



Great American Cleanup “#cleanYOURblock



The Keep America Beautiful® Great American Cleanup® is the country’s largest community improvement program which kicks off in more than 20,000 communities each spring. This national program engages more than 1.5 million volunteers and participants who take action in their communities every year to create positive change and lasting impact.

Keep America Beautiful encourages individuals to host “#cleanYOURblock” events in their own neighborhoods using tools learned by volunteering with a local affiliate or using this online toolkit.

Project Ideas:

1. Litter cleanup
2. Plant trees, shrubs and gardens
3. Revitalize your local park

LITTER CLEANUP

Cleanup Event Steps:

1. Define the purpose of your project
2. Gather a team
3. Set a date
4. Develop a plan including tools and materials needed, budget and day-of instructions
5. Execute
6. Celebrate
7. Share results with Keep America Beautiful by sending stories, data, and photos to gac@kab.org

Results:

The goal of your project should be to take the knowledge learned at a local Keep America Beautiful affiliate’s Great American Cleanup or similar project and implement it in a project in your neighborhood – or your block – to improve your community’s environment. Focus on results with immediate impact (e.g. # of trees planted, pounds of litter collected, yards of fencing painted, etc.).



Resources:

For more information about hosting a #cleanYOURblock event, visit our website (kab.org) or contact your local affiliate ([find here](#)) for tools and resources available in your community.

Before the event:

- Organize a cleanup committee of family, friends and neighbors who share your passion for the cause
- Visit the area you are planning to clean
- Determine if the area is public or private property. Make sure you obtain written permission to host your event at that location
- Determine areas to target and set boundaries
- Take "before" photos
- Register your event by emailing gac@kab.org
- Contact your local sanitation or public works department to see if they advise you to use any special trash bags/receptacles or if they can provide hauling services for bulk items
- Prepare with equipment you'll need (bags, gloves, litter pickers, rakes, shovels, and luggage scale), any permissions required, and make volunteers aware of equipment needed and appropriate clothing they should wear

Day of event:

- Set up an assembly area for volunteers to gather prior to and after the cleanup
- Ensure you have all materials (i.e. trash bags, gloves)
- Arrange collection locations for filled litter bags and bulky items
- Conduct a safety talk at the beginning of the activity so volunteers know how to safely pick up litter
- Assign volunteer responsibilities
- Have a first-aid kit on hand, and provide access to water
- Take photos during the event
- Record your results (i.e. pounds of litter) and take "after" photos (the best "after" photos are taken from the same location you took the "before" photos)



Tips for bagging litter and bulk items:

- Make sure you have identified collection containers for litter vs. recyclables (check with your local trash hauler for local recycling standards)
- Typically, recyclables include aluminum, metal, plastic bottles and cans, including aerosol containers
- Use clear bags or a clearly identifiable container for collecting recyclables and a trash bag for all other littered items for disposal
- Bulky items, including electronics, tires and appliances, should be managed as appropriate

Safety tips:

- Wear gloves; thick-soled, closed shoes; long pants; and long sleeve shirts
- Wear sunscreen and bug repellent
- Be aware of your surroundings and any potential hazards
- Use tools to pick-up litter and debris if available
- Wash hands with antibacterial soap after the cleanup

PLANT TREES, SHRUBS AND GARDENS

Before the event:

- Organize a cleanup committee
- Visit the site and determine areas to be planted
- Take "before" photos
- Register your event on kab.org
- Set goals – for example, number of trees to plant
- Research native species to consider planting
- Make sure there is enough space for the trees and/or plants to grow
- Draw up your design
- Prepare with equipment and any necessary permissions
- Gather volunteers and educate on appropriate clothing



Day of event:

- Set up an assembly area for volunteers to gather prior to and after the event
- Ensure you have all materials i.e. gardening gloves, tools: large and small shovels, rakes
- Arrange collection locations for filled litter bags and bulky items
- Assign volunteer responsibilities
- Have a first-aid kit on hand
- Apply any necessary safety parameters (i.e.: signage on roadways to make passing vehicles aware of planting)
- Take “during” photos
- Record results, i.e. # of trees/plants planted and take “after” photos (the best “after” photos are taken from the same location you took the “before” photos)

Tips for planting

Trees

- Dig your hole a couple of inches deeper and twice as wide than the bottom wrapped part of the tree that contains the roots
- Place the tree in your hole and fill the area around the root ball with soil
- Build the soil up in a mound around the tree’s trunk, slightly higher than the level ground
- Water the tree once you’re done to thoroughly drench the roots
- Water regularly until established

Flowers

- Ensure you have all materials i.e. gardening gloves, tools: large and small shovels,
- Set plants atop the ground and space them evenly
- Soak the plants while they are still in their original pots
- Gently pry apart matted roots, so they’ll spread in the soil
- (If available) add slow-release flower food into each hole and mix into soil Place flower plant in soil, cover with dirt, and water thoroughly
- Water regularly, as needed



Native Plants

- Dig your hole slightly bigger than the size of the pot the plant is currently growing in
- Use a tool (garden fork) to loosen the base of the hole and add additional compost
- Soak the roots of the plant in a bucket of water prior to planting, then invert the pot and gently take the plant out
- Place the plant in the hole
- Fill the root of the plant with additional soil and water the plant to drench the roots
- Water regularly, as needed

PARK REVITALIZATION

Before the event:

- Determine what you want to accomplish
 - Event ideas: Equipment/ fence painting, graffiti removal, surface replenishment
- Meet with any local park/ council representatives to share ideas, get approvals and written permission
- Organize a cleanup committee
- Determine how much time the project warrants
- Determine which skills are needed for specific efforts
- Set a date and location
- Create job descriptions
- Take "before" photos

Day of event:

- Set up an assembly area for volunteers to gather prior to and after the event
- Ensure you have all tools needed to specific project
- Assign volunteer responsibilities
- Have a first-aid kit on hand
- Apply any necessary safety parameter
- Take "during" photos
- Record results (i.e. acres of parks cleaned and improved)
- Take "after" photos (the best "after" photos are taken from the same location as the "before" photos)



Tips to get you started:

- Think about what types of activities you want to happen in your park to help you decide what equipment you will need or changes you want to implement
 - If you want it to be a place for relaxing, gardens and benches may be the best-suited project; if you want it to be a place for socializing, picnic benches may be more desirable
- When you have gathered your team and started brainstorming about your project, bring pictures and videos to show people the possibilities
- Learn your community's needs. Talk to your community members and those who regularly use the park to ensure your project meets their current need

Once you've decided on your project, contact a Keep America Beautiful staff member and/or your local affiliate for project support.