



GREEN GROUND

Low Impact Development Program

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Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Compost

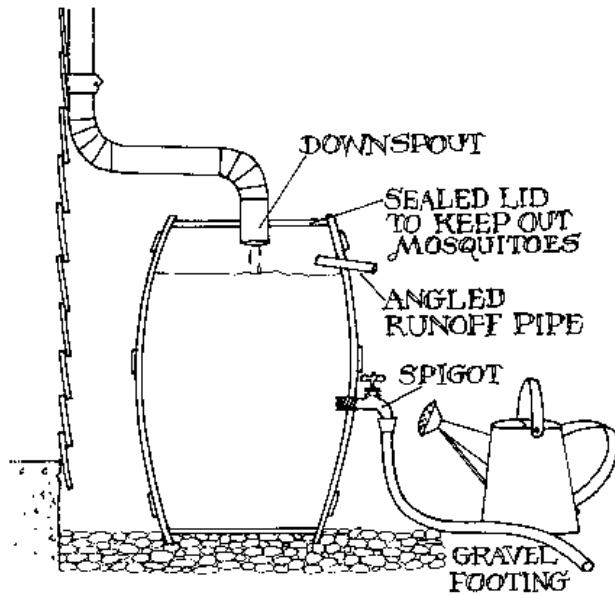
Living on an island means living with limitations and learning first-hand what happens when these island limits get pushed. One of the primary limitations in San Juan County are landfill options. Due to limited space waste is hauled off-island therefore solid waste is an expensive and problematic issue. Many people recycle. Many are careful about excessive use of resources. And many islanders are learning how to perform the ultimate “reuse” of material through composting. The information in this leaflet is a refresher for those who already reduce, reuse, recycle and compost; and an educational nudge to those who've not yet begun.

Reduce: The three R's are actually presented in order of importance. The first one is reduce. Reducing is more than simply buying less; it's a thought process. Sometimes it's helpful to delay a purchase until you've thought about it for a while. You may, at times, realize that you don't really want the item or already have something that you can use in its place. This thought process can save money and be easier on the earth. As you consider a particular item, think about the following:

Do I really need this item? This works well for the tenth pair of shoes or second car. How will I dispose of this item or its packaging when I am finished with it? Is it available in a larger quantity to reduce packaging? Purchasing bulk foods and used items can reduce packaging. Can I buy a locally-made product to reduce the transportation costs and support the local economy? Locally grown food, and items such as books, furniture and crafts are available locally. Consider these questions especially when buying products with high-energy consumption such as electronic devices or appliances or toxic products.

Reuse: After reducing, the next step is to reuse. Examples of reused materials are items that are refilled, repaired, previously used by someone else, or put to use in another way, such as using yogurt containers to store leftover food (*but, be sure not to microwave containers unless they are specified for such use!*). Buying items that can be refilled is a great way to reuse the packaging instead of sending it to the landfill. Even free items can be refilled such as, bringing your own bags to the grocery store (including the small plastic bags for produce). Do you have an old piece of furniture that you are tired of? Having it repaired, refinished or reupholstered is a waste reducing option. If you do replace larger items like furniture, appliances, etc. there are local salvage organizations on most of the main islands. Check with the Conservation District if you're not sure who to contact for this. Even unused building

materials can be used by someone else instead of adding to the landfill, and saves you money. Shopping at garage sales, thrift and consignment stores is also a great option.



One way to Reuse and Recycle your resources is to install a rainbarrel to catch rainwater for non-potable uses around the house.

Recycle: After you have reduced and reused, the third R is recycling. We are all familiar with this one and are hopefully recycling everything we can in our households and encouraging our employers and other associations to do the same. Knowing what is recyclable in your area is crucial to a successful program and to cutting down on waste.

As you start paying attention to your purchasing decisions, you can be conscious of buying items in packaging that you can either reuse or recycle. If you find that the product you are going to purchase is in a plastic that is not recyclable in the San Juans, try to purchase the same product in one that is.

The other half of recycling is purchasing products made from recycled materials. You will see recycled content listed in two ways, post industrial and post consumer. Post consumer waste is material that we as consumers, have used and turned in to be recycled, and is therefore more environmentally friendly than post industrial. The most desirable product is post consumer material that is recycled back into the same item. The second is an item that is down-cycled. These are recycled into something that is not able to be recycled again. An example of this is when pop bottles are recycled into plastic 2 x 4's to replace lumber. Thus far, the plastic lumber is not recycled after its life. Ironically, recycled products are more expensive than new items. Our production infrastructure and national economy are set up for new materials at this time. Supporting the recycled product infrastructures will help give them the needed boost that will eventually equalize the pricing structure. There is a high price in using only new materials and then throwing them away - we just don't see it at the check-out counter! If we approach our purchasing keeping in mind first reducing and reusing, we can save enough money to afford the recycled content and other eco-friendly products that are on the market.

Compost: Composting is an outdoor form of recycling. It's a great way to keep wastes out of the landfill and wastewater treatment plants and you will have ready-made organic matter for gardening or landscaping. Start your own compost bin and you'll soon discover rich soil where you put what you thought was garbage. The basic recipe for composting is one-part nitrogen and two-parts carbon. Here is a list of compostable items and those to avoid:

Nitrogen rich: grass clippings, fruit and vegetable waste, plant clippings, coffee grounds, teabags, rotted manure (cattle or horse), spoiled food, crushed eggshells, flowers, and fresh leaves.

Carbon rich: dried leaves, hay and straw, small twigs, sawdust, newspapers, breads and pastas, evergreen needles, untreated bark chips, hair, and unbleached paper.

AVOID: cat and dog manure, meat, fish, bones, grease or greasy foods, charcoal or coal ashes, walnut leaves or husks, plant or grass clippings that have been treated with chemicals and dairy products.

To begin composting you will need an area for a pile or a compost bin. You could build a bin out of wood and chicken wire or purchase a plastic tub or barrel and drill holes in it. Hints for successful composting: Turn the compost regularly to increase decomposition. Locate the pile or bin out of the wind and hot sun in the summer months. Keep a lid or some plastic on the compost pile during the winter months. Add water when necessary; the proper moisture is like a moist sponge. Use a bin with a cover if you intend to include food scraps. Add a shovelful of soil occasionally to add more microbes. Chop up large materials to aid the decay process. Turn the pile immediately if you notice offensive odors. Another type of composting using worms, is called vermicomposting.

For more information about composting, contact San Juan County Public Works Solid Waste Division 360-370-0503 or WSU San Juan County Extension 360-378-4414.

One final note on composting, it is important to be patient and wait for the materials to break down. Compost that is not fully decomposed may cause nitrogen starvation when used on plants. Seeds that have not been properly broken down may be able to sprout in your garden. When your food and yard waste scraps are a deep brown and look like soil, your compost is ready to use. If there are still some larger pieces of material you can screen them out and keep them for further composting. Apply the compost to your garden in a layer from 1" to 3" thick. Mix it into the top 2" of soil before and after planting.

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