

# Get rid of stuff -- without harming our environment

Spring brings that urge to de-clutter and clean. Here are ways to make it both earth-friendly and easier.



**Find out how to dispose of almost anything, by ZIP code**, for Alameda and Contra Counties at [StopWaste.org's Resource web site](https://www.stopwaste.org). For West Contra Costa, [RecycleMore has a similar guide](#).

**Medicines and sharps:** Find places to dispose of medicines and sharps by ZIP code at [med-project.org](https://www.med-project.org). This takes a few clicks, but you'll find useful information along the way.

**Mattresses and other bulky items:** Most local governments offer free pickup at least once a year, but rules differ. Find Albany's [here](#), Berkeley's [here](#), and El Cerrito's [here](#). Some bulky items including appliances can be dropped off for recycling and re-use at [Berkeley Recycling](#) and the adjacent [Berkeley Transfer Station](#), but check those links for rules and possible fees.

**Hazardous waste:** Many things are unsafe for ordinary pickups because they could be toxic, corrosive, or able to cause fires, explosions, or other dangerous reactions. They include paint, batteries, fertilizers, pesticides, electronic waste, fluorescent bulbs and ballasts, and medical wastes. Start by checking the [Re:source](#) and [RecycleMore](#) guides for specific items.

- Residents can drop off most household hazardous wastes free at [four locations in Alameda County](#) or the [West Contra Costa Hazardous Waste Facility at 101 Pittsburg Ave., Richmond](#). Check rules and hours first!
- A narrower range of hazardous wastes are accepted at [Berkeley Recycling](#) and, for residents of El Cerrito and Kensington, the [El Cerrito Recycling Center](#). Again, check rules and hours first. West Contra Costa offer [free pickup of household hazardous waste for seniors and the disabled](#).
- Besides most of the locations above, [E-waste can be dropped off free at the E-Waste Collective, 610 Page St., Berkeley](#). The non-profit donates refurbished computers.
- One-day free hazardous-waste drop-off days are usually scheduled May - October. Watch for notices or [check schedules here](#).

**Repairing things or passing them on to others for re-use** is of course better than throwing them away. Check local thrift stores, Urban Ore in Berkeley, and free drop-off boxes. One popular spot, the [El Cerrito Recycling Center's Exchange Zone](#), is closed until at least July.

**Albany and El Cerrito hold city-wide garage sales in May, with April signup.** Albany's is scheduled for Sat., May 4., with registration and fee deadline Apr. 16. [Albany info here](#). El Cerrito's sale is scheduled Sat., May 18, with registration and fee deadline Apr. 21. [El Cerrito info here](#).

**Finally, not being "too clean" in your garden** can avoid some extra work and help the environment. [Bee City USA](#) recommends reducing mowing through spring, giving time for flowers to bloom and feed hungry bees and other pollinators. Year-round, [leaving some bare soil](#) and rotting limbs, boards, and leaf litter can provide shelter for newts, food for birds, and homes for ground-nesting and wintering bees.