

June 2008 Green Sanctuary Survey Results Written Comments by Respondents

COLOR KEY
Topic
The questions for this topic
Response: needs information
Response: share this idea
Response: making progress!

REDUCE SOLID WASTE
Compost yard waste and kitchen scraps
Do curbside recycling
Use re-usable plates, flatware, cups
Limit use of highly packaged foods
Use re-usable bags when shopping
Buy used items when practical
Donate unneeded useful items to others
I live in an apartment complex and do not have the capability to compost. (That is, unless you can give me any suggestions.)
Very hard to buy unpackaged foods
I am curious about: 1) comparing costs of washing laundry to using paper towels and 2) has anyone tried the non-detergent methods of doing laundry? Do they work?
It's very difficult around here to find a new home for "unneeded useful items" -- I feel I must choose between being environmentally irresponsible and cluttering my home and my life with things I no longer use.
Composting involves a purchase of the proper equipment.. not in my budget right now but am considering it
I wish I could say I always do, but I'm not always in an environment where I can.
I need improvement in most of the above
Is there room at the church to start composting food scraps from Sunday mornings? Would a sponsored green bin be adequate, or can we start a "take it home" bucket for people with existing compost? Is there any proof that Binghamton curbside recycling actually gets recycled?

If I use store bags, I recycle them by placing junk mail in them for pick-up at the curb for re-cycling. Unless one buys only fresh food, it is very difficult to avoid most highly packaged food.

I try to get equal amounts of paper and plastic bags when shopping because I re-use them as garbage bags. When I have plenty of "garbage bags" stocked up, I use re-usable bags for groceries.

Sometimes we compost yard waste, but I live in an apartment so it's difficult to communicate with my house-owner about how to compost the yard waste. In regards to kitchen waste, we're currently discussing the possibility of obtaining a worm farm.

Broome County is more thorough in its recycling program but we do what we can in Chenango.

We have no curbside recycling, but we always take recyclable items to the county facility.

take recycling to land fill recycle bins myself

I count plastic shopping bags as "reusable" because I throw out all my trash in them, but I do usually use cloth.

Just started composting this month...since the Green Sanctuary program was initiated.

REDUCE ENERGY USE: TRANSPORTATION

Plan errands to minimize trips

Walk or use a bicycle for short trips

Carpool to work

Use public transportation

Drive at or below the speed limit

At replacement time, substitute a higher mileage vehicle

Vacation locally

Reduce discretionary flying

living outside the metro area, my mass transit options are limited

my kids hate this *driving at the speed limit

Buses do not go where I want to go. We buy older cars that are comfortable and cheaper. Flying to visit relatives or to vacation is very important to us.

When I have a car, I don't use public transport. When I don't have a car, I always use public transport or walk. Right now, I have a car.

unable to walk due to limitations and never learned to ride a bike live in country, need vehicle to leave home usually drive 5 miles over speed limit, and keep my cars for at least 200,000 miles vacations? what vacations?

I am more likely to drive at or below the speed limit when I have been recently reminded about it, but then tend to thoughtlessly revert to old patterns.

My home is very inconvenient to public transportation.

This is a little tricky...I don't use public transportation because it doesn't go anywhere I need to go. I don't carpool because there is no one to carpool with at my current job (would if there was) and I don't need to reduce discretionary flying, because I very rarely fly anywhere, not due to environmental beliefs, but I have no reason to fly---no one to vacation with!

Living outside Binghamton City Limits there are no viable means of getting to shopping centers as they are over 8 miles away and there is no public transportation outside the shopping areas. You must drive to get to them.

locally is relative. Are we talking 100 miles vs 500 or 500 vs 2000?

You should add a carpool to church section. Or carpool to market. Just a general ride board.

I buy only used vehicles and keep them until it is no longer economical to drive them. Living in a semi-rural community, questions 2,3,4 do not apply to my situation.

I'm planning to spend some time in Florida this winter. I'm planning to go and come by bus rather than fly.

I work in a one person office. Usually I drive at the speed or 5 mi above. I only take vacation when I have a good reason.

Our 6 year old car gets over 25 mpg in town and above 35 on the highway. Hope to have a long time. Also hope for better mileage when a new car is needed

I walk or bike to work 90% of the time. The other 10% I drive alone. I couldn't answer the "Carpool to work" question and there is no other way to indicate this.

Vacation is usually at home.

We have not bought a new car in some time, but have decided to purchase a hybrid or alternative fuel vehicle when we next purchase a car. I do not use local public transportation, but do use it when visiting larger cities (such as New York and Boston)

Because I do not drive, many of these questions are not applicable. Bicycles are pretty tough on this old body on our steep hills. Town is four miles away and we go for once a week errands or soccer games, etc. for grandkids. Our worst indulgence is coming to Binghamton for church, meetings, etc. Vacations are usually New England, but I do carpool to go west for ceremonies every summer.

I don't drive at all.

we just got a Toyota camry hybrid and it gets 40+ MPG

REDUCE ENERGY USE AT HOME
Replace all incandescent light bulbs with CFLs
Use clothesline or drying rack to dry laundry
Install low flow shower heads
Reduce hot water temperature to 120 degrees
Set winter thermostat to 65 or lower
Use fans instead of air-conditioning
Get a home energy audit
Improve insulation and sealing of house
Insulate hot water heater and all hot water pipes
Install passive solar energy improvements
Install photo-voltaic solar for electrical power
Buy renewably generated electricity
Wood heat boiler will not ? efficiently @65 degrees
For many of the actions that I answered "I never do", the obstacle has been cost and not lack of interest or intent. I would like to learn more about changes that can be made that I can afford at this time, with the intent on making even more substantial changes when our financial picture improves.
I need to be more educated on the above
My energy source comes from an ESCO service. Other energy improvements are beyond my ability to pay for them as a retired person.
Would like someday to go solar as much as possible, will a better financial situation. I would love to see the church incorporate solar.
I have bought low-flow shower heads on at least three occasions, and they are so wimpy I end up tearing them out and storing them in the attic. Anybody want one?
Most of this does not apply to apartment dwellers.
Energy use is primarily dictated by apartment owner
What about those of us that rent?
We have hot water heat and thus no hot water tank and limited ability to control hot water temperature from the boiler.
Looks like the CFL's won't work in a sconce light. We set the winter thermostat lower at night. I am concerned about wind turbines and bird migration.
I rent and therefore, am not responsible for updating the property.
:(We rent, and can't do a lot of these things. The landlord is 'pro' but now says he has to have the house resettled or leveled or some such before replacing any windows. And solar panels aren't cost effective yet.

The jury is out on insulating hot water heaters.. tends to hide deterioration and sometimes decreases life of heater
Most of the "never do" solutions have been dictated/weighted by the financial and time concerns of other household members
I tried CFL bulbs. Terrible light! Returned them.
I hate answering "I never do" to these...it's not that I never would, it's just that some of these things we haven't done yet.
Some items are a matter of expense...installation of photo voltaic solar.
I live in an apartment, so I can suggest many of these changes to my house-owner but they are not something I can actually make sure are done.
I am interested in buying renewable generated electricity, but I don't know how to go about that
I am a renter so have no control over many items listed this page.
For many of the actions that I answered "I never do", the obstacle has been cost and not lack of interest or intent. I would like to learn more about changes that can be made that I can afford at this time, with the intent on making even more substantial
Would like to know more about how to safely dispose of CFLs since they have mercury in them, also about the hazards of accidental breakage. I haven't thought much about many of these items and appreciate you're bringing them to attention. Would like to know more about low flow shower heads, insulating hot water heater and hot water pipes, passive solar energy improvements, photo-voltaic solar for electrical power. Plan to do some research these items.
How do you arrange for a home energy audit?
CFL's I use in all light fixtures but what most do not recognize is that when these break you have a hazardous waste issue. The mercury in these bulbs make these insufficient energy sources for sustainability. All options for alternative energy sources are too expensive to maintain and initially invest in. Home energy audits? Who would perform that for free? Info would be nice.
Something like improving insulation isn't an "always or sometimes" question; it's more a "have done/plan to do/don't plan to do" question. Ditto some of the other questions.
We avoid clothesline drying because most family members are allergic to pollen, mold, and dust, and we've been advised to machine-dry.
Slowly working on the light bulbs.
We use solar to produce hot water; 4 times more cost effective than PV
I buy wind power whenever it is offered. I have a photo-voltaic system for some of my electricity. However, I still buy an appreciable amount of electricity from NYSEG. I heat my house with gas.
I rent, so I do not have control of most of the above. In the winter, I keep heat at about 67 when I am there during the day & about 62 at night.
Most of our bulbs have been changed to CFLs. As the rest blow, they will be replaced with CFLs. I don't know if we buy renewably generated electricity, so I am assuming we don't.
In process of insulation now... have allergies /asthma, need AC
Set to 66 upstairs at night - thermostat moved from downstairs - would be 65 or below if it was still down there. Downstairs temperature is 65 or below. Some lights do not have replacements - small base no place for clotheslines - finish drying some articles on shower rod

Our house is a solar passive house. We have a tempering tank to get the well water to room temp before heating. Getting renewably generated electricity was so complicated, we gave up. I concentrate on turning off lights, as we didn't like the CFL bulbs.

1. We have no thermostat. We have wood heat. It is almost always below 65 degrees in the house. 2. We are signed up with Citizen-re to get solar panels later this year.

We are registered with CitizenRe, a business that plans to begin leasing and installing solar panels this year. About thermostat: we heat with wood so no need for such newfangled devices!

I use the wind and the sun to dry my laundry in the warm months, and the warm air blowing through my floor vents to do the same in the cold months. I don't feel I should have to pay for renewable energy when I am capable of utilizing it for free.

CONSERVE WATER

Plant a garden that requires no watering

Collect rainwater for outdoor watering

What methods keep rainwater pure? (not a place for mosquitoes, clean)

I'd like some more information about how to do the above, actually.

Not possible. Have not found enough information about rain collection to use it. But I intend to do so as soon as I solve some questions regarding mosquito control and storage space and transport.

Also collect waste run water for gardening and reuse gray water when possible

I mulch to reduce water requirements in garden.

I think collecting rainwater is a great idea. I've been thinking about getting rain barrels for collecting water for garden. Also, am thinking about planting more trees to help with CO2 absorption.

I use the newspaper and straw layering system which only requires watering for the most sensitive veggies in periods of several weeks without rain.

I have no place to even keep a container garden, and would consider planting in a community garden plot near the church.

Need tips for convincing home owner that a re-do of the gutters could be incorporated with barrels, or that existing gutters could be converted to support barrels.

Should have the option to choose "plan on it"

I usually limit showers to 1/week or so, using basin in between

Lack of water has not been a problem, but it is worth thinking about. Collecting rainwater for watering my earth boxes seems an excellent idea that I plan to implement this summer.

I don't water at all because we have adequate rainfall, so it's not necessary. What happened to all of the water conservation suggestions? There are so many more things that can be done to conserve water than just the above two, such as switching to an energy star washing machine; installing low-flow toilets; making sure all faucets have aerators; reducing outdoor watering which uses water from a faucet; planting plants indigenous to this region of New York; and reducing car washing. I hope that these will be added to the follow-up survey.

We installed a low-water toilet, and in a family of 5 that makes a HUGE reduction in water use!

REDUCE USE OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES
Purchase only biodegradable, non-toxic cleaning products
Use minimal amounts of cleaning products
Eliminate all herbicides and pesticides
Use water based paints
Recycle old oil
Recycle batteries, computers, and electronic products
Healthy cleaning products are super expensive
I have a good car, oil does not need refill until time of oil change. Don't know where to recycle batteries.
Could use some advice about recycling old oil, batteries, computers, and electronic products.
Having instructions on how to dispose of household batteries at the local dump would be beneficial as we have been collecting them at home for a year now.
I don't really know what to do with my used batteries.
I get oil changes done by the mechanic and I assume that the oil is recycled. I will inquire at the next oil change to make sure my assumption is correct. I haven't painted in awhile and cannot remember whether or not the oil was water based. I'm thinking it might have been latex paint.
I used to think water based paints were safe, but they have VOC's, and gave us headaches for a few days. I intend to find no or low VOC paints.
Need better collection sites and disposal information for expired and no longer used products. Also, section on switching to rechargeable batteries instead of disposable.
Since I don't drive, battery recycling is difficult, so I just hold onto them. It would be nice if UUCB provided a drop-off place for used batteries, so that I could dispose of mine.
My local car maintenance Garage recycles my oil.
I tried--and failed--to recycle a dead computer, nearly three years ago. The difficulty of that process is one reason I want to launch an electronics recycling project as part of Sustainable Living.
I use biodegradable/natural pesticides, if I use them at all, never fertilize or chemically treat the lawn or garden (except compost), often use baking soda for scouring, deodorizing.
I also need to talk with the man that I hire to clean my house about increasing my use of biodegradable cleaning products. I no longer drive, so that I myself don't use motor oil. The friends I hike rides from do, and so does Broome Transit.
I hire TruGreen because I don't want to annoy my neighbors with my dandelions. However, I hope I follow a resolution to notify my neighbors that I will not hire TruGreen next year, so as not to use pesticides and herbicides.

FOOD CHOICES
During growing season, purchase produce from local growers
Substitute whole foods for processed foods
Use organically grown foods
Avoid foods that have been genetically modified
Reduce consumption of meat and poultry
Purchase "fair trade" foods
I need help with determining when genetic modification happens
I don't know if the foods I eat have been genetically modified, so I have to assume some if not many have been.
Would like more information about avoiding foods that have been genetically modified.
I do not completely accept the concept of the superiority of the vegetarian diet
once again, the organic is usually too expensive with 3 children
There needs to be better & clearer, not to mention honest, food labeling. It's easy for me to limit meat, poultry. It's not possible for my mate, who craves meat, likes white bread. It's always a compromise on food prep.
My family raises organic foods and we eat "organic" all year as much as possible. Any meat or poultry comes from a local Organic farm.
Not driving, it's difficult for me to get around to farmers markets, but I could put more effort into that. I don't like standing for long periods of time, so I prepare almost none of my food from the ground up, except when I make salads. Most of my produce is local or organic. I have red meat less than 4x/yr. I eat chicken maybe 6-7x/yr. I buy Amy's prepared vegetarian entrees. which are my usual main courses. That brand doesn't package in plastic, but they do use cardboard. I avoid sea-food, because of over-fishing.
Where's the obvious question: During growing season, plant your own vegetable garden?? We have been doing that for more than twenty years.
We use venison, chicken and fish mostly
We grow most of our own veggies during the summer---organic at that
I grow my own vegetables! Also, I do not believe there is such a thing as food that has not been genetically modified over time.

EARTH JUSTICE

Favor businesses that pay their employees a fair family wage

Avoid purchasing products produced under "sweatshop" conditions

Invest in companies with good environmental practices

Donate to environmental organizations

Be an active member of an environmental group

Vote for candidates who advocate environmentally responsible policies

Again, I need to become more educated about which businesses pay a fair wage, how to avoid sweatshop products, and where to buy fair trade food items. I know some of the information but definitely would like to make more informed decisions.

it's expensive, hard to afford to live green as much as I would like to

It is not always possible to know what is "fair traded" or "sweatshop" produced, but I look for products which identify the source.

This brings to mind that I should use more earth friendly fabrics such as organic cotton, but that is very expensive. Too many of my clothes have polyester and polyester blends. I could try producers advertised by Co-op America.

I avoid Walmart but other than that I need more information

I do not know what businesses do the above. We buy and invest in what we think are reasonable companies. I don't votes on one issue alone.

I don't know which businesses pay their employees a fair family wage. I don't know which products r produced under sweatshop conditions.

Need help in most of these areas, like figuring out which businesses pay employees fair family wage. I avoid Walmart and am sure there are other companies like it though don't know what they are. Also, what companies produce under "sweatshop" conditions? Which companies have good environmental practices? I donate to Heifer, Seva, NRDC, Sierra. What are the environmental organizations with best practices?

It's hard to get the truth about the social/environmental practices of a business. Besides, a business may be good in some very visible ways and terrible in less visible ways.

The "fair family wage" idea is a nice one but how can we know? This can be addressed much more effectively with collective advocacy then individual choices.

It is difficult to make these decisions based on anecdotal information or what you read on the web/news. Who am I to judge who is paid a fair wage and who isn't? I was raised to believe that if your wage isn't fair, find another job (anti-union grandparents). Tough calls all around, and questionable relationship to environmental policy. Not sure what other fair trade goods are available, but I don't drink coffee!

Fair family wage? I avoid Walmart but don't know where available info is on other companies or local ones. Sweatshop conditions? Where is this info available?

If I KNEW which companies paid a fair family wage or didn't have sweatshop conditions, I'd favor them.

I am not always aware of the companies that pay a fair family wage that produce things under sweat shop conditions, or that have good environmental practices...or I would make a practice of following those guidelines.

I don't usually research of the companies I buy from. I tend to buy very little anyhow, only what's needed and then my main criteria are availability and price

The first three are difficult: unless you spend a great deal of time researching every company that produces goods & food for the market, how can you know? "Fair trade" products have limited availability so they are not easy to obtain. And I can honestly say that I don't believe I own a single item of clothing that was not produced under "sweatshop" conditions. It used to be easy to make choices prior to NAFTA because I just looked for "the union label", but not anymore. I then fell back on European manufacturers, but they have also outsourced their manufacturing process, so I don't try anymore. I'm always shocked when I discover I've purchased something "Made in America", but I always wonder if that means the Mariana Islands, which is covert for "sweatshop" labor. I think if we purchase local food, manufacture goods locally, and frequent local businesses, the first three suggestions would be things that we automatically did, rather than expended a lot of energy trying to accomplish.

We have banned all new oil wells, coal, and nuclear. Look at the price of gas. Isn't that horrifying?

These are upper-class luxuries. Not everyone can afford organic/free trad/non-sweatshop products.

For questions 1 & 2, we need education & communication, plus it takes time to find out. Maybe the church can help to be the educator in a simple, user friendly way.

When there is a candidate who does, advocate.

I am not yet an active member of an environmental group, but could not check I never do - I never have, but that doesn't mean I never will.