



Stuff, Stuff and more Stuff



Ideas on How to Reuse and Recycle all Kinds of Household Items

Prepared by the Leagues of Women of Voters of Rensselaer County

Revised December, 2007

What's in this guide:

| | |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 2 |
| GEE WHIZ RECYCLING FACTS..... | 3 |
| GENERAL INFORMATION ON RECYCLING AND REUSE..... | 5 |
| Websites | |
| Charities | |
| Freecycling | |
| Online Selling | |
| Do-it-Yourself | |
| Consignment (seller-assistant) Services | |
| On-line Classifieds | |
| SPECIFIC ITEMS (Alphabetical) | |
| Appliances..... | 7 |
| Batteries..... | 7 |
| Books..... | 8 |
| Bottles and Cans..... | 8 |
| Building Supplies..... | 9 |
| Bubblewrap (see "Packing Supplies") | |
| CD's and DVD's..... | 9 |
| Cellphones..... | 10 |
| Clothing and Other Textiles..... | 11 |
| Electronics..... | 12 |
| Local Collection Businesses..... | 12 |
| National Companies - Recycling and Trade-in Programs..... | 13 |
| Charities - Local and National..... | 13 |
| Eyeglasses..... | 14 |
| Furniture and Household Items..... | 14 |
| Hangers..... | 15 |
| Household Hazardous Waste..... | 15 |
| Kitchen Waste..... | 16 |
| Light Bulbs..... | 16 |
| Magazines..... | 16 |
| Paper (including junk mail)..... | 17 |
| Packing Supplies..... | 17 |
| Picnic-ware and Coffee Cups..... | 18 |
| Plant Pots..... | 18 |
| Plastic Bags..... | 18 |
| Plastic Containers..... | 19 |
| Printer Cartridges..... | 20 |
| Scrap Metals..... | 20 |
| Smoke Detectors..... | 21 |
| Styrofoam (see "Packing Supplies" and "Plastic Containers") | |
| Tires..... | 21 |
| Toys..... | 22 |

Introduction

The League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County is committed to environmentally sound solid waste management practices that reduce the amount of waste, particularly toxic waste, which enters our landfills. Toward this end, we encourage residents of the county to take steps to appropriately recycle or facilitate the reuse of unwanted products.

We often find ourselves in a quandary about what to do with those unwanted things that our municipal garbage services won't accept. There are, in fact, lots of ways to recycle and reuse goods and, in the process, extend the life of our landfills, protect the environment and save raw materials.

This is an informal list of ideas about how to reuse and recycle all kinds of household items. It includes information on outlets in the Capital District and beyond that will accept your unwanted goods. The list is far from exhaustive and some portions of it may go out-of-date rather quickly. *To report errors or suggest other ideas, please feel free to contact Diane Bell. E-mail: dianebell@nycap.rr.com; Phone: 518-273-5172.*

The matter of solid waste disposal is only one of many environmental issues and perhaps not the most dire. Still, it's an issue that's close to home, so to speak. Everyone generates at least some garbage and everyone can do something to reduce the amount of stuff they throw away. Here are some guidelines to follow:

*** Buy:**

- only what you need and whenever possible, in bulk quantities;
- products that are durable and repairable;
- products with the least packaging possible; and
- products made from and packaged in recycled or recyclable materials.

*A fun book: "Cool Green Stuff: A Guide to Finding Great Recycled, Sustainable, Renewable Objects You Will Love"
by Clarkson Potter*

- * Think before you discard.** Ask yourself if you can reuse an item or if someone else could.
- * Be aware.** Read the newspaper (on-line if you want to save paper), pay attention to the radio and TV, cruise the Internet, talk to friends and neighbors - information on recycling is out there.
- * Be creative.** You may discover your own ways to recycle and reuse things.
- * Share your ideas.** Together we can reduce our impact on this earth of ours.

GEE WHIZ RECYCLING FACTS

Source: brochure from the
NYS DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

It takes more energy and natural resources to make an altogether new product than it does to make a product by recycling. Recycling generates less pollution, including less greenhouse gases, and saves landfill space. It also saves money and time. And, it creates jobs!

Recycling Steel... Environmental Savings

For every ton of steel (metal) recycled, we...

Use 40 % less water than used to make virgin steel

Reduce air pollution by 86 %

Reduce water pollution by 76 %

Save enough energy to run a 60 watt light bulb for 26 hours

Save 2500 pounds of iron ore, 1000 pounds of coal and 40 pounds of limestone

Litter Facts: It takes steel cans up to 100 years to decompose.

Recycling Paper ... Environmental Savings

For every ton of paper recycled, we...

Save 463 gallons of oil

Save 7000 gallons of water

Make 60 pounds less air pollution

Save 3 cubic yards of landfill space

Save 4100 kilowatt hours of energy

Save 17 trees

Reduce carbon dioxide emission by 85 pounds per year

Litter Facts: It takes paper up to one year to decompose.

Recycling Aluminum

For every ton of aluminum recycled, we...

Reduce energy use by 90 %

[A TV could run for 3 hours on the energy saved by recycling just one can!]

Reduce air pollution by 95 %

Reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 13 tons

Save 237 Btu's of energy

Litter facts: It takes aluminum cans 200 to 500 years to decompose.

Recycling Glass...Environmental Savings

For every ton of glass recycled, we...

Save enough energy to light a 100 watt light bulb for 4 hours

Save 9 gallons of fuel (oil)

Save 1 million Btu's of energy

[It takes 25 % less energy to make glass from recycled, rather than virgin, materials]

Save 1330 pounds of sand, 433 pounds of soda ash, 433 pounds of limestone,
and 151 pounds of feldspar

Reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 3.46 tons

Litter facts: Glass can last for thousands of years. It does not decompose.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON RECYCLING



Wbsites:

-- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

www.dec.ny.gov

-- **Eco-cycle** is an organization working to build zero waste communities. Their goal is to redesign our production systems so that they are cyclical, as in nature, and nothing is considered to be waste.

www.ecocycle.org

-- **Earth 911** is an environmental "Web portal" that "empowers the Earth's citizenry with community-specific 'actionable' environmental information" for use in everyday life with the aim of promoting sustainability.

www.earth911.org

-- **LIME** is an on-line community where you can find information to help you "live healthier and ...make our planet greener". Type in "recycling" in their Search box.

www.lime.com

Charities that will Take your Stuff:

-- The **Giving Map** is an interactive map that helps you locate charities around the Capital District region that will accept donated goods of various sorts. It can be found online. The map is updated around Thanksgiving. Managed by Fountains Spacial, Inc. in Schenectady, NY. Phone: 518/346-0942

www.aqishost.com/givingmap/

Freecycling: www.freecycle.org

-- The **Freecycle Network** is made up of 4144 groups with about 400,000 members across the globe. According to their website, there's a Freecycle group in the Albany area with about 600 members. The Freecycle Network is a grassroots and entirely nonprofit movement of people who are giving (and getting) things for free while building a sense of community and keeping stuff out of landfills. Membership is free, and every thing posted must be FREE, legal and appropriate for all ages.

Online Selling

Most people are aware of e-Bay and Craig's List as online selling venues.

-- **Do-it-Yourself.** Before getting into selling online, study the process. A book by Jacquelyn Lynn called "Make Big Profits on eBay" is one resource. The author suggests going online first as a buyer to see what you like. The best sellers think like buyers, or at least attempt to know the thought process of a buyer. There are costs associated with eBay, and in certain instances with Craig's List, so items that only sell for a few dollars may not be worth the time and energy.

-- **Consignment (seller-assistant) Services.** This type of company manages the eBay process for customers. It provides a variety of services, including: researching an item to determine if it is actually sellable and what it is worth, taking pictures, writing descriptions, posting the item on eBay for auction, and packaging and mailing the item. It takes a profit ranging from 20 to 35 percent. These companies may be especially good if you have collectibles, memorabilia, antiques, heirlooms or anything else where the value isn't obvious. They're also good for people with items needing special attention throughout the auction period or anyone who doesn't have enough time to sell their items.

Silver Birch Trading Post is one such company in the Capital District. Phone: 518/439-0724.
<http://www.silverbirchtradingpost.com>.

-- **On-line Classifieds.** On-line classifieds are especially good for lower priced items. The Albany Times Union is now offering free classified ads for merchandise and pets priced at \$250 or less and vehicles priced at \$5,000 or less. Ads are limited to three lines. They run for 15 days on-line (as well as in the daily newspaper). Place ads at 454-2000 or tuclassified@timesunion.com.)

SPECIFIC ITEMS (Alphabetical)

Note: Before visiting the locations listed below or mailing items, call to double-check that the organizations or businesses are, indeed, accepting the items you wish to dispose of.

APPLIANCES



-- See **ERC Community Warehouse** (below) under "Furniture and Household Goods". See also **Habitat for Humanity ReStore** under "Building Supplies". Also check the yellow pages of the phone book under "Appliances - Used".

-- **Waste Management and Recycling Products**. Collects broken refrigerators, air conditioners and clothes dryers. Location: Scotia-Glenville Industrial Park. Phone: 518/377-9900.

Batteries

According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) website, batteries are a small amount of the solid waste stream, but they are a concentrated source of some types of heavy metals, like cadmium, lead and mercury, that are bad for human health and the environment. Call your municipal solid waste coordinator to see if your community collects batteries. Also check the DEC website for guidance.

www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/819.html.

-- **Technology Surplus Store** (affiliated with Waste Management and Recycling - See also "Appliances" and "Electronics"). Collects all types of batteries, some for free and some for a fee. Location: Scotia-Glenville Industrial Park. Phone: 518/377-9900.

-- **eLot** in Troy (see also "Electronics" below) accepts batteries.

-- Some other stores recycle batteries. Stores include: Staples (www.staples.com), Target (www.target.com), Walmart (www.walmartstores.com), Verizon Wireless (www.verizonwireless.com), Radio Shack www.radioshack.com.

-- See also **Call2Recycle** under "Cellphones" (below).

BOOKS



-- **Second hand book stores.** There are numerous second hand and antiquarian booksellers in New York and New England that will buy used and antique books. Look for them online and in the yellow pages. Public libraries also accept used books for book sales.

-- **Half.com by eBay.** This is an eBay-affiliated website where you can sell (and buy) books, CDs, movies and games.

www.Half.com

-- **Book Crossing.** You can register to be a member of this organization. Once you're a member, you can simply leave a book at a site of your choosing (a coffee shop, park bench, hotel, gym, train station, etc.) and post its location on the organization's website so others can seek it out. (The organization also hosts forums where readers can discuss with each other their favorite authors, characters and books in every genre.)

www.BookCrossing.com

BOTTLES and CANS



-- Grocery stores, of course, take recyclable soda and beer bottles and cans.

-- Some local organizations that may also accept empties as donations are: Mohawk and Hudson River Humane Society (Menands), SOCS (Supporting Our Canine Strays - Hoosick Falls), Children's Museum of Science and Technology (N. Greenbush), Schodack Boy Scout Troop 522, Troy Central Little League, Community Congregational Church of Clinton Heights, Snyder's Lake Community Corp. (Remember. Call first.)

Support the Bigger Better Bottle Bill so that juice and water bottles can be redeemed in the same way as soda and beer bottles!!! For more information on the bill, go to:

www.NYPIRG.org.

BUILDING SUPPLIES



-- **Habitat for Humanity ReStore.** The ReStore sells a wide range of new and lightly used building materials to raise money for its building projects in the Capital Region. Items accepted include: cabinets, appliances, bathroom fixtures, lighting fixtures, paint, curtain rods, tools and more. Location: 696 Delaware Ave., Albany. Phone: 518/275-6638
www.capitaldistricthabitat.org

-- **Parts Warehouse.** A facility run by Historic Albany Foundation that accepts donations of historic salvaged parts. Items accepted include: doors, windows, mirrors, mantles, lighting fixtures, tubs, hardware. Location: 89 Lexington Avenue, Albany. Phone: 518/465-2987.
www.historic-albany.org/warehouse.html

-- **Bournebrook Architectural Salvage and Supply.** Buys and sells vintage household furnishings, such as doors, windows, wooden louver blinds, shutters, oak and marble fireplaces, sinks, stoves, architectural hardware, vintage stained glass, cast iron fencing, etc. Location: 169 River Street, Troy. Phone: 518/687-0335

BUBBLEWRAP (see "Packing Supplies" below)

CDs and DVDs

CDs and DVDs have become the standard medium for storing and distributing large quantities of high quality information. They are durable, convenient, easy to carry and store, and cheap to produce.

You can reduce the number of discs you use, in a couple of ways:

- If you use CDs for **data storage**, look into using DVDs instead, because you can store lots more data on a DVD.
- Rent or buy used **music CDs and movie DVDs**.
- Pass on unwanted music and movie discs to friends or charities.

(CDs and DVDs - continued)

You can recycle CDs and DVDs, too:

-- **eLot** in Troy accepts used CDs and DVDs for no fee. (see also "Electronics" below)

For fun!! Reuse discs as drink coasters, candle holders, bird chasers, reflectors and garden row markers.

CELLPHONES



Cellphones are competing with computers and monitors for the dubious distinction of being the largest contributors to the world's growing toxin-laden, e-waste problem. Americans discard 125 million phones each year, creating 65,000 tons of waste!!! California has passed the first cell-phone recycling law in North America; all electronics retailers in the state must have a recycling program.

-- **eLot** in Troy accepts cellphones. (see also "Electronics below")

-- **Call2Recycle**. This is a national program run by the non-profit Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC) that offers consumers and retailers in the US and Canada simple ways to recycle old phones, as well as rechargeable batteries. Most major electronics retailers, from Radio Shack to Office Depot participate in the program and offer Call2 Recycle drop-boxes in their stores.

www.rbrc.org/call2recycle/

-- **CollectiveGood**. This organization refurbishes phones and re-sells them to distributors and carriers for use primarily in developing countries. (They also recycle non-functioning batteries through partnership with the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation.)

www.collectivegood.com/partners.asp

-- **ReCellular**. This company provides in-store collection programs for Bell Mobility, Sprint PCS, T-Mobile, Best Buy and Verizon. They also maintain partnerships with Easter Seals, March of Dimes and Goodwill Industries who collect cellphones as a way to fund their charitable work.

www.recellular.com

CLOTHING AND OTHER TEXTILES



According to an article on textile recycling written for the Worldwise Company (www.Worldwise.com) by Debra Lynn Dadd, it is unlikely that you have a textiles recycling program in your community; however, if you donate your discarded clothing and other textile items to a second-hand store, they will either be sold in the store, passed on for sale in foreign countries, or otherwise processed. There's no reason to send your used clothes to the landfill when it's so easy to drop them off at a thrift store.

-- Clothing. Most of us are aware of the many organizations that take clothing, including: the **Salvation Army**, **Goodwill Industries**, **Unity House** (Troy), senior centers, churches (e.g., the **Clothing Nook at Bethany Hospitality Center** at St. Paul's Guild House in Troy).

-- Old towels and blankets (plus newspapers). Ask a local vet or humane society if they can use them.

-- Scrap fabric and yarn. Look for quilt clubs and craft workshops at community centers.



ELECTRONICS

The US alone generates approximately seven million tons of electronic waste each year. Many organizations are now getting into the act of recycling electronics.



LOCAL COLLECTION BUSINESSES:

-- **eLot Electronics Recycling, Inc.** This is a full-service recycling company focused on the recycling, de-manufacturing, and refurbishing of computers and electronics. Pick-up and drop-off services are available, as well as data erasure and data deconstruction. They take: computers, printers, cell phones, televisions, pagers, copiers, PDAs, watches, scanners, laptops, speakers, batteries and much more. They also offer rebuilt computers, parts, and electronics. Location: 8000 Main Street, Troy. Phone: 518/266-9385.

www.elotrecycling.com

-- **Waste Management and Recycling Products** This company runs the **Technology Surplus Store** which collects and refurbishes obsolete computers, monitors, keyboards, printers, fax machines, televisions, VCRs, hand-held electronics, etc. They also provide data destruction services. Small quantities may be delivered to the store; there may be a fee to recycle certain items. Call in advance if you have large quantities and/or large items.

Location: Scotia-Glenville Industrial Park, Bldg. 405, Scotia.

Store phone: 518/377-2200. Main company phone number: 518/377-9900.

www.techsurplusstore.com

ALERT!! According to an Associated Press article by Terence Chea: " Most Americans think they're helping the earth when they recycle their [old electronic equipment]... But chances are they're contributing to a global trade in electronic trash that endangers workers and pollutes the environment overseas....Many so-called recyclers simply sell the working units and components, then give or sell the remaining scrap to export brokers." When recycling your equipment through a vendor, inquire about how they recycle their equipment. For more information, go to the Basel Action Network website at: www.ban.org.

NATIONAL COMPANIES THAT RECYCLE

-- **Dell** doesn't charge to recycle its own machines and will recycle other manufacturers' machines free with the purchase of a new Dell.

www.dell.com/recycling

-- **Hewlett Packard** will recycle all brands of computers for a fee, but if you buy a new HP machine, you qualify for a credit.

www.hp.com/hpinfo/global_citizenship/environment/recycle

-- **Apple** offers free recycling with purchase of a new machine.

www.apple.com/environment/recycling/program/index.html

NATIONAL COMPANIES WITH TRADE-IN PROGRAMS

(for machines that are not yet obsolete):

-- **Hewlett-Packard** arranges trade-ins through a third party and gives a free quote for your old computer online through its trade-in program

www.hp.com/united-states/tradein.

-- **Toshiba**. Similar to HP.

www.toshiba.eztradein.com

CHARITIES THAT ACCEPT COMPUTERS:

Local

-- Look for local charities in need of a computer - the machine should be able to run modern software. (If less than 4 years old, it will be useable.). Some local charities that may accept computers include: **Joseph's House**, **ERC Community Warehouse** (see "Furniture" below), **Troy United Area Ministries** (see "Furniture" below).

National

-- **Computers for Schools** (www.pcsforschools.org)

-- **Back Thru the Future** (www.thegreenpc.com)

-- **Earth 911** (www.earth911.org)

-- **Gifts in Kind** (www.GiftsInKind.org)

-- **Goodwill Industries** (www.goodwill.org)

-- **National Cristina Foundation** (www.cristina.org)

-- **National Recycling Coalition** (www.nrc-recycle.org)

-- **National Safety Council** www.nsc.org/ehc/epr2/DONATE.HTM

(National charities that accept computers - continued)

- **Recycle for Breast Cancer** (recycleforbreastcancer.org)
- **Rethink Initiative** (www.eBay.com/rethink)
- **Share the Technology** (www.sharethetechnology.org)
- **Used Computer** (www.usedcomputer.com)

EYEGLASSES



--The **Lions Eye Bank** collects eyeglasses at its office. You can also mail eyeglasses to the Lions Eye Bank at the address below. Simply write "Free Matter for the Blind" on the package where you would normally put a stamp; the US Post Office will deliver it. **Lens Crafters** in the Crossgates and Colonie Center malls also provides collection boxes. Location of Lions Eye Bank: 6 Executive Park Drive, Albany. Phone: 518/489-7606.

FURNITURE AND HOUSEHOLD ITEMS



We are all quite familiar with how to dispose of these items, but here are some ideas in any case.

-- **ERC Community Warehouse** is a non-profit reuse center established to divert reusable discards from the landfill or incinerator. The Warehouse will come to any location in Rensselaer County to collect large items which they then re-sell at their store in Hoosick Falls.

Phone: 518/686-9401

www.hoosickfalls.com/community/ERC.htm

-- **Troy Area United Ministries (TAUM)** operates a furniture program for people in need. They especially need beds, dressers, dining tables and chairs. Warning: they may take a while to return your call, particularly if you don't have an item they really need right now.

Phone: 518/274-5920.

-- **ChuckIt** is a company, based in Saratoga Springs but serving the Capital District, that will take away furniture and almost any non-hazardous materials (boxes, wood, renovation materials, appliances, construction debris, clothing). They do all the work of lifting etc. The "junk" is appropriately disposed of at transfer stations, recycling centers or not-for-profit organizations. If your items go to charity, you receive a receipt. Minimum fee of \$50.

Phone: 1-888-248-2548

www.188chuckit.com

-- Other organizations that accept furniture: **Salvation Army stores, Unity House (Troy).**

-- On-line and print media: **Craig's List, eBay's Kijiji, Freecycle, Want Ad Digest**, newspaper classifieds (**Times Union, Troy Record, Advertiser**).

Hangers



--Take them back to the dry cleaners

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTES

Americans generate 1.6 million tons of household hazardous waste (HHW) per year. Household hazardous wastes are defined by the US Environmental Protection Agency as "leftover household products that contain corrosive, toxic, ignitable, or reactive ingredients". They include: paints, cleaners, solvents, oils, batteries, and pesticides that contain potentially hazardous ingredients that must be disposed of with special care.

Some municipalities in Rensselaer County currently hold or are planning to hold collection days for household hazardous wastes. Watch the newspapers and contact your municipal government. Encourage local officials to initiate a collection program in your community if none exists. One way to ease the costs of such a program might be for your community to coordinate with a neighboring community. A good source of information on hazardous waste recycling is the Eastern Rensselaer County Solid Waste Management Authority (ERCSWMA). They can be reached at 518/686-7540 (Website: www.ercswma.org).

KITCHEN WASTE



-- **Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rensselaer County** has brochures on composting vegetable matter. Call Monday, Wednesday or Friday mornings from 9 to 12 to speak to a Master Gardener who can provide you with handouts and specific advice. Location: the Agriculture and Life Sciences Building, 61 State St., Troy. Phone: 518/272-4210

LIGHT BULBS



Do not put spent fluorescent bulbs in your garbage and do not crush them!! Fluorescent bulbs contain mercury. Some municipalities accept these bulbs in their Household Hazardous Waste collection programs. Check with your municipality.

-- **Technology Surplus Store** (affiliated with Waste Management and Recycling - see also "Appliances" and "Electronics") collects various types of fluorescent bulbs for a fee. (Think about starting a group collection at work or in your neighborhood.)
Store phone: 518/377-2200.

-- Local lighting stores may also take bulbs. Check with them.

-- The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's website at www.dec.ny.gov has information on recycling compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs
(Quick link: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dshm/hzwstman/lamprecy.htm>)

-- Check out www.Earth911.org. Once at their site, enter your zip code, press "GO", click "Household Hazardous Waste", then Fluorescent Bulbs" or call 1-800-CLEAN-UP for hotline.

MAGAZINES

-- You may be able to share your magazines with others by leaving them at community centers, senior centers, nursing homes and similar locations. The **East Greenbush Library**, for one, has a magazine exchange where you are free to drop off and pick up magazines. Encourage your local library to do the same.

PAPER (including "junk mail")



-- Go to the **Federal Trade Commission's** website to learn how to remove yourself from junk mail lists. Click on "For Consumers", then Telemarketing", then "Unsolicited Mail, Telemarketing and E-mail: Where to Go to 'Just Say No'". If everyone reduced junk mail, 100 million trees would be spared each year (according to RealSimple Magazine).

www.ftc.gov

--If moving, fill out a temporary change of address with the post office rather than a permanent one. The PO sells lists of permanent address changes to direct marketers, but doesn't bother doing so with temporary addresses.

-- Find ways to re-use printer paper, Christmas cards and wrapping, colored flyers etc.

PACKING SUPPLIES



-- **Rent-a-Crate**, based in Massachusetts, rents re-usable plastic moving crates that they will deliver and pick up all over the USA. There is a delivery fee. You can order them online or call Mark at 201/681-3249.

www.rentacrate.com

-- **Expanded polystyrene (EPS)**. This is the rigid "foam" product used to protect all kinds of fragile items during shipping. It's also used as custom insulation for buildings and in bicycle helmets. According to the Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers (AFPR), it is an excellent material for recycling. The majority of EPS collected for recycling is used in making new EPS foam packaging or re-pelletized and re-manufactured into rigid, durable products such as plastic lumber and trim. Go to the AFPR website for more information:

www.epspackaging.org.

According to the EPS Packaging website, you can also break up EPS foam packaging (#6 only) into smaller pieces and ship it back to the following address:

Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers
1298 Cronson Blvd., Suite 201
Crofton, MD 21114
401/451-8340

-- **Styrofoam peanuts and bubblewrap.** Commercial pack-and-ship stores (**UPS stores, Mail Boxes Etc.**) will take your Styrofoam peanuts as long as they're clean.

Background on Styrofoam peanuts:

Peanuts are made of a non-recyclable chemical compound called "styrene". Chronic exposure to styrene is associated with many health problems, including central nervous system damage and eye, skin and respiratory irritation. Occasional exposure is not a problem but the health of workers who make the product can be seriously affected. Most "peanuts" end up in landfills where they can pose danger to soil and groundwater in the vicinity of the land fills.

Some locales in Oregon and California have actually banned Styrofoam peanuts. Conscientious shippers can use old newspapers instead or switch to PaperNuts which are made from post-consumer corrugated cartons and paper-processing waste. There are also starch-based "peanuts" that dissolve in water.

PICNIC-WARE AND COFFEE CUPS



-- Obtain a set of reusable plates, cups, and utensils for your family or community group and stop using disposable plastic and Styrofoam products.

-- Look for starch-based utensils that will dissolve in the landfill. Honest Weight Food Coop in Albany is using them.

-- Buy a mug from your favorite coffee shop and use that each time you visit.

PLANT POTS - Return to your favorite nursery or community garden program.

P

PLASTIC BAGS



Americans use 100 billion plastic bags each year, 99 percent of which are never recycled!!

-- Plastic grocery bags. Return bags to grocery store collection bins or better yet, bring your own cloth bags to the store. Cloth bags are now available for sale in many grocery stores. (It's a good idea to keep the bags in your car.) If buying a single small item, decline the plastic bag.

(Plastic Bags - continued)

-- Don't use those small, clear plastic produce bags in the grocery store for single items (one cucumber, for instance). Let items sit loose in the grocery cart or put several together in one bag, then take them out for processing at the checkout counter. You can also save these bags and bring them back to the store for re-use.

Note: The verdict is out on the efficacy of so-called "biodegradable" plastic bags.

For fun!! Those interested in buying decorative hand bags crocheted from strands of plastic grocery bags should check out MyRecycledBags.com. Crafters can get information on doing this themselves from websites including Craftzine.com or the Knitty Gritty section on the web site for the DIY (Do It Yourself) Network.

PLASTIC CONTAINERS

Background

Even though curbside recycling of plastic containers has become commonplace in the United States, most of us remain confused by the "chasing arrow" symbols and accompanying numbers on these containers. What should we put in the recycle bin and what should we discard in the garbage. In fact the symbols on containers are misleading, since the numbers denote the type of resins used to make the containers, not whether the containers are recyclable.

Certain plastics (numbers 1 and 2) do have a strong market demand for reuse, but other types of plastics go directly to the landfill. Even if the plastics are recycled, they are not made into new containers (as is the case with glass or metal). The recycled plastic is used instead for certain so-called secondary products. These products are not recyclable and are destined ultimately for the landfill.

There is concern on the part of some environmentalists that if curbside collection of plastics makes containers seem more benign, people may buy even more of them. This will be detrimental to the environment because more and more non-renewable resources will be used up in the manufacturing the containers.

Sources of information: www.ecologycenter.org; <http://domesticgoddesses.tribe.net>; <http://earth911.org>; www.eartisland.org; <http://sustainablog.org>; <http://www.recyclenow.org>

What can we do to manage and minimize our use of plastic containers?

For now:

- * Check with your municipality and follow local recycling guidelines as carefully as you can.
- * Select products that use little or no packaging or that are made from glass or paper.
- * Reuse plastic containers whenever feasible.
- * Buy large containers of liquid products, such as hand soap, and refill smaller containers around your house.
- * Bring your own take-out containers to your favorite restaurant.

For the future:

Urge our legislators to enact legislation that:

- * Requires all containers to be composed of a percentage of post-consumer material.
- * Standardizes the labeling on plastic containers to indicate what is recyclable, recycled, etc.
- * Requires producers to take back plastic from consumers. With producers involved in plastic disposal, they would be stimulated to consider ways to facilitate the re-processing of plastic. This could be done by: limiting the number of container types and shapes, using only one type of resin in each container, making collapsible containers, eliminating pigments, using water-dispersible adhesives and phasing out associated metals.

Styrofoam food containers - These are difficult to recycle because of their light weight and low scrap value. In New York State, legislation is being proposed to ban these containers. As reported in the Albany Times Union on Nov. 24, 2007, NY State Sen. Liz Krueger has proposed legislation to ban Styrofoam in the food-service industry in New York State. The bill applies to restaurants, food-service providers, vendors and supermarkets and all state offices. Major colleges and universities in the state are already experimenting with using alternatives to Styrofoam. Syracuse University, for one, has switched to plastic Rubbermaid containers for take-out food that the students return for washing.

P RINTER CARTRIDGES

-- **FedEx, Kinko's, and Staples** retail branches accept used Inkjet or Laser Toner cartridges.

S CRAP METALS - check the yellow pages of the phone book.

Smoke Detectors

There is some radioactive material (very small amount) in smoke detectors, so some manufacturers will take back used products. The detectors should be shipped via surface mail or UPS ground, so they don't end up in an airplane.

-- First Alert takes back their smoke detectors. Call them at 1-800-323-9005 for their mailing address and consult their website at www.firstalert.com. They charge a fee of \$1.00.

-- American Sensors (a Canadian firm) will also take back smoke detectors made under a variety of different brand names. Call them at: 1-800-387-4219.

Styrofoam (see "Packing Supplies" and "Plastic Containers" above)

Tires



New Yorkers generate an estimated 13-20 million waste tires each year. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is responsible for regulating the management of waste tires and has developed a comprehensive plan to abate noncompliant waste tire stockpiles. There are about 95 such stockpiles in New York State containing an estimated 29 million tires. The stockpiles are prone to fires and provide excellent breeding sites for mosquitoes. There have been several such fires in Rensselaer County between 1989 and the present.

The Waste Tire Management and Recycling Act of 2003 established a fund to support stockpile abatement efforts. Revenue for this fund comes from a recycling fee of \$2.50 per new tire that must be collected from customers at tire service centers. Tire centers are also required to accept used tires from customers until December 31, 2010. The tires must be the same size and in a quantity equal to the number of new tires purchased.

Municipalities may accept tires as well -- Troy does for a fee of \$2.00. Drop off tires at the "Alamo" on Main St. opposite the Rensselaer County Jail. The Alamo is open every third Saturday from 9 am to 3 pm (until the snow flies). Call the City Clerk (270-4541) or Public Works (270-1115) to verify when the Alamo is open.

Toys

Charities are still collecting toys but, given the recent scare about lead in toys from China, some organizations may have ceased accepting toys or will be very fussy about what they do accept.

