

Tenafly Nature Center is an environmental center that models environmentally friendly practices. We respectfully ask that you use as few disposables as possible. Please use environmentally-friendly items that have minimal packaging and, if possible, are made of recycled or recyclable materials.

**Here are ideas to reduce your environmental footprint when hosting a party or event.**

### **Birthday Party Supplies**

- Send electronic invitations rather than paper
- Use tree free paper when sending invites
- Send seed invitations that can be planted at a future date
- Purchase biodegradable/compostable tableware
- Use fabric to decorate your child's party instead of disposable decorations and tableware (decorations can later be moved into your birthday child's room).
- Purchase sustainable and reusable party decorations such as fabric tablecloths
- Purchase sustainable and reusable goodie bags and one great item. Your guests will remember the party every time that item is used or played with.
- Use paper balloons or lanterns and themed stringed lights
- Bake your own cake

### **Birthday Gifts:**

- Wood toys
- Cloth or felt dolls
- Kleen Kanteens
- Laptop lunch boxes
- Support a local craftsperson or Fair Trade artisan
- Offer to spend time with the birthday child in a handmade gift certificate (zoo trip, museum, or local nature center)
- Make your own gift

### **"Giving gifts" for the birthday child**

A trend that is spreading throughout communities is having the birthday child choose a charity and ask guests to bring a donation in lieu of gifts. The idea being that instead of a wrapped gift the guest brings a monetary donation, knowing that half the collected amount will be donated to a cause or organization chosen by the birthday child. Children love to learn and feel proud to know they've helped reduce, reuse and recycle at their birthday party or celebrating at their friend's special event. By doing this you virtually eliminate the excess of waste generated from gifts and wrapping paper. Everyone loves the idea of helping a cause close to the birthday child's heart and the learning that goes on for the children and parents about the cause is so

amazing. These "giving parties" encourage children to ask questions and learn how a local community organization helps people right in our own neighborhood.

*Sample wording for a 'giving party' invitation:*

Dear family and friends,

This year we are starting a new tradition with gift giving at \_\_\_'s birthday celebration. Our family is striving to reduce our environmental footprint and is hosting a green party. Please bring a donation in lieu of gifts because \_\_\_\_\_ has decided to support the \_\_\_\_\_ (child's cause) with 1/2 of the birthday money he/she receives. \_\_\_\_\_ will be able to purchase a special gift from his/her portion of the donations.

Thank you for your support!

(Source: [www.greenplanetparties.com/pages/GreenPartyTips.htm](http://www.greenplanetparties.com/pages/GreenPartyTips.htm))

<b>Did you know?</b>	<b>What are the alternatives?</b>
The average disposable plastic fork or spoon is made from petroleum and may take anywhere between 10-100 years to decompose (releasing toxic substances into soil and groundwater).	Reusable metal flatware is the best choice.  Biodegradable utensils made from starch-based plastics or lightweight woods, such as birch, will decompose faster.
Styrofoam from nonrenewable sources of petroleum is practically indestructible. While it may have a recycling code, it is generally not accepted due to a lack of suitable recycling facilities. It is estimated that Styrofoam can take up 900 years to decompose.	Products made from recycled paper can reduce air pollution by 74%, water pollution by 35%, and create 5 times the number of jobs over creating paper products from trees. These products also protect old-growth trees, forest ecosystems, native habitat and biodiversity. Standard paper plates (without coating) will break down within weeks to months.
The average disposable paper cup is lined with a petroleum based substance to keep liquid from seeping into the paper fiber.	Environmentally friendly paper cups can be made from renewable sources such as PLA - usually lined with confectioner's sugar. TNC uses Ecotainer cups.  PolyActide (PLA) products can be made from corn or potato starch and are better for cold foods and beverages. Bagasse products are made from residual sugar cane fiber and are suitable for hot and cold foods products.
Most garbage bags are made from plastic and can take 10 to 50+ years to decompose in a typical landfill.	Some biodegradable Garbage Bags are fully compostable and biodegradable in approximately 50-100 days in properly maintained commercial compost facilities.

### **Tenaflly Nature Center Eco-friendly add-on options**

- Plates, Cups & Forks Rental- \$20
- Birthday Party Décor: cloth banner, table cloth, napkins, rainbow nylon lantern string lights- \$30
- Rental for both- \$45 (With this option there is much less trash and clean up time! Include picture of the pavilion decorated with the eco-friendly touch.

### **Vendors for Eco-party Goods**

- Whole Foods
- [greenplanetparties.com](http://greenplanetparties.com)
- [sustyparty.com](http://sustyparty.com)
- [ecopartytime.com](http://ecopartytime.com)
- [tenthousandvillages.com](http://tenthousandvillages.com)
- [greenheartshop.org](http://greenheartshop.org) for Fair Trade ideas/gift
- [greenpartygoods.com](http://greenpartygoods.com)
- [Etsy.com](http://Etsy.com), search for “ecofriendly party”

### **Favor Ideas**

- [Kuningroup.com](http://Kuningroup.com)- recycled plastic bottle felt
- [Woodluck.com](http://Woodluck.com)- forest critter bookmarks/pencils (seems like a link farm)

### **Further Reading**

- [Pbs.org/parents/special/article-earthday-greenparty.html](http://Pbs.org/parents/special/article-earthday-greenparty.html)