

# GREENWorks

## Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

A publication of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH (603) 271-3710

December 2023

### Time to Add an 'R'? Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – REFILL

In an era when environmental sustainability and community well-being take center stage, refill stations have emerged as a modern and popular solution to address both concerns. A [refill station](#) (sometimes called a “refillery”) is a retail store with the purpose of reducing single-use plastic production by promoting the reuse of one’s own containers. These stations usually supply consumables like dried fruit, grains, spices, detergents, cleaning products, hygiene items and water.

Using refill stations as part of a lifestyle routine not only reduces plastic pollution, but it also conserves resources from the production of plastic packaging. Think about all of the laundry soap containers you’ve thrown out or recycled over the years. The production of plastic bottles and containers require substantial amounts of fossil fuels and water, further contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and resource depletion; not to mention the energy required to manufacture and transport the products.

These refilleries can also be stimulating for local economies, garnering a sense of community, providing jobs and attracting people from all over. Shopping alongside other sustainability supporters is a great way to meet like-minded people and build up your community. Due to these stores being a relatively new concept, there aren’t many of them around. Having so few of these stations will result in people traveling out of their way to visit, creating an economic growth in that area.

#### Ready to Refill?

Generally, to purchase items in one of these stores, you would bring your own reusable container (glass jar, empty plastic container, an old Tupperware container, etc.), fill with whatever product you need and pay for what you got! It’s that easy. Many stores also offer some reusable containers for purchase or donated by others.

So, there are many benefits to switching to refillery products, but where can you find one? It does take a little looking around. Here's what we found:

[The Refill Station](#) in Portsmouth prides themselves as being a low-waste shop, committed to reducing their plastic footprint. The store provides a wide variety of different household and personal care products; and even delivers with your own containers!

[Witching Hour Provisions](#) in Hopkinton is not your average coffee shop. Not only do they sell fresh brews, but they also host a refill station for home cleaning and hygiene items.

For food refills in Concord, the [Concord Food Co-Op](#) gives you the option to buy certain foods and drinks with your own containers. Foods like grains, flours, nuts, coffee, etc., can be bought in your own reusable container, and *you* get to decide how much you want to take home with you! Also in Concord is [Bona Fide](#), which has over 30 refill options including detergents, soaps and hygiene products.

## Make-Your-Own Refill Stations

Want to save some money? Yes, refilleries are a great idea and very effective, but depending on how much of the products you need, it can rack up a high bill. Luckily, some household and personal care products are inexpensive and easy to make at home. All it takes is a quick internet search from a reliable source and you can find quick and cheap recipes for common products like soaps, lotions, shampoos and cleaners. For example, this [easy and cost-effective laundry detergent recipe](#) below only requires 3 ingredients, *and* you can make it in bulk.

### Homemade Powder Laundry Detergent

Ingredients:

- 4.5 ounces shaved bar soap
- 14 ounces Borax
- 14 ounces washing soda

Instructions:

- Thoroughly stir all three ingredients together for several minutes.
- You can take this a step further and blend the mixture in a blender or food processor to create a powder that will dissolve easily even in cold water. (Just be sure to let the dust settle before removing the lid of your blender or food processor so you don't inhale the fine particles.)
- Store in a sealed container with a small scoop and you now have between 32-64 loads of soap! 1 Tbsp is recommended per small load, but you are encouraged to use more for large/heavy loads.

Whether you start shopping at refilleries or making your own products at home, this is a healthy habit to adopt in 2024! Small changes like this can reduce waste and conserve resources, all while fostering a feeling of togetherness and community.

###