

The San Francisco Department of the Environment, suggests there are four basic concepts – 4R's for environmentally healthy living. They are: REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE and ROT (composting). We also want to add a fifth R for RENEW, the need to spend time in nature to refresh and recover yourself – especially when caught by the stress and strain of modern life. In the words of Henry David Thoreau, "In wilderness is the salvation of the world". This paper will focus on the four R's – yet this fifth R is the foundation of it all. The world of nature nourishes and sustains us; we hope by these actions to help protect the earth and enhance our relationship with it.

~ REDUCE (Waste) Suggestions from Cowichan Valley Regional District in Duncan, BC:

Make an effort to purchase items that use less packaging

- Utilizing your local library branch which loans out compact disks, tapes & videos
- Donating magazines to the community hospitals to be used in their waiting rooms
- Using stale bread for croutons or birdfeed
- Using flushable cat litter and flush other pet wastes rather than putting in the garbage
- Using baking soda to brush your teeth

How to use less paper and plastic goods:

- Bringing your own bag to carry your groceries
- Using cloth napkins instead of paper and diapers
- Providing your own ceramic coffee cup instead of a disposable paper or Styrofoam cup
- Buying milk and juice in plastic jugs that can be recycled or making juice from concentrate.
- Carrying your lunch in a cloth bag or using a lunch box instead of paper bags
- Buying food in bulk (i.e. flour, cereal, dried fruits, nuts)
- Buying environmentally friendly detergents in bulk or refillable containers
- Using an erasable note board instead of paper notes
- Using refillable cartridge razors
- Buying persona care and cleaning products in refillable sizes or without boxes
- Buying pumps instead of aerosol cans

~ REUSE: This includes thinking of different uses for something that you already have and are currently not using. For instance, you will often see old bathtubs used as garden planters. If something you currently have is no longer be used, consider giving it to a friend or donating it to an organization like the Salvation Army which benefits not only the environment but those in need as well. Reusing suggestions from the Cowichan Valley Regional District include:

- Glass juice bottles with metal lid can be refilled and transported while on the go
- Yogurt and margarine tubs can be use instead of Tupperware or plastic wrap for leftovers or

to transport a homemade lunch

- Check the classified ads for used items before buying new (i.e. appliances, furniture)
- Reuse plastic grocery bags when shopping or employ them as garbage bags
- Reuse egg cartons as containers to start plant seeds
- Use rechargeable batteries
- Use long-life compact fluorescent light bulbs
- Send holiday greetings electronically via the internet
- Give the gift of an experience - such as tickets to a show, skiing or a vacation
- Give a transit pass to the student or commuter
- Be creative when wrapping gifts using colorful cartoons, magazines fabrics instead of wrapping paper

~ RECYCLE This includes:

- Compost food waste from teabags to peanut shells
- Use reusable coffee filters or compost the disposable ones
- Recycle old phone books and directories
- Complete the recycling loop - look for items made with recycled products

Many items can be recycled these days. In San Francisco, Sunset Scavenger will recycle the following items:

Containers

Paper bags & packaging

Glass jars & bottles

Aluminum foil, cans & pie tins

Tin/steel cans

All plastic bottles

Empty paint and aerosol cans

Paper Items

Newspapers/telephone books

Junk mail (including magazines & catalogs)

Office & writing paper

Dry food boxes

Flattened cardboard

Paper bags & packaging

Sunset Scavenger states there are certain items that cannot be recycled. These include: plastic bags, Styrofoam, juice boxes, mirrors, windowpanes, light bulbs, ceramic dishes & cups, liquids, diapers, kitty litter, lumber.

~ ROT or composting can be done with a small amount of preparation. In the city of San Francisco, a composting program has been set up and according to Sunset Scavenger – in San Francisco, materials that can be sent to the compost include:

Organic Material (Fantastic Three Program Only)

Fruit and vegetable peelings/scrap

Cheese & meat

Poultry and seafood

Bread, rice, beans, pasta

Coffee grounds with filters

Tea bags

Food soiled paper

Paper bags and newspaper (to line pail and wrap food scraps)

Leaves and grass

Brush and tree pruning/weeds

Houseplants

Flowers

Milk cartons