

*Eco-Tip for October 29, 2017*

## **Two Tips for Halloween: Reused Costumes and Recycling Pumpkin**

By David Goldstein, Ventura County Public Works Agency, IWMD

You have probably bought treats to distribute, and you may have a spooky Halloween display; you may even know all the steps to Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. But to truly be in the spirit for trick-or-treaters who will come to your door Tuesday night, you need a costume.

Unfortunately, you cannot count on a thrift store to come to your rescue this close to the holiday. This year Halloween falls three days after a Saturday night, and most Halloween parties take place on Saturday night. Few people have had time to donate their used costumes to thrift stores, and most thrift stores receiving donations in the past two days have not yet had time to sort clothes and put them on hangers.

One exception to the dearth of used costumes is the Camarillo Family YMCA (3111 Village at the Park Drive, Camarillo). As a fund raiser, Camarillo YMCA staff have hosted a successful Halloween costume exchange in their large lobby for the past month, and just last week they reduced prices to \$10 per costume and \$1 for accessories such as masks, hats, and magic wands. They still have items, and their loyal clientele are likely to bring in more on Sunday, from 9 am to 5 pm, following the parties on Saturday night, according to Yvette Kontogiannis, who works at the front desk.

Of course, homemade costumes are another last minute solution, and you can reuse items you already own. Here is a classic: You can wear all black, use strips of white duct tape to make a series of vertical dashes from your leg to your collar, then attach a fork across your shirt. What are you? Well, a fork in the road, of course!

None of the other local YMCAs are hosting a costume exchange, but the Conejo Valley YMCA (4031 N. Moorpark Road, Thousand Oaks) is promoting reuse of a different type of Halloween waste. In preparation for the pumpkin carving portion of their Family Fun Night on Monday, volunteers on Sunday are hallowing out pumpkins. They will dry the seeds and distribute them to members for planting or baking and snacking, according to Emily Kamal, Member Service Representative.

Pumpkins can be recycled in your curbside yard waste cart. This is the single yearly exception to the general rule against food in yard waste carts. If pumpkin seeds end up in the yard waste cart, that is okay too. Site operators bring the temperature of compost piles up over 130 degrees for several days, preventing seeds from sprouting in finished compost. They do this regularly anyway to kill seeds that cause weeds.

Even better than putting your pumpkin in your yard waste cart is to compost it yourself in your own compost pile or worm box, saving the seeds for replanting next year. Of

course, this eco-tip does not apply to you if you are an artisan pumpkin decorator using artificial items banned in jack-o-lantern contests. Self-adhesive plastic rhinestones, glue-gunned beads, studs, and rivets are not welcome in yard waste recycling carts; throw away those extreme creations. No one wants Halloween pumpkin bling contaminating the compost of their spring flower beds.

From an environmental perspective, Halloween is not really a scary holiday if we focus on the creativity, community spirit, and fun of the holiday.

*On the net:*

<http://greenhalloween.org/blog/?cat=3>