

Green Halloween Guide

Halloween has become a really popular event here in the UK, with large numbers of children going trick-or-treating on 31 October. Have you ever considered the environmental impacts of all that spooky fun? Probably the scariest thing about Halloween is how much waste it creates! But don't worry, there are plenty of ways that you can make Halloween much greener and still have all the fun.

Costumes

An incredible seven million Halloween costumes are bought and thrown away here in the UK each year! A study carried out in 2019 found that 2,000 tonnes of plastic waste was being generated by throwaway Halloween costumes and accessories. Whilst the amount of plastic they contain has been reduced in the last few years, cheap, shop-bought costumes still contain of around 70% non-recyclable plastic, including the synthetic fabrics they are made from.



So instead of buying a costume, have a go at creating one with what you already have at home. You can use old clothes like shirts, t-shirts, black trousers or shorts as the basis of your costumes. You could always add in your own rips and tears for a more ragged look.

If you don't have everything you need lying around at home, try to find what you your clothes and accessories from a charity shop. You'll be helping to give them a new lease of life. You can really let your imagination run riot! You can almost certainly make a great costume without having to resort to a plastic-filled costume from a supermarket! You can also use face paints to create a spooky look - there's no need to buy a plastic mask!

If you really can't get the look you're after using old clothes or a visit to a charity shop, consider renting from a costume shop instead. The costume is likely to be spooktacular, and it will be used lots of times. Hiring a costume is likely to be expensive, but won't cost as much a buying a spectacular outfit for Halloween!

Decorations

For a half term activity, you could spend an afternoon creating some home-made decorations. Cut out your own spider, bat and pumpkin decorations using coloured card. You can make your own googly eyes using black and white coloured card too! Avoid plastic ones, because they can't be recycled.

Modelling clay can also be used to make Halloween decorations overleaf for examples).



You could use low energy coloured bulbs to create a spooky atmosphere. This works especially well if you use them sparingly, so that it's mostly dark, but with an eerie coloured glow!

You could also use natural materials like sticks, branches and dead flowers to create Halloween decorations and make things feel creepier!

Parties

If you're going to have a Halloween party, there are a few simple steps you can take to make it as environmentally-friendly as possible:-



Avoid disposable cups and plates and use reusable ones instead. If you really have to use disposables, make sure you buy biodegradable ones - you can get great disposable bowls made from wood and compostable plastic glasses. Note though that compostable plastic normally requires temperatures in excess of 70C to properly break down, so it needs to be composted in a commercial digester. Use a marker pen so that your guests can identify their cups easily and don't need to keep taking new ones.



Treats

If you're going to buy packets of sweets to give out as treats, try to buy sweets with Fairtrade or sustainable ingredients. Even better, try to buy from local producers if you can. Try to cut down on plastic packaging too. Best of all, if you want to be as green as possible you could bake your own Halloween treats, like these (see photo, right)!



Treat bags

Instead of buying a new treat bag or bucket, you could clean and decorate a bucket from a bucket and spade set you don't use any. You could also collect your treats in an old pillowcase if you really want to cut down on your impact.

Pumpkins

For the greenest option, grow your own. It's a bit late if you haven't started yet, so for the next best thing, visit a local pick-your-own and choose your pumpkin from there. It's much more fun and you know the pumpkins have been grown nearby, cutting down on their carbon footprint.

Jack o' lanterns

Talking of pumpkins, make sure you don't just scrape out the insides of a pumpkin and throw them away. We throw away over eight million pumpkins each year, just in the UK alone. Don't let them go to waste! You can toast the seeds in the oven for a tasty and healthy snack and make pumpkin pie, pumpkin soup or even pumpkin muffins with the soft flesh you scrape out when making your Jack o'lantern!



You can make a delicious pumpkin soup (left) or pumpkin pie (below) with the flesh you scrape out of the inside of the pumpkin.



Compost and recycle

Make sure you compost your Jack o'lanterns, along with any other waste food you may be throwing away if you've had a party.

Reuse

Make sure that you put your costumes, treat buckets and decorations away carefully, so that you can use them all again next year.

This guide to a green Halloween has been created by the Young People's Trust for the Environment.

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Registered charity number 1153740

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