

Living Green is making choices in our day-to-day lives that reduce our impact on the environment and move us in the direction of a sustainable lifestyle – one that is healthy, ecologically sound, economically viable and socially just.

## A TRUE TEST FOR NATURAL REMEDIES: FLEAS

I have never seen fleas before in Spokane until this fall when my cat and dog came home with a case of fleas. After reading current research about chemical-free pest-control techniques, I decided on an action plan.

The first step in my plan was to kill the live fleas and prevent others from hatching. In order to kill them, the animals had to be bathed and all of the laundry washed. Yes, energy conscious readers, this was a time to use hot water. Next, I had to vacuum every inch of floor, couches, and mattresses.

In order to ensure that the fleas would not come back, I had to be strategic about maintenance of my pets. Maintenance required the purchase of the following; *food-grade* Diatomaceous Earth (DE), Neem Oil, and a flea comb. I also used some additional items I found around the house: white vinegar, baking soda, and salt. Live fleas can be killed in less than a minute by submerging them in vinegar or soapy water. Sprinkling baking soda and salt throughout carpeted areas and furniture will dry out fleas and eggs.

Once you begin the maintenance of your pets, it is crucial to vacuum, brush with the flea comb, and wash laundry on a regular to daily basis. A lot of undercoat comes out with the fine-toothed flea combs. It's best to bag it and dispose of it as you should expect that invisible eggs or larvae are

embedded.

During the first two weeks comb the pets daily and bathe them frequently to remove any live bugs and larvae. Be sure to let the soapy water or vinegar saturate the coat for several minutes.

After brushing thoroughly, I rubbed the pets down with a mixture of vegetable and Neem oils. Neem oil is considered a "soft" pesticide used by some gardeners. Neem oil has the ability to repel fleas and prevent new ones from jumping on the animals. After two weeks of using the mixture there was little reprieve.

At this point I stopped using the oil and switched to something more aggressive than baking soda, DE.

DE is also known as insect dust. It is used in organic gardening and for many indoor pests, but it must be of food-grade quality. Because it is a light dust, it easily clings to insect bodies and in a bug's world, it is very sharp. The dust then cuts the waxy coating of insects and they eventually dry out and die of dehydration within 72 hours. Sprinkle DE throughout carpeted areas, furniture, and pet beds. Even though it is completely safe if inhaled or ingested, it is recommended to wear a mask when applying as it will coat many surfaces before settling. Then sweep over it to distribute under carpet fibers and upholstery. Use a vacuum every three days to remove new hatches of fleas within carpets,

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Now flea-free, without pesticides.

## PET TIPS FOR THE PLANET

### Rice Porridge Dog Recipe

#### **Ingredients:**

- 2 C brown rice
- 6 C of water
- 2 Tbs of vegetable oil
- 1 Tbs tamari or soy sauce
- 1 Tbs sesame seed oil

1. Bring water to a boil and add rice. Turn down heat to a simmer and cook rice around 30 minutes.
2. Pour the cooked rice into a pan with vegetable oil to fry.
3. Add the tamari/soy sauce and sesame seed oil. Fry over low heat for a couple of minutes, stirring occasionally.

**Allow to cool for 20-30 minutes before serving.**

While you love your pets, cleaning up after them and keeping the environment clean can be expensive. Here are some suggestions to lower that cost and live green.

**Adopt!** When it comes to getting a new pet, always adopt from people in your community or shelters. Puppy mills are known for having shockingly poor conditions; the practice of over breeding can create sickly pups or behavioral problems. And remember to spay or neuter your pets.

**Pet products:** Try natural soaps and organic cotton beds or sweaters. There are also many products including toys and leashes made from recycled materials. This reduces wasteful vinyl and nylon.

**Pick it up:** Pick up the dog poo. Otherwise it washes away with storm water into the river or dissolved into the ground water. As for felines: try alternative litter that doesn't contain clay ingredi-

ents which are strip-mined.

**Pest and Home products:** Skip harmful pesticides whenever possible. Avoid active ingredients like chlorpyrifos, dichlorvos and phosmet. There are products marketed as natural but always do your homework on the ingredients when trying to avoid harmful chemicals. When winter hits, search for pet safe versions of de-icer, or shovel regularly and use sand. Some salt based ice melt products can burn pet paws and can cause internal damage when ingested.

**Food:** Avoid foods that contain meat raised with hormones and antibiotics and food containing animal by-products. Unless labeled "FDA Certified Food Grade" that chow contains ingredients not fit for human consumption. And many people save money by making pet food - or just the treats, at home.

## THE IMPACTS OF CANDY

Many holidays are all about food, and some are all about candy. As we enter the new year, there is still one candy-laden day to some: Valentine's Day.

Chocolate is grown on small tropical cacao trees in Africa, Central and South America. One tree produces around 2,000 pods per year. After pods are harvested the seeds are removed and shipped to a factory to be dried, weighed, sorted, and added to recipes to make types of chocolate. Manufacturers sweeten it by adding sugar, cocoa butter, vanilla, and milk to make various treats.

Unfortunately, 40% of the world's supply of cacao (or chocolate) comes from a reliance on slave labor practices. One way to promote fair trade & labor practices is

by purchasing certified fair trade chocolate. Visit Fair Trade Labeling Organization International at [www.fairtrade.net](http://www.fairtrade.net) to find a list of companies.

The other big issue with candy is the ingredient high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), also known as Corn Sugar. The U.S.D.A. defines HFCS as, "A corn sweetener derived from the wet milling of corn. Corn starch is converted to a syrup that is nearly all dextrose. Enzymes isomerize the dextrose to produce 42% fructose syrup."

The mass consumption of HFCS began in 1967 with the introduction of *IsoSweet* by A.E. Staley Manufacturing Company. By 1976, U.S. production of HFCS jumped from 200,000 to 2.5 billion pounds per year. Since that



Cacao pods and the Fair Trade label.

time, it remains the most common sweetener in processed foods and beverages. Current research has linked consumption of HFCS to problems such as; obesity, dental cavities, poor nutrition, high triglyceride levels, heart disease and other health issues.

So before you pick up that box of candy this holiday, treat your loved one to something else or purchase fair trade dark chocolate.

## CFL'S vs. LED'S

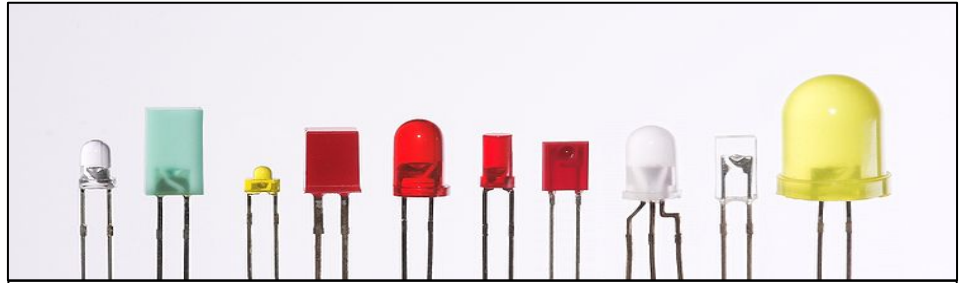
Something about winter seems to make people more aware of their energy usage. Maybe it's the grand display of holiday lights. Or it could be from the cost of winter bills. What ever the cause, there are many lighting options that will help in becoming energy efficient.

The media has in this past year promoted the use of compact fluorescent lamps (CFL's) and light emitting diode bulbs (LED's) as an environmentally and cost effective alternative to Edison's incandescent bulbs. However, the lighting revolution is still changing.

Incandescent lights work by heating the small tungsten wire until it becomes hot and produces light. 90% of the energy used by incandescents is lost in heat, 10% is used to produce the light that emits from the wire filament. CFL's use ¼ of the energy to make the same amount of light as incandescents. They also last 10 times longer. However, the environmental impact of mercury contained in CFL's is not good.

Even though the most significant source of mercury in the environment comes from burning fossil fuels, we need to recycle CFL's to avoid the added burden from mercury. (See sidebar.)

The LED light bulb is another ef-



LED's in different casings. The Wikimedia Commons.

fective alternative to the incandescent ones. Technology that produces these light bulbs have been around since 1962. Since that time, LED lights have been used in aeronautics, electronics, transportation, and appliance industries. These bright lights are produced by a semiconducting process that emits either visible ultraviolet or infrared wavelengths.

### Some advantages of LED's are:

- The bulb's surface remains cool and durable.
- LED's can last 50,000 to 100,000 hours (Compare to CFL's lifespan of 6,000 hours).
- They come in a variety of colors, sizes, and models.
- Light is emitted in a single direction instead of filling an entire room.

### Some LED disadvantages are:

- LED's require the management of currents and heat while being

used or light output and lifespan will be reduced.

- They can only be used in specific places due to lighting properties such as single beam of light versus a shower.
- They are expensive—for now. Retrofit bulbs range from \$25.00-\$60.00 for night lights and small lamps.

To recycle unbroken bulbs, Avista is partnering with area recyclers to take bulbs in all of Avista's service areas. If you live in Spokane, these three local recyclers accept CFLs free of charge:

- Clark's Recycling Westside Center, 1730 W. Sinto Ave., 328-4086
- Earthworks Recycling Inc., 1904 Broadway Ave. 534-1638
- Du-Mor Recycling, 6004 N. Perry St., 489-6482

## WINTER WEATHERIZATION TIPS FROM SNAP

Now that winter is here, it's time to revisit a few of the things you can do to help keep Mother Nature out and your heat in.

- First: have the furnace serviced. When your car needs service your gas mileage goes down. It's the same with your heating system. Make sure to change the filter regularly. This helps keep the air cleaner and the furnace

running more efficiently.

- Control your thermostat and dress in layers. The warmer you dress, the less heat you need.
- Apply rope caulk around the windows and use shrink-to-fit plastic to ensure that windows, new or old, will keep cold temperatures out.
- Use silicone caulk for the out-

side of your home and anywhere that cold air can come in or heat can escape.

- Close off rooms you don't use.

Finally, remember that most of our weather comes from the south/southwest, so these are the sides of the home to concentrate on.

By Linda Riddle, Conservation Educator

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**1/6 Intro to Weatherization, Renewable Energy, and Sustainability** Join David Hales, Building Systems Specialist with WSU's Energy Program, from 6-8pm at Sun People Dry Goods Workshop Room, 32 W 2nd Ave, Suite 200. Cost: \$15. For more information call 368-9378 or email [beth@sunpeopledrygoods.com](mailto:beth@sunpeopledrygoods.com).

**1/8 Free Ski/Snowshoe Idaho Day** An REI family adventure outing in Priest Lake State Park from 10am-2pm. There will be a guided snowshoe hike and free cross country ski lessons. For more information please contact the park at 208-443-2200.

**1-11 Vigil For Victims of Human Trafficking** At the Women's Hearth 6-6:30pm. 920 W 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.

**1/13 Snowshoeing Basics** Join REI staff for a Free class on the basics of snowshoeing from 7-8:30pm. At the REI store on 1125 N Monroe, call 328-9900.

**1/19-2/23 SNAP's Business Plan Workshop** A 6-week workshop on Wednesdays from 6-8pm. Learn if you're ready to start a small business and how to write a business plan. East Central Community Center, 500 S. Stone. Register at 456-7174, ext 110.

**1/29 "From Where the Sun Rises"** Opening day of historic material from children of the Plateau Tribes at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W 1st. Call 456-3931 for more information.

**2/4 Winter Garden Planning Part 1: Garden Site Design.** Join Pat Munts to learn the basics of garden design at 6:30-8:30pm. Must pre-register, \$18. At Sun People Dry Goods, 32 W 2nd Ave.

**2/11 Winter Garden Planning Part 2: Seed Starting for the Garden** Join Pat Munts to learn best practices including lighting, temperature and humidity, soil,

and containers at 6:30-8:30pm. Must pre-register, \$18. At Sun People Dry Goods, 32 W 2nd Ave.

**2/6 "Souper" Bowl** for the Women's and Children's Free Restaurant at Mt Spokane State Park, Selkirk Lodge, from 10am-1pm. This is for women of all ages and abilities to participate in outdoor winter recreation—snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Visit [souperbowlspo-kane.org](http://souperbowlspo-kane.org) to register or call (509) 869-4136.

**2/19 P.E.A.C.H. Season Opener** A full day of workshops, a Seed Swap and an evening fundraiser including live music at the Fresh Abundance store at 2015 N Division. Call 435-5210 for more information.

**2/25 Black History 101** A traveling museum featuring the legacy of Malcolm X, and a lecture on his influence on hip hop and more. At 7pm at the Crosby Center, Gonzaga University, 502 E. Boone Ave.

## Fleas, cont'd from p. 1

mattresses, and cushions.

Even cats and dogs can be dusted with DE. Sprinkling on their fur and giving a quick rub will push the dust close to their skin where potential pests are bedding down.

By the end of the third week, we only saw three fleas in five days. Then there were zero fleas another week after that. In the end

applying DE to the pets and frequently cleaning floors was the most effective strategy. What it all came down to was a waiting game of catching up on their life cycle. In theory there can be more eggs which can hatch in the future. So, from here on out, our household is still on the look out to fight invaders but it seems that we may finally have come to the end of the journey.

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**VOLUNTEER!** Bring the message of sustainable living to people throughout the community as a Community Educator. If this sparks your interest, call 744-3370 Ext. 242.



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