

REDUCING WORKPLACE WASTE IN THE LANDSCAPING SECTOR

A practical guide to help landscaping businesses towards zero waste

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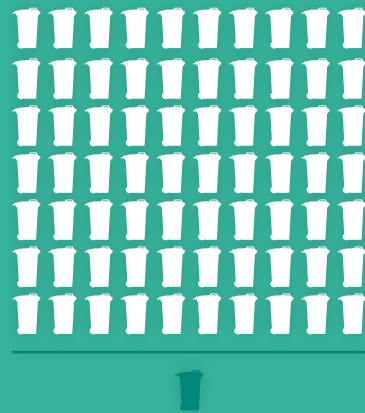


WHY SHOULD I REDUCE MY WASTE?

Environmental sustainability is now a key part of doing business. By minimising your waste, you can cut your disposal costs, reduce your carbon footprint, and build your brand's reputation with staff and customers alike.

In 2023, Queenstown Lakes District businesses were **surveyed** to get a snapshot of how organisations were managing their waste and how they could be supported to reduce and minimise their waste outputs. The majority of respondents said that reducing their environmental impact was a key motivator to minimise waste and 92% said that waste reduction was important or very important to their business.

QLDC is committed to helping our communities become a low waste and low emissions district, and to helping your business achieve its waste minimisation goals.



For every one rubbish bin of waste that you put out on the kerb, **70 rubbish bins of waste were made upstream just to make that one bin on the kerb.** Even if we could recycle 100% of the waste coming out of our households, it does not get to the core of the problem. Correct recycling is vital, but we need to think about cutting off the waste streams and bringing less waste into our businesses in the first place. **The Story of Stuff** is essential reading and talks more about this.



Credit: Pixabay

TACKLING WASTE TOGETHER

Working and consulting with businesses of all sizes across the region has helped identify key waste streams in the landscaping industry and have come up with practical solutions to help you reduce your waste.

Waste costs in gardening and landscaping businesses are comprised of far more than just your recycling, landfill or green waste fees. There are your own transport costs and staff time to factor in which, when you're loading and unloading trailers, add up very quickly. Small changes can lead to greater efficiencies across your business and free you and your staff up to focus on the job in hand.

Wastebusters has put together **a document** to help you communicate your waste minimisation strategies to your team, with content for staff induction manuals. It's a great idea to have a policy in place so that waste minimisation is seen as the norm from the outset.



Credit: Anne Nygard, Unsplash

IN THE OFFICE

According to a 2018 Environmental Protection Agency study, the average office worker generates about **900g worth of paper and paperboard products every day** and uses roughly **10,000 sheets of copy paper per year!** Worse, a study from Xerox found that nearly half of all printed documents are thrown away within **24 hours**, and **30% are never picked up from the printer at all.**



- Make sure all of your team is on board. Practise what you preach in your office workspaces and kitchens by making sure your rubbish and recycling stations are set up well with clear signage. Have a look at the [QLDC website](#) to make sure you know what materials you can recycle in the district and [check out these guidelines for tips on how set up effective rubbish and recycling stations.](#)
- Make the most of technology and cut down on your printing. Cloud software, shared online files and e-signatures can instantly reduce your paper footprint.
- If you do need stationery, look for products such as environmentally certified paper with recyclable packaging, refillable pens and, above all, be sure that you really need it first!
- When you need to print, go double-sided, black and white and use draft settings to reduce ink.
- Repurpose shredded paper.
- Consider renting office equipment and furniture, and check second-hand options before you go for something new. If buying new opt for durable and repairable options.
- Make sure everyone understands how to recycle batteries responsibly. They cannot be placed into rubbish or recycling bins as they pose a significant fire risk to collection trucks and waste facilities. Refer to the [A-Z Rubbish and Recycling Directory](#) for information on how to recycle batteries and other electronic waste responsibly.
- Plan projects carefully to order only the materials needed, reducing excess and leftover materials.
- Consider introducing waste into your regular reporting and celebrate your wins with your teams and on your socials.
- Have a look at the [office waste guide](#) for more ideas on how to minimise your office waste.



Credit: Annie Spratt, Unsplash

PACKAGING



Wānaka landscape company, Green Fox, undertook a comprehensive waste audit with Wastebusters. The majority of their waste is diverted from landfill and their biggest challenge is in supplier packaging. By working with other businesses in the region and by talking directly to their suppliers, there is the potential to reduce upstream waste and eliminate hard-to-recycle packaging. [Read the case study here.](#)

According to the Sustainability Business Network, about 70% of your business' sustainability impact comes from your supply chain. Whether it's talking to your existing suppliers or looking for alternatives, beginning at the source is key.

- Talk to your suppliers about their packaging. Is it necessary? Is it recyclable? Can you ask them to provide plants without labels? Can you be sure that, if they agree to this, they're not removing them before despatch? Transparency across the supply chain is essential.
- **Agrecovery** has product stewardship schemes for recycling LDPE bags (#4 plastic) and woven polypropylene bags (#5 plastic) that cannot go into your business recycling. They also offer recycling options for larger plastic containers and some garden chemicals.
- Consider local suppliers who can provide products with no or less packaging. (Plus, you're supporting local!)
- Keep your plant pots in circulation. Local reuse hubs may accept them or you could create a depot for members of the public to come and collect any surplus pots you have. Talk to community gardening groups to see whether they could take any pot or containers that you no longer need. Remember: reuse before recycle!
- If you do need to recycle pots or containers, **Mitre 10** has a pot recycling scheme for clean, soil free polypropylene (#5 plastic) plant pots.
- Use refillable containers. Whether it's items in the office or essentials when you're out on a job, look for products that offer refill services.
- For other items, buy in bulk to reduce both packaging and disposal costs. Source materials from local wholesale depots that can be loaded directly into a trailer with no packaging.
- Consider industry collaboration. They may be your competitors but other businesses may be key to your success. Involve the big guys too. Can you buy in bulk, share resources and reduce packaging waste? Can you lobby suppliers to make the changes you want to see? There's strength in numbers!



Credit: Eco Warrior Princess, Unsplash

OUT IN THE FIELD

- Make your own compost or think about leaf mulches and grass cycling. If this is feasible, this is a great way to reduce packaging waste and costs, and means you know exactly what is going into your compost. Consider partnering with local food outlets to take their surplus food scraps or become a community compost hub.
- For hard-to-compost and impossible-to-mulch items like flax fronds, find out about **biochar**. Sometimes referred to as “black gold”, biochar is the result of organic matter that has been heated by pyrolysis, i.e. in the absence of oxygen. The charcoal produced is a combination of black carbon which is incredibly beneficial to the soil and removes disposal costs.
- Use strong and durable tools. Maintain and repair them in favour of buying new ones.
- If you are using compostable options for everyday items such as weed mats and plant pots make sure they are certified. Many widely available products are not compostable or biodegradable and create more waste. The WasteMINZ Organic Materials Sector Group has

produced a series of guidelines for compostable and biodegradable materials. These can be found online [here](#).

- When using compostable alternatives, if you can't process them yourselves, find out who can and understand the conditions in which they can break down. If they end up in landfill, they are unlikely to break down and, depending on what they're made of, the products may emit greenhouse gases.
- Research sustainable landscape design software and new technologies that can help you reduce waste.

Native plants are great for biodiversity and it's also a good way to reduce your waste. Native plants are adapted to the local climate and require fewer resources like water and fertiliser. By planting natives, you reduce the need for excessive maintenance and reduce the chances of invasive species taking over the garden.



- Look for reclaimed materials such as bricks or **timber** and map these out in your design processes so you know what to look out for and how much you need.
- Get creative. Depending on your brief, think about how you can repurpose and upcycle existing items into new, useful items e.g. turning tree stumps into garden furniture. Old natural fibre textiles can be used as cloches and plant covers, plant ties or frost cloth. Footwear, old household items and barrels make for great planter pots and old CDs on posts are great for bird scaring. Visit your local reuse hub and be inspired!
- Consider going spray free where possible to allow more green waste, such as grass clippings, to be safely composted.
- **Understand your local transfer stations' and green waste facilities'** acceptance criteria. This can be a great way to divert green waste from landfill but it is vital that you understand what can and can't be accepted to avoid contamination.



Credit: Troy Tanner, Real NZ

Food waste from Cardrona and Treble Cone ski fields goes into their compost which is then used for their native revegetation projects. As well as diverting organic waste from landfill, this provides valuable sustenance to their land which they would otherwise have to pay for. Creating your own, custom-made compost is a no-brainer, on so many levels.

SO MANY IDEAS, SO MANY QUESTIONS! WHERE SHOULD I LOOK NEXT?

Remember you're not alone and help is at hand! Here are some useful links to support you on your waste reducing journey:

- Take a look at this [general guide for businesses](#), which gives additional ideas on how to implement changes in the workplace with helpful links and resources.
- [Check out these other industry resource guides](#). You may find more ideas there to help you on the path to zero waste.
- You can find some rubbish and recycling signage on the QLDC website here: [QLDC - Waste Minimisation for Businesses](#).
- [Talk to Zero Waste champions in Aotearoa](#) like [Wastebusters](#), [Zero Waste Network NZ](#), [Sustainable Queenstown](#), [Zero Waste Glenorchy](#), [Wao](#), [Sustainable Business Network](#), and [WasteMINZ](#). Sign up to their newsletters, join their zero waste events and be part of the conversation.
- [Research your local composting options](#). Contact [Grow Wānaka](#), [Zero Waste Glenorchy](#) or [Sharewaste](#).
- [Talk to industry experts](#). Ben Elms, aka [Dr Compost](#), offers advice to commercial businesses on composting and is a wealth of knowledge when it comes to biochar. Agrecovery has a number of online resources to help you with recycling items and products that cannot go into your everyday business recycling.
- Take a look around the world. [Rescape](#) in California has some useful ideas and resources to reduce landscaping waste and work on other environmental initiatives. [Cal Recycle](#) is an excellent site for landscaping and gardening resources and their other industry sheets are well worth a read. [Landscape for life](#) is another very good site for ideas.
- [Make good purchasing decisions](#) using this [smart purchasing guide](#) to ask questions of your suppliers.
- [Connect with other low-waste businesses](#) via [circular economy directory](#) or [CiRCLR](#) - a simple B2B platform that encourages circular economies, which turns the existing cost of waste disposal into new revenue streams for businesses.
- [Consider undertaking a waste audit](#) - you can't take action if you don't know what you're dealing with. Waste audits connect you with zero waste experts who have the know-how to help you with simple and measurable waste solutions.
- [Get back to basics](#). Find out who is offering [waste management services](#) in your area.
- [Be inspired](#). Read [local case studies](#) to see what other businesses have done to reduce their waste.



Credit: Canyon Brewery

This guide was written by Wastebusters and designed by QLDC under the QLDC Zero Waste District Programme funding as part of the Resourceful Communities initiative.

Resourceful Communities aims to make the link between global work on the circular economy and local reduction and reuse activities.

The year-round programme inspires and supports behaviours that are part of the transition to a more circular economy.

Our aim is to help to build a culture where resources are valued and kept in use, and waste minimisation is the norm.

