



Times-News

Living Closer to the Earth, Closer to Our Pocketbooks

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ECO NOTES



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Did you ever have one of those moments where your life passed before your eyes? I had one this weekend and it wasn't a near death experience. Instead I was putting down "sheet mulch" in my yard, a step towards turning my backyard into my own personal "garden of eatin.'" As opposed to tilling which depletes the soil of nutrients over time, sheet mulching is a way of enriching the soil. One of the first steps is to lay down old newspaper on top of grass. I had collected a 3 foot high pile of newspapers and as I placed it down, I reviewed the high points, low points, joys and sorrows of 2011.

In those pages, I once again relived local tragedies, the bravery exhibited by local residents, as well as others who turned to crime. There were stories of football heroes and steroid-taking athletes, births, deaths, weddings and retirements, all going back to the earth to become compost for my garden.

What took my breath away is how much time and energy, excitement and anxiety were dedicated to these fleeting moments of our community's life. How many of them will have everlasting meaning? How many of them will disappear in the depths of the earth never to arise again.? For me, it was more ingredients to feed my family. In a way, it was because of these events and occasions, celebrations and sorrows that future tomatoes, beans and corn will grace my former lawn.

Living closer to the earth is a challenge that more Hendersonvillians are accepting. In tough times, we all need to find a way to tap into resources closer to home. I've been asked many times, what steps I'd suggest people take to live in a more sustainable lifestyle. Here are a few starters ideas:

- 1) **Grow your own food.** Nothing could be easier, more economical and more nutritionally beneficial than growing one's own vegetables, fruit and nuts. Cooperative Extension is an excellent source of information on how to begin.
- 2) **Harvest your own water.** Rainfall is subject to more fluctuation than ever. It either comes down as a monsoon or not at all. A 2000 square foot roof can capture 36,000 gallons of water, meeting the demand for the 100 gallons of water per day. Cisterns are the best way to go, but rain barrels are a good first step.
- 3) **Strive to leave zero waste.** Recycling is nice, but what about PRE-cycling, i.e. ,don't buy things with lots of packaging or buy things with compostable packaging. Buy or build compost bins to recycle your food waste and put compostable packaging back into the soil.
- 4) **Keep our streams clean.** Much of the damage to streams is caused by stormwater that pulls toxins, sediment and garbage into our streams and kills the biomass. A first step to take action is to follow your downspout. Many downspouts are connected directly to the nearest stream, or to a ditch that feeds the closest waterway. In many cases, cutting the downspout or redirecting onto the lawn or a rain garden or rain barrel/cistern can be a big step forward.

ECO now offers a new sustainability service. Expert consultants can do an energy audit of your home to help cut your energy costs or help turn your ornamental yard into an edible yard. This for-fee service will help you save money and live more connected to our natural resources. A portion of the service fee goes to benefit ECO's public programs. For more information contact ECO at 692-0385 or www.eco-wnc.org.

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