

Green Ramadan

The roadmap of God's vicegerents begins at home

BY ISNA GREEN INITIATIVE TEAM

SINCE 2015, THE ISNA GREEN INITIATIVE Team (<https://isna.net/isna-green-initiative/>) has been organizing “Greening Our Ramadan” campaign to encourage environmentally friendly practices in our mosques and Islamic centers, as well as in our schools and homes, to reduce our community’s carbon footprint and become responsible stewards.

Once again, sadly due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, Ramadan 2021 will be observed at home.

Ramadan is a month of merciful divine blessings, the month when the Quran began to be revealed. It is a month of submission for spiritual uplifting, balance and control of physical desires; of fasting and remembering the needs of the less fortunate; of focusing on charity and self-control so we can better reflect upon our stewardship and ask: “What are we doing to our environment and ourselves? Where are we going? And why?”

Let’s take this opportunity to reflect upon our duty to uphold the trust given to humanity by God as stewards: “And it is He who has made you successors upon Earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees (of rank) that He may try you through what He has given you...” (6:165). Simply stated, humanity as a whole is responsible for safeguarding the environment, its resources and ecosystems, as well as all of its various communities: “And there is no creature on (or within) the ground or bird that flies with its wings except (that they are) communities like you. We have not neglected anything in the Register. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered” (6:38). A hadith reminds us, “Earth has been made a mosque for me, and a thing to purify (to perform *tayammum*)” (“Sahih al-Bukhari,” book 8, hadith no. 87).

Therefore, we must preserve our planet and learn to cohabit with other communities in a balanced way so that we can become an ecofriendly umma.

Last year, the team introduced an ISNA Green Home Guide rubric as a tool for establishing a *baraka*-based (praising of God)

rating system that quantifies your “greening of Ramadan” through various types of praise (*tasbih, tahmid, tahlil* and *takbir*).

As this Ramadan will again be more challenging, we will release informational updates on www.isna.net. All participants will receive a certificate, and the environmental

advocacy Pen and Inkpot Foundation will plant a tree on behalf of your mosque/Islamic center or your home. As the hadith says: “Every Muslim who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, a person or an animal eats from it, is regarded as having performed a charitable deed” (“Sahih al-Bukhari,” book 41, hadith no. 1).

Unfortunately, during Ramadan a considerable amount of food and water is wasted because recycling efforts are few and far between. And yet a new global Muslim tradition is slowly arising, one that aligns with the well-known verse:

“For it is He who has brought into being gardens — [both] the cultivated ones and those growing wild — the date-palm, fields bearing multiform produce, the olive tree and the pomegranate: [all] resembling one another and yet so different! Eat of their fruit when it comes to fruition and give [the poor] their due on harvest day. Do not waste [God’s bounties]: Verily, He does not love the wasteful!” (6:141).

Abdullah ibn Amr reported that one day the Prophet (*salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) passed by Sa’d while he was performing ablution and asked, “What is this excess?” Sa’d said, “Is there excess with water in ablution?” The Prophet replied, “Yes, even if you were on the banks of a flowing river” (“Sunan Ibn Majah,” hadith no. 425).

Therefore, let’s pledge to make Ramadan more environmentally conscious, socially responsible and compassionate for those around us. Every year, consumers in rich countries waste almost as much food (248 million tons) as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa (254 million tons) (<http://www.fao.org/>; May 11, 2011).

Feeding America reports that 72 billion pounds of food is wasted, while 50 million people may have struggled with hunger in 2020. It adds that a further 52 billion pounds from manufacturers, grocery stores and restaurants end up in landfills rather than on kitchen tables (<https://www.feedingamerica.org/>).

The total generation of municipal solid waste in 2018 was 292.4 million tons. Of this, plastics amounted to 35 million tons (12.2%), reported the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (epa.gov).

As we fast, let’s reaffirm our sense of self-restraint and accountability to God, the Creator, the Provider of Sustenance, and adopt green practices for all times by doing at least some of the following actions.

GREEN RAMADAN
The Masjid Development Infographic Series

As Muslims, we should be sensitive to the harm that we do to our environment. More than that, it is imperative that we live in harmony with nature and implement sustainable and positive practices that are environmentally friendly. Let us live up to our role as stewards of the Earth.

TIPS TO A GREEN MASJID

1. CONSERVE FOOD AND WATER
2. USE DEGRADABLE PAPER PRODUCTS
3. RECYCLE MATERIALS
4. CONSERVE ENERGY
5. PLANT A TREE
6. EDUCATE OTHERS

1. Conserve food during iftars and avoid being wasteful by giving excess food to people in need. Conserve water, especially during wudu. Follow the tradition of our Prophet (peace be upon him).
2. Use relatively quick degradable paper products for iftars, instead of using the usual Styrofoam cups and plates.
3. Recycle materials, especially plastic water bottles. Other recyclable materials include paper, cardboard, newspapers, aluminum, milk bottles, soda bottles, yogurt tubs, and margarine/butter tubs.
4. Replace all light bulbs in the masjid with energy saver bulbs to conserve electricity.
5. Plant a tree or start a garden to improve the landscaping and also help the environment.
6. Give a khutbah on the Islamic imperative to conserve and protect the environment.

Ramadan Kareem
to you and your community!

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THINGS YOU CAN DO

- Reduce food waste and overconsumption. Eat more fruit and vegetables and less meat. Remember that the Prophet ate mostly grains, dates, water, milk, honey, vegetables and fruits. Take only what you can finish, eat moderately and don't waste food, all the while remembering that the Prophet advised us that one "cannot fill a vessel worse than his/her stomach" and that he/she should fill one-third of it with food, one-third with drink and one-third with air ("Sunan al-Tirmidhi," hadith no. 2380).
- Recycle material, especially plastic

LAST YEAR, THE TEAM INTRODUCED AN ISNA GREEN HOME GUIDE RUBRIC AS A TOOL FOR ESTABLISHING A BARAKA-BASED (PRAISING OF GOD) RATING SYSTEM THAT QUANTIFIES YOUR "GREENING OF RAMADAN" THROUGH VARIOUS TYPES OF PRAISE (TASBIH, TAHMID, TAHLIL AND TAKBIR).

water bottles. Plastics now take up 25-30% of our landfills. In the U.S., 1,500 plastic water bottles are used every second; of these, 70% never make it to a recycling bin (<https://drinkopenwater.com/>). Minimize the use of plastic to help preserve the climate and our health. Most plastics have a long decomposition life, so replace them with rapidly biodegradable/paper products or bring your own utensils. Avoid all Styrofoam, a brand name for polystyrene foam, which is non-biodegradable and thus can remain intact for over a million years (<https://sciencing.com/long-styrofoam-break-down-5407877.html>).

- Bring your own reusable water bottles and mugs to *iftar* and *tarawih* events, because 80% of plastic bottles are not recycled.

Replace light bulbs with energy-saver LED bulbs. Consider an Energy Star certification for your facility, installing solar panels and using light sensors.

Reduce your use of water, even when making *wudu*. Use low flow, Energy Star plumbing fixtures and sensors.

- Think about planting a garden or a potted plant. Maybe try growing some of your own food. Plant a tree, which is considered a charitable act.

- Read about the Prophet's medicine and natural herbal remedies (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3447072/>).

Buy fair-trade products. Get a daily dose of vitamin D by walking during the day. Consume less. Drink a lot of water and eat nutritious food.

- Join civic activities and/or community social projects, volunteer at homeless shelters, collect food for food pantries, invite non-Muslims to community and home dinners, and take care of Muslim inmates in nearby jails. Involve children and youth in age-appropriate Ramadan activities, such as serving as Green ambassadors during community dinners.

- This year, since "Earth Day" falls during Ramadan, ask your *khateeb* to deliver at least one Friday *khutba* on the Quranic imperative to conserve and protect the environment and its social good. Conduct Energy Star training and appoint/elect a community green coordinator.

OUR ONGOING ACTIVITIES

The team recently collaborated with the Environmental Protection Agency and compiled the "First Energy Star Booklet for Muslim Communities" (https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/owners_and_managers/congregations and <https://isna.net/isna-green-initiative/>). These documents explain how to make mosques, Islamic schools and centers more energy efficient. This collaboration was announced at ISNA's 57th annual convention.

Over the years, the Green Initiative Team has conducted many webinars; given awards for community participation; participated in Earth Week; and worked with IMANA, MANA, ICSJ, Green Faith of Southern New Jersey, Interfaith Power & Light, and similar organizations. We have made presentations at ISNA conventions, conferences and forums to promote environmental conservation and preservation among Muslims.


ISNA encourages all communities to form a local Green Initiative Team and have a Green Ramadan.

RAMADAN RESOLUTIONS

Ramadan is a roadmap to achieving balance with the environment. Let's use this month to reflect and act upon our stewardship, refresh our *tawakkul* and make our outward actions reflect the envisioned balance. Let's save Earth's resources and communities from the waste, mass pollution, global climate change, species extinction, habitat loss, ecosystem degradation, unsustainable farming and rising zoonotic diseases caused by our negligent actions.

Let's do our best to reduce the negative impacts that fall on the most vulnerable, many of whom live in the inner cities. Although they are the least responsible, they pay a disproportionate price in terms of the ensuing harm and negative health impacts.

May God help us to celebrate a greener Ramadan this year. We ask you to join us and thank all mosques and households who have participated in previous Green Ramadan campaigns.

To receive your ISNA Home and/or Masjid Rubric, please register at www.isna.net. 

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