

## Ten Tips for Greening Your Institution

### 1. Form a Green Team

Greening isn't a solo job. Put out a call for staff or volunteers interested in sustainability and convene a sustainability committee, or [green team](#). It is helpful to have a representative from the facilities staff and the organization's board or leadership team. After forming a green team, use our [Institutionalizing Greening Checklist](#) to make sustainability a permanent part of your operations. You can also try incorporating sustainability into a staff person's job title.

### 2. Conduct an Official Energy Audit

If your building hasn't undergone an energy audit, now is the time! Energy audits help institutions peel back the mystery surrounding their energy use, offer recommendations for better efficiency and lower utility bills. In New York, NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority) offers [free energy audits](#) and incentives for small non-profits and subsidized [Flex Tech](#) audits for larger institutions. The federally-funded [BlocPower](#) firm connects houses of worship with these incentives and with energy efficiency contractors. Outside of New York, [Interfaith Power and Light](#), a multi-faith environmental coalition, can help your synagogue start greening. Also check the [Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency](#) (DSIRE) to find out what kinds of energy incentives your state offers. [ASHRAE](#) also offers valuable information about energy audits. Green teams may also want to use the [Hazon Seal audit recommendations](#) on facilities for guidance.

### 3. Conduct a Food Audit

Use [Hazon's Food Guide](#) and [Food Audit](#) to identify areas where your institution can improve its food sourcing, service, and waste management. After you perform an audit, learn how to organize sustainable holiday meals, start composting, and even learn how to purchase healthier and more sustainable food for meals and events. Even small changes like using reusable dishes or switching to equal exchange coffee can make a big statement and contribute to a healthier and more sustainable global food system.

### 4. Host a Green Kiddush

Green a weekly event at your institution. For synagogues, a [green kiddush](#) offers a way to publicly showcase your institution's commitment to greening through a Jewish lens. Make a few small changes, such as serving a meat-free or plant based meal, cutting out plastic ware, or offering local produce and organic grape juice. You can time the green kiddush to holidays like Earth Day, Tu



B'shvat, or the reading of Parshat Noah (the Torah portion describing the biblical flood). You could even go a step further and institute a green kiddush every week. Read about one synagogue's sustainable kiddush success story to learn how to reduce waste and enliven your next kiddush or simcha.

#### 5. Start Educating

Give a [sermon](#), host a lecture series, show a [movie](#), or form a book club about food, water, sustainability, or climate change. Check out even more examples of education related events on our [Hazon Seal Spotlight Blog](#)! These events build momentum around your sustainability efforts and inspire participants to green their own lives. If your organization has programs for children, invite [TEVA](#) educators to teach a Jewish environmental lesson, or incorporate green activities into the existing curriculum. Use one of Hazon's [curricula or source books](#) to help you get started. Post clear signs (with Jewish content) that identify recycling, paper, and compost bins and signs to remind people to turn off the lights.

#### 6. Implement Small Facilities Upgrades

Start upgrading your building by installing programmable thermostats and low-flow faucet aerators, replacing incandescent light bulbs with LED bulbs, and placing recycling bins next to every trash bin. These small improvements could even save your organization money. These projects will also build momentum for bigger projects like solar panels and HVAC retrofits.

#### 7. Purchase Green Products

Conduct an assessment of your organization's purchasing habits for office supplies, kitchen supplies, and cleaning products. Meals and tableware are a major source of waste in Jewish communities and thus an excellent opportunity for improvement. Consider a shift to reusable tableware to minimize all energy and waste related to production, packaging, shipping, waste removal, recycling, and even composting. If this is not at all feasible in your institution purchase compostable/biodegradable tableware and cutlery. You can also ensure a healthier space by purchasing, or even requesting your cleaning service to use, natural cleaning products free of hazardous chemicals. These products are often just as cheap, if not cheaper than "standard" supplies. Check out the "Green Products and Purchasing" section in [Greening Resources](#) for a list of sustainable product providers.

#### 8. Plant a Garden

[Start a garden](#) in the front of your building, in a courtyard, or on the roof. Host a community planting event at the beginning of the season, and create a gardening club to make sure its well-tended. Gardens not only improve and institution's image, but they also offer a myriad of educational opportunities. They can also provide the community with local and healthy food!





Gardens are a wonderful tool to help children learn about the natural world and the cycle of the Jewish year. Learn how one JCC set up a garden and nature classroom for all ages.

#### 9. Speak Up and Get Active

Advocate for public transit, write letters to government officials in support of renewable energy or asking them to support food assistance programs. You can also plant trees in your neighborhood park or volunteer in a community garden. There is so much that you can do! There are environmental and social justice campaigns underway in every corner of the country, at the local, state, national, and international levels. Sign up for newsletter from [League of Conservation Voters](#), [350.org](#), [Greenfaith](#), [Religious Action Center](#), [Sierra Club](#), [Jewish Climate Action Network](#), or [Citizens' Climate Lobby](#) to stay up to date.

#### 10. Spread the (Green) Word

Share your greening successes! Start by adding a tab on your institution's website that documents green improvements. Use social media to announce green upgrades and events. Encourage staff and community members to compost at home, unplug their personal electronic devices, use reusable water bottles, mugs, and shopping bags, and carpool or bike ride to work. Finally, fundraise by sharing greening stories with potential donors. Let organizations nearby know what you're up to.

