



Recycling and
Environmental
Action
Planning
Society

Greening Your Office

Tips by Email

Attention: **Office Staff**
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GREEN TIP #8:

Remember your travel mug!

Make it a habit to collect travel mugs before someone in the office goes on a coffee run! Paper cups are not recyclable because they are coated with wax or plastic on the inside, and with the exception of milk cartons, paper or cardboard containers that have directly come in contact with food cannot be recycled.

North America consumes 50 million trees a year for paper cups.

... which, after 15 minutes of use, we throw in the garbage can. Then, we pick the cups up with pollution-belching trucks and throw them in a dump, where they rot and create more greenhouse gases. To say this is not an elegant solution to beverage transportation is quite an understatement -- but what could we replace it with?

Why do coffee companies brand their paper cups? After all, we usually throw stuff in the garbage because it is low quality or broken. Take a walk down any street and you will quickly get a picture which coffee shops are serious about the environment, and which ones are causing serious environmental damage.

Disposable taste buds? There are lots of problems with disposable cups. Up to 90 per cent of flavor comes from the aroma you inhale, so the non-recyclable styrene lids make your morning jolt about one-tenth as delicious. Paper cups are all lined with plastic to prevent sogginess and, if you want to keep your reproductive organs functioning, plastic is seldom considered a good marriage with hot or acidic liquids.



And of course, trees are elegant and amazing organisms that deserve better than to be pulped into coffee cups -- think Stradivarius. Forests generate value with an ease industry will never replicate. The unmeasured economic value provided by Canada's boreal forest for things like water filtration and air purification has been estimated at \$93 billion. That is two and a half times as much as the combined economic value of the forestry, mining, oil and gas and hydroelectric industries in the boreal forest. This would represent eight per cent of Canada's entire GDP, and trees don't need a pension or health care. And yet we keep grinding them up -- North America uses 60 per cent of the world's paper cups, 130 billion of them per year. Those cups require about 50 million trees and 33 billion gallons of water, which could sequester 9.3 million tonnes of CO2 and quench 550,000 drought-stricken citizens of the state of Georgia, without even asking them to lower their ridiculous consumption rate of 166 gallons per day.

Easy solutions: Please stop. There is really no need to argue further. Paper cups are stupid. Let's dispense the obvious solution quickly: buy a travel mug.

Sources: http://sustainablechoices.stanford.edu/actions/at_the_store/coffeemug.html
<http://www.alternet.org/environment/84187/>

Any Questions or Suggestions? Call or Email us! 250 561 7327 or green_solutions@reaps.org

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