

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Island Green Living Recycles Nearly 1 Million Cans and 45,000 Pounds of Plastic in 2023

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Pallets of cans in the USVI for recycling. By. ISLAND GREEN LIVING

Island Green Living, a nonprofit organization based in St. John, has announced that it has recycled nearly one million aluminum cans and 45,000 pounds of plastics destined for the ocean in 2023 alone. Operating primarily on donations, the organization has successfully diverted nearly 3 million cans and 30 tons of plastics from landfills, waterways, and streets since the start of their recycling initiatives.

Last week's milestone also marks the seventh shipment to their recycling partner, PADNOS, and the third such transport facilitated by Tropical Shipping. The shipping

company provided a deadheaded cargo ship bound for the mainland at a significantly discounted rate, making the nonprofit's efforts more impactful. Included in this week's shipment were 233,046 aluminum cans and 11,240 pounds of plastics.

"We thank Island Green for inviting Tropical Shipping to join efforts in protecting our beautiful Virgin Islands," commented Jennifer Nugent-Hill, Tropical's director of governmental & community affairs.

Harith Wickrema, president of Island Green Living, expressed gratitude to Tropical Shipping and other partners. "We are grateful to Tropical Shipping for agreeing to transport our recyclables at a tiny fraction of the cost, which enables us to ship increased volume away from our over-capacity landfills," Mr. Wickrema said. He also noted the invaluable support from Governor Albert Bryan, legislators, Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, and the community. "Without collaborative efforts and the support of all, we would not be able to deliver these positive results for the territory," he said.

Despite the impressive numbers, Mr. Wickrema noted that the materials collected represent only a small fraction of what the territory generates in waste. "Nearly 60 percent of our waste is compostable and 19 percent is recyclable—it is a valuable resource," he stated. Mr. Wickrema highlighted the financial and operational challenges that nonprofits face in managing sustainable waste.

Kelly McKinney, the executive director of Island Green Living, added to Mr. Wickrema's comments. "Many people don't realize that St. John's recycling programs are charity operations, not municipal ones. We depend heavily on donations," she said. As Island Green Living enters its second full season with expanded recycling programs, the organization aims to increase both resident and visitor participation and funding.

The nonprofit has strategically placed its recycling bins at three major trash collection sites across St. John: Cruz Bay, Giff Hill Road, and Coral Bay. Moreover, they also allow for drop-offs at Island Green Living's ReSource Depot and at a bin at Caneel Bay Fuel Dock in Cruz Bay. They accept plastics marked with resin codes #1, 2, and 5, which include items like water bottles, food containers, and milk jugs. Caps should be removed from containers before recycling, and items like plastic utensils, bags, and Styrofoam cannot be accepted.

Island Green Living has a 19-year history of promoting sustainability and conservation in St. John. Its ReSource Depot thrift shop alone has diverted approximately 900,000 pounds of building and other materials from landfills. The organization has also been actively involved in legislative actions, including efforts to ban plastic bags, straws, and toxic sunscreens.

For more information or to make a donation, the public is encouraged to visit Island Green Living's website at www.islandgreenliving.org. Island Green Living Association is a registered 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainability throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands.