



POLLUTION PREVENTION VIEW

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 3

A Newsletter from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

SUMMER 2007

You've Got Free Rain



Summertime and the living is easy. Well, except for all the time we spend taking care of our lawns and gardens. On one hand, we get to enjoy beautiful flowers, tasty vegetables, and a soft, green lawn, but on the other hand, they use lots of resources - especially water. In fact, during the summer months, it is estimated that nearly 40 percent of the water used by a household is for watering lawns and gardens.

There are a few easy things you can do at home to cut down on the amount of water you use and still have a healthy lawn and garden - like collecting rainwater in a rain barrel and reusing it, redirecting water from your downspouts to where it is needed, using native plants that need less watering, and building a rain garden.



Rain barrels were used as far back as 2,000 years ago, when rainwater was collected and stored in simple clay containers and used during dry months. Nowadays, they are making a comeback mainly in the form of a covered plastic 55-gallon drum placed beneath a downspout, with couplings that allow a garden hose to be attached. Local water conservation organizations are promoting and selling them, such as the Farmington Watershed Association, or you can buy one from a retailer or construct your own.

Collecting rainwater for later use makes a lot of sense. In Connecticut, during the six months from April through September, we get about 25 inches of rainfall. Just look outside your window the next time it rains and imagine all the water that's running down your driveway being reused in your garden rather than picking up pollutants and being washed down the storm drains. Using rainwater instead of municipal water has benefits beyond just water conservation. The rainwater can improve the health of your gardens, lawns, and trees since it isn't full of minerals, chlorine, fluoride, and other chemicals.

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You've Got Free Rain

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Here are a few things to remember about rain barrels:

- Water stored in an open container represents a risk for small children, so make sure your rain barrel has a secure cover.
- A properly fitted screen or filter will keep out silt, leaves, and other contaminants and prevent mosquitoes from getting into the barrel to lay their eggs. An additional protective measure is to put a small brick of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (a biological control available at garden centers) in the barrel to kill any hatching larvae.
- Place your barrel on level and stable ground so it will not tip over. Keep in mind that when your rain barrel is full, it will weigh quite a bit.
- Disconnect your barrel during the winter since freezing and thawing may weaken the material or cause cracks.

Besides helping the environment, an obvious reason for collecting and redirecting rainwater is to save money on your water bill. Only 1/4 inch of rainfall runoff from the average roof will completely fill the typical barrel! (A good formula to remember: 1 inch of rain on a 1000 sq ft roof yields 623 gallons of water. You can calculate the yield of your roof by multiplying the square footage of your roof by 623 and divide by 1000.)

To help you get started on creating a water-conserving yard, here are a few rain barrel resources:

<http://www.marc.org/Environment/Water/buildrainbarrel.htm>

<http://www.baysoundings.com/rainbarrels.asp>

<http://www.longwood.edu/cleanva/rainbarrels.htm>

For information on rain barrel sales with non-profit organizations see:

<http://www.nerainbarrel.com/>

UCONN LEEDS the Way

What do football players, rain gardens and recycled tires have in common? They all can be found at the new "green" football-training complex at the University of Connecticut in Storrs.

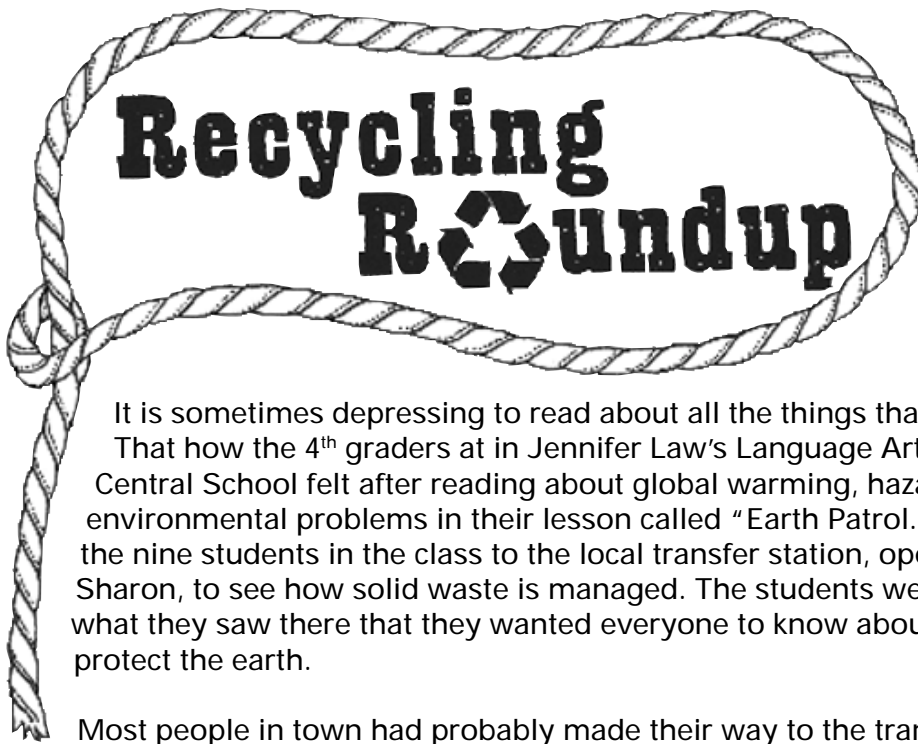
Recently the CT Green Building Council held a tour of UCONN's LEED-registered Burton Family Football Complex/Mark R. Shenkman Training Center. This facility includes many green building features, including an indoor football field made of recycled tires, energy efficient lighting and heating, and rain gardens and bio-retention swales that retain stormwater runoff.

LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System, which serves as a national benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings. Building to LEED standards only increases the initial construction cost by about 1/2%. Over the long term, the savings in energy will help to offset the extra expenditures to reach LEED certification.

"The Burton-Shenkman Complex is about 35 percent more efficient than a normal building built to regular standards would be," Richard Miller, UCONN Director of Environmental Policy said. "We'll be saving about \$40,000 a year which means a quick payback of three to five years in energy savings alone. These buildings are also more durable, so you save on maintenance and repair costs."

For more information on the Burton-Shenkman facility and UCONN's Sustainable Design and Construction Policy, visit <http://www.ecohusky.uconn.edu/greenbuildings.html>

The CT Green Building Council sponsors tours of green facilities – including recently a fuel cell manufacturer and a food distribution center. For more information, go to www.CTGBC.org or contact Kim Trella, DEP Office of Pollution Prevention at (860) 424-3234.



Teaching Grown-ups about the 3 R's

It is sometimes depressing to read about all the things that are wrong with our environment. That how the 4th graders at in Jennifer Law's Language Arts Enrichment class in Salisbury Central School felt after reading about global warming, hazardous waste and other environmental problems in their lesson called "Earth Patrol." As part of the lesson, Ms. Law took the nine students in the class to the local transfer station, operated by the towns of Salisbury and Sharon, to see how solid waste is managed. The students were so impressed and heartened by what they saw there that they wanted everyone to know about what their town was doing to protect the earth.

Most people in town had probably made their way to the transfer station to drop off garbage, but the students thought that too few were aware of all the opportunities to reduce, reuse, and recycle (the 3 R's). So they developed a "tour" of the transfer station in booklet form, cleverly entitled, *It's Not A Dump*. The color booklet contains a map of the transfer station and descriptions of items collected, such as electronics, clothing, leaves, and wood. Included are details of yearly disposal costs, tonnage collected and how the materials are processed. Along with all these meticulously researched details, each student offered his or her own pithy thoughts about recycling and waste reduction.

With the exception of printing the covers, the students were involved in every aspect of putting 350 copies of the booklet together, including taking time from recesses and lunches to collate and bind them. One copy went home to each family at the school. Copies were also distributed to town officials and employees, and to members of the Solid Waste Commission. Financing came from the Salisbury Association Land Trust.

The reaction to the booklets has been overwhelmingly positive and the students learned that each of us can do our part by helping to reduce our waste and managing it the right way. In recognition of their efforts, DEP presented the school with a GreenCircle Award on June 15th. As one of the students said, "Even if you do the smallest thing to help our earth you can still make a difference..."

To see the book, go to <http://www.salisburycentral.org/miscPdf/ItsNotADumpBook.pdf> or contact Jennifer Law, Salisbury Central School at (860) 435-9871, x131. For information on the GreenCircle Award Program, visit www.ct.gov/dep.

Solid Waste includes Disaster Debris

No one can be sure when it will happen, but experts predict that Southern New England is due for a major hurricane. Connecticut has experienced four category 3 hurricanes over the past century, the '38 hurricane being the most destructive. According to the CT Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS), hurricanes have the greatest destructive potential of all natural disasters in the state. In fact, a Category 3 hurricane hitting Connecticut would generate an estimated 5.5 million to 20 millions tons of debris. To give you an idea of just how much that is, our entire state generates 5 million tons of solid waste annually!

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Solid Waste includes Disaster Debris (continued from page 3)

How would we manage that debris? At the May 22nd meeting of the State Solid Waste Management Advisory Committee, Frank Gagliardo of DEP's Recycling Unit told the group that DEP has been working with DEMHS, other state agencies, U.S. EPA, FEMA, and Connecticut municipalities to prepare the State in the event of a major hurricane or other natural disaster. This includes the draft Disaster Debris Management Plan that establishes a framework for state agencies and municipalities to manage debris generated by a natural disaster.

The Debris Plan has two main objectives: (1) to assist other state agencies and municipalities in their disaster debris management planning and (2) to establish emergency waste management practices that are consistent with the State's Solid Waste Management Plan. Connecticut's approach to managing disaster debris will be to recycle and compost as much of it as possible; to use our in-state waste disposal capacity efficiently; to utilize temporary debris staging areas; and to rely upon transfer stations and volume reduction facilities to move the remaining wastes out-of-state.

Gagliardo indicated that the State is also preparing requests for proposals (RFPs) to address debris removal and monitoring. Debris monitors will provide documentation of the cleanup effort, which is necessary for FEMA public assistance funding. The Plan and the RFPs will be finalized later this summer. Next steps include coordinating the State plan with municipal emergency plans. For more information contact Frank Gagliardo at (860) 424-3130.

For updates on the State Solid Waste Management Plan Advisory Committee, visit www.ct.gov/dep/swmp.

Beware The Phantom Load

Phantom or vampire loads come from appliances that are sucking up the juice even when turned off or not in use. Appliances have "standby power" to support features such as instant-on, remote control, channel memory and LED clock displays. TVs, for example, are still consuming about 75 % of their wattage when turned "off."

To find these sources of phantom power in your home, walk around and count how many battery and cell phone chargers you have. Then count up the number of appliances with remote controls, digital displays, rechargeable batteries, and soft-touch keypads. The average American home has between 5 and 10 appliances with these standby power features. That accounts for about 5% of residential electricity use - meaning that U.S. consumers spend over 4 billion dollars on standby power every year.

Nearly 2.5 billion electrical products just in the U.S. contain external power supplies, a block-like appendage attached to the power cord (also known



as a "wart"). The "wart" converts AC, or alternating current (the kind sent over high-voltage lines) into low-voltage DC or direct current (the kind we use for electronic circuits). Touch the wart and you can feel the heat that is wasted in this conversion. The problem with these power supplies (also called transformers) is that by design they are very inefficient and power conversion is always taking place, even when the appliance is not being used.

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WHAT'S NEW IN P2?

from the Connecticut DEP

No Pesticides at K-8

Legislation was passed this session (Public Act 07-168) expanding the current pesticide ban from elementary school to middle school grounds and playing fields (grades 8 or lower). The bill bans the use of lawn care pesticides but there is an exemption if an IPM program is in place until July 1, 2009, at which time the pesticide ban at these schools includes the entire property.

See <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2007/ACT/PA/2007PA-00168-R00HB-05234-PA.htm>

Green School Training

A seminar to help anyone working on school construction to comply with the new energy requirements (PA07-242) is being planned for September. If you would like more information, please contact Kim Trella at kim.trella@po.state.ct.us or (860) 424-3234.

Electronics Recycling



Public Act 07-189 establishes a recycling program for electronics, such as computers and televisions. Beginning January 1, 2009, CT municipalities will provide for the collection of unwanted electronics, which may contain toxic chemicals such as lead and mercury. The electronics will then be properly recycled and the manufacturers will cover the cost of the program. See <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2007/ACT/PA/2007PA-00189-R00HB-07249-PA.htm>

Beware the Phantom Loads (continued from page 4)

The U.S. EPA is expanding the Energy Star line to include external power supplies where the average efficiency must be in the top 35% of units on the market. This has the potential to save over 5 billion kWh of energy, preventing the release of more than 4 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions—equivalent to taking 800,000 cars off the road. Consumer products like cell phones, PDAs, digital cameras and camcorders will soon be available with the Energy Star label. Eventually these more efficient adapters will be in cordless phones, laptops and office equipment.

What can you do to stop phantom power? Unplug your battery and cell phone chargers when not in use. Connect your computer, TV, and DVD player to power strips. The power strip can be turned off, effectively stopping the flow of electrons through the system, curtailing the phantom power loss. *Note: Be sure to check with your service provider to see if they recommend turning off the power to equipment such cable multimedia terminals. Some of these devices have a battery back up that could be drained, triggering a trouble report to your service provider.*

Who makes higher efficiency products?
Check out EPA's Energy Star website for a listing:
http://www.energystar.gov/ia/products/prod_lists/eup_prod_list.pdf

A Pot to Plant In

Calling all gardeners! Whether you plant flowers, herbs, vegetables or fruits, there's a new type of pot to start your plants in, one that's environmentally friendly, made in Connecticut, sold locally and said to grow bigger, better plants - CowPots™!

CowPots™ are made of cow manure and can be planted directly into the soil with the plant. They were invented by brothers Matt and Ben Freund, dairy farmers in the northwest hills of Connecticut, and are now being sold at a number of locations including Freund's Farm in North Canaan and the Connecticut Creative Store in Hartford.



At Freund's Farm, over 250 cows roam the grounds and leave behind a lot of manure. While farmers and gardeners have always considered cow manure a good soil amendment for their gardens, the packaged manure that backyard gardeners buy does not come close to depleting the great loads piling up on dairy farms. The nitrogen and phosphorus in that manure can negatively impact waterways, especially the Housatonic River, a water source for many Connecticut communities that is located not too far from the Freund's.

Matt and Ben started working on their unique pots back in the late 1990s, as a way to manage the manure in an environmentally sound manner. CowPots™ were actually created right in Matt's kitchen where he began by gluing the manure fibers together and drying the pots in his toaster oven. After many trials and tribulations, the brothers found a process in which they can mass-produce pots of limitless sizes and shapes at an economical cost. These pots can withstand months in the greenhouse, but within 4 weeks of being planted in the ground they dissolve and continue to feed the plant.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Farm Reinvestment Grant Program recently awarded the Freund's \$40,000 for a facility to allow an increase in the production of the CowPots™. This grant program is designed to strengthen the economic viability of Connecticut's agricultural producers through long-term capital-fixed-asset and diversification projects. This year, only 18 producers are being awarded the matching grants, which will be used to expand or improve existing farms in accordance with a 10-year business plan.

CowPots™ can be used in place of plastic or peat pots. The manufacture of plastic pots creates pollution and since this plastic is not recycled, it also contributes to our solid waste problem. Peat pots have their own set of environmental issues, mainly that the large-scale removal of peat from bogs is destroying precious wildlife habitats and it takes centuries for a peat bog to regenerate. CowPots™ are helping a local farmer reduce the nutrient load on the farm and the resulting run-off, which directly contributes to a better and cleaner environment. These pots have the added bonus of having built-in fertilizer and also allow for better root penetration.



Want to find out more about CowPots™? Visit www.cowpots.com
For information on the Farm Reinvestment Grant Program – www.ct.gov/doag

DEP Receives National Award from H2E

This spring, DEP's Office of Pollution Prevention received the *Champions for Change Award* for its leadership in assisting Connecticut hospitals with improving their environmental performance. Laura Brannen, Executive Director of Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E), praised DEP, saying "The Connecticut DEP is at the forefront of a fundamental shift in the health care industry; by encouraging the use of healthier and more responsible products and practices, DEP is helping all of Connecticut's health care facilities to operate in ways that better protect the health of patients, workers, communities, and the environment. This is a revolution that benefits everyone."

DEP provides education and outreach to hospitals through the Connecticut Hospital Environmental Roundtable (CHER), formed by DEP in 2004 as a way to help hospitals deal with growing number of environmental concerns and regulatory requirements facing the health care industry.

For more information, visit www.h2e-online.org or www.ct.gov/dep/p2 (click on Institutions and CHER).



Ask
Eartha



Note: This feature offers answers to select environmental questions. Send your question to the editor's address -- judith.prill@po.state.ct.us and watch future issues for an answer.

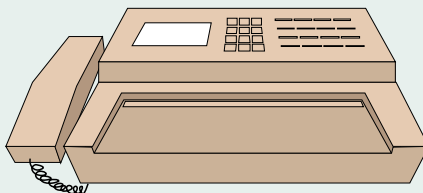
Dear Eartha:

I followed your recommendations in a previous newsletter (*editor's note: Winter 2007, page 2*) and have almost eliminated the junk mail coming to my home. Now I noticed at work that we usually get a few junk faxes every day. How can I stop these since they are a waste of paper and toner?

— Henry M.,
Hartford, CT

Junk faxes are annoying but they also are illegal — even if they have information printed on them about how to stop to further faxes. There are federal and state laws prohibiting unsolicited advertisements to any fax machine, including those at both businesses and residences.

There is one exemption under the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules. If you have an established business relationship with the company sending the fax, it is implied that you have consented to receive the faxes until you notify the company otherwise.



Once you do request to "opt-out," the company must stop sending further faxes within 30 days from the date of your request.

What you can do to stop unwanted fax advertising:

- File a complaint with the FCC, which can issue citations and impose fines against companies violating the junk fax rules. Their website has an on-line complaint form www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html or you can 1-888-CALL-FCC for more information.
- Register with the National No Call List to protect your number from unwanted telephone and fax solicitation at <https://www.donotcall.gov/default.aspx> or call toll free at 1-888-382-1222. You may report Do Not Call violations to the CT Department of Consumer Protection, which will accept complaints on unwanted solicitations from both in-state and out-of-state companies. Connecticut's complaint form can be downloaded at http://www.ct.gov/dcp/lib/dcp/pdf/forms/no_call_complaint_form_2004.pdf

- Eartha

For more information, visit
www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/unwantedfaxes.html
or www.junkbusters.com/fax.html



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P 2 C A L E N D A R

A S E L E C T I O N O F E N V I R O N M E N T A L E V E N T S

July 22, 2007

Water Conservation with Rain Barrels Collinsville Canoe and Kayak

The Farmington River Watershed Association has partnered with the New England Barrel Company to provide opportunities for residents to purchase rain barrels. For more information, visit FRWA website www.frwa.org and go to the events section.

September 8, 2007

Lawn Care Basics Auer Farm - Bloomfield

This seminar, sponsored by the UCONN Home and Garden Education Center, will cover lawn seed selection, fertilizers, when to renovate, and problems such as moss, shade and grubs. To register, call (860) 486-6271 or visit: www.ladybug.uconn.edu.

August 16, 2007

Organic Lawn and Turf Course Manchester Community College

The CT Chapter of Northeast Organic Farming Association (CT NOFA) is sponsoring an intensive daylong course for land care professional and municipal employees on management of lawns and athletic turf using organic methods. For more information, visit www.organiclandcare.net or call (203) 888-5146.

October, 2007 (date TBD)

Creating Compost: Black Gold for the Homeowner

Tolland County Agricultural Center -Vernon
Demonstrations and discussions on various composting methods and equipment, from indoor worm composting of kitchen scraps to hauling fall leaves. Call (860) 688-3881 for more information or visit: www.ct.nrsc.usda.gov/eln-workshops.html.