



THE EHS CONNECTION

APRIL 2018

OUR POLLUTED LAKE

Take a walk along the beaches of Lake Ontario and you'll see plastic in the form of bottles, lids, bags, food wrapping, and unidentifiable bits of debris washed up on the shore. If you're like most people, you see the garbage, shrug your shoulders and silently curse the litterbugs. What you may not realize is that this debris is a symptom of one of the biggest threats to the health of lakes and oceans. The debris is mostly plastic, which people are dumping into the world's waters at the rate of 8-million tons of plastic per year (and that figure is growing). On the Great Lakes, plastics account for 80% of all debris. On the ocean, some estimates peg it even higher, at 90%. The famous "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" is a plastic-strewn stretch of the Pacific Ocean that may be as large as 15,000,000 square kilometers. The debris you can see is just the tip of the plastic iceberg. Most plastic pollution is difficult to spot. The plastic is less than a few millimeters long. It often floats just under the surface. Plastic wreaks havoc on the natural environment. It splits into smaller pieces, but it does not break down in the environment. Fish and animals mistake the tiny specs for food. Their bellies fill up with plastic, and they starve. Plastic debris also helps attract contaminants and can even create large floating mats that lure fish away from their natural habitat. Where is this plastic coming from? Litter, obviously, is one source. Garbage is thrown or blown and washes into the water from land. The other sources might surprise you. Clothes have tiny strands of plastic-especially microfleece. When you do your laundry, you are also flushing plastic down the drain. Soaps and toothpastes are also a major problem. One tube of toothpaste can have 300,000 microbeads in it. The teeny tiny "micro-scrubbers" that are supposed to make your teeth and skin shiny wash down the drain. Then, because each bead is too small to be captured, they end up being flushed into the water from wastewater treatment plants. Cigarette butts are some of the worst culprits. When you flick your spent butt into the water or onto the beach, it doesn't go away. It joins with hundreds of thousands of other pieces of plastic debris and hangs around for decades. The plastic problem is one of the greatest challenges we face. With so many products used by so many people in every country on earth, it can seem overwhelming. But starting here, at home, on the waters we use every day, you can make a big difference. Three simple ways we can help curb plastic pollution:

- Switch to refillable water bottles and food containers.
- Dispose of all your waste properly (including your cigarette butts).
- Avoid soaps and toothpastes with microbeads.

NEXT TIME YOU'RE WALKING THE SHORELINE BRING A BAG ALONG AND TAKE SOME TIME TO PICK UP PLASTIC DEBRIS AND DISPOSE OF IT PROPERLY. EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS!

EARTH DAY SUNDAY, APRIL 22ND

COMPOST is organic material that can be added to soil to help plants grow. Food scraps and yard waste currently make up 20 to 30 percent of what we throw away, and should be composted instead. Making compost keeps these materials out of landfills where they take up space and release methane, a potent greenhouse gas.



All composting requires three basic ingredients:

- ⇒ Browns - This includes materials such as dead leaves, branches, and twigs.
- ⇒ Greens - This includes materials such as grass clippings, vegetable waste, fruit scraps, and coffee grounds.
- ⇒ Water - Having the right amount of water, greens, and browns is important for compost development.

Your compost pile should have an equal amount of browns to greens. You should also alternate layers of organic materials of different-sized particles. The brown materials provide carbon for your compost, the green materials provide nitrogen, and the water provides moisture to help break down the organic matter.

BENEFITS OF COMPOSTING

- ⇒ Enriches soil, helping retain moisture and suppress plant diseases and pests.
- ⇒ Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers.
- ⇒ Encourages the production of beneficial bacteria and fungi that break down organic matter to create humus, a rich nutrient-filled material.
- ⇒ Reduces methane emissions from landfills and lowers your carbon footprint.

BACKYARD COMPOSTING

Select a dry, shady spot near a water source for your compost pile or bin.

Add brown and green materials as they are collected, making sure larger pieces are chopped or shredded.

Moisten dry materials as they are added.

Once your compost pile is established, mix grass clippings and green waste into the pile and bury fruit and vegetable waste under 10 inches of compost material.

Optional: Cover top of compost with a tarp to keep it moist. When the material at the bottom is dark and rich in color, your compost is ready to use. This usually takes anywhere between two months to two years.

WHAT TO COMPOST:

Fruits and vegetables
Eggshells
Coffee grounds and filters
Tea bags
Nut shells
Shredded newspaper
Cardboard
Paper
Yard trimmings
Grass clippings
Houseplants
Hay and straw
Leaves
Sawdust
Wood chips
Cotton and Wool Rags
Dryer and vacuum cleaner lint
Hair and fur
Fireplace ashes

WHAT NOT TO COMPOST AND WHY:

Black walnut tree leaves or twigs
- Releases substances that might be harmful to plants
Coal or charcoal ash
- Might contain substances harmful to plants
Dairy products (e.g., butter, milk, sour cream, yogurt) and eggs*
- Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies
Diseased or insect-ridden plants
- Diseases or insects might survive and be transferred back to other plants
Fats, grease, lard, or oils*
- Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies
Meat or fish bones and scraps*
- Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies
Pet wastes (e.g., dog or cat feces, soiled cat litter)*
- Might contain parasites, bacteria, germs, pathogens, and viruses harmful to humans
Yard trimmings treated with chemical pesticides
- Might kill beneficial composting organisms
* Check with your local composting or recycling coordinator to see if these organics are accepted by your community curbside or drop-off composting program.

TEN WAYS TO UNPACKAGE YOUR LIFE

BRING YOUR OWN BAG

Say no to single use paper and plastic bags and bring your own high quality reusable bag. Whether you're picking up groceries, getting takeout food or clothes shopping, use your own bag. Each reusable bag can eliminate hundreds (if not thousands) of single-use plastic or paper bags!

CARRY A REUSABLE WATER BOTTLE

Each week, Americans buy enough plastic water bottles to circle the earth five times! Carrying your own bottle cuts waste and is much cheaper. Typically, bottled water costs 2000 times more than tap water, is actually less safe to drink, and loses taste tests in competition with tap water. Need more convincing? Watch [The Story of Bottled Water](#).

PACK A WASTE-FREE LUNCH

Do away with throw-away lunch packaging. Each child who brings a brown bag lunch to school every day generates 67 pounds of waste each year.

BRING YOUR OWN CUP

The average American once used 500 paper cups a year. Replacing your single-use paper, plastic or Styrofoam cups with a reusable cup or mug can have a huge impact. Try keeping a cup in your bag, at the office, or in your car so you always have one around. Most coffee shops offer a discount for bringing your own cup!

SLOW DOWN AND DINE IN

A big reason we have a food packaging problem to begin with is because people want to eat on the go - whether it's a drive-through or grab-n-go. Take a breath, slow down and dine in. Get your coffee "for here" or enjoy a home-cooked meal with friends and family and say goodbye to single-use packaging.

SAY NO TO STRAWS OR BRING YOUR OWN

Plastic straws are consistently one of the most littered plastic items, which means they end up in our waterways and are harmful to fish and wildlife. Say NO to straws! If you really need one, get a reusable straw and bring your own. To get a sense of the problem, check out this funny [video from Straw Wars](#).

AVOID HEAVILY PACKAGED FOODS

Heavily packaged foods are bad for the environment and they're usually unhealthy for you too. Buy foods that aren't heavily packaged, like fresh produce and bulk items.

BRING YOUR OWN CONTAINER AND UTENSILS

Need to grab lunch on the go? Bring your own container and utensils to cut down on "the other leftovers" from your take out meal. You can also bring your own container for leftovers when you eat at a restaurant - no more single-use "doggie bags"!

USE NO BAG OR A FABRIC BAG TO CARRY PRODUCE AND OTHER GROCERY ITEMS

You've worked so hard to bring reusable bags to the store, why fill them up with plastic produce bags? Bring your own fabric bags for produce and bulk items. Many companies make reusable produce bags from hemp, organic cotton and even recycled plastic.

COMMUNICATE

Let your friends and family know what you're doing and help them get involved. Write letters to companies that over-package and tell them you're concerned about this issue. You'll be surprised how powerful leading by example can be!

From the EPA

EXPLORING



n a t u r e



EXPLORING NATURE 2018

Monday to Friday
9:00 am to 2:00 pm
July 9 to 13
and/or
July 16 to 20

Ages 5 to 14 as of
the start of the program

Rice Creek
FIELD STATION

STATE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW YORK AT OSWEGO

RICE CREEK FIELD STATION

Hey! If you haven't visited Rice Creek you are missing out on a really beautiful place. I've been going there for several years to hike the many trails and enjoy the peace and beauty of the great outdoors. Spring is a great time to witness the rebirth of nature.

Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 4:30 pm and
most Saturdays 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
CLOSED Saturday May 26, Monday May
28 and Wednesday July 4
Trails are open during daylight hours.

Trails can be muddy in some areas-
especially at this time of year-so be sure
to wear boots.

Go check out what's changing with the
season.

Before and after visiting the grounds,
gardens and trails take precautions
against [Lyme Disease](#).

For more information please check out
their webpage at:

<https://www.oswego.edu/rice-creek/home>

APRIL WORD SEARCH

For a chance to win a cool prize, complete the Word Search and send it via e-mail to lisa.drake@oswego.edu OR through Campus Mail: Lisa Drake, 110 Lee Hall. Make sure to put your name on it! The winner for March was Teri Davis. Look for: Plastic, Debris, Great Lakes, Pollution, Microbeads, Soaps, Toothpaste, Compost, Organic Material, Scraps, Waste, Soil, Methane, Browns, Greens, Water, Carbon, Nitrogen, Moisture, Diseases, Pests, Humus, Paper, Single Use, Re-usable, Bag, Water Bottle, Packaging, Container, Communicate, Rice Creek.

A	R	I	C	E	C	R	E	E	K	U	I	K	N	E	G	O	R	T	I	N	O
W	A	T	E	R	B	O	T	T	L	E	R	R	T	E	L	B	A	S	U	E	R
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C	A	R	B	O	N	G	N	U	I	E	W	Q	N	O	B	S	G	O	E	M	I
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I	H	J	I	O	P	E	W	I	S	O	B	O	G	N	M	E	R	G	H	J	D

CALVIN'S TIP OF THE MONTH:

IF YOUR DOG IS NOT ON A TICK PREVENTIVE, PLEASE SEE YOUR VET FOR HIS/HER RECOMMENDATION! IT'S VERY IMPORTANT FOR YOUR PET'S HEALTH AND YOURS TOO!



DUTCHISM FOR APRIL

Early Morning

The moon recedes, retiring the night

The sun rises announcing the dawn

Yesterday becomes today with a stretch and a yawn.

Left foot, right foot we take a sleepy pace

Slowly joining the human race

Now the mirror tells your face

"Go back to bed and rest your case"