



Happy Chinese New Year! For those unfamiliar with this celebration, it marks the beginning of the calendar year according to the Lunar Calendar, which is based on moon cycles. Also known as the Lunar New Year, this day is celebrated primarily in East and Southeast Asian countries. and in the U.S. as well. I will be celebrating the Year of the Tiger with some yummy Asian food.

This month, our focus is on sustainable living. I asked LEAF gardeners and partners to give us an update on what aspect of sustainable living they are focusing on this year and to provide their tips. I will continue to work on waste reduction, sustainable foods and sustainable clothing as these are very prevalent in our landfills. With little effort, we can reverse the trend.

In this edition of LEAF News, Lucy, who we introduced in our January newsletter, interviewed Sejal, LEAF's sustainable living educator, on waste reduction. You'll also hear from Joyce, our former LEAF Nursery Propagator who is studying hard to get her Masters in Range and Wildlife Management at UC Berkeley. Her piece is about sustainable eating. Lastly, Sara, the owner of [Eeviee](#), a partner of LEAF and non-profit leader in the textile circular recycling movement, will share with us about sustainable textiles. I hope you find this month's news to be informative and that you may join our efforts to reduce landfill waste.

Smiles,

Elaine



LUCY INTERVIEWS **SEJAL**
ON REDUCING WASTE

Waste is a multifaceted problem. To better understand it, I interviewed LEAF's sustainable living educator, Sejal, who is also an environmental activist and former environmental engineer. As I spoke to Sejal, I realized how immense the topic of waste is, and how little of it actually gets recycled. More importantly, she addressed what you and I can do as individuals to reduce it. First, however, we discussed the impact of waste on an international level.

-LUCY

L: How do the bans and restrictions by countries like China affect us locally?

S: The ban impacts us locally for several reasons. Before the ban, China accepted both clean and dirty recyclable materials. Today, however, China claims that most of the plastics they receive are unusable and too dirty to recycle. Since China's ban, more and more of our items are winding up in our landfills. So it's more important than ever to clean recyclables. In addition, because we've been sending recycling outside the US, we currently don't have the infrastructure and technology for recycling here. Hopefully, our local government and industries will start creating more effective ways to take care of our own waste.

L: How well do containers need to be cleaned out?

S: Nothing should come out of it, whether it's dry, semi-liquid or oily. If there is just a little bit of residue, that's okay.

L: I read that new packaging trends with thinner plastic containers are actually impacting recycling in a negative way. Is this true?

S: Yes. The thinner the plastic, the less recyclable it is. To reduce shipping cost, companies are using lighter sheets of plastics, bubble wraps, and combinations of different plastics. All of these will end up going into the landfill.

L: Which numbers within the recycling symbol can be recycled here in Fremont?

S: In Fremont and Alameda County, plastic with #1 and #2 symbols are most likely to be recycled. For the rest of them, there's no guarantee. That's why it's important for us to use less plastic. Once again, many plastic items, even the ones with recyclable icons on them, are not recycled in the U.S. And now, China isn't taking them either. So they end up in landfill or in a storage facility and never get recycled.

L: How do you think people can avoid generating other types of plastics besides #1 and #2?

S: It's a big challenge. Most things which are not #1 or #2 are either packaging or single use materials, whether it's take-out, bubble wrap, or whatever the items you buy at

Amazon are shipped in. Think about all the waste that is created when we buy little things online that come heavily packaged for our convenience. Convenience is good, but at what cost? We are destroying nature. Everything is being impacted by our activity.

L: What can we do with recyclable plastics that aren't #1 or #2 so they don't end up in the landfill?

S: You can reuse items for storage and extend their life. But ultimately, they're going to go somewhere. The best thing is to create less or not generate waste in the first place. Try to invest in reusables. Try to live with less. Be creative and invest in things like stainless steel and glass containers instead of plastic. If possible, go out and eat at restaurants or cafes instead of getting take out. Bring your own doggie bag. Install a water filter instead of using bottled water. Remember that Ziplocs, cling and saran wraps are single use and are not recyclable – they go in the trash. Use containers with lids! If you don't have containers with lids, use a plate to cover. Things like these are simple and save you time and money.

L: It's a lot to ask people to change their habits.

S: Yes, it's a lot. And change doesn't happen overnight. It comes slowly. The more conscious we become, the more simplified our lives can be. You can start by looking at the things you're using in your house. Just focus on changing one or two things at a time. It will become a new habit, and you won't even miss your previous habit. Do you use paper towels when you don't really need to? Try using linen towels to dry your hands instead. And buy more natural fibers like cotton, linen, hemp, and wool while avoiding [synthetic materials](#) like polyester, nylon, and acrylic. Even if cotton goes to the landfill, its impact is not nearly as bad as plastic.

L: Are the plastic stickers on our fruit compostable?

S: No. They go in the trash along with ties that go around green vegetables and herbs.

L: What would it take on an individual level to reduce our waste?

S: That's where each of us can improve. Focus on the 5 R's: refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose, and recycle. Previously it was just 3 R's—reduce, reuse, and recycle. This includes doing things like donating items to thrift stores and partaking in exchange groups, like the Buy Nothing Project of Fremont that you can read about on Facebook. If there's nothing in your area, create something.

Another method of reusing is the composting of foods. In Alameda County, about 40-50% of food that could have been composted or redistributed to people in need is going into landfills. Good food is being thrown out for no reason. California now has a mandate for houses as well as businesses to compost, recycle, and garbage. The state also has a goal

for 20% of wasted food to be redistributed to people by 2025. Share food with your friends and neighbors. Maybe cook it and then freeze it. Glean your fruit trees and share what you gather with others, including your local food bank. Not all options are convenient nor easy. They come with their own challenges and time commitments. But when we allow our food to go bad, we waste both money and the energy that went into growing that food, harvesting it, transporting it, and storing it. If you have non-food items you don't want to keep and don't know how to recycle, like trophies for example, [Re:source](#) will tell you who might accept it to recycle, reuse, or resell. Spread the word about this!

L: What can individual households do to increase the likelihood that their items will be recycled?

S: Do the right thing. Follow your city guidelines for segregating recyclables and waste materials properly. Don't do what we call "wish cycling" and just throw things you're not sure about in the garbage. Learn what can be recycled and clean items before you toss them in the recycling bin. I've also learned to keep plastic caps on bottles. Because of their small size, caps can clog the machines. If the machines get clogged, we risk the whole load being thrown in the landfill because it's not cost-efficient to allow things to pile up. So it's always a good practice to close containers before putting them in recycling bins.

L: What brings you hope for a sustainable future?

S: I feel very hopeful when I see young people like yourself getting involved, trying to understand the issues, learning to change their habits, and taking part in the community to make a difference. I feel hopeful when I see people and small organizations around the world like LEAF who educate their communities to embrace change and combat issues like climate change.

L: Thank you, Sejal!

Below are resources that will help you to become more educated about waste and the impact it has on our lives. We hope you'll want to get involved in making Fremont and our world a better and safer place to live.



STOPWASTE
at home • at work • at school



JOYCE
TALKS
SUSTAINABLE
EATING

Many of us in the U.S. may have heard of [Veganuary](#), a plant-based pledge for the month of January that was started in 2014 by a UK non-profit with the same name. According to their vision, "We want a vegan world. A world where food production does not decimate forests, pollute rivers and oceans, exacerbate climate change and drive wild animal

populations to extinction.” Veganuary is not to be confused with *Regenuary*, which holds similar ecological values while *encouraging* consumption of animal products. Let's talk about both of these.

[Regenuary](#) was coined in 2020 by another UK organization, the Ethical Butcher, in *response* to Veganuary. In an [article](#) for The Guardian, co-founder Glen Burrows states, "The whole point of the movement is to think more about the impact of [our] food choices and stop the oversimplified narrative that all plant-based foods are better than animal-based.” Regenuary emphasizes thinking local, seasonal, and regeneratively about our food which can include animal products. It's understanding the “how” while perhaps critiquing Veganuary’s “not the cow.” Regenuary is not without its own critical examination, though. Because [regenerative agriculture](#) is inherently difficult to define, it's loose definition and rising popularity has been co-opted as a greenwashing term lately. Brands marketed as “regeneratively produced” might not mean what you perceive it to be.

So, should we align ourselves with the values of Veganuary or Regenuary? If you're on the fence or maybe just curious, why not try out both and see what works for you? At the same time, I don't think our relationship with food can be simplified to any binary (i.e. meat is bad, plants are good). Rather, you can strengthen your connection with food in a number of areas. Here's how.

Have a relationship with what you're eating—being mindful of who grew or made this food and why you are eating it. (What's your favorite dish and where are the ingredients raised?) Recognize in what ways your relationship with food is unique—there are cultural, place-based, economic, medicinal layers to what you eat and why. Extend that understanding outward, because that relationship looks different for everyone. And if you wish to prioritize a harm reduction diet, a potent term from Alexis Nikole or [Black Forager](#), I can't tell you what that looks like for you, but I think it is one that is adaptive to change and accommodates for future wellness.



SARA
DISCUSSES
SUSTAINABLE
CLOTHING

Are there clothes in your wardrobe that are collecting dust? Do things you no longer wear get pushed further and further toward the back of your closet? Or maybe your work situation has changed, allowing you to work from home in joggers and t-shirts instead of having to wear suits to the office 5 days a week. Whatever the reason, spring cleaning is around the corner. So it's a good time to decide what to do with all the clothes you no longer need. The good news is that you have choices. Here are 4 really good ones to consider.

1. **RESELL** – Various platforms now exist for you to sell your items. Facebook Marketplace, ThredUp, and Poshmark are just a few.
2. **REUSE** – this could be in the form of donation to your local thrift shop or charity or distributed within your own community via [Buy Nothing](#) groups.
3. **UPCYCLE** – this is where you take that stack of t-shirts and cut them up to make a quilt or some other useful item.
4. **RECYCLE** – Send the items to recycling centers that will break down the fabric into shoddy, which can be used to make insulation and carpet padding, as well as back into new thread and ultimately new fabric to make new clothing!

Your options range from easy to time consuming. What works best for you will be according to the items you are looking to dispose of and the amount of time and energy you're willing to invest. All choices are good ones as they can prolong the usefulness of the item and keep it from entering our landfills where it will take years to break down. Working as a group to share in the effort and costs of shipping has benefits.

Recent group collections have resulted in an 80% cost savings when done as a group vs individually.

Not only did we save money, used less materials to ship the goods but also saved the recycling centers the cost and energy to deal with multiple packages when just 1 was needed. It's a winning scenario for both ends of the process.

There are some good local resources you can call upon if you need more info:

<http://www.smartasn.org/index.cfm>

<https://www.recyclestuff.org>

If you need more local help, contact us at Eeviee.com. We can help you find information and even help you move clothes and other textile items to be recycled.



LEAF

TREE GLEANING



Yep, there's that word again—**GLEAN**! While it only rhymes with **CLEAN**, you can actually *clean* while you *glean*! As fresh fruit from the trees you own falls and begins to clutter your yard, you can gather (glean) the fruit and tidy (clean) your property! While lemons are ripe for gleaning today, fallen oranges will be decorating your patio furniture very soon. Help a neighbor in need by donating your fresh fruit to LEAF. In turn, we'll deliver your fruit to food banks who'll get your donation into the hands of those who need it.

We'll be in hand at **LEAF CR Stone Garden** each Monday and Thursday morning from 9 to 10:30am to accept your donations. For more information, contact us at info@fremontleaf.org or just follow the link below!

fremontleaf.org/glean

Get Cookin'!

OUR FAVORITE RECIPES



Fermented Lemons

Fermented Lemons, also known as *preserved* lemons, can be made using only salt and the lemon's own juices. This is an easy way to keep lemons ready when you need them. From growforagecookferment.com.

Ingredients

- 10 lemons
- 1/2 cup coarse sea salt non-iodized
- Bay leaves and peppercorns (optional)
- Quart glass jars

Instructions

1. Wash and scrub the lemons to thoroughly clean them.
2. Trim the top and bottoms by cutting about 1/4 inch off.
3. Slice the lemons lengthwise into quarters, leaving the last 1/2 inch connected at the base.
4. Gently open the lemons and sprinkle the inside with a teaspoon of salt.
5. Place 1 tablespoon of salt on the bottom of a quart jar. Pack the lemons into the jar tightly using a wooden utensil. Add more salt as you go. Press the lemons down to release their juices, to make room for the remaining lemons and to make sure that the lemon juice and salt combine to make a brine.
6. Optional: add a couple of bay leaves and a tablespoon of peppercorns if desired.
7. Add freshly squeezed lemon juice (about 2 lemons) on top to completely cover the lemons in juice.
8. Add a glass fermentation weight on top to keep the lemons submerged while they ferment.
9. Close the jar and allow the lemons to ferment at room temperature for about 4 weeks. Turn the jar upside down every so often to distribute the salt and juice. The lemons will soften and mellow as they sit in the pickling liquid. The lemons are ready once they soften, and the pith loses its bitterness.
10. Burp the jar occasionally as it ferments, especially during the first two weeks. Use a fermentation lid such as an airlock if you would rather skip having to burp the jar.
11. To use, rinse the lemons as needed with water to remove some of the salt. Remove and discard the pulp and use just the peels (though the flesh can also be used if desired).

Notes: Preserved lemons will keep for six months to a year. You can store them in the refrigerator or at room temperature. The salty, acidic brine that is created during fermentation acts as a preservative. The pickling juice can also be used over the course of a year. Just leave enough juice in the jar to always keep the lemons submerged in the brine.



Fremont Beekeepers

FIRST MEETING OF 2022

Saturday, February 12th, 2pm

LEAF C.R. Stone Garden

55 Mowry Avenue in Fremont

(near Mission Blvd)



WORK PARTY!



There's strength in numbers! Come join members of LEAF on the 2nd Saturday of each month from 9am until noon as we tackle various projects that benefit from a group of volunteers. **Masks are required!** Look for signs upon your arrival.

**LEAF C.R. Stone Garden is located behind Mission Valley Vet Clinic
at 55 Mowry Ave near Mission Blvd in Fremont.**

We hope to see you there!

WORK PARTY SCHEDULE

FEB 12 9AM-NOON

MAR 12 9AM-NOON

The image shows a laptop on a wooden surface. The laptop screen displays a video titled "GARDENERS UNITE! Talkin' DIRT" with a thumbnail of a person in a garden. To the left of the laptop is a pair of tan work gloves, and to the right is a small orange mug. The text "Talkin' DIRT" is overlaid in large, stylized letters. Below the image, on a dark background, is the text "An Online Gathering of Gardeners". Further down, it says "Curious about what to do in your garden in February? Check in with Guy, Michele and Rebecca on our Talkin' Dirt online gathering of gardeners for the answers to all your questions." Then, "Our next gathering is THIS WEDNESDAY February 2nd from 7 to 9 pm." At the bottom, it says "Visit fremontleaf.org/talkindirt to register."

Talkin' DIRT

**An Online Gathering
of Gardeners**

Curious about what to do in your garden in February? Check in with Guy, Michele and Rebecca on our Talkin' Dirt online gathering of gardeners for the answers to all your questions.

Our next gathering is **THIS WEDNESDAY**
February 2nd from 7 to 9 pm.

Visit fremontleaf.org/talkindirt to register.

Make a donation that will
impact an **entire community.**

