



VOLUME 13, ISSUE 3

POLLUTION PREVENTION VIEW

SUMMER 2013

NEWSLETTER FROM THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

## Got Leftover Paint?

The problem of how to properly dispose of your old, unwanted household paint just got a lot easier. As of July 1, a new program has begun to collect and recycle unwanted latex and oil-based paint. This program is the result of a law passed in 2011 requiring paint manufacturers to manage unwanted paint.

Connecticut's paint recycling program utilizes a network of retail stores, transfer stations and household hazardous waste collections as drop-off points for residents to take unwanted paint. The organization coordinating this program is called PaintCare. Their website, [www.paintcare.org](http://www.paintcare.org) allows residents to type in their town or zip code to find a nearby drop-off point.



Does this remind you of your garage or basement?

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) estimates there are more than 5 million containers of unwanted paint from homeowners in Connecticut waiting to be disposed of properly. Under this new program, unwanted paint will be collected and the latex will be recycled if it is possible. The oil-based paint will be burned for energy recovery.

The program is financed by a fee at the point of sale. Customers pay 75 cents on a gallon container and \$1.60 on five-gallon containers. This money goes to the paint manufacturers, who use it to pay for collection and processing the unwanted paint. Previously, managing unwanted paint was funded primarily by municipalities through property taxes. Financing the recycling of a product through the purchase price of the product instead of municipal tax dollars is an example of extended producer responsibility (EPR). This approach is already in place for electronics, and legislation passed this year will establish a similar program for mattresses.

For more information, visit DEEP's Paint Recycling webpage — [www.ct.gov/recycle](http://www.ct.gov/recycle).

# Tackling a Spiny Invader

Now that summer is in full bloom you may be noticing that a profusion of plants and vines have taken over your yard or garden, some of which may be invasive.

An invasive plant is a non-native species that is harmful to the environment, the economy, or human health. The Connecticut Invasive Plants Council publishes a list of plants considered to be invasive or potentially invasive in the state.

Let's focus on safely removing one of the trickiest invasive plants in our area — Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), without pesticides. By avoiding the use of pesticides to manage invasive plants on your property, you protect your family's health and prevent potential pollution from lawn and garden herbicides.

Invasive plant species cause an array of problems, including the displacement of native plants and reduction of wildlife habitat.

Japanese barberry may also cause problems with soil quality including a decreased litter layer of soil, altered pH levels, and increased nitrate levels. These soil quality problems can become a threat to drinking water on your property. It can also be a health hazard because it provides a perfect environment for an infected tick population. A CT study found 120 ticks infected with Lyme disease in an acre of land where barberry was not controlled, but significantly fewer ticks when the plant was controlled or not present at all. Controlling barberry thus reduces your family's exposure to tick viruses.

Connecticut Invasive Plant Coordinator Logan Senack says it is most effective to remove Japanese barberry, and other shrubs like it, in early spring when there are fewer seeds, making disposal easier. DEEP forester Dick Raymond's advice to landowners with a small clump of barberry plants is to dig them up by hand or with a hoe or weed wrench, using thick gloves to protect you from the spines. It is important to remove all of the roots because the plant can and will grow back if any roots are left. If you didn't pull or dig it out in the spring, cut it down at the root — then bag it for disposal before the end of summer to avoid spreading the seeds.

Once the barberry plant has been uprooted, it is important to dispose of it properly. You must bag it immediately so its seeds are not dropped elsewhere on your property. If the plant root re-sprouts the following spring, there are a couple of non-chemical control choices available. You can pull the root out and dispose of it or apply directed heat to the new growth with a high BTU propane torch. You may have to repeat this process a number of times over one or more seasons to ensure success. This method requires training and extreme caution. Experts recommend that you attend a propane torch safety workshop (contact **Dr. Jeffrey Ward** at the CT Agricultural Extension Service). You should also notify your local fire or Open Burning Official of your plans.

A good method to keep invasive species from re-entering the area once removed is to plant native species in their place, such as northern bayberry (*Morella pensylvanica*), ink-berry (*Ilex glabra*), winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*), and mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*). For advice on the control and disposal of invasive species, check out **Guidelines for Disposal of Terrestrial Invasive Plants**.



Japanese Barberry Photo by Mark Brand, UConn

The CT Forest and Parks Association has a handy **set of flashcards** about invasive plants species.

# Raising Green Families: Diaper Choices

*(This is the second of a three-part series. The author is the mother of a toddler and works at DEEP.)*

One of the first major green parenting decisions that my husband and I made concerned our diaper option; reusable cloth or disposable? It was astounding to learn that our daughter could go through 5,000 to 6,000 diapers in the two to three years she would need them. After some research and talking to friends and family, we decided that cloth diapers would be best for us. We use disposable diapers when we're away from home and at daycare.



We have been pleasantly surprised how easy and effective (no diaper blow-outs) cloth diapering has been. This is the age of indoor plumbing and high efficiency washing machines, after all, and we have a washer, dryer and clothesline at our home. We chose pre-fold diapers and separate covers and non-pin closures for their ease of washing, versatility and low cost. It took a little while to work out the best washing formula, but I learned a little soap goes a very long way in a high-efficiency machine with hard well water, and that my covers were best washed separately in the sink with soap and baking soda. I also learned that a white vinegar rinse added to the fabric softener well of the washing machine will neutralize soap or hard water residue that could impede absorption. Vinegar acts as a natural fabric softener, especially for diapers that are dried on the clothesline.

Whichever diaper option you choose, there are ways to make either choice more environmentally friendly.

## For Disposable Diapers:

- Purchase from a company with a commitment to the environment. Look for companies that use renewable or environmentally sustainable materials, such as organic cotton, and minimize packaging.
- Choose products that are chlorine-free and are made from plant-based absorption materials instead of petroleum-based.
- Be wary of claims that the product is compostable and know that currently they cannot be processed that way in Connecticut.

## For Cloth Diapers:

- Purchase pre-owned diapers at diaper swaps (e.g., <http://beantreebaby.com/events>) or online (e.g., [www.diaperswappers.com](http://www.diaperswappers.com)). If you must buy new, choose locally-produced, unbleached, organic cotton, pre-fold diapers. You can also resell your diapers when you are done with them.
- Wash your own diapers instead of sending them to a diaper service to avoid greenhouse gas emissions associated with transportation. As with the rest of your laundry, use the most energy- and water-efficient cycle on your machine that also works well with your diaper-cleaning regime, and dry diapers on a clothesline instead of the dryer whenever possible to further cut down on energy use.
- Use washable cloth wipes, made from old burp cloths, receiving blankets or wash cloths. For the wipe solution you can use just water or make your own (e.g., [www.zany-zebra.com/cloth-wipe-solution.shtml](http://www.zany-zebra.com/cloth-wipe-solution.shtml)).

For those of you who want to take this one step further, you can consider **Elimination Communication**, a cooperative process which helps your baby use the toilet, further reducing diaper use. Good luck!

# Ask Eartha

*This summer I am planning both a large family picnic and a milestone birthday party for my close friend. Do you have any tips for helping me tread lightly on the environment while hosting these celebrations?*  
Dave K., Waterbury

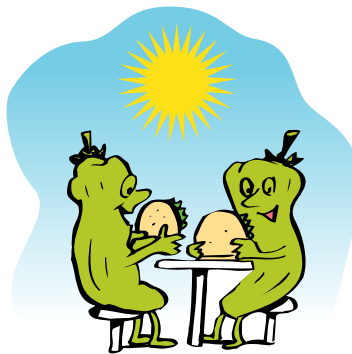


This time of year is popular for parties and celebrations of all types. The nice weather allows us to hold events outdoors and that in itself is eco-friendly — utilizing nature for the ambiance, and eliminating the need for lighting and air-conditioning which reduces energy use.

Food is usually the mainstay of a party and there are lots of ways to be eco-friendly. During the summer, locally grown foods are abundant in Connecticut. Visit your local farmers' market (Check the **Connecticut Grown website**) where you can often find many different fresh fruits and vegetables, cheeses, breads, chips, dips, beers and wines. Many chain supermarkets also feature local produce and products. Try to serve drinks from pitchers rather than individual size bottles and use bulk dispensers for ketchup, mustard, sugar, cream, salt, pepper, etc., rather than individual packets.

When it comes to party supplies like plates, cups, napkins and cutlery, reusable ones are ideal, but let's face it — disposables are most convenient

for large gatherings. Look for items that are made with recycled content and avoid polystyrene foam (aka Styrofoam) products. For light snacks, try to serve "finger food" or food that can be served with just a napkin. Use cloth tablecloths which can be rented along with tables and other equipment so you don't have to buy a lot of items unnecessarily. This also



helps reduce the amount of trash your event generates. Don't forget to set up separate containers for trash and recyclables; keep them next to each other and have them clearly marked so guests will know where to put their items.

Helium balloons are often used

at events to commemorate an achievement or memorialize an individual, but balloons can have serious environmental impacts when released into the air. They can end up in waterways and Long Island Sound where marine animals such as turtles mistake the balloons for food. The balloons can get lodged in their digestive tract or choke the animal, leading to death. Balloon ribbons can also strangle birds.

**BalloonsBlow.org** has a list of earth-friendly alternatives including flowers, plants, flags and banners.

It's not a party if no one shows up! Make it convenient for your guests to RSVP by sending electronic invitations, such as e-vites — no paper, no fuel or emissions from delivery, and free! If you choose an option that allows invitees to see who else is coming, they can use the information to facilitate carpooling to the event.

So go enjoy your summer events knowing that you are being kinder to the environment. I'm sure your family and friends will appreciate your efforts as well.

Eartha answers selected environmental questions. Email your question to [judith.prill@ct.gov](mailto:judith.prill@ct.gov) and watch future issues for your answer.

Find out the air quality before going outside to do your summertime chores — [www.ct.gov/deep/air](http://www.ct.gov/deep/air)



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P2 View is published by the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, Office of Pollution Prevention. Editor: Judy Prill. Contributors: Roslyn Reeps, Tom Metzner, Allie Valenti, Connie Mendolia, Mary Sherwin and Kim Trella.

Publication of this newsletter is funded by a grant from the U.S. EPA. The listing of websites in this publication is provided as a public service and does not constitute an endorsement by DEEP.

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