

GREEN MANTLE™ INITIATIVE

# Get Some Green Back

*12 Steps to greener living and saving money*



RACHEL  
CARSON  
COUNCIL 

**GREEN  
MANTLE™**  
INITIATIVE 



The “Green Mantle™ Initiative: Get Some Green Back” gives 12 ways to help protect yourself, your family, your pets, your fellow citizens, and the wildlife work force that supplies useful ecosystem services—while also indicating how doing so can save you money. The “Initiative” includes ways to lower your energy use while reducing greenhouse gas production; it recommends using fewer chemical pesticides to reduce risk to the environment and to human health.

The following instances from recent scientific literature reinforce the effectiveness of related recommendations in the “Initiative:”

- An example of support of the “Initiative’s” energy sections (# 3 “Energy” and # 10 “Transportation”):

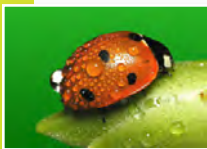
Researchers claim that if you and enough other individuals follow actions discussed in these two sections, there can be a decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This potential for CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions can come from behavioral changes involving “in-home and personal transportation technologies without waiting for new technologies or regulations or changing household lifestyles,” (Dietz, T., et al., “Household actions can provide a behavioral wedge to rapidly reduce US carbon emissions,” on-line *PNAS*, 2009).

Examples in support of turf management practices recommended in the “Initiative’s” Pest Control Outdoors section (#4):

- Researchers found that lawns managed under a consumer lawn care program (that is, one using a consumer lawn care product and following label instructions) showed very little difference in total weed cover compared to untreated lawns. This finding suggests that an untreated lawn is comparable in certain respects to the lawn that a resident would treat with a widely-marketed consumer product. (Alumai, A., et al, “Comparable evaluation of an aesthetic, biological, and economic effectiveness of different lawn management programs,” *Urban Ecosyst*, (2009) 12:127-144.)
- Researchers comparing different turf treatments by professional companies found that the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) method used less chemical pesticides and had only slightly reduced lawn quality than that of commercial treatments using a conventional chemical regimen. However, and this is important, the cost of the IPM method was significantly lower (by approximately 40%). “Therefore, both the cost and environmental and health risks associated with lawn management programs can be significantly reduced if [a] slightly lower lawn aesthetic quality can be accepted by homeowners.” (Alumai, A., et al, “Comparable evaluation of an aesthetic, biological, and economic effectiveness of different lawn management programs,” *Urban Ecosyst*, (2009) 12:127-144.)

“WATER, SOIL and the earth’s green mantle of plants make up the world that supports the animal life of the earth. Although modern man seldom remembers the fact, he could not exist without the plants that harness the sun’s energy and manufacture the basic foodstuffs he depends upon for life.”

—Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*



From Rachel Carson’s green mantle of plants comes RCC’s “Green Mantle Initiative” encouraging people to live in earth-friendly ways that can protect our health and sustain our planet.

The “Green Mantle Initiative” identifies 12 areas of concentration to help protect yourself, your family, fellow citizens, your pets, as well as the essential services of the earth’s vegetation and its wildlife work force\*.

The “Initiative” encourages you to: reduce your reliance on hazardous chemicals, lower your energy use and save money, by adopting the green practices presented here.

For each of its 12 areas the “Initiative” details 3 levels of action representing an increasingly progressive commitment to greenness, Basic, Plus and Super. The Plus and Super levels include all actions described in the lower levels.

Adopting these green actions will benefit you personally. If enough other people take the “Initiative’s” green steps (especially with respect to energy), we can hope to reach, in Rachel Carson’s words, “a destination that assures the preservation of our earth”. (*Silent Spring*, 1962).

To assist you there are resources listed on the back cover.

\*Rachel Carson recognized the importance of plants and other life forms in creating the healthy conditions essential for the sustainability of our society and our planet. This vital force (composed of insects, bacteria, fungi, amphibians, fish, birds, bats and so many more) can function most effectively when living free of hazardous chemical contaminants.



## Healthy Food Choices

**BASIC** Buy organic produce, grains and dairy products, and shade-grown coffees and teas. Buy only what you will eat.

**PLUS** Offer organic food and products to guests in your home, and at business meetings and community events.

**SUPER** Support and purchase organic items at a farmer’s market in your community. Join a community supported agriculture (CSA) group. Grow an organic vegetable garden. Make Mondays meatless.



## Recycling & Trash Reduction

**BASIC** Arrange to recycle paper, plastic, metal, etc. at your own home. Buy food and household products in bulk rather than individually packaged. Bring reusable bags to the store. Buy less. Dispose of electronics properly.

**PLUS** Use recycled paper and plastic products. Purchase used clothing, furniture, appliances, toys and sporting goods (make sure they are pest free); find new uses for older items instead of throwing them out; donate items you would otherwise throw in the trash. Sign up for a local group at [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org).

**SUPER** Hold a clothing swap, household goods exchange, or yard sale in your neighborhood or workplace; donate anything left over to charity.





## Energy Conservation



**BASIC** Caulk all windows using low VOC caulking materials, use weather strips on doors, and use programmable thermostats. Turn up the thermostat in warmer months and down in cooler months. Insulate the hot water heater and pipes. Switch to energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs. (Note: these must be disposed of as hazardous waste.) Make sure lights are off, if not in use. Unplug electronics and appliances when not in use. Use fans.

**PLUS** Install thermal window panes and storm doors. Replace inefficient heaters, air conditioners and refrigerators with energy-efficient models (such as Energy Star appliances.) Dry clothes on a clothesline.

**SUPER** Add solar panels and other alternative energy methods such as geothermal and wind power to heat and cool your home. Limit temperature control to fewer rooms with window units or space heaters.



## Pest Control Indoors & Out



**BASIC** *Indoors:* Use traps and non-volatile chemicals to decrease evaporation and inhalation (an example is boric acid.) Only use volatile chemicals as a last resort. *Outdoors:* Use low-risk, non-chemical methods such as milky spore for managing insect pests; only use chemical pesticides as a last resort.

**PLUS** *Indoors:* Implement low-risk methods of pest management such as caulking cracks to stop entry of pests. *Outdoors:* Select plants for their natural resistance to pests and diseases and their ability to attract beneficial insects.

**SUPER** *Indoors:* As much as possible, establish chemical-free areas and pest-free areas, using preventive methods. If absolutely necessary, use bait stations for management of pests such as termites, cockroaches, etc. Do not apply any insecticides designated for outdoor use. *Outdoors:* Establish and proclaim your lawn as chemical pesticide-free with a sign.





## Landscape Maintenance & Wildlife Support



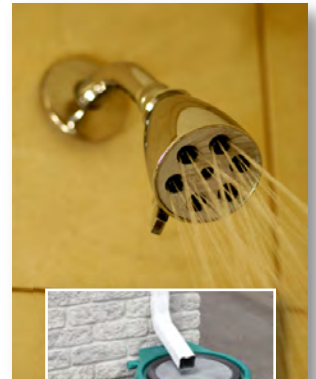
- BASIC** Keep grass height high enough for grass to thrive instead of weeds, this is done by adjusting the lawn mower blades to 2 ½ to 3 inches. Whenever possible, use manual tools. Provide water sources and appropriate feeders and shelters for birds. Leave grass clippings on your lawn.
- PLUS** Use corn gluten herbicide to control broad-leaf weeds. Don't use chemical herbicides on grass. Plant beneficial species that provide food and shelter to a variety of wildlife. Do not plant invasive species of plants.
- SUPER** Test soil to determine if you need to add amendments (i.e. composted manure or limestone, etc.). If you do then use organic fertilizers and compost. Set up your own compost bin and use the compost you produce to enrich your soil. Be sure the plant materials added to your compost are herbicide free. Leave part of your own property wild; advocate wildlife corridors and habitat preservation in your area.



## Water Conservation



- BASIC** Keep water use to a minimum. Don't leave the water running while brushing your teeth or doing the dishes. Take short showers instead of baths. Run the dishwasher and washing machine only when full. Add non-animal composted organic matter to the soil, and mulch to encourage soil to absorb and conserve moisture. Water outdoor plants early in the day when there is less evaporation.



- PLUS** Replace conventional toilets with low-flow models. Replace showerheads with water-saving models. Install low-flow aerators to your faucets. Replace dish and clothes washers with energy-efficient models. Where irrigation is needed install drip irrigation; install rain barrels (or better yet cisterns) to collect water for use on plants in dry spells and to wash cars.



- SUPER** Set up a gray-water reclamation system using bath or dish water to irrigate your lawn and garden. Consider switching to composting toilets. Plant vegetation that the natural level of rainfall can support without the need for additional irrigation.



## Healthy Home Practices

**BASIC** Avoid using plastic products in the microwave unless absolutely necessary. Use pump sprays instead of aerosol cans. Use washable rags and sponges in place of paper towels.

**PLUS** Use environmentally-friendly dish washing, surface, and oven cleaning products, and hygiene products (toothpaste, soaps, shampoos, etc.) Consider purchasing an energy-efficient refrigerator (Energy Star.) Use non-toxic, environmentally friendly cleaning and laundry products that are low in VOCs - volatile organic compounds. Laundry products should not contain phosphorus.



Gradually replace linens with organic cotton fabrics and other organically-grown fibers.



**SUPER** If you use disposable containers, be sure they are of made of recycled or post-consumer materials and can be recycled or used again. Use non-toxic, environmentally friendly products for polishing floors, furniture, and cabinets. Replace carpeting with untreated fiber floor covering or recycled, renewable floor materials. Consider using an organic maid service.

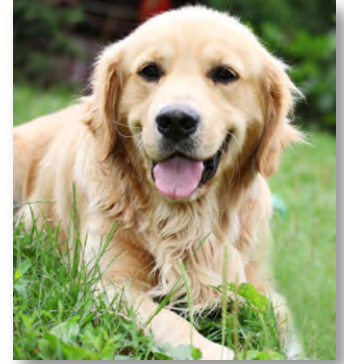


## Pet Safety

**BASIC** Use only veterinarian prescribed insecticides on or around your pets.

**PLUS** Avoid chemical pesticides and fertilizers in outdoor areas frequented by your pets.

**SUPER** Avoid carpets and furniture that contain polybrominated diphenyl ethers that can be hazardous to cats.



## Home Construction and Maintenance

**BASIC** Incorporate recycled products, energy-efficient or eco-friendly materials when you do any remodeling. Increase the amount of insulation.

**PLUS** Commit to using only recycled, energy-efficient or biodegradable materials in any new construction. Work with an architect certified in LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.) Use light colored roofs in warmer areas and darker roofs in cooler climates.

**SUPER** Make your home a completely green building; for a great example see the Lewis Center for Environmental Studies at Oberlin College (link given in Introduction.) Install a green roof.





## 10 Transportation

**BASIC** Use public and alternative transportation such as subway, bus, riding your bicycle, or participating in a carpool. Combine errands for fewer trips, and shop close to home or work. Walk when possible.



**PLUS** Purchase energy-efficient vehicles for yourself and your family. Help create and maintain bicycle lanes.

**SUPER** Encourage alternative transportation and the purchase of energy-efficient vehicles for your company and town.



## 11 Environmental Education & Leadership

**BASIC** Keep informed of current information by signing up for mailings from Rachel Carson Council, and scanning the news and other media for environmental items. Encourage friends, family members, and co-workers to join a local environmental group. Register and vote for candidates that support policies that encourage responsible stewardship of the planet.



**PLUS** Provide your local library, children's or civic group with environmentally-focused reading materials. See the Rachel Carson Council suggested reading list. Create and lead an environmental activism committee at your work. Oppose random un-ecological development (sprawl); write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.

**SUPER** Hold environmental awareness video nights (rent videos from RCC), and offer organic snacks and use recycled and recyclable serving products. Take an active role in supporting organizations which promote environmentally-friendly practices and education, such as Rachel Carson Council, Inc. Encourage local institutions to preserve green spaces and wilderness. Join a local conservation organization and promote conservation easements.



## 12 Celebration of the Anniversary of Rachel Carson's Birth

**BASIC** Take time to enjoy nature and share it with those you love. Take a nature walk with family or friends, focusing especially on engaging children in the wonders of nature.



**PLUS** Volunteer to read nature stories aloud to children at a library, school, or after-school program.

**SUPER** Work to have your town, county, or state proclaim Rachel Carson's birthday, May 27, as a pesticide-free day. Contact Rachel Carson Council for details!



Rachel Carson at Hawk Mountain

# Green Resources

“EcoHeal IPM for Outdoors: a Homeowner’s Guide”, by Rachel Carson Council, Inc.

List of native plant societies, state by state:

[www.newfs.org/publications-and-media/resources/nps.html](http://www.newfs.org/publications-and-media/resources/nps.html)

Gardens Alive!: [www.gardensalive.com](http://www.gardensalive.com)

U.S. EPA Personal Emissions Calculator:

[www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind\\_calculator.html](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html)

Lewis Center for Environmental Studies, Oberlin College:

[www.oberlin.edu/ajlc/ajlcHome.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/ajlc/ajlcHome.html)

U.S. Green Building Council: [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

U.S. DOE Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy (EERE):

[www.eere.energy.gov](http://www.eere.energy.gov)

Freecycle organization: [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)

For additional information about the Rachel Carson Council’s Green Mantle™ Program, (including publications, educational materials, and workshops), call **(301) 214-2400**, email [office@rachelcarsoncouncil.org](mailto:office@rachelcarsoncouncil.org) or visit us on the web at [www.rachelcarsoncouncil.org](http://www.rachelcarsoncouncil.org)



8600 Irvington Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20817  
Phone: 301-214-2400

E-mail: [office@rachelcarsoncouncil.org](mailto:office@rachelcarsoncouncil.org)  
[www.rachelcarsoncouncil.org](http://www.rachelcarsoncouncil.org)

© Rachel Carson Council, Inc., 2015

**Credits:**

Prepared by the RCC staff  
Design & Layout: Ross Feldner  
All photos of Rachel Carson are from the RCC Collection