

THE ECO MOSQUITO

SUSTAINABILITY NEWS AND EVENTS AT HSPH AND BEYOND

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It doesn't seem too long ago that the sun disappeared before we could break free from our offices or labs to enjoy it, and now the longest day of the year is coming and going. June 21 marks the summer solstice, and the best place to enjoy the more than 15 hours of daylight is anywhere besides your office or lab. So get outside as much as possible these days and get yourself some vitamin D!

DID YOU KNOW?

The Harvard Green Room recently underwent a major housekeeping session and treasures were discovered amongst the piles of stuff that people had dropped off, including Polaroid film and two gently used high-end printers. So follow the signs to the Green Room in the basement of Building 1 (no, it's not scary, unless you're scared of free stuff!) between 7:30am and 4:30pm on weekdays. And bring any good loot that's just no use to you anymore; somebody will love it!



Let's Get Rrready to Rrreduce, Rrreuse and Rrrecycle!

Is the spirit of the World Cup getting to you? Considering how athletic those guys are, you may be looking for a less strenuous outlet for your heightened sense of competition. Well, we believe that Harvard scientists are some of the hardest-core competitors around, so we're excited to launch the first Longwood-wide Lab Environmental Competition! Starting on July 7, labs from across campus will compete for four weeks to earn points by cleaning out freezers, donating unwanted equipment and sharing best practices. At the end of the competition, the lab with the most points will win a special wine and cheese party, and will probably end up with a less cluttered and more efficient lab to boot. All participating labs will be able to exchange their points for a variety of prizes, ranging from sporks and bike helmets to a breakfast event. We hope you'll help spread the word in your department and encourage your labs to participate. If your lab is ready to throw down, contact Katrina Rudnicki (katrina_rudnicki@hms.harvard.edu) at HMS or Hardeep Ranu (hranu@hsph.harvard.edu) at HSPH. Like good coaches, they'll help prepare you for the competition by distributing de-icing kits so that each lab in your department has all the tools needed to clean out their freezers, and also by joining you at an upcoming departmental meeting to talk for a few minutes about the competition. Find out more and register your lab at green.harvard.edu/programs/green-labs.



Putting the buzz in your ear since 2012

Is it Really Worth it to Buy Organic Produce?



Here at the Eco Mosquito, we like to ask the tough questions, especially when there's the possibility of saving money involved. So we want to know, how much healthier is organic produce, and is it worth it to spend those extra cents per pound? You may have missed the excellent HSPH Forum in May, which focused on pesticides and food as part of the Andelot Series in Current Science Controversies. Ohhh, controversy! So what's the deal? Well, it turns out that there's a lack of public health research on pesticide safety because there's no real control population—we are all exposed to pesticides to some degree. Yikes. We do know that many pesticides are toxic to the human nervous system, but we don't know if our food is causing enough exposure to do harm. In terms of safety levels, we only have one guide: tolerance. So, while there may currently be an acceptable daily intake, we still don't know how these chemicals affect us in the long run. We also know that organic food contains less pesticides and will help us to reduce our exposure. So, if you can afford it, buying organic could be a great investment in your health. And if you have to go with non-organic, it's good to know that some produce is cleaner than others. The Environmental Working Group analyzed pesticide residue testing data from the USDA and FDA to come up with these rankings:

THE DIRTY DOZEN

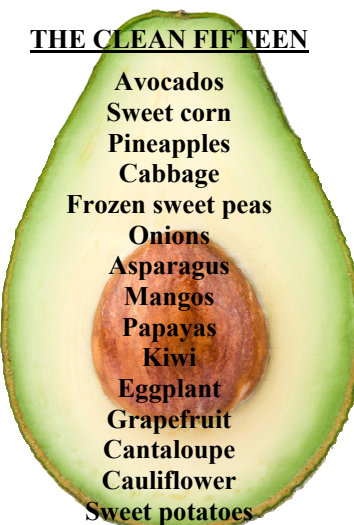
Apples
Strawberries
Grapes
Celery
Peaches
Spinach
Sweet bell peppers
Imported nectarines
Cucumbers
Cherry tomatoes
Imported snap peas
Potatoes

Always try to buy these organic, and wash thoroughly if you can't!



THE CLEAN FIFTEEN

Avocados
Sweet corn
Pineapples
Cabbage
Frozen sweet peas
Onions
Asparagus
Mangos
Papayas
Kiwi
Eggplant
Grapefruit
Cantaloupe
Cauliflower
Sweet potatoes



Even in their conventional forms, these are the produce less likely to contain pesticide residue, but you should still wash them!

Contact us at ecoop@hsph.harvard.edu