced. Consider buying two- or three-liter bottles of soda instead of a 12-pack: one or two plastic bottles are much easier to recycle than one cardboard container and 12 individual cans, which must also be emptied and cleaned before being recycled.
- Avoid disposable garbage. NCBG prohibits the use of disposable plastic bottles and individually wrapped items (individual bags of chips, granola bar wrappers, etc). Likewise, providing coffee creamer in a reusable or recyclable container produces considerably less waste than individual servings—plus this makes the coffee-pouring process faster, which ultimately means a happy group and a happier Earth!

During your event

- Check in with the caterer before the event, make sure all materials are compostable and that the materials abide by NCBG Event Guidelines (check with NCBG event staff if you have questions).
- Monitor what’s going in the waste, and keep an eye out for any contamination.
- Consider adding to your agenda at the beginning of your event what waste goes where, so all participants are informed. Most people are surprised to learn that all compostable items can go in the compost bin!

After your event

- Make sure at the end of the event, there’s a plan for any leftover food. Some options are: have event participants take home leftover food (bring containers or Ziploc bags in advance), talk to NCBG in advance about leaving food for garden staff, or plan on having catering company bring leftovers to local food pantry or charity.
- Ensure all waste goes to the right place. If working with a caterer, have them bring bags of trash offsite since we don’t allow the production of garbage at events, and then they can bring bags of compost to be disposed of at the garden in rolling bins under the auditorium, and recycling should be dumped in recycling bins outside the auditorium in the loading dock area.

Typical Mistakes We See

1. Event user made sure that the catering was bringing compostable service ware, but the snacks & coffee cups that the event user brought were plastic/plastic-lined, and not compostable.
2. In the past, groups have brought in compostable plates and cups, but used recyclable, non-compostable utensils. While we love to recycle at NCBG, when we add mixed products to our waste stream during an event, waste disposal becomes a headache—guests now have to sort their waste and the level of contamination always increases. We try to keep contamination to a minimum by requiring everything to be compostable or reusable. We do allow the use of recycling when it comes to paper, large bottles/jugs, and aluminum cans.
3. Items to be cautious about that are commonly overlooked: coffee stirrers, creamer & sugar packets, plastic straws, cold cups. If planning to utilize any of these items, serve in bulk when possible and consider wooden, paper, or compostable options, avoiding anything waxy or with prints.
4. Make sure if you're using all compostable materials, participants at your event know it should all go in the compost bin. It's a bummer when we see compostable items end up in the garbage, where they won't decompose and break down.

Tips to save money, and help the environment!

- If you've got a small, local group, consider a BYO-cutlery or BYO mug event! By having everyone bring a reusable plate, cup, and utensils from home, you can literally see just how much waste is prevented with the eclectic mix of tableware. Our classrooms have sinks, and we allow use of our catering kitchen with an auditorium rental, so everyone can go home with clean dishes, too!
- Use paper products! Untreated, dirty paper products are perfect additions to any compost pile! Avoid printed or waxy paper cups and plates.

Finding Compostable Products

Sometimes finding compostable products can be challenging. We hope to make this easier for our event users, so take a look at the tips below:

- Our favorite lines to order from are [Sustainable Earth](#) brand by Staples (must order online), or you can order certified compostable supplies from [Amazon](#)
- Our compost processing facility can take any products that are "BPI Certified Compostable".
- We prefer the use of fiber-based materials over PLA-based materials (ex: use of paper, bamboo, banana leaves over bioplastic materials).
- Looking to find a store that carries compostable service ware? Weaver Street Market is a local retailer who carries a full supply, and you can find some materials at health food stores like Whole Foods. We suggest ordering online if possible, since you can find better prices and a wider variety of options.
- Having a difficult time finding compostable service ware? CompostNow is a local service ware distributor for the North Carolina Botanical Garden. All of the service ware items they have available are guaranteed compostable and fall within our guidelines for a zero waste event. To learn more about their delivery options and pricing email them at orders@compostnow.org.