

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- This month's Eco-Office highlights some green tips for summer.
- Upcoming Sustainability Committee meetings in Lowell: 7/17, 8/21, 9/18
- June 21: First day of summer!
- July 4: Independence Day

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Reduce and Reuse in the Sharing Economy By Anna Meyer

In the sharing economy, the emphasis is not on ownership, but access. Comprised of both not-for-profit and for-profit entities, the phenomenon has exploded in the past few years. Thanks to the sharing economy, if you want to set up IKEA furniture with a power drill, for example, there are several options that are greener than going out and buying a new drill. For instance, you can log in to neighborgoods.net to locate someone in your area who is willing to lend or rent a drill. Or you could head to a "makerspace" for temporary access to a power drill and use of a shared workspace. If time is tight, you can find someone willing to set up the furniture for you on taskrabbit.com.

NeighborGoods and TaskRabbit are examples of "marketplaces," whose main values are connecting people, facilitating monetary transactions, and allowing users to have profiles and get rated by other users. Other marketplaces include Airbnb (rooms and homes worldwide), Lyft and Nuride (rides), DogVacay (dog sitting), and GearCommons (outdoor recreation equipment). The niche of other businesses such as Port City Makerspace, in Portsmouth, N.H., is in providing access to a shared resource. Zipcar ("wheels when you want them"), Rent the Runway (designer dresses by the day), and Workbar (shared office spaces for small businesses, complete with meeting rooms, printing, and coffee) also use this model.

The sharing economy's growth can be attributed, in part, to the expansion of online social networking. But it's also related to the recession, with more people looking for creative ways to make money and to get value from what they already own. Regardless of why people participate in the sharing economy, the result is good for sustainability.



Photo credit: www.shutterstock.com/182870507

Sustainability in Bloom By Clair Ryan



Photo credit: Pablo Corral Vega, Audobon Mag

Ah roses, so delicate, so beautiful, so romantic, so sweet...but unfortunately, so unsustainable. The vast majority of roses purchased

in the U.S. (and indeed, any cut flowers bought out of season) are grown in South American countries where looser environmental regulations allow for the use of pesticides that are restricted domestically. In addition to being a health concern for workers and local residents, the pesticides run off untreated into local waterways. There are some environmental advantages to growing flowers close to the equator; the extended hours of sunlight and

high temperatures mean that growers use far less energy supplying artificial lighting than greenhouse growers in the U.S. Also, workers tend to live close to the greenhouses and either walk or bike to work. However, much of that advantage is nullified when you consider that the cut flowers must be shipped and/or trucked over 3,000 miles to reach us here in New England, all the while being kept at a temperature close to freezing.

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So what's an eco-conscious flower lover to do? Here are a few suggestions:

- Try to restrict your flower buying to July through September and go local! Many pick-your-own farms in New England have gorgeous field-grown blooms including sunflowers, zinnias, snapdragons, asters, coneflowers, cosmos, and goldenrod. Farm stands and farmers markets often have bouquets available. "But Clair!" I imagine you're thinking, "Valentine's Day and Mother's Day aren't in the summer!" It's true, but there are plenty of other

creative and thoughtful gifts out there...and aren't flowers more special if your loved one isn't expecting them?



Photo credit: Clair Ryan

- Try your hand at paper flowers!

All you need is some floral wire and tape, cardstock or tissue paper, a hot glue gun, and a good measure of patience. I

made my mom a bunch of crepe paper tulips for Mother's Day this year. Admittedly, it took a lot more time than ordering flowers online, but the results will last a whole lot longer.

- If nothing but roses or other stems out of season will do, look for a vendor that sells flowers that are either USDA certified organic (for domestic flowers) or approved by a third party certification organization such as VeriFlora. And before we end up with a climate where we actually can grow roses year round in New England, you might also want to think about buying some carbon offsets.

All-Natural Homemade Summer Refreshments

Adapted from theyummylife.com

Making fruit- and herb- infused waters is incredibly simple and will keep your taste buds intrigued all summer long. The combinations are endless. The supplies you'll need are just a 2 quart pitcher with a lid and a wooden spoon. Ditch those sugary sodas and try out a few of these healthy alternatives!

Ingredients

- 2 cups of fruit (most fruits will work, but see below for recommendations)
- A sprig of your favorite herb (mint, basil, sage, rosemary, tarragon, thyme, or lavender)
- Water
- Ice

Instructions

- 1) If using herbs, add a sprig to the jar/pitcher and use the wooden spoon to press and twist the leaves (just enough to release the flavor – no need to crush the herbs into pieces).
- 2) Add 2 cups of fruit to the jar/pitcher, and press/twist the fruits as well, just enough to release the juices.
- 3) Fill the jar with ice cubes.
- 4) Add water to top off the jar.
- 5) Cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

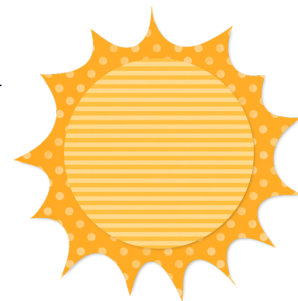
Possible Flavor Combos

- Peppy Pineapple Mint
- Boisterous Blackberry Sage
- Wild Watermelon Rosemary
- Non-Herb Options:
 - Special Citrus: 1 orange, 1 lime, and 1 lemon, all sliced into rounds and then sliced in half. Press/twist, and then continue with Step 3 above.
 - Raucous Raspberry Lime: Squeeze in juices from 1 quartered lime, then toss in the squeezed quarters. Add raspberries and press/twist the fruits at the bottom, then continue with Step 3 above.



Photo credit: theyummylife.com

Summer Living By Kristen Fitzpatrick



Summers in the Northeast are about as gorgeous as they come! Here a few tips, and things to remember, to make this summer even more enjoyable (and eco-friendly):

Save on electricity!

By drawing the blinds closed during the day to keep the home cooler, and opening them in the early evening, the sun becomes a “free” source of light when the longest periods of daylight are during the summer.

Skip the dryer!

In an effort to save energy, keep heat in your home low and to keep more money in your pocket, hang some clothes to dry. Whether it’s on an outdoor clothes line or an indoor free-standing clothes rack, let the warm summer breeze dry a few items.

Check out a local Farmer’s Market!

Summer is a great time to attend local markets where farmers get together to sell their organic and sustainable produce, aiding the local economy.

Walk, run and bike!

The warm weather months are a fantastic opportunity to enjoy all that the great outdoors has to offer. When making local trips, opt out of driving and enjoy a quick jog, walk or a bike ride to help our planet and your health.

Skip the individual packaging!

Instead, use coolers, thermoses, re-usable containers and nalgenes when going on a hike, to the beach or other outings.

Use re-usable!

When throwing that summer cookout or backyard BBQ opt for washable linens instead of disposable napkins! The DIY is simple enough, or check out www.reuseit.com for some colorful and affordable options.

Save the water!

Instead of using ice cubes this summer for your iced coffee, plan ahead and fill an ice tray with coffee allowing it to freeze into coffee cubes – it will cut down on water use, and keep your coffee tasting like coffee! Also, try freezing some grapes and using them as a tasty way to chill your white wine on a hot day.

Go for the uncooked foods!

Instead of turning on the oven or burner each night, indulge in the delicious “cold” foods that the summer offers. Try diced fruit, green salads, gourmet sandwiches, tuna salad or ceviche, if you’re feeling daring! Below is a simple and delicious summer salad recipe.



Photo credit: Kristen Fitzpatrick

Blueberry Spinach Salad Recipe

- 1) Thoroughly wash and dice baby spinach leaves and arrange as you wish in a bowl or on a plate.
- 2) Clean and dice celery stalks and add that to the spinach.
- 3) Top the salad (to your liking) with cleaned blueberries, dried cranberries, and ample goat cheese.

Insider Tip: This is delicious with a raspberry walnut vinaigrette dressing!



What Does Your Footprint Look Like? By Lindsey Walaski

Water footprint is the amount of water used daily by an individual person. Most people would assume the main source of water footprint is domestic uses, like household appliances and water fixtures. However, only five percent of the water footprint is designated towards domestic water uses in the average American's lifestyle. The remaining 95% is attributed to the use of water in the development of manufactured products and food used throughout the day. The use of water in the supply chain of products is not commonly thought of by consumers and is surprisingly large: the average cup of coffee has an estimated water footprint of 35 gallons of water, most of which is used to grow the coffee beans.

In an effort to increase the awareness of the water footprint and to encourage the use of low water intensive products, environmental advocates have supported the concept of *water footprint labeling* on products, similar to the nutritional labels. This would promote water conservation in the manufacturing process and make consumers savvier when purchasing

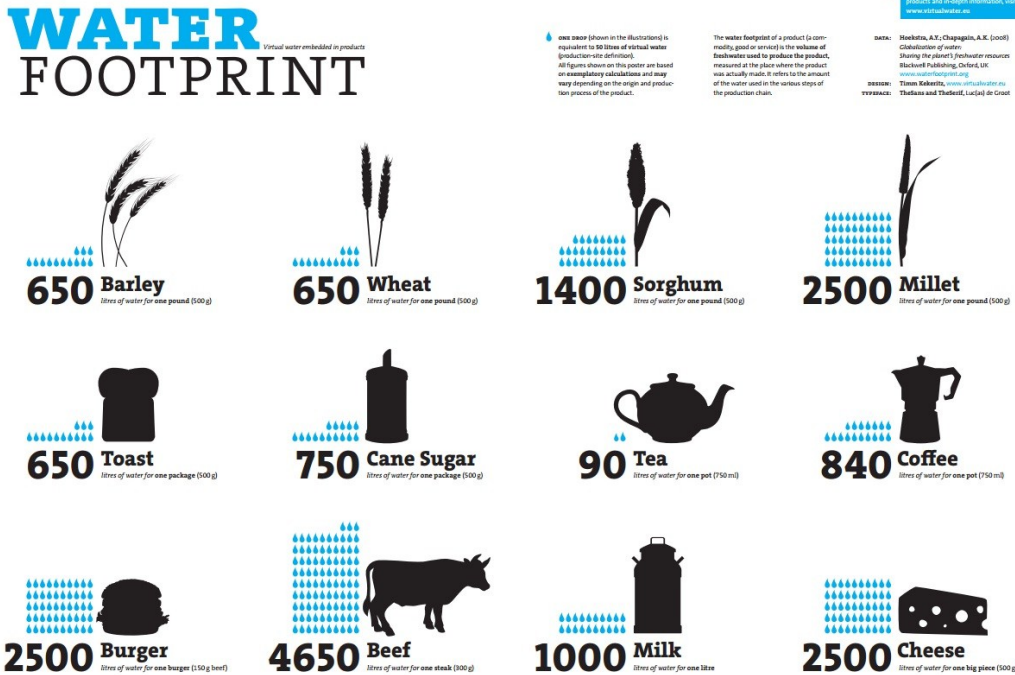
products. While this process seems simple, it's very difficult to implement due to the variety of sources of water: *green water* (precipitation), *blue water* (surface or groundwater), and *grey water* (freshwater used to mix and dilute pollutants to maintain water quality standards) are all considerations when determining a product's water footprint. Additionally, the use of reclaimed water in the supply chain adds a more intricate piece to the puzzle.

There are many tangible techniques to have a more conservative water lifestyle. The first step is to become more aware of your individual water footprint, which can be quantified using water calculators available online such as the [National Geo-](#)

[graphic Water Calculator](#). Another helpful technique is to cut down the use of manufactured materials. Reduced production of manufactured goods will subsequently reduce the amount of water used. A third practice is to purchase less when grocery shopping and to be mindful of the footprint of the food you eat. For instance, grass-fed beef has a smaller water footprint than conventional beef due to the water used for the corn and grain fed to feedlot cows. Finally, products made with recycled ingredients have a smaller water footprint. Recycling a pound of paper saves about 3.5 gallons of water!

Sources: [National Geographic](#) and [Water Footprint Network](#)

WATER FOOTPRINT



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From the Chair: Transportation Tribulations By Dan Peckham

As the seasons change, my appearance upon arrival to the office here in Lowell has varied – red in the face due to harsh winds this winter, drenched from rain this spring, and now I arrive both drenched and flushed due to the summer heat and humidity. The weather takes its toll in a more pronounced way because my commute involves significant amounts of time exposed to the elements: from my home in Somerville (on the edge of Boston), the trip to Lowell involves a bus, a Commuter Rail train, and a 20-minute walk.

This isn't a sob story, though – the fact that it is even possible to make the trip without driving is some-



Photo credit: www.djc.com

thing for which *someone* deserves praise. But who are the real movers and shakers that spur public transit development and allow people to commute more sustainably? As with *Field of Dreams*, transportation development has been described as a situation where “if you build it, they will come.” Extend the Boston subway system out into the suburbs and you will expect to see people living nearby make use of it. To further increase convenience while also saving idle time, some have even suggested having buses save time by letting you pay at the bus stop before getting on, as in the bottom left picture.

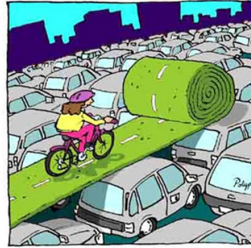


Photo credit: www.djc.com

However, undertaking this large of a project without public support will be like swimming upstream into Class 4 rapids. This begs the question, which comes first – [the public transportation advocates with innovative ideas for change](#), or the transportation system that will attract them to the area in the first place? I'll use my free pass and leave that one as food for thought.

In some situations, though, public transportation just isn't feasible. Facing a move to a different area of Boston this upcoming fall, I will most likely need to replace my “transportation medley” commute with a more standard car trip. Transportation advocates understand the need to be reasonable in their goals for behavior change: rather than push for multimillion dollar infrastructure projects, many groups target baby steps like getting bike racks installed on the front of busses and trains.



Photo credit: dlis.uoregon.edu

In a similar vein, rather than ditch your car completely, advocates promote replacing at least a few car trips, when possible, with a more sustainable form of transportation. Are there a few trips that you routinely take by car that could be done via biking or walking if allotted a little more time? Could you perhaps even get to work [one day a month](#) without your car? [Just be sure to stay safe!](#)



Moving? Have a Plan to Dispose of Hazardous Materials

Adapted from New Hampshire DES [GREENWorks](#)

Selling your home and moving usually means cleaning out many items that you would rather not take with you. As you dig deeper into closets, the basement and garage, these items mount up – leftover paint, unused insect spray, gasoline for the lawnmower, pool chemicals and more!

Also, as a real estate closing condition, you may be required to remove all household hazardous wastes from your home. Commercial disposal of household hazardous wastes can be extremely expensive. If not removed from your home, the

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disposal costs may be deducted from the sale price of your home. In addition, your mover is not allowed to transport hazardous chemicals to your new home either.

What products are household hazards?

We use hazardous products every day in



our homes. These products become a hazard when improper use or disposal will cause a threat to the environment or human health. Many common household products, such as paints, solvents, drain openers, oven cleaners, polishes, waxes, pesticides, cleaning agents and spent automotive products, have hazardous properties. The properties that make these products hazardous are:

- Flammable: Easily set on fire or ignited.
- Corrosive/Caustic: Burn and destroy living tissue on contact.
- Explosive/Reactive: Detonate or explode by exposure to heat, sudden shock or pressure.
- Toxic/Poison: Capable of causing injury or death through ingestion, inhalation or absorption through the skin.

Have a Disposal Plan:

- Check labels to identify which items are hazardous household wastes.
- Set aside those products that you will use up before you move or will personally transport to your new home.
- Ask the new resident, friends or neighbors if they want any of the remaining products.
- Check with your city or town as to when the next household hazardous waste collection day will be held, and take any remaining waste to the collection.
- Do NOT dispose of any chemicals, petroleum products or other hazardous wastes down the drain or on the ground. It is against the law and it contaminates the groundwater and potentially drinking water wells.

Submit an article for our September fall issue!

NEIWPC staff at the Lowell office started putting together the Eco-Office Bulletin newsletter in September 2012 as a way for the Sustainability Committee to update the rest of the office on their activities, as well as to share news and tips on sustainable practices at the office and home. Distribution was expanded to include all NEIWPC employees in December 2012, and we are pleased that recent articles have come from staff in both Lowell and beyond. For future issues, we welcome article submissions from all employees. Please contact [Dan Peckham](#) if you are interested in contributing.

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Established by an Act of Congress in 1947, the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission is a not-for-profit interstate agency that employs a variety of strategies to meet the water-related needs of our member states—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. We serve and assist our states by:

- Coordinating forums and events that encourage cooperation among the states
- Developing resources that foster progress on water and wastewater issues
- Representing the region in matters of federal policy
- Training environmental professionals
- Initiating and overseeing scientific research
- Educating the public
- Providing overall leadership in water management and protection