

## GO GREEN

By BECKY BARTELLS

**C**atchy title, huh? I know... not so much, but it is what comes to mind and it is exactly what I am trying to say. Here's how my neuroses began ...

A number of months ago, in a bookstore in New York City, I happened to put my (admittedly often impulse buying) hands on a little green book, appropriately titled "The Green Book". I bought it, thinking that it would be interesting, but mainly because it was cute. I suspect that some of the people with whom I am closest wish I hadn't.

It is true that as a result I do have a large Tupperware container of worms currently (and hopefully just for the winter) residing under my kitchen table. Long story ... the upside being that since then I haven't had to throw any vegetable waste in the trash and subsequently the landfill. This is especially good for me because

it seems that I have a produce buying compulsion and feel guilt every week when I throw away all of the produce that I was sure I would eat —



**Authors Elizabeth Rogers and Thomas Kostigen provide hundreds of solutions for all areas of your life, pinpointing the smallest changes that have the biggest impact on the health of our precious planet. Learn more at [www.readthegreenbook.com](http://www.readthegreenbook.com).**

just before heading to the Farmer's market to replenish with some more (at least its giving to the local economy). See information at the end of this article.



### PLASTIC RECYCLING FACTS:

- In 2006, Americans drank about 167 bottles of water each, but only recycled an average of 23 percent. That leaves 38 billion water bottles in landfills.
- Bottled water costs between \$1 and \$4 per gallon and 90 percent of the cost is in the bottle, lid and label.
- According to the Beverage Marketing Corp, the average American consumed 1.6 gallons of bottled water in 1996. In 2006 that number jumped to 28.3 gallons.
- Eight out of 10 plastic water bottles become landfill waste.
- In 2007 we spent \$16 billion on bottled water. That's more than we spent on iPods or movie tickets.
- Plastic bottles take 700 years before they begin to decompose in a landfill.

It is almost impossible to go a day without hearing or seeing something relating to the environment, how it is *breaking or broken* and how we need to *fix* it, seeing as we are responsible for the damage (not how its worded typically, but that's what my ears are hearing). I'm going to give people the benefit of the doubt and assume that it isn't sheer laziness that keeps so many of us from not trying to do our part. Rather, I will assume it is largely because we don't think that our little part can make a difference. But what if everyone did a little part? How very idealistic and naïve of me to even think it... but its NOT THAT HARD and that is what "The Green Book" is about. The book shares hundreds of simple ways to contribute (and some may find themselves questioning the often unbelievable stats). My feeling is that whether the stats are proven or not, these are things that we should be doing. One of my favorites ...

*Use and refill a single water bottle, thermos or canteen when you travel ... it takes 1.5 billion barrels of oil annually to satisfy America's demand for bottled water. If this oil were converted to gasoline, the total cost could fuel five hundred thousand station wagons to take their families on coast to coast trips.*

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## Green ideas for your landscape

Reduce the size of your lawn

By JESSE BERGEY

Who doesn't love a beautiful, lush, green lawn? Unfortunately, turf grass is just not very sustainable or environmentally friendly. It requires large amounts of fertilizer, pesticides, fuel, water, and expense to keep it looking nice. I hope to provide you with some ideas for lawn alternatives.

**GROUNDCOVER:** Consider replacing some of your lawn areas with groundcover, especially any sloped or slightly unusable area. These plants are usually low growing, and don't require trimming. You will still have some weeding and mulching for the first few years, but not much more once the plants are established. Groundcovers come in many shapes and sizes; be sure to consider plant height, rate of spread, light and moisture requirements, hardiness, and whether it is deciduous or evergreen. Some of my favorite groundcovers are Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), Plumbago (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*), and Lilyturf (*Liriope muscari*). For more information: [www.riverbendnursery.com](http://www.riverbendnursery.com)

**ORNAMENTAL GRASSES:** Ornamental grasses have been gaining popularity in recent years. These grasses add a unique texture to your landscape, and contrast well with almost any other plant. They are also drought tolerant, low maintenance, and don't require fertilizers or pesticides to thrive. Beautiful plumes, variegated foliage, and great fall color are only a few characteristics that these grasses possess. Dwarf Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*), Feather Reed Grass (*Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Karl Foerster'*) and Pink Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaries*) are just a few of the grasses you should consider planting. For more information: [www.saundersbrothers.com](http://www.saundersbrothers.com)

**TREES, SHRUBS & PERENNIALS:** Consider an overall landscape design with this option, so the plant selections combine well and compliment each other. Use a variety of plants, which will provide year-round interest. Plants that don't require much pruning, fertilizer or water are also good ideas. This option may require more planning and expense but will be the most attractive long term. Try using native plants like River Birch (*Betula nigra*), Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*), Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*), and Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia spp.*). They are interesting in all seasons and appealing to the surrounding wildlife. For more information: [www.saundersbrothers.com](http://www.saundersbrothers.com)

These options will not only add aesthetic beauty to our landscapes, but will have less of an impact on the environment, and that is what really matters.

## Continuous improvement

First, I want to say thank you to all of the people who have supported Fine Earth, LLC, over the last 13 years. We are so grateful for the many relationships that we have formed. 2007 was our best year ever with many exciting and challenging projects. We continued to focus on our core business — residential design/build, commercial landscape/hardscape and landscape and lawn maintenance. Continuous improvement is our primary focus. The Fine Earth, LLC team spent over 20 days in training on ways to improve our systems, procedures, safety and quality. I feel very fortunate to have such a hard working, dedicated staff surrounding me. Kathy Sizemore, our accountant, is celebrating 10 years of service with us. We've had some significant promotions this year, Stacy Farley being promoted to Vice-President of Operations, Matt Jones and Jeremiah Maclam promoted to Senior Project Managers, and Cody Cornett promoted to Project Manager of our maintenance accounts.

One of the most exciting and challenging jobs completed last year was a \$480,000 streetscape improvement project in Broadway, Va. This first phase included crosswalks, brick pavers and landscaping. The project included both aesthetic and "traffic-calming" changes on a three block stretch from Turner Avenue to Lee Street. Fine Earth, LLC has also been selected to install the first phase of landscaping and hardscaping work at the Preston Lake Master Planned Community. Thus far, the Village Green and Lake area proposals have been awarded. The Village Green is a park consisting of open lawn areas, a children's play area, and a com-

munity picnic shelter. We will also be installing paver walkways and extensive plantings, creating an intimate park setting surrounded by upscale townhouses. Upon entering the Preston Lake site, the first view is the Lake Area. This will consist of a large lake surrounded by a landscaped walking trail and the future Clubhouse. We will be installing many trees, shrubs and perennials to this area as well.



The modern trend of outside living is evident with this recent project. Fine Earth designed, installed and now maintains this outdoor space.

We are very excited to partner with the Shenandoah Builder's Association with a gift of \$10,000 to celebrate Arbor Day. Together we will select two sites this year for the installation of 16 large trees in both a city and county location. Site locations will be at a school, park or other community areas. We hope that a successful launch this year will result in up to 10 permanent groves being planted during Arbor Day week over the next five years.

Finally, come visit us at this year's SVBA Home & Garden show April 4–6. Jon Carloftis, the featured speaker for the show will be in our booth on Saturday, between his 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. Fine Earth, LLC sponsored presentations.

Jon is best known for his rooftop landscape designs and is the current garden expert for HGTV's advisory panel. He was featured in the March issue of *Garden Design* magazine, the authority on contemporary landscape design. He consistently appears in almost every gardening related magazine and has been on Martha Stewart Living (twice). Please come see us and meet Jon.

With warm weather around the corner, we look forward to hearing from you. *Happy Gardening!*

— CHAD LAYMAN

► **GO GREEN, FROM PAGE 1**

Far fetched? Maybe, but after considering this statistic I have stopped buying bottled water completely. It is unnecessary and now I am going to sound like my parents, but...bottled water didn't even exist (except for Evian that only the rich and famous could afford) when I was growing up and yet, somehow, no one died from dehydration. "Back then" there was tap water. My point is, buy some Nalgene water bottles (or buy some Fine Earth landscaping and we'll give you a logo'd one for "free"— it will, of course, be figured into your price — *somewhere*) and refill, refill, refill.

It is so much cheaper and we really are fortunate to have great local public water coming right out of our faucets (for now). If your pipes are 100 years old, like mine, buy a water filter for your faucet. And I have to at least men-

tion recent reports about the lower grade plastic water bottles breaking down and emitting carcinogens ...

My second favorite suggestion...

*Use fewer plastic bags... By reducing plastic bag consumption by just 2 bags per week, you'll throw away at least one hundred fewer bags per year. If tied together handle to handle, these plastic bags would make a rope long enough to wrap around the earth more than 126 times.*

Until I stopped taking plastic bags from retailers I had never noticed how many times they are given for no reason. Is it that much harder to carry a gallon of milk by its handle than by the handle of the bag it's put into? There

are many differing responses to my refusal of "the bag". Some (like the nice woman at Barnes and Noble) thank me and it may start a conversation, but most people look at me like I'm asking to eat spaghetti with my hands. I was actually told by a cashier at a local retail store (more impulse buying on my part) that she was *required* to give me a bag. What are we doing?

Being a landscaper and gardener and therefore an obligate "tree hugger" I feel like I have no choice. I set out to get myself and Fine Earth into shape. We represent the "Green Industry" and we are far from exemplifying the current,

**'There are many differing responses to my refusal of "the bag" ... most people look at me like I'm asking to eat spaghetti with my hands.'**

trendy, definition of "Green". I will be the first to admit that both of us (myself and the company) have a very long way to go ... but we're working on it.

We've gotten recycling bins for the standard stuff, we are piling cardboard in the basement until we have enough to collect, and we are finally taking advantage of the city's "business only" office paper recycling program— which also allows us all to bring in our paper from home. Next step, to build and operate some compost bins. For years we have been throwing compostable stuff in the dumpster only to turn around and *buy* compost? To Mike Layman, I say...we finally heard what you've been saying for the past 10 years... To all of our friends and customers who read this, keep us on track, ask how we are coming along with those compost bins, and maybe think about making some changes yourself. 🌱

## LEARN MORE :

- For info on recycling locally: [www.ci.harrisonburg.va.us/index.php?id=431](http://www.ci.harrisonburg.va.us/index.php?id=431) (this site is very, very informative and if you have questions, call (540) 434-5928).
- For information about getting worms to live under your kitchen table (or pantry, garage, etc ...) — a great little home project for kids: [www.planetnatural.com/site/xdpy/kb/composting-with-redworms.html](http://www.planetnatural.com/site/xdpy/kb/composting-with-redworms.html). After considerable research, I found this site to be the most helpful, both for instructions and for buying the worms themselves.
- And finally, I received this in an email from a friend ... a video about where our "stuff" goes: [www.storyofstuff.com/index.html](http://www.storyofstuff.com/index.html).

## Choose native trees and shrubs

By JESSE BERGEY

### WHITE FRINGE TREE (*Chionanthus virginicus*)

This tree is not normally what comes to mind when thinking of 'spring flowering trees', as it does not share the same popularity as Cherries, Redbuds, or Dogwoods. The White Fringe Tree definitely deserves more attention than it gets, due to its many appealing characteristics. The tree is named after its flowers which arrive in May, and have a very airy, delicate and fringe-like appearance. It is native, which makes it very adaptable to our climate and soil. Also, the dark blue berries that form after flowering are a good food source for birds and other wildlife. At maturity it can be anywhere from 12 to 20 feet tall and wide, so it is perfect for areas where space is limited. It prefers full sun or partial shade, and can be used as a specimen or planted in a group. In full bloom the white fringe tree is a truly a sight to see.



### WITCH HAZEL (*Hamamelis spp.*)

I have grown to love all varieties of this shrub over the years, and I know exactly why? It is the perfectly timed blossoms, which can appear in late fall or late winter depending on the species. When all other plants are resting for the winter, Witch Hazel provides us with a subtle and very unique splash of color. This large native shrub actually has some valuable medicinal properties, and has been used throughout the years and even some today to treat a variety of physical afflictions. The flowers are very interesting, and consist of four crinkly, ribbon-like petals. The most common flower color is yellow, but some of the hybrids will bloom in shades of red and orange. Witch Hazel also displays wonderful fall color, ranging from bright yellow to a mix of purple, red and orange. Be sure to provide enough space, these shrubs can be anywhere from 12 to 20 feet high and wide at maturity. Overall a very adaptable and handsome shrub that would really look great planted as a border along a wooded area. Really a great plant to cure the 'winter blues'.



Appearing at the Shenandoah Valley Builders Association Home & Garden Show and hosted by Fine Earth, LLC.

# 'Putting style in your garden'

WITH JON CARLOFTIS



**SATURDAY, APRIL 5; 1:00 P.M. AND 5:00 P.M.  
IN BUILDERS SQUARE AT JMU'S CONVOCATION CENTER**

Award-winning garden designer, author and owner of Rockcastle River Trading Company — Jon Carloftis will join us this year at the 2008 SVBA Home & Garden Show. Jon is a contributing editor of *Garden Design* magazine, and a regional writer for *Country Gardens*. His designs also have been featured in *House Beautiful*, *Country Home*, *Interior*, *The New York Times* and *Country Living Gardener*. He has made television appearances on *The Style Channel*; *The Home and Garden Channel*, in which two of four designs in a show called *The Secret Gardens of New York* were Jon's; and ABC's *Good Morning, America*, where two of his gardens were featured.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.VALLEYBUILDERS.ORG](http://WWW.VALLEYBUILDERS.ORG) OR [WWW.JONCARLOFTIS.COM](http://WWW.JONCARLOFTIS.COM)



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