

## Great American Cleanup “#cleanYOURblock”



The Great American Cleanup is the country's largest community improvement program that kicks off in more than 20,000 communities each spring. This national program engages more than 5 million volunteers and participants who take action in their communities every year to create positive change and lasting impact.

Keep America Beautiful is encouraging individuals to host their own “#cleanYOURblock” event on their own street using what can be learned by volunteering with a local Keep America Beautiful Affiliate or using this online toolkit. Once you've had your event, make it a #cleanYOURblock Party by celebrating your hard work and accomplishments with neighbors, friends and family.

### 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. Layout a plan including: tools and materials needed, budget and instructions for day-of event
5. Execute and have fun
6. Celebrate
7. Share results with Keep America Beautiful by sending stories, anecdotes and photos to [gac@kab.org](mailto: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 event and apply it to a project in your neighborhood — on 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)



### Resources:

For more information about hosting a #cleanYOURblock event, visit our website ([kab.org](http://kab.org)) or contact your local affiliate 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](mailto: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 "during" photos
- > 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/bulk items:

- > Make sure you have identified cans for litter vs. recyclables
  - o Recyclable items: paper, cards, cardboard, glass bottles and jars, metal tins, can and aerosols
  - o Plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays (check with your local trash hauler for local recycling standards)
  - o Non-recyclable items: Food waste, shredded paper, wood, electronics and cables, clothing and textiles
- > Separate non-recyclable items such as cables and electronics for distribution to their proper disposal area, post-event.



**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 of family, friends and neighbors who share your passion for the cause
- > Visit the site, determine areas to be planted
- > Take “before” photos
- > Register your event by emailing [gac@kab.org](mailto:gac@kab.org)
- > Set goals such as # of trees planting
- > Research any trees and plants that you are thinking of planting.
  - o Consider planting natives to your area
  - o Make sure you have enough space for your plant to grow
- > Draw up your design
- > Prepare with equipment you’ll need, any permissions required, and make volunteers aware of equipment needed and 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

- > 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

### Plants (Look for native plants)

- > Dig your holes 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
  - o Event ideas: Equipment/fence painting, graffiti removal, surface replenishment
- > Meet with any local park/council reps to share ideas/get approvals and written permission
- > Organize a cleanup committee of family, friends and neighbors who share your passion for the cause
- > Determine how much time the project warrants
- > Determine which skills are needed for specific effort
- > 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 for specific project
- > Assign volunteer responsibilities
- > Have a first-aid kit on hand
- > Apply any necessary safety parameters
- > Take "during" photos
- > Record results (i.e. acres of parks cleaned and improved) and take "after" photos (the best "after" photos are taken from the same location you took 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'll need or changes you want to implement
  - o 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 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 needs

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