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# The Campus Green

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## Go Green at Catered Events on Campus

If you are environmentally conscious, and you are planning a catered event on campus, luckily for you there are several “green” options available to you! First and foremost, when ordering trash cans for the event, you can order a recycling receptacle if you anticipate that any plastic bottles and recyclable paper products will be thrown out.

The eco-friendly serviceware included in the cost is compostable, but since there are not currently any compost bins on campus, these compostable plates and cups must go in the trash. They can not be recycled because they are usually contaminated with food and grease. However, if they are clean, uncontaminated with food, or unused, they can go in the recycling bin. Putting them in the trash isn't the ideal situation, but unlike Styrofoam, which can take more than 500 years to disintegrate, these plates and cups are biodegradable and will be gone in a matter of months.

Actually, the most eco-friendly option for silverware, plates, and cups at catering events is good-old fashioned reusable china dishes and metal silverware that can be washed and reused. The cheapest option is the default free compostable plates and napkins, but, as stated above, since there are no compost bins on campus, these “compostable” items will most likely be thrown in the trash and sent to the landfill. Both china and compostable serviceware are better for the environment than disposable plastic or Styrofoam serviceware, so please avoid that at all costs.



Lastly, if you are serving a large party through Sodexo on campus, consider buying in bulk. Buying bottled water or other beverages for each individual costs anywhere from \$1.99 to \$2.10, whereas a pitcher of water serving 8 to 10 people *only* costs \$1.99. A gallon of orange, apple, or cranberry juice, serving 16, costs \$24.00. A pitcher of iced tea, serving 8 to 10 guests, costs only \$2.50. And lastly, iced water with fruit, serving 50 *guests*, costs *only* \$35.00. So you see, you can also save money while being environmentally conscious!

*Remember to always explicitly request recycling bins at catering events, especially if you decide you need bottled beverages.*



## The Recycling Process on Campus

Some individuals on campus have mentioned their concern when seeing the janitorial staff apparently throwing all the trash and recycling in the same bins. This could be just a misunderstanding.

Whenever a recycling bin is contaminated with garbage or trash, the whole thing must go in the trash! It is not their job nor responsibility to dig through the trash and recycling to separate the two just because someone couldn't recycle properly in the first place. Many team members go above and beyond their responsibilities and take trash out of recycling bins and vice versa, but it takes time and they have been instructed not to. So please make an effort to recycle properly in the first place.

Another possible misunderstanding is this: The cleaning staff members have a cart that they take with them when cleaning office buildings. These carts have two separate bags on them: a black bag to collect trash and a clear bag for recycling. They do not mix on the cart. The cleaning staff are properly trained in Providence College recycling guidelines when hired, and they are instructed to make their best judgment when deciding whether a recycling bin is too contaminated with trash.



The cleaning company has also mentioned that the most contaminated recycling bins are in the student dorms. Students are constantly throwing **recyclable** aluminum cans, clean tin foil, paper, cardboard, and plastic containers in the garbage, and this is a HUGE PROBLEM. You are responsible for putting your waste in the proper bin. Check out the links below to find comprehensive

recycling guidelines. Refer to either of these guides whenever you are in doubt, or contact the Office of Environmental Health & Safety.

Another solution for the dorms, where students spend the majority of their time, may be providing students with a recycling bin in every dorm room and apartment on campus. Res Life could also include a recycling education component to floor meetings, which would surely boost campus recycling rates.

Go to the websites below to find lists of what to and not to recycle here in RI:

<http://www.recycletogetherri.org/what-can-i-recycle>

<http://rirrc.org/school/>

## Do you know the difference between a shamrock and a four-leaf clover?

During St. Patrick's Day celebrations, people wear green clothes, necklaces, and temporary tattoos covered in shamrocks, but does anyone know why the shamrock is associated with St. Patrick's Day? Or the difference between a shamrock and a four-leaf clover?



The word shamrock comes from the Gaelic word seamróg, which means plant or little clover. According to Irish legends, St. Patrick traveled around Ireland teaching Christianity using a three-leaf clover, the shamrock. He used the three-leaves of the clover to represent the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit of the Holy Trinity. If a fourth leaf was ever found, it represented God's grace. In the 19th century, the shamrock became strongly associated with Irish identity and was used as a symbol of rebellion against the British government. Those caught wearing shamrocks could be hung. The use of the shamrock in St. Patrick's teachings was never documented in literature, and neither was the specific type of three-leaf clover he used. The shamrock was only ever recorded in drawings.

Early Celtic priests, or Druids, on the other hand, used four-leaf clovers in worship rituals, to heal the sick, and to ward off evil spirits. The phrase "the luck of the Irish" comes from the belief that there are more four-leaf clovers in Ireland than anywhere else in the world.

Four-leaf clovers, are rare mutations of white clovers, or *Trifolium repens*. Since some areas are more likely to have four-leaf clovers than others, it is likely that environmental factors, such as pollution or soil composition, have an effect on their growth. They are considered to be lucky, partly because they are so rare. For approximately every 10,000 three-leaf clovers there is only one four-leaf clover.



Interest in the symbolism of four-leaf clovers can be traced back thousands of years. According to Christian legend, Eve took a four-leaf clover from the Garden of Eden with her when she was expelled from Paradise. Christians also believe that each leaf represents a theological virtue: faith, hope, charity, and luck. Still others believe the four-leaf clover wards off evil spirits, brings power, happiness, love, and wealth. In 1620, Sir John Melton was the first person to make a literary reference to the luck associated with four-leaf clovers. Today, the meanings of the four leaves have changed slightly, merging ancient beliefs.

## Compost Conference & Trade Show

On Thursday, March 9th, the Environment Council of Rhode Island partnered with the Rhode Island College Office of Sustainability, holding a Compost Conference & Trade Show. Individuals from The Compost Plant, Earth Care Farm, ecoRI, engineers, students and staff from various schools in the area, and parents gathered in the RIC Student Union building to share their experiences composting in various settings. These experienced composters shared what worked, what didn't, and what was necessary for the success of their programs.



Successful compost piles are often covered, mixed, hot and dry, and incorporate worms to aerate the soil. Many of the medium to large

compost piles blow hot air into the bin through the bottom to ensure it is dry and hot throughout. It is important to promptly break up any large chunks and to never leave standing water in the pile. Compostable plates and cups, as well as egg cartons, require a very high heat to decompose, and therefore can only be composted at commercial facilities.

The composting program at Brown University began roughly two years ago thanks to the push from students. The Compost Plant initially implemented a pilot program at Brown to learn of potential problems they might face. They began the pilot program in the back of the dining halls, where food is prepared. Once that was successful, they began collecting food waste from the front area of the dining hall where students and staff eat. An important step was replacing individually packaged items such as sauces and milk cartons, with items bought in bulk. The food waste bins are picked up when they are full and can sit out for a few days at a time. Composting often raises concerns about odor or rodents, but Brown has yet to receive a complaint about either. It is the same waste, just sitting in a different bin, separated.

**Remember to take advantage of this beautiful outdoor classroom behind Ruane that is surrounded by a bioswale!**



If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact us at the Office of Environmental Health & Safety.

401.865.1881

[recycle@providence.edu](mailto:recycle@providence.edu)  
[www.providence.edu/recycling](http://www.providence.edu/recycling)

Newsletter brought to you by Alex Duryea, Student Sustainability Coordinator

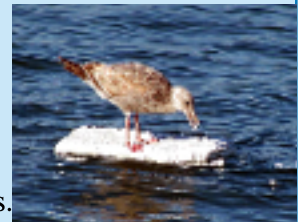
## Why Styrofoam is Bad for the Environment

Styrofoam is the name given to polystyrene by the Dow Chemical Company. It is made of plastic, derived from non-renewable fossil fuels and synthetic chemicals. When using a Styrofoam cup, these chemicals could potentially leach into your cup or container, especially when you are getting a hot drink or hot food. When polystyrene is exposed to heat, chemicals such as Styrene or Benzene, both known neurotoxins and carcinogens, could seep into your beverage or food, and eventually your blood and tissues. Microwaving Styrofoam is even worse, causing the release of even more harmful chemicals.



The exact amount of time it takes for Styrofoam to decompose is still up for debate. Landfills today are designed to prevent decomposition of trash and possible leaking of liquid

contaminants into groundwater sources nearby, by sealing the area shut once the the particular plot is full. Technically Styrofoam is sent to a landfill where it will **never** decompose. Instead of biodegrading, Styrofoam often breaks up into small pieces that are much harder to collect and pose a serious threat to wildlife. Styrofoam packaging and cups are banned in over 100 cities across North America, including San Francisco, Washington DC, and New York City, and many European and Asian cities, due to the negative health and environmental effects.



What can you do? When shopping, look for products with recyclable packaging, or products without any packaging. Choose paper over Styrofoam whenever you have the option, or even better, bring your own reusable coffee cup with a lid or container to avoid having to use Styrofoam at all!

**Come to Harkins LL18 or stop by Dunkin on campus around noon Thursdays to get a koozie to replace Styrofoam hot cups! Bring your reusable cup with a lid to get a discounted drink for the price of a refill at Dunkin and Starbucks!**

