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The views expressed by individuals on the Green Page do not necessarily represent the views of the ATC.

THE GREEN FLOOR



Detail from the month of February's mosaic

Twelve superb circular mosaics made at a workshop during the Big Green Week will form part of a larger design to create flooring for the shelter in Primrose Garden, adjacent to Black Pit Lock on the Rochdale Canal.

Designed by Vicky Wooldridge and Susy Feltham this project continues the collaboration between the ATC and the owners of Primrose Garden that aims to produce a beautiful and productive garden space that also

maximises bio-diversity and wildlife. The linking component of the design is a symbolic tree with concentric circles radiating from the middle of the floor to represent the four elements of fire, earth, air and water.

Each circular mosaic represents a month of the year and was made using an old bicycle wheel, the spokes help add strength to the finished product, broken tiles and crockery, donated by shops, local businesses

and individuals throughout Hebden Bridge, and cement! (Any ideas for a more environmentally friendly grout would be gratefully received.) The mosaics are currently on display in the window of the Gardening Workshop at the ATC. Mosaic making kits similar to those used by the ATC are available from the Green Shop. For further information contact Susy Feltham (01422 842121).

A BIG GREEN THANK YOU

The Alternative Technology Centre would like to thank the whole of the local community for involving themselves so fully in the recent hugely successful Big Green Week.

We welcome feedback on any aspect of the week and are keen to discuss any ideas or suggestions for next year's event! Please contact Abby on (01422) 842121.

A to Z of recycling

M's

M is for

Magazines – Suitable for recycling with your newspapers (remove any plastic packaging from unread magazines!) but also worth passing on to health centres, hospitals or doctors and dentists surgeries if they contain well-researched articles on alternative therapies, non-mercury dentistry, or the fluoridation of water supplies.

Manure – Farmyard manure can be rich in plant nutrients and ideal for improving soil structure. Well-rotted manure has a carbon to nitrogen ratio similar to good compost and can be used as a fertiliser or compost activator. Manure from intensively reared animals is likely to distort the balance of your compost heap and should perhaps be avoided.

Maps – Old road maps, rendered obsolete by successive government passions for concreting over the countryside, make excellent wrapping paper!

Markets – Wednesday's second hand market in Hebden Bridge is often full of really useful second-hand goods for re-use and recycling!

Medicines – Make a concerted effort to reduce your use of unnecessary antibiotics! Although some medicines are classified as hazardous most can be returned to the chemist or doctor's surgery for disposal.

Metals – Contact Kerbside (01422 881110) or the council's recycling officer (01422 392385) for information on all aspects of metal recycling.

Milk bottles – Glass milk bottles are regularly re-used up to 20 times before being recycled and their continued use must be supported. Plastic milk bottles can be recycled by members of the ATC's Plastics Recycling Club (01422 842121).

Mobile Telephones – Broken mobile phones can often be repaired, try i-tec (0870 840088) or cellcomm (01274 688788) but in the UK alone it is estimated that there are 90 million mobile phones lying around un-used! A directive due to take effect in 2004 will make manufacturers responsible for their recycling but until then freepost bags for recycling your unwanted mobiles are available from various charities including Action Aid. Contact recycling@aarecycling.org.uk

Mosaics – The art of mosaic making dates

back into prehistory. Almost any recycled objects can be incorporated into mosaic designs and the results are often stunning. Mosaic making kits similar to those used on projects by the ATC are available from The Green Shop.

Motor Oil – Waste lubricating oil from vehicles is recyclable and it is illegal to pour oil into drains or dump it. Waste oil contains toxic substances and just four litres (about the amount from one oil change) will contaminate an area of water twice the size of a football pitch. The annual amount of dumped oil in the USA is eleven times the amount that polluted the environment after the Exxon Valdez Tanker spill! Car oil can be deposited in a special receptacle at Eastwood Waste Transfer Station.

Mulch – Covering the ground with a layer of recycled materials such as leaves, newspaper, cardboard, grass clippings or even black plastic can keep weeds at bay, retain moisture, and protect the soil from rain and sun. Some mulches will add fertility to the soil and mulching is generally regarded as an excellent tool for all gardeners.

Being "older" gives you the advantage of being able to look both forward and further back.

When I look at the world I inhabit today, my town of Hebden Bridge, and back to my childhood in an equally small stone-built town, I see huge changes.

As a child I bought sugar and flour weighed out in brown paper bags from the wee corner shop a few steps from my front door. My mam never went shopping in a car and always carried her shopping home on foot. I roamed the town, its park and surrounding countryside, and walked or sometimes rode my bicycle to school, often on my own.

My world was much more local – quieter, cleaner, slower, much less polluted, and less anxious – but also had much less choice, was more prejudiced and more limited. I doubt if it really was much safer. I suspect people had a different attitude to risk then and were less influenced by fear-inducing media crime and "bad news" reporting.

A Sideways View

Be hip, resist, be ecological!

Kathleen Tansey

It seems to me that fear is behind many of the great threats to the environment we have today. There are the fears of nations, fed by old rivalries and power struggles, propaganda and arms sellers, and those of individuals. The relentless march of technology, and the need for profits, constantly upgrades the latest type of gun, bomb, mine, missile or even weapon of mass destruction and cause us all huge fears and huge world problems as nations fail to agree on their control, removal and eventual safe (?) disposal. And yet there appears to be little consideration of the total waste of money on these weapons when we face climate change, decreasing natural resources, increasing pollution and an ever-more unreliable public transport system.

Given the choice what would benefit your quality of life most?

Fear seems to make many people happier to go out by car rather than foot, especially at night.

Women, men, children, reclaim the streets! Shop locally! Join the queues at the Picture House! Hang around on street corners non-threateningly! People take their children to school in a car because the roads are too dangerous to cross...see the illogicality? Make time! Walk whenever possible, get fit cheaply and stop you and your children becoming couch (and car) potatoes. Let's have one less exhaust pipe blowing out fumes in the school run traffic jam or by the traffic lights.

Don't be afraid of the cold! Cars are rushing everywhere. People rush too, they compete because of the fear that if they don't do things quick enough something nasty will happen. Perhaps their jobs will go or there just won't be enough time...for what? Some expensive leisure activity or just slumping in the chair exhausted? Our consumer society today plays on our fears as well as our wants. Be hip, resist, be ecological.

FOR PEAT'S SAKE

Peat grows naturally in a living bog. Plants living on the surface of a bog don't rot when they die because the ground is waterlogged, instead they form peat. The UK's lowland raised peat bogs are amongst the most important and valuable wildlife habitats we have, but over 95% of them have been damaged or destroyed by extraction for horticultural use. To extract peat a bog is drained and the surface stripped of vegetation, a process that effectively kills the bog. Once destroyed peat bogs are gone forever. Using peat is one of the most environmentally damaging actions a gardener can take and it is not even an ideal soil improver as it adds few nutrients to the soil.

Many amateur gardeners have now gone peat free and famous wildlife gardens such as those at Highgrove, The Natural History Museum and Cabinet Office are also peat and chemical free. Huddersfield based West Riding Organics have developed an affordable natural peat alternative called "Moorland Gold" that can be used for digging in or mulching and will add fibre and raise the organic content of soil. It has been certified organic by the Soil Association since 1988 and can also be mixed with homemade compost to make a seed and potting compost. Separate organic seed and cutting, potting and tomato composts are also available.

Moorland Gold is formed by the particles of peat and leaf mould that are naturally washed into underground streams every time it rains. These particles run into lakes and dams and settle on their beds which are periodically dredged to prevent them silting up. This dredged silt is dried and sieved to produce a fine, dark and rich medium more beneficial to soil than commercial peat. By using a natural peat alternative in your gardening you will not only utilise a natural waste product that will greatly benefit your garden but also avoid causing unnecessary damage to the environment. For more details contact www.wro.binternet.co.uk or call in at The Green Shop.

BEYOND THE VALLEY

Positive green news stories from outside the Calder Valley.

WOKING UP TO RENEWABLES

Woking Borough Council in Surrey has implemented a series of innovative energy efficiency and environmental projects that have saved the council nearly £5million whilst also passing on huge savings for local householders. It has installed the country's largest domestic photovoltaic system and created the first local sustainable community energy network in the UK. It has been recognised as the most energy efficient local authority in the UK and is the only council to be awarded a Queen's Award For Enterprise. It has reduced its energy consumption by 43.8% over 10 years, and its carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides emissions have also shrunk by an average of 71.5%. For more information contact www.woking.gov.uk

BIOFUELS ARE GO

Legislation has already passed through the lower house of the Polish parliament to stipulate that 4.5% of domestic fuel sold in the country must be sourced from biofuels. This will not only help the country's farmers find markets for their goods, but also reduce

Poland's carbon dioxide emissions and begin to reduce its high dependence on imported fuel. It currently imports about 20% of its total fuel needs. The European Union has more conservatively proposed that biofuels are guaranteed a 2% share of the EU market. Meanwhile at Bangor University they have discovered the power of vegetable oil for making superior machine lubricants that provide an effective and benign alternative to fossil fuel based oils that include toxic chemicals.

WHERE HEBDEN LEADS LONDON FOLLOWS

As seen during the Big Green Week, the cycle rickshaw, or pedi-cab, is due to make its London debut following the purchase of City Cruiser pedal-powered taxis by the capital based PromoBikes, a company who already have experience of using human-powered quad bikes as promotional vehicles. The bikes will be exempt from the congestion charge! A similar scheme has been operating in Berlin since 1997 and transported 320,000 passengers during the last year on a mixture of sightseeing

routes and individual trips. Similar schemes have been attempted in Oxford, Cambridge and Brighton and in Croydon a rickshaw co-operative is currently offering hailable pedal-powered cabs for cheap trips to and around the city centre. Contact www.promobikes.co.uk for more details.

YET MORE WINDS OF CHANGE

Whilst the government's Energy White Paper didn't quite spell the end for nuclear power, it's future will be reviewed in 2005 and there will be no new projects up to that date, it did commit the government to a more proactive renewable energy policy and some new government funding. The Scottish Executive has adopted a target of 40% of power to come from renewable energy sources by 2020 and plans to build Britain's biggest offshore wind-farm on the south west coast of Scotland were passed by ministers in March. Meanwhile the generation of electricity from wind turbines in the USA increased by 40% in 2002 whilst Norway managed an amazing 470% increase in the last twelve months.

NAPPY TALK

Research By the American Environmental Protection Agency has discovered that traditional disposable nappies will survive in landfill sites for up to 500 years and will leach harmful chemicals and viruses into underground water supplies. The UK alone uses approximately 8 million, yes 8 million, disposable nappies a day producing about 800,000 tonnes of dirty nappy waste per year. It is estimated that for every £1 spent on "disposable" nappies it costs taxpayers 10p to dispose of them.

If that isn't enough to make you rush out and join the Real Nappy Association then take notice of the fact that the gels and chemicals that are used in the absorbent layers of disposable nappies are not subject to government controls or independent testing! Sodium polyacrylate, the so-called "super-absorber" that gives disposable nappies their absorbent qualities was actually banned from tampons in the

mid 1980s because of its links with the potentially fatal toxic shock syndrome. There has been no industry testing to demonstrate that this chemical is safe on a baby's skin despite the fact that an infant's skin is five times thinner than an adults!

The good news however is that there are convenient and cheap alternatives to traditional disposable nappies ranging from nappy laundering services, providing weekly supplies of home delivered cotton nappies, to part-biodegradable disposable nappies. The Women's Environmental Network estimates that 15% of British parents now use real nappies and a Which! Consumer survey found that nearly 80% of parents prefer using them when given the choice. In Seattle, USA, 22 of their 24 maternity centres now use washable nappies and approximately 70% of parents use them at home. Their local waste disposal company even subsidises the cost of the

nappy washing service for low-income families because it is cheaper to pay for than continuing the transportation of huge quantities of nappy waste!

There are more than 20 different types of modern fitted cotton nappies available, most of which are made from breathable waterproof fabrics, do not use pins or plastic pants and are usually supplied with biodegradable liners. Disposable nappies such as Tushies and Moltek Oko include a cotton blend for comfort, do not use polluting bleaching agents and are part biodegradable.

For more information contact www.real-nappy.com, Change cotton nappy laundering service (01422 847080), Pennine Real Nappy Network (01924 496434), and www.wen.org.uk/nappies, or call in at The Green Shop.