

THE ECO MOSQUITO

SUSTAINABILITY NEWS AND EVENTS AT HSPH AND BEYOND

ISSUE 10, MAY 2013

The last time we checked in with you, the tulips and daffodils were diligently pushing their way up, but there was still a nip in the air. Now it's time to crack open those windows and feel the fresh breeze...spring is undeniably here!

It's Time for Spring Greening

After a long winter, there's something about the spring air that makes us want to give our surroundings a fresh start. Many of us will fly our clean-freak flags high this May with the annual rite of spring cleaning. As we try to make our homes as fresh as the air outside, surely the last thing we want is to unleash a load of toxic fumes, right? According to the EPA, household cleansers and disinfectants are one of the leading sources of indoor air pollution. Typical cleaning products use harsh cleansing agents like bleach, ammonia, and acids, whose off-gassing can be especially dangerous to children and pets.

The unnecessary use of antibacterial agents can also make bacteria stronger and more resistant to antibacterial drugs. Yikes! But this doesn't mean you should give up and live in filth. You can always buy eco-friendly cleaning products, but common, cheap household items like lemon juice, baking soda, and white vinegar are all you really need to get your home spick and span. Here are a few of our favorite formulas:

All purpose cleaner: Mix 1/2 cup vinegar and 1/4 cup baking soda (or 2 teaspoons borax) into 1/2 gallons (2 liters) water and keep in a recycled spray bottle for everyday clean ups.

Carpet and rug deodorizer: Sprinkle baking soda or cornstarch (about one cup for a medium-size area) and then vacuum after 30 minutes for a fresh scent that leaves no nasty chemicals behind.

Window and mirror cleaner: Mix 2 tablespoons of white vinegar with a gallon of water, and pour it into a spray bottle. Squirt on, then scrub with newspaper, not paper towels, which cause streaking.

Gentle disinfectant: Squeeze a couple drops of liquid castile soap into two cups of hot water. Stir and add 30 drops of either lavender or tea tree oil, or a combination of both. Pour it into a spray bottle and use on everything but glass.



DID YOU KNOW?

We love checking in with the EPA for solid sustainability facts. First, the bad news: In 2010, Americans generated about 250 million tons of municipal solid waste, for an individual waste generation of 4.43 pounds per person per day. Most of this waste was recyclable. Now, here's a reason to be optimistic: Recycling is on the rise! In 2010, we recycled and composted over 85 million tons of our waste, equivalent to a 34.1% recycling rate. Compare this to our 9.6% recycling rate in 1980 and we have a reason to feel hopeful for the future. Please keep doing your part!



May We Suggest A Lovely Lunchtime Walk?



Slip out of your office or lab at lunch and escape into a springtime fantasy world with these easy instructions: Pretend you are just grabbing lunch and head to the cafeteria. Exit the building and

cross the Kresge Courtyard with a quick pace and minimal eye contact. Dodge some frisbees on the Quad and continue down Avenue Louis Pasteur. Cross Park Drive, veer to the right and you'll find yourself in the Back Bay Fens section of the Emerald Necklace. Keep strolling along and you'll pass fields and basketball courts. Try not to be bitter that some people get to play outside while you're usually stuck under office lighting all day. Keep going and you'll reach the Kelleher Rose Garden. If the roses are in bloom, you'll be stunned. If not, you'll have to return. Keep heading towards the city and you'll reach the Victory Gardens. Stroll along the paths and admire these little garden plots blossoming in the heart of Boston. Resolve that you too will grow vegetables, herbs, and flowers this summer. Sigh and realize that it's time to head back to HSPH. But remember how lucky you are to work right next to such a beautiful place and make this the first of many lunchtime walks!

P.S. Graduates of 2013, we are going to miss you! Best of luck to you all. May you go forth and be green!

DON'T MISS THIS!

If you're a biker then you'll want to join the Harvard Longwood Bicyclists on Thursday, **May 16** for their annual **Bike Brainstorm**. It's an opportunity for Boston/Longwood area bikers to talk about their priorities and projects for the upcoming year. Great ideas will be flashing like lightning bolts from 12:30 to 1:20 p.m. in Kresge 502.

What did you think of Take the Stairs and Earth Week? We want to hear from you! Come join the **Green Team** on Wednesday, **May 22** from 11 to noon in FXB G10. The snacks have been really good for the past few months....just sayin'.



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