

From Costumes to Landfills:

\$11.6B Halloween Spending Adds to Fast Fashion Waste

Is It Time for Your Business to Host a Costume Drive?

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Photo Credit: Unsplash+

Willow Kennedy

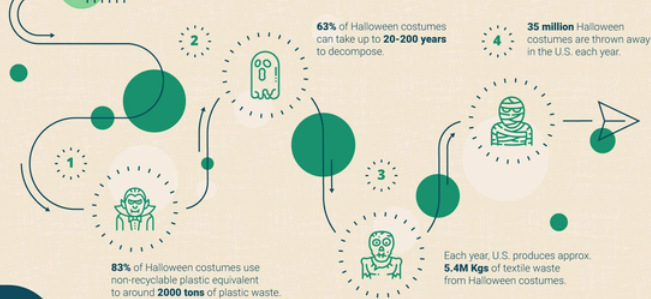
Every year, Halloween brings excitement, creativity—and an unsettling amount of waste. The National Retail Federation (NRF) projects Halloween spending in the U.S. to reach a record **\$11.6 billion in 2024**, with costumes making up a significant portion of this seasonal expenditure.

Roughly 83% of all costumes use non-recyclable, oil-based plastic, ending up in landfills and contributing to a staggering amount of textile waste generated each year. In the U.S. alone, it's estimated that 35 million Halloween costumes are trashed annually.

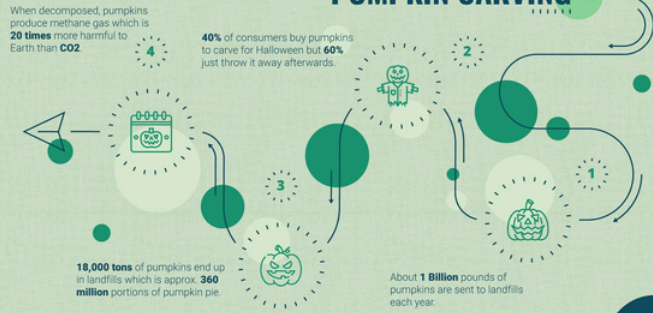
10 SPOOKY FACTS ABOUT HALLOWEEN WASTE

+ 5 WAYS TO REDUCE IT!

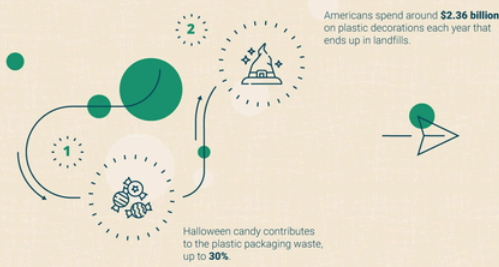
HALLOWEEN COSTUME



PUMPKIN CARVING



TRICK OR TREAT



5 TIPS TO REDUCE THE WASTE

- Reuse Costume**
Repurpose and recycle your Halloween costume. Don't just throw it away.
- Eco Packaging**
Use biodegradable or reusable packaging for candies on Halloween.
- Consume Pumpkin**
Eat your pumpkin, make recipes to use it, compost it, or feed it to animals.
- Save Decorations**
Donate or recycle Halloween decorations. Don't put them in the waste-bins.
- Smart Utensils**
Ditch disposable utensils, use glass plates or aluminum foil and pans.

SOURCE:
<https://www.wastemanaged.co.uk/halloween-waste/>
<https://www.budgetjunkies.com/blog/reduce-waste-halloween/>



While Halloween may seem like a once-a-year occasion, the temporary nature of costumes and decorations mirrors broader fast-fashion issues. Popular retailers like **Spirit Halloween**, with its **1,500 pop-up stores** across North America, generate an estimated \$1 billion in seasonal revenue. Similarly, e-commerce platforms from **Amazon to Shein and Temu** capitalize on quick, budget-friendly options, encouraging single-use purchases that lead to environmental impacts that last far beyond October 31.

Fast Fashion's Role in Halloween's Environmental Impact

The temporary nature of Halloween costumes—usually made from oil-based plastics—means that once discarded, they linger in landfills for centuries. Fast-fashion models amplify the issue by promoting **inexpensive, low-quality materials that aren't designed to last**, with the hidden costs of such fast, disposable fashion reaching beyond waste to include **potential environmental and health risks**.

Halloween, and the days and weeks that follow, presents an opportunity for businesses to take the lead in promoting sustainability during the holiday festive season. Initiatives that encourage reduced waste, upcycling, and alternative materials not only align with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals but will also resonate with eco-conscious consumers.

Practical Ways Businesses Can Support Sustainable Halloweens

For businesses looking to implement more eco-friendly practices and encourage employees and customers to do the same, sustainable fashion advocate **Lexy Silverstein** shared a few ideas with our team, which can engage employees, boost morale, cut waste and enhance corporate image.

Host a Costume Swap:

We suggest clothing swaps all the time in fashion. Why not do it for Halloween? Instead of buying anything new, companies can organize an annual costume swap for employees. Whether on-site or virtual, a costume swap lets everyone freshen up their look without buying something they'll only wear once. It's a practical, sustainable way to make use of costumes that are often forgotten after one wear. Plus, it adds a sense of community as employees share their own Halloween creativity.

Invest in Reusable Decorations:

Halloween decorations can be a big source of waste, so why not go for items that can be used year after year? Fabric banners, ceramic pumpkins, and other sturdy, festive decor offer a stylish way to celebrate without creating more landfill waste. Businesses can take it further by hosting a DIY decoration workshop for employees or customers, where they can create decorations from natural or recyclable materials like old jars, cardboard, and fabric. Not only does this save resources, but it gives everyone a chance to create unique pieces that bring a personal touch to the holiday.

Eco-Themed Costume Contests:

Encourage employees to get creative by organizing a costume contest that focuses on sustainability. Employees can come up with unique outfits using items they already have at home or repurpose old clothes to fit a Halloween theme. This simple contest allows employees to showcase their creativity while spreading awareness about eco-conscious choices. Adding categories like “most inventive upcycle” or “best thrifted look” keeps it light-hearted and engaging.

Reusable Treat Bags for Employees:

Instead of disposable plastic bags, encourage employees to bring or use reusable treat bags or fabric totes for Halloween festivities. These bags can be customized with Halloween themes and brought back each year, promoting a sustainable Halloween tradition. For companies looking to make it easy, offering employees a reusable, Halloween-themed bag is a small gesture that reinforces environmental responsibility in a festive way.

Host a Halloween Costume Drive:

This year, instead of the usual canned food collection, invite employees to bring in gently-used children’s Halloween costumes. These costumes can often be reused for several years, so let’s give them a second life! Once collected, set up a “Costume Closet” where parents can stop by and pick something up for their kids—or, if you prefer, donate the collection to a local school, community center, or church where families can benefit.

The Corporate Call to Action

Halloween offers companies an opportunity to model sustainability in ways that go beyond costumes and decorations. Initiatives like costume swaps and eco-themed contests can set a new standard that will resonate with employees and customers alike, establishing a brand’s commitment to environmental responsibility year-round.

As consumer awareness of fast fashion’s environmental toll continues to increase, companies that embrace sustainability initiatives can **gain both reputation and loyalty. The changes may be simple, but their cumulative impact—from reducing textile waste to supporting local communities—can help redefine Halloween as an eco-conscious celebration.**