



# Food For Thought

Did you know that you could help reduce pollution by choosing to buy locally grown food? Increasing the purchase of locally grown food is one of the 55 recommended actions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions outlined in the Connecticut Climate Change Action Plan 2005. The goal of this recommendation is to increase the purchase of Connecticut's farm products by 10%. To reach this goal in CT, the Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Agriculture are working together to enhance the Connecticut Grown program, develop more farmers' markets selling Connecticut products and require state contracts to give preference to locally grown and raised products.



The Grow Hartford Booth at the Laurel Street Farmer's Market

But what does locally grown food have to do with climate change? The food we eat travels an average of 1,500 miles and is picked 4 to 7 days before it reaches supermarket shelves. Shipping our food from across the country or farther allows us to enjoy strawberries from California and grapes from Chile year round. However, there are environmental impacts of our long-distance relationship with much of our food, ranging from intensive energy, pesticide and water use to air pollution and resulting greenhouse gases from transport.

In contrast, buying locally grown food reduces air pollution and greenhouse gases because it travels much shorter distances to get to supermarket shelves or farm stands.

It also supports local farmers, helps to preserve farmland from more energy intensive development and generally creates less water and soil pollution than large factory farms. And besides, who can deny that the freshly picked, local strawberry tastes a whole lot better than its well-traveled and expensive cousin?

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# Food For Thought

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The “buy local” movement is growing like corn in July. The CT Department of Agriculture has a number of programs to promote the growing and buying of local foods. Currently, there are 19 schools and 25 farmers in Connecticut participating in the Farm To Schools Program and buying local produce for school cafeterias. A number of large institutions are currently purchasing or considering purchasing locally grown produce, including Yale University, the CT Department of Corrections, and the University of Connecticut. Local food is widely available-- there are also 70 farmers’ markets in the state selling Connecticut Grown products. They are even located in urban areas such as Hartford, New Haven, and New London. For example, the Hartford Laurel Street Farmer's Market had its grand opening on June 25 and is a partnership with Knox Parks Foundation and Project Grow, an urban agriculture initiative for Hartford youth.

The Connecticut General Assembly recently passed a bill (P.A. No. 05-228 An Act Concerning Farm Land Preservation, Land Protection, Affordable Housing and Historic Preservation) that will provide increased support for local farmers and the buy local program. The bill provides increased funding for farmland preservation and the sale of CT Grown foods in schools, restaurants, retailers, and other institutions and businesses in the state.

Check out the abundance of fresh produce available right here at home, including those luscious CT blueberries and corn. By choosing locally grown, you support our state's economy and our New England heritage and do your part to create a healthier environment.

## Easy ways to buy locally grown foods for your family:

1. Shop at a local farmers’ market. For a list of farmers’ markets near you, go to [www.ct.gov/doag/cwp/view.asp?a=1368&q=259134](http://www.ct.gov/doag/cwp/view.asp?a=1368&q=259134) or call 860-713-2544
2. Buy a share in a local farm, known as Community Supported Agriculture. Go to [www.ctnofa.org/programs/csa.php](http://www.ctnofa.org/programs/csa.php)
3. Buy directly from a farm or shop at a food co-op. For options, see [www.ctnofa.org/programs/farms.php](http://www.ctnofa.org/programs/farms.php)



## Want to learn more? Check out the following:

- Working Lands Alliance - a state-wide advocacy coalition of farmers, conservationists, land trusts, anti-hunger groups, and leaders, [www.workinglandsalliance.org](http://www.workinglandsalliance.org)
- Food Routes – information on buying locally grown food, tool box and link to local produce, [www.foodroutes.org](http://www.foodroutes.org)
- Eat Here: Reclaiming Homegrown Pleasures in a Global Supermarket, by Brian Halweil, Worldwatch
- Chef’s Collaborative, [www.chefscollaborative.org](http://www.chefscollaborative.org)
- Northeast Organic Farming Association, [www.nofa.org](http://www.nofa.org)

# Clearing the Air...



Summer is the season of traffic congestion and poor air quality due to all the extra traveling everyone does. But, you can make an impact in reducing the smog of summer air pollution. Ground-level ozone—the result of vehicle air pollution mixing with the sun—is a major contributor to Connecticut’s poor air quality. Just taking care of routine car maintenance, for example, will result in 20% less ozone-related emissions, which means cleaner air to breathe.

DEP monitors air quality around the state at 27 locations checking for particle pollution and ozone levels. The heat, the humidity, and particle matter all made the air thick during the recent heat wave. On hot, sticky days, people are breathing in more pollutants. To get the latest up-to-date conditions and warnings, log into the DEP website at [www.dep.state.ct.us](http://www.dep.state.ct.us)

DEP is asking everyone to help clear the air...we need everyone to pitch in!

Use this checklist to make sure you are doing your part to clear the air and save gas.

☑ Refuel when it’s cool — save gas and reduce the amount of gasoline vapors (hydrocarbons) that vent. As the temperature increases during the day the gas tank heats up, causing the gasoline vapors, or hydrocarbons, to vent. To refuel when it’s cool, make refueling your last errand of the evening, or first one in the morning. Whatever cool time you choose, thank yourself for saving!

☑ Don’t top off the gas tank — it allows the ozone-producing gas fumes to escape! The gasoline that you spill will eventually evaporate and pollute the air, so protect the air for you and everyone else. Spilled gasoline pollutes the air when it

evaporates. Watch what you do at the gas station to prevent spills and overfills.

☑ Give your car a check-up — maintain it so it’s running at peak. It saves gas! Proper vehicle maintenance also helps improve the air. Check your owner’s manual and replace air filter, vacuum and coolant hoses, oil, oil filter, fluids, belts, and so on as recommended. Good job!

☑ Avoid idling — you can turn off the engine after 10 seconds without losing efficiency and save gas. Start today — make a contribution to healthy air and turn the key off. The Federal Highway Administration estimates that idling and stop-and-go traffic costs motorists an average of \$1,194 per driver in wasted fuel and time. Decide to turn off the key and walk into the bank or drug store.

☑ Keep your tires inflated to their correct pressure and save gas. Start by checking tire pressure (including the spare) monthly or whenever the temperature changes by more than 15 degrees. Adjust tire pressure to the proper level noted in the owner’s manual. If you actually get your tires inflated, give yourself a pat on the back. You just saved gas and cut pollution.

The real trick is building these activities into your routine. We would love to hear how you did at incorporating these changes into your schedule. Write us at:

*"Ask Eartha".*

## What is in vehicle exhaust and why is it a problem?

Vehicle exhaust is the by-product of burning gasoline or diesel fuel. Exhaust typically contains hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and particulate matter. It also contains other air pollutants, such as air toxics and greenhouse gases.

Hydrocarbons from vehicle exhaust react in the presence of nitrogen oxides and sunlight to form ground-level ozone, a major component of smog. Ozone irritates the eyes, damages the lungs, and aggravates respiratory problems. Carbon monoxide weakens heart contractions and lowers the amount of oxygen carried by the blood. Particulate matter aggravates existing heart and lung diseases and is associated with increased frequency of childhood illnesses. Air toxics are known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health or environmental effects. Greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, trap heat in the Earth’s atmosphere, contributing to global climate change.

For more information, go to [www.epa.gov/otaq/invntory/overview/pollutants/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/otaq/invntory/overview/pollutants/index.htm)

You can try these enjoyable alternatives to car travel almost anytime—

- Walk or bike someplace and enjoy the sunshine, the birds, the kids.
- Take the bus or train for a short trip or your whole vacation.
- Stay at home and enjoy the backyard or a local park.

Of course, there is the joy of slowing down the pace that can come with summer. This too has benefits for our health and the environment!

# Recycling Rundup

## Take a Step to Zero Waste!

Zero Waste? Does that sound contradictory to you? Surprisingly it's not! It is a goal to shift our approach to trash issues. Instead of seeing used products as waste, we can begin to look at them as new resources. **Almost everything we throw away can be reused if its components are separated.** Zero Waste is more than a concept -- right now communities all over the world are working toward achieving Zero Waste. For example San Jose, California and Loveland, Colorado reuse and recycle well over 50% of residential solid waste. Australia, New Zealand, and Toronto have made official proclamations that commit them to achieve Zero Waste by 2020, 2015, and 2010. Thirty other nations have implemented "Take Back" laws, which make manufacturers responsible for recycling or disposing of their products and packaging properly.

Zero Waste changes the way manufacturers design products and packaging by using recycled materials instead of natural resources and by making sure that the product can be recycled and reused when the consumer is done with it. Companies assume responsibility to take back their products to be properly recycled and disposed. An example is the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC) that collects batteries found in cellular and cordless phones, cordless power tools, laptop computers and camcorders. There are collection sites throughout Connecticut, including many popular stores such as Wal-Mart and Radio Shack. More than 300 manufacturers support this program by placing RBRC's Battery Recycling Seals on rechargeable batteries and portable electronic products. To find the nearest collection site to you please visit [www.rbcc.com/consumer/uslocate.html](http://www.rbcc.com/consumer/uslocate.html) or call 1-800-8BATTERY.

On a smaller scale, people are using "zero waste" principles in helping make their events virtually trash free. Mansfield, Connecticut adopted a Zero Waste approach at its Festival on the Green last fall. The town set up waste stations that included can and bottle recycling as well as composting. Food vendors were asked to serve food on paper plates or bowls and beverages in recyclable containers. They were provided with knives, forks and spoons made from corn. Volunteers guided fair attendees in the disposal of their waste. At the end of the day, 71 pounds of paper plates and cups, napkins, corn-based forks and spoons, and food went to the transfer station for composting. Almost 30 pounds of bottles and cans were recycled, and the remaining 82 pounds went to the trash incinerator. Of the 182 pounds of waste produced, 55% of it was either recycled or composted.



Zero Waste Network™

### Help Reach The Goal Of Zero Waste

It's not going to happen in a day. But in order to reach Zero Waste, we all can take some step towards that goal:

1. Purchase recycled products and recycle at home, work and school.  
Buy Recycled:  
[www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/recycle/prodhome.htm](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/recycle/prodhome.htm)
2. Make your next party or picnic a green event.  
Green Event Planning Guide:  
[www.bridgingthegap.org/pdfs/Green%20Event%20Manual.pdf](http://www.bridgingthegap.org/pdfs/Green%20Event%20Manual.pdf)
3. Compost your food and yard waste.  
DEP Composting Page:  
[www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/compost/comindex.htm](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/compost/comindex.htm)
4. Write a letter to a company that doesn't use recycled materials or uses excessive packaging. Let them know you want them to change so we reduce waste going to incinerators or landfills.
5. To find out more ways to get to Zero Waste, go to The Grass Roots Recycling Network at [www.grrn.org](http://www.grrn.org)

# Honey, I Shrunk (Wrapped) the Boat!

For boaters, peeling back their boat covers after a long, snowy winter is an annual rite of spring. The problem is what to do with the cover once it is off the boat. The lightweight plastic used to shrink-wrap boats is not biodegradable and takes up a lot of space in dumpsters and at landfills. Considering that about half of the vessels in Connecticut are shrink-wrapped over the winter, that's a lot of plastic.



The good news is that boat shrink-wrap, made of low-density polyethylene, is a recyclable material that can be remanufactured into composite lumber, agricultural sheeting, and even the spacers on highway guardrails. The not-so-good news is that more than half of the shrink-wrap used on Connecticut boats is not recycled, but sent to landfills or trash-to-energy plants. However, those low recycling rates reflect more a lack of a universally convenient solution than a lack of good intentions among the boating public. Many boaters and marinas purchase "mail back bags" large enough to hold the wrap of a 26' vessel and send the plastic directly to a recycler, but many facilities claim that using such a recycling option is not practical.

In order to increase the boat wrap recycling options for marinas, the DEP established a pilot recycling program for boat wrap involving the Trex Company, manufacturers of composite lumber. This spring, participating marina operators collected boat wrap at their facilities for their waste hauler to transport to one of two facilities in Connecticut, where it was baled and stored before being hauled to Trex in Virginia. In all, nine marinas participated in this pilot project, and an estimated 20,000 pounds of shrink-wrap were sold to Trex. The company will test the use of the boat shrink-wrap in their manufacturing process to determine whether they can continue to use it to make their recycled boards in the future.

While the DEP continues to encourage boaters to cover their vessels with reusable canvas covers or plastic tarps, recycling boat wrap is an important step in reducing solid waste produced by Connecticut boaters. For more information, contact the DEP Recycling Office at (860) 424-3237.



## Commuter Connections

By now, most of us realize that driving a car is probably the single most polluting activity we do!



Cars generate three major air pollutants: carbon monoxide (CO), oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and hydrocarbons, and are the single largest contributor to ground level ozone. So, DEP is making it easier for Elm Street employees to cut back on commuting and other driving by encouraging carpooling, mass transit, and biking to work. A new internal web page was developed for DEP employees only, called Commuter Connections.

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## WHAT'S NEW?

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## Commuter Connections

DEP staff can go to the page for lists of co-workers interested in carpooling and bike-to-work buddies. The site also has information on fuel-efficient vehicles, commuter tax benefits, bus and train schedules, vehicle maintenance tips and much more.

And, the latest effort to reduce driving - DEP now has a bicycle that staff can use to travel locally! Anyone who is comfortable riding a bike to a meeting or other commitment nearby, can now use the bike instead of driving.

For ideas on how to get a program like this started at your workplace, contact Connie Mendolia at [connie.mendolia@po.state.ct.us](mailto:connie.mendolia@po.state.ct.us) or (860) 424-3243.

## Award Honors State's

### Climate Change Leadership

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), along with several other Connecticut state agencies, is showing leadership when it comes to dealing with climate change, and its hard work is not going unrecognized. The U.S. EPA presented the State of Connecticut's Governor's Steering Committee on Climate Change (GSC) with one of its prestigious Annual Climate Protection Awards at a national event held in Washington, DC in May. In addition, at a ceremony held at DEP headquarters, EPA New England Regional Administrator Robert Varney gave recognition and presented plaques to the six state agencies that make up the GSC (DEP, Administrative Services, Transportation, Public Utility Control, Office of Policy and Management, and Clean Energy Fund).

The GSC was selected for the award because of its groundbreaking work in developing a plan for reducing Connecticut's emission of greenhouse gases, pollutants that contribute to climate change. Their work resulted in the Connecticut Climate Change Action Plan 2005. "The award is a testament to Connecticut's leadership and commitment in efforts to reduce harmful pollution, improve energy efficiency and reliability, strengthen our economy and improve the overall quality of life," said DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy, Chair of the GSC.

United Technologies Corporation (UTC) also received the 2005 Climate Protection Award from the U.S. EPA. UTC pledged to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 16% per dollar of revenue from 2001 to 2006. UTC's energy use (normalized for revenue) dropped 9% in 2004 for a cumulative reduction of 40% since 1997, meeting their 2006 energy efficiency goal. Normalized water use decreased 19% in 2004, with cumulative reductions of 53%. Air emissions dropped 27% in 2004, with cumulative reductions since 1999 of 58%. UTC has also earned the EPA Climate Wise Partner Achievement Award and the EPA National Clean Water Act Recognition Award for outstanding stormwater management.

For more information on climate change and what the DEP and others in Connecticut are doing, visit [www.ctclimatechange.com](http://www.ctclimatechange.com).

# Recycling on the Right Track



DEP employees brought in over 100 pair of used sneakers for recycling at its second annual collection in June at its headquarters in Hartford. The collection was part of a statewide effort coordinated by the Connecticut Recyclers Coalition for the Nike Re-Use a Shoe program.

So what becomes of all these shoes? Nike grinds them up and they are then made into sport surfaces such as running tracks, basketball courts, and artificial field turf. The Nike program not only eliminates waste, but also is an important part of the "NikeGO" initiative, which encourages youth to exercise and enjoy sports.

For ideas on how to get a program started at your school or workplace, contact Nan Peckham at [nan.peckham@po.state.ct.us](mailto:nan.peckham@po.state.ct.us) or (860) 424-3357. If you would like to read more about Nike's program, go to [www.nike.com/nikebiz/nikebiz.html?page=27&cat=reuseashoe](http://www.nike.com/nikebiz/nikebiz.html?page=27&cat=reuseashoe).



Note: This feature offers answers to select environmental questions. Send your question to the editor's address -- [judith.prill@po.state.ct.us](mailto:judith.prill@po.state.ct.us) and watch future issues for an answer.

## Dear Eartha:

I moved into a house with a "perfect" lawn. The former owner regularly applied "weed and feed" and pesticides to keep it that way. I decided against using that chemical stuff but now my lawn looks terrible. What can I do that would be safe for kids and pets?

—Joyce P., Fairfield, CT

Your lawn had become dependent on the routine applications of fertilizers and pesticides. The good news -- you can get it looking good again by using organic methods that are healthier for your family and the environment.

You will have to do some work and be patient as your lawn recovers. Organic lawn care is initially more expensive but in the long run, it actually costs less because routine applications of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides are avoided. It may take several seasons to re-establish beneficial organisms in your soil, like earthworms. But once your soil becomes healthy, your lawn will naturally resist weeds, insects and disease.

It is important to remember that an organic lawn will have a diversity of plants growing it -- not just grass plants. The more diversity in the lawn, the more resilient it will be. Weeds, such as dandelions can be controlled by establishing a soil favorable to the healthy growth of grass, which will out compete the dandelions over time.

Here are some quick tips to get your lawn green, healthy and safe for your family and pets:

- Know your soil -- have it tested to determine pH and existing nutrients. Don't exceed the fertilizer and lime recommendations provided with the soil test results. Use a core aerator in the fall to keep the soil from becoming compacted.
- Mow high and often -- a height of 3 inches will help block weeds from germinating. Keep the blade sharp and leave the clippings on the lawn.
- Water wisely -- deep and infrequent watering in the early morning is best. To reduce the need for water, plant drought-resistant grass such as tall fescues and add compost to sandy soils to hold the moisture.
- Scout for pests -- check your lawn monthly for signs of trouble and use safe alternatives to control problem insects and weeds. Get to know which are the beneficial organisms -- they can keep the trouble-makers in check, eliminating the need for pest control products.

If you are thinking about hiring a lawn care service to maintain your lawn, look for a state-licensed company that specializes in organic land care. The Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) has a list of land care professionals accredited in organic lawn care. (See sidebar for contact information.)

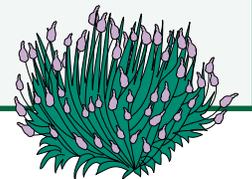
- Eartha



*Play it safe on a natural lawn*

## Further Resources:

- "A Citizen's Guide to Organic Land Care" and list of accredited organic land care professionals:  
NOFA,  
[www.organiclandcare.net](http://www.organiclandcare.net)
- "The Grass is Always Greener" (information on soil testing, state licensing requirements, etc.):  
DEP,  
[www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/p2/p2View/p2summer01.pdf](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/p2/p2View/p2summer01.pdf)
- "Healthy Lawn, Healthy Environment"  
EPA,  
[www.epa.gov/oppfead1/Publications/lawncare.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/Publications/lawncare.pdf)





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For a free subscription, please contact Judy Prill at (860) 424-3694 or e-mail your request to [judith.prill@po.state.ct.us](mailto:judith.prill@po.state.ct.us). If you want to save paper and postage by reading the P2 View electronically, you can either subscribe to the listserv or view it on-line (see [www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/p2/](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/p2/)).

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# P 2 C A L E N D A R

## A S E L E C T I O N O F E N V I R O N M E N T A L E V E N T S

### P2 Lecture Series

August 16, 2005  
 Organic Lawn and Turf Course  
 Manchester

The Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) is sponsoring an intensive day-long course for land care professionals and municipal employees on state-of-the-art management of lawns and athletic turf. For more information, contact CT NOFA at 203-888-5146 or [www.organiclandcare.net](http://www.organiclandcare.net).



DEP sponsors a lecture series on pollution prevention topics.

Lectures are free, open to the public, and are held in the Phoenix Auditorium, DEP Building, 79 Elm St., Hartford. For additional information, contact Lynn Stoddard at (860) 424-3236 or go to [www.dep.state.ct.us/calendar/calendar.htm](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/calendar/calendar.htm).



September 22, 2005  
 CT Green Building Council  
 Dinner Event  
 Berlin

Lecture on "Building a LEED-Certified Research Facility", Speaker: Deb Carling, Pfizer and/or Rick Warhall, Whiting-Turner. For more information, go to [www.ctgbc.org](http://www.ctgbc.org) or call Kim Trella at (860) 424-3234.

Looking for summer fun in CT?  
 Visit a State Park or Forest — [www.dep.state.ct.us](http://www.dep.state.ct.us)