

# Make it a Green Halloween

What's better for the environment is better for your kids.

by Kate Winn

**B**lack and orange...and green? Though eco-friendly decisions should be the norm year round, October 31st is worthy of a little extra attention. There are some fabulous websites out there with tips for making this holiday a little less scary for the environment, such as [www.greenhalloween.org](http://www.greenhalloween.org), [www.thegreenparent.com](http://www.thegreenparent.com) and [www.planetgreen.discovery.com](http://www.planetgreen.discovery.com). We've compiled some of our favourite ideas to get you started!

## Costumes

☺ Do you really need to buy costumes this year? Try trading with a friend. As long as they're new to your kids, they'll be happy!

☺ If you are purchasing an outfit, look for natural materials such as 100% cotton, and consider consignment and thrift stores, which give previously-loved costumes a second chance.

☺ What about designing a costume with materials already available in your home? Ideas can be found online for the crafty sort, or existing items can be combined and repurposed. Could your closet (or Grandma and Grandpa's) outfit a biker, hippie, princess, rocker, pirate, movie star, scarecrow, priest, expectant mother or old man?

☺ Avoid manufactured plastic masks, as they have been shown to contain toxins which you don't want near your little angel's (or devil's) face.

☺ When adding the finishing touches to costumes, don't forget eco-friendly makeup and hair products.

## Treats

☺ When little ones come knocking on your door, be ready with a stash of fair trade and organic chocolate, lollipops or jellybeans. Other healthy choices include juice boxes, applesauce packs, fruit leather, raisins, veggie chips, and granola bars.

☺ Purchase your goodies locally, and aim for as



Photo: Cerr Weatherbee

little packaging as possible (wrappers that can be composted or recycled are ideal).

☺ Remember that many schools are peanut-safe, so keep this in mind when choosing your treats.

☺ Though this holiday is particularly frightening to dentists and dieticians, "treats" doesn't necessarily translate as "tooth decay and empty calories"! Kids love other tangible items like pencils, erasers, stickers, barrettes, coins and cookie cutters. (Just avoid the little sweatshop-produced plastic trinkets that will quickly find a place in our landfills.)

☺ If you're looking for something to munch on during the horror movie, consider roasted pumpkin seeds, which also make a healthy lunchbox snack. If you're not a fan, feed your seeds to birds and squirrels.

☺ In some homes, the Halloween Fairy visits small children to take away their treats and leave something better behind. Older kids can trade in their candy for points towards a book, CD or other coveted item. (Most uneaten candy can be composted; just remove the wrappers.)

## Travel

☺ As the little ones are trick-or-treating, have them collect their goodies in a reusable bag. A pillowcase is a traditional favourite, and kids appreciate its large volume! Try making reusable bags part of your shopping trips year-round.

☺ Trick-or-treaters and chaperones should go door-to-door on their own little feet (or magic slippers, or monster paws). Heading to a Halloween party? Hop on your bike, take public transportation, or carpool.

☺ Before the big night arrives, and wrappers are quickly discarded, discuss with your children the importance of recycling packaging when possible and disposing of trash properly.

## Decorations

☺ The most authentic decorations come from nature itself: pick up organic, pesticide-free pumpkins, and when their time is up, use them for cooking or composting. Gourds also add to festive fall decor.

☺ When selecting store-bought decorations, choose items that can be stored and reused, avoiding anything disposable.

☺ Candles are a must for eerie ambience, and beeswax and soy are your best bets. Both are made from renewable resources, (unlike paraffin wax, which is a petroleum-based product and no friend to the environment). These also burn more cleanly than traditional candles. LED lights and solar lighting are other green choices.

## Celebrating

☺ If you're sending out Halloween greetings or party invitations, choose e-cards and save a tree and a stamp – many e-greeting sites are free.

☺ Use dishes and utensils that are washable and reusable. If this is not an option, at least pick up biodegradable plates that can be thrown in the compost. This list may seem overwhelming, but even if you try one tip (or one tip per category) you can begin to green your Halloween one step at a time!

*Kate Winn lives near Lindsay with her husband and two daughters, who are still content to wear their cousins' hand-me-down Halloween costumes.*

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