

ecology action center news



Volume 12, Issue 4

Winter 2014

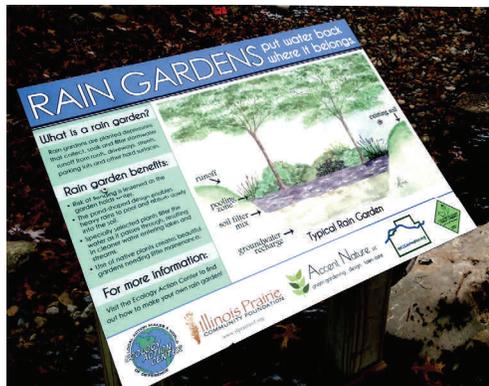
EAC's Landscaping Goes Green(er)!

By *Kris Hall, Assistant Director*

Stopped by the EAC lately? If you have, you've notice that we've been hard at work sprucing up the EAC lawn! Foregoing traditional turf grass, we have planted native landscaping all around the building and installed interpretive signage to explain to our visitors why these Yard Smart techniques are so important.



Funded by the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation (ilprairiecf.org), the EAC will now be able to show off beautiful, practical and environmentally-friendly native landscaping. The Illinois Prairie Community Foundation serves area counties and helps connect donors to causes they wish to benefit. Through this funding, the Ecology Action Center was able to bring in Accent Nature, a landscaping organization that focuses on safety and sustainability. And they did a wonderful job!



The EAC's lawn practices the principles we preach: not only do we have a new rain garden to help filter and direct groundwater, but we are growing native landscaping that won't need chemicals or gallons of water to maintain. Even better -- these native plants will help foster beneficial habitat for native species, prevent introduction of invasive plants, and add to the beauty of Uptown Normal.

Want to find out how to create your own Yard Smart garden? Come out to the EAC or stop by our website and find helpful resources to spruce up your sustainable landscape, too.

Mark Your Calendar

January 6 Green Drinks: Presentation by Citizen's Climate Lobby

February 3 Green Drinks

March 3 Green Drinks

April 11 Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo

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E-waste Update

Home Sweet Home Ministries no longer accepts bulky tube-style CRT TVs and monitors due to rising costs in CRT recycling. While you can still take other electronics to Home Sweet Home, please use the following locations for CRT recycling:

Best Buy

Will take CRTs up to 32" but does not accept consoles and rear-projection TVs. Accepts many other types of e-waste also. Customers are limited to bringing in 3 units per day per household.

Normal Public Works Garage

Accepts many types of e-waste, including CRTs.
Monday-Friday 7am-2:30pm; first Saturday of every month 8am-noon.



Tread Lightly: Eco-Friendly Winter Tips

By Emily Cross, EAC Energy Program Coordinator

As winter rolls around every year, the same anxiety hits me: winter road driving is absolutely terrifying! Determined to take charge of my winter weather fate, I decided to look into some products that could aid in my quest — only to find that so many of our go-to solutions are not safe for our planet. What's an eco-friendly winter worry-wart to do?

It turns out that with a little bit of winter-smarts, we can avoid the worst of these eco-enemies. Try out these tips!



Ice melting: although salt is great at melting ice and snow, it's even better at harming the environment. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, salt accumulation ends up in waterways, hurting local wildlife and plants. Once salt reaches groundwater, it not only stays there for decades, but can also cause corrosion and affect the water's taste.

Ice-melting tips: It may seem obvious, but always start by shoveling snow -- especially as soon as the snow stops falling. Doing this means you will need much less de-icer, if any at all. Oftentimes, sand will help give you a better grip down your driveway, just make sure to apply sparingly. If you do use salt, remember that piling it on won't remove the ice completely -- you just need a few handfuls for your average driveway. Make sure to apply it as early as possible, because it takes much more salt to melt accumulated snow than it does to prevent accumulation. The EPA has a list of safer de-icing products on its Design for the Environment site at epa.gov/dfc.

Snow blowing: Gas-powered blowers generate a lot of air and noise pollution. In fact, they emit greenhouse gases along with carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides, along with particulate matter. Not only does it pose a risk for your health, but also the health of any pets and children playing in the area. Furthermore, if you have a gas snow blower that you bought before 2011, it doesn't have the more-stringent Environmental Protection Agency standards that required emissions-control units.

Snow blowing tips: Consider shoveling free exercise to help combat those holiday cookies -- according to the Surgeon General, 15 minutes of snow shoveling is as vigorous as swimming laps for 20 minutes or walking for 30. If you are at risk for heart disease, you can pay a neighborhood kid to help. If you must use a snowblower, go for an electric model, or at least replace an old gas blower with a newer one. Use a two-stage, four-stroke engine, which will operate much more efficiently than a single-stage, two-stroke engine.

Car maintenance tips: Before we hit the worst winter has to offer, make sure to do a maintenance check. How's your tire pressure and alignment? Is your engine due for a tune-up? These quick check-ups will make sure that your car is running efficiently -- meaning you'll burn less gas. Furthermore, when we do get a few warm days, please remember to wash your car at a professional wash, which will use less water than washing at home and recycle and filter the water to prevent chemicals from going into our rivers and streams.

The Town of Normal wants your feedback!

The Town of Normal Parks and Recreation Department has launched Engage Normal, an online survey, to seek feedback from Town of Normal residents on its current parks, programs, and facilities and gather input on how they can be improved for the future.

The feedback gathered will be used to update Normal's five-year comprehensive master plan. The end goal is a plan on recommended strategies and a road map for implementation that will guide the Town Parks and Recreation Department's next five years.

"Since our last plan in 2005, new types of recreation activities have become popular, and how we spend our recreation time has changed," said Parks and Recreation Director Garry Little. "In addition, the Town's population has expanded to new areas of the community, resulting in the need to look at recreation facilities to serve those residents. This update will examine these changes and provide a framework for meeting the current and future needs of the Normal community."

There will be multiple opportunities for residents to comment on topics, contribute ideas, and interact with fellow Town of Normal residents. In addition to Engage Normal, the Town will conduct a community-wide survey and host public meetings.

Please check out the website at yourparksplan.normal.org to start participating now!



The Gift that Gives Back

Please consider an additional contribution before the end of 2014 to help support the EAC's important environmental programs. You can even stop by the Ecology Action Center to find great holiday gift items:



- Eco-friendly tote bags and washable lunchbags
- Gift certificate for Home Energy Check-ups (\$20 value)
- Rain barrels and compost pails
- Spoon holders made from reused wine bottles
- Chico bags and other eco-friendly reusable gift wrap
- EAC reusable water bottles

While much of our funding comes from contracts with local government agencies to provide specific services for our community, we believe it is important to go above and beyond the written agreements with these entities to continue to increase our impact in protecting our local environment. But it is only with the help of generous contributors such as yourself that we are able to do so.

The Ecology Action Center is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; as such donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law. Please make your year-end contribution online at www.ecologyactioncenter.org or by mail to Ecology Action Center, 202 W College Avenue, Normal, IL 61761.

Radon Reminder

Give the Gift of Health. Protect loved ones by reducing radon in your home this holiday season.

If you have an elevated radon level in your home, take steps today toward changing this situation. Reduce your family's risk of radon-induced lung cancer. Elevated radon levels can be fixed and can almost always be reduced to below 4 pCi/L. Happy Holidays.

Radon test kits are available at the EAC for \$10.00 each. These 5 to 7 day tests are simple, reliable, easy to use and you will get test results in 10 days after mailing in. Contact Ruth Ann Lipic, Radon Program Coordinator at 309-454-3169 with your questions and concerns.





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