



# 2006 RESOURCE CONSERVATION GUIDE



A SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION OF THE NEBLINE

Prepared by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County and the City of Lincoln Recycling Office



## Earth Day Reminds Us to “Think Globally and Act Locally”

Saturday, April 22, is the 36th anniversary of Earth Day. It is a day set aside to reflect about our environment and how we affect the environment. In the 1970s, environmentalists used the slogan “think globally and act locally.” That sentiment is still important today. Each of us in our daily actions impact the environment either positively or negatively. The purpose of this guide is to help you think about our environment and offer tips on how we can become better resource managers.

**The U.S. lifestyle accounts for 40 percent of the global consumption of resources!** People around the world want a similar lifestyle, but there are simply not enough resources in the world to provide six billion people with the goods and services we enjoy here.

These economic pressures along with hurricanes in the gulf region played a role this past winter when natural gas prices jumped by 50 percent and fuel prices for our automobiles have reached an all-time high. Is it possible for us to maintain our lifestyles while using fewer resources? We must rethink our bad habits.

**Our challenge is to “think globally and act locally” to bring about simple changes that allow us to save money and conserve resources.** Are there things you can do to save energy? For example, turning your thermostat down a degree or two in the winter and up a degree or two in the summer. Are there things in your daily life you can do to conserve water? For example, reducing your time in the shower or using a low-flow shower head. Are there things you can do to reduce the waste you generate? For example, buying items at the grocery store in bulk rather than individual packaged items.

Please take this insert and put it in a place you can refer to during the year. This Earth Day make a pledge to become a better resource manager.

## The Important First Step is “Reduce”

We all know how important it is to recycle. But let’s stop and think about why we recycle. For many people, it’s to reduce waste and save landfill space. By recycling, we don’t have to throw things away, helping us to conserve our precious resources. Recycling is working, but recycling alone cannot solve all of our solid waste problems.

Remember the three “R’s”: reduce, reuse and recycle. Which one comes first? It’s reduce. And it’s first for a reason. **It’s better not to create waste than to have to figure out what to do with it.** As Benjamin Franklin said, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

**In order to reverse the trend of resource depletion, we need to take the lead, rethink our lifestyle and become less wasteful.**

While being more important, waste reduction is perhaps the most difficult of the three R’s. It requires us to change our lifestyles and rethink how our daily actions impact the environment. In 1960, when the globe had half the current population, the average American produced approximately 2.5 pounds of trash per day. Today the average American produces more than 4.5 pounds of trash per day. The American lifestyle is the most resource intensive on the planet. Even with higher recycling rates, we have not been able to keep up with consumption.

Did you know in 2004, City Solid Waste Operations staff estimate roughly 310,500 tons of waste was disposed of by Lincoln and Lancaster County residents? This represents 2,353 pounds of garbage per person for the year. In 2000, we produced 2,314 pounds of garbage per person for the year. The rate of garbage disposal is growing faster than our population growth rate. More waste is generated per person in Lincoln than cities in European countries such as

Germany or in Pacific Rim countries such as Japan.

Remember when we only got one telephone directory? Today we get four from different companies. Help stop the waste. Choose a directory you want to use and contact the other firms and ask them not to deliver a directory to your home or business.

We should not only be concerned about the volume of solid waste we generate each year, but we should also be concerned about the toxicity of our waste. According to USEPA, Americans generate 1.6 million tons of household hazardous waste each year. The average American home has accumulated as much as 100 pounds of household hazardous waste. This household hazardous waste can also cause health problems. Over five million poison exposures occur each year in the U.S. Roughly 92 percent of these poisonings occur in the home and 53 percent involve children under the age of six. **Much of this waste and many of the injuries could be eliminated through the purchase of less toxic alternative materials.**

## Shop S.M.A.R.T (Save Money and Reduce Trash)

Waste reduction begins when you make purchasing decisions. Decisions you make while shopping can save you money and reduce the amount of trash that goes to the landfill. A family of four can save approximately \$3,000 a year by buying products in the largest size they can use and by buying reusable items.

### Avoid Unnecessary Packaging

More than \$1 of every \$10 we spend on food goes toward packaging. One-third of the trash from households is product packaging. Product packaging has its purpose, such as making products safer and supplying information. But many items are overpackaged.

- Large-quantity items usually have less packaging per unit, lowering your costs. This could include purchases such as laundry soap, shampoo, toilet paper, pet food and cat litter. For food items, select the largest size you can use before spoilage would occur.



### Express your Opinion

- Buy cereal in a large box instead of in individual serving size.
- Buy juice in concentrates and use reusable containers instead of single-serving packages.
  - Reject excessively packaged products.
- Contact manufacturers about packaging. If you believe a product has too much packaging, write the manufacturer. Go a step further and compliment manufacturers who use the minimum amount of packaging needed.
- Also, ask store managers to stock products you prefer.

### Buy Reusable and Recyclable Products

- Buy reusable products. Disposables such as razors and

- paper towels create unnecessary waste unless safety is a factor.
- Buy and use returnable or refillable products. Refillable water containers and shopping bags are two examples of reusable products.
- Buy products made from “post consumer” recycled materials. These materials were used by a consumer before being recycled. Buying products made with recycled materials creates a demand for recyclable materials. This raises their value, making them more appealing for future recycling efforts.
- Buy products which can be recycled such as glass, tin, aluminum, newspaper, cardboard and some plastics.

### Rent or Borrow Items You Only Need Temporarily

- Rent products you only need temporarily. Sometimes a borrowed or used item is available and would better fit your needs rather than buying a product.
- Renting reusable dishware and linens for events and gatherings can prevent waste from disposable cups, plates and silverware.
- Renting items can save you money and time, and it can reduce the amount of trash created at an event.



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