

# ENVIROTalk

Spring 2009

## Reduce yard waste – grasscycle

Grasscycling is a simple, natural approach to lawn care that leaves grass clippings on the lawn after mowing to decompose quickly and reducing the need for water and fertilizer use.

- ✂ Mulch mowers (electric and gas) chop grass clippings into tiny bits and blow them down into the lawn, leaving no visible clippings.
- ✂ Push-reel or regular mowers leave clippings on the surface to break down quickly.

Find discounted mulch mowers, push-reel mowers and other natural yard care products during Northwest Natural Yard Days, April 15 to May 15, at home improvement stores and local retailers.

**FREE!**

Gas mower recycling event  
May 2-3

City of Tacoma Recycling Center  
(Tacoma Landfill)  
3510 S. Mullen St.  
[www.cityoftacoma.org/  
naturalyards](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/naturalyards)



## PUT *some* cents back in **YOUR BUDGET:** CONSIDER A KITCHEN GARDEN

### Kitchen garden

*n. A garden in which vegetables, fruits and herbs are grown for household consumption.*

A kitchen garden can be as simple or as complex as you desire – from an herb box in the window to a picturesque yard full of edible landscaping. An edible garden is not only practical, it also makes a colorful conversation piece.

Not sure where to start? Consult the experts. Ask your local nursery or bookseller for suggestions.

And with the magic of a little TAGRO Mix or Potting Soil, you can turn your backyard, community garden plot or a container on your porch into a food-producing machine.

TAGRO products are available year-round for pickup or delivery.

To place an order or for more information:  
(253) 502-2150

[www.tagro.com](http://www.tagro.com)

### Just need a little?

⚙ **TAGRO Potting Soil is available by the bag** at Portland Avenue Nursery, GardenSphere and Gray Lumber.

⚙ **Free TAGRO Mix (you shovel).** Bring a shovel and bucket to 2201 Portland Ave., Gate 5, and ask about free Mix.



# Donate Books FOR Tacoma's YOUTH

More than 60 percent of low-income families have no children's books in the home. Your book donations to the new collection bin at the City of Tacoma Recycling Center will go to those Tacoma kids who need them most.

Donate new or used (in good condition) books at the Recycling Center (Tacoma Landfill), open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Communities in Schools of Tacoma will identify the schools in need.

Donation bins are provided by Reading Tree, a nonprofit organization with a mission to provide children from low-income families the opportunity to read and own books. Find other local Reading Tree collection bins at [www.readingtree.org](http://www.readingtree.org).



Unless your pet  
can flush...

## REMEMBER to SCOOP the POOP

Bacteria from dog poop and other pet waste can pollute water, suffocate fish and make people sick. So, please, do your part in keeping the streets and waterways clean.

Always remember to:

- ▶ Scoop the poop
- ▶ Put it in a plastic bag
- ▶ Place it in the garbage\*

Thank  
you!

\* You can also flush un-bagged pet waste down the toilet.

## EcoFind

### Plastic bag drying rack

Using plastic bags is not ideal, but sometimes it can't be avoided. To reduce the amount of waste that goes to the landfill, consider this EcoFind: a plastic bag drying rack. These simple, tree-like stands hold plastic bags upside down to dry after being washed with soap and warm water. Most bag dryers will hold resealable plastic bags, small sandwich bags or produce bags so you can use them again and again.

Plastic bag drying racks can be found online or in stores that carry environmentally friendly products.

Get cash to  
**'MAKE A SPLASH'**

City of Tacoma Environmental Services awards up to \$50,000 a year in environmental grants to help educate residents and protect and restore our surface water resources. Grants are open to anyone considering projects that focus on preventing pollution and protecting or restoring clean water within Tacoma city limits.



A City of Tacoma Environmental Grant Program

Previous Make a Splash grant-funded projects include a marine science summer camp partnership,

stream studies, educational puppet shows and native planting events completed by schools, community groups, businesses and nonprofit groups.

Applications are available April 13. The application deadline is May 15.

For more information: [www.cityoftacoma.org/makeasplash](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/makeasplash) (253) 591-5588.

Protect your home from sewage backups

Backwater valves allow only one-way flow from your household plumbing to the City's sewer system. If there is a blockage or excess flow in the City's sewer main, a properly operating backwater valve can close and prevent the sewage from backing up into your home through your household fixtures. Backwater valve protection is necessary when a building drain is lower than the nearest upstream sewer manhole.

If you have a backwater valve, remember to inspect its function at least every six months and clean it if necessary.

For more information: (253) 502-2264  
[mrose@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:mrose@cityoftacoma.org)

**GREENER CLEANER**

**Stop slugs in their tracks**

Protect your plants this season from menacing slugs by luring them into a place where you can easily find them and transport them to another location or kill them. Simply set out small clay flowerpots turned upside down and propped up on one side with a flat rock. The dark, moist underside of the flowerpot will attract the slugs and you will know right where to look for them. These traps are attractive enough to use in flowerbeds, gardens or container plantings.

For more natural ideas like this one, visit [www.cityoftacoma.org/greenercleaners](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/greenercleaners).



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Did you know the numbers on plastic items don't indicate if they are recyclable?

To figure out if a plastic item is recyclable, focus on the shape — bags, bottles, jugs, jars, tubs — of the item. The plastics industry developed the numbers as an internal system to identify plastic resins with different chemical make-ups and melting temperatures, not necessarily as indicators of recyclability. Find a list of the most common accepted plastic items at [www.cityoftacoma.org/recyclingreview](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/recyclingreview).

**Was that me?**

**Q.** How do I know if that oil spot is from my vehicle?

**A.** Simply place a piece of cardboard under your vehicle, wherever you suspect the leak. After several hours, check the cardboard for spots. If you see signs of leaks, use the cardboard to catch drips until you can get your vehicle repaired. Please remember that oil-stained cardboard must be discarded in the trash.

One leaky car might not seem like a big deal, but it all adds up ...  
[www.cityoftacoma.org/surfacewater](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/surfacewater)



# SPRING CLEANING? *Clean up with these disposal opportunities*

If your spring cleaning ritual has you stumped on how to dispose of all your usable and not-so-usable stuff, here's where to go.

## Reusable household items, furniture, building materials

### ☘ Goodwill and the ReHarvest Center:

Attended donation stations at the City's Recycling Center (Tacoma Landfill, 3510 S. Mullen St.), 8 a.m.-6 p.m. daily.

☘ **2good2toss.com:** Web site offering a way to buy and sell reusable items for free or up to \$99. It's free to post your unwanted items.

## Electronics recycling

☘ Goodwill accepts some electronics that are in good condition for free.

☘ **TVs, computers, monitors:** Recycle for free at participating E-Cycle Washington locations, [www.ecyclewashington.org](http://www.ecyclewashington.org).

1-800-RECYCLE.

☘ **Other electronics:** Recycle at participating Take it Back Network locations, [www.takeitbacknetwork.org](http://www.takeitbacknetwork.org) (may be accepted for a fee).

## Household junk

☘ **Call-2-Haul:** Curbside bulk collection service available to Solid Waste Management residential customers. Available by appointment twice a year, the Call-2-Haul service picks up large, unusable household items that are not part of the weekly garbage collection. (253) 573-2468, [www.cityoftacoma.org/call2haul](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/call2haul)

## Hazardous waste

☘ **Household Hazardous Waste Facility:** Dispose

of household hazardous items for no additional charge at the facility, located at the Tacoma Landfill. (253) 591-5418 [www.cityoftacoma.org/hazwaste](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/hazwaste)



## RESOURCE LIST SPRING 2009

### RESOURCE

### PHONE

### WEB SITE

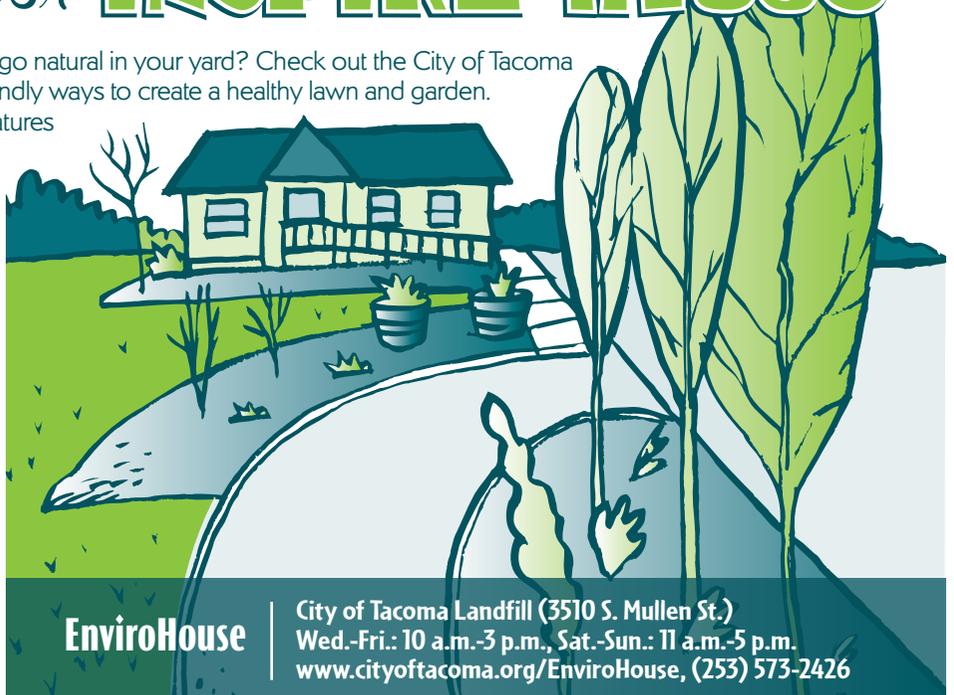
Call-2-Haul .....	573-2468	<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/call2haul">www.cityoftacoma.org/call2haul</a>
EnviroHouse (green building exhibit).....	573-2426	<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/EnviroHouse">www.cityoftacoma.org/EnviroHouse</a>
Garbage.....	591-5543	<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/garbage">www.cityoftacoma.org/garbage</a>
Hazardous waste .....	591-5418	<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/hazwaste">www.cityoftacoma.org/hazwaste</a>
Landfill scalehouse .....	593-7724	
Leaves.....		<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/leaves">www.cityoftacoma.org/leaves</a>
Recycling .....	591-5543	<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/recycle">www.cityoftacoma.org/recycle</a>
Sewer backups .....	591-5585	
Solid Waste Management information line (recorded message only) .....	565-5955	
Solid waste (general questions) .....	591-5543	<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/solidwaste">www.cityoftacoma.org/solidwaste</a>
Street flooding.....	591-5585	<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/flood">www.cityoftacoma.org/flood</a>
Street sweeping.....	591-5588	<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/streetsweeping">www.cityoftacoma.org/streetsweeping</a>
TAGRO .....	502-2150	<a href="http://www.tagro.com">www.tagro.com</a>
Wastewater/Surface water (general questions)..	591-5588	<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/wastewater">www.cityoftacoma.org/wastewater</a> <a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/surfacewater">www.cityoftacoma.org/surfacewater</a>
Wastewater/Surface water (billing questions).....	502-2100	
Water conservation.....	502-8723	
Water pollution hotline.....	383-2429	
Yard waste .....	591-5543	<a href="http://www.cityoftacoma.org/yardwaste">www.cityoftacoma.org/yardwaste</a>

*When calling any of the utilities, please have your account number available. It is the first thing you will be asked and allows us to quickly access your information. Your account number is located at the top of your utility bill.*

# Let the **EnviroHOUSE** be your **INSPIRE HOUSE**

Need some visual inspiration to go natural in your yard? Check out the City of Tacoma EnviroHouse and learn earth-friendly ways to create a healthy lawn and garden. The natural landscape exhibit features new interpretive signage that shows visitors how to:

- ⚙️ Plan a sustainable landscape
- ⚙️ Create a sustainable garden
- ⚙️ Place the right plant in the right place
- ⚙️ Reduce the impact of your lawn
- ⚙️ Protect and restore water resources
- ⚙️ Compost
- ⚙️ Water wisely
- ⚙️ Select sustainable pathway materials
- ⚙️ Build and maintain healthy soil
- ⚙️ Rain garden benefits



## EnviroKIDS ~ NATURAL EGG DYE

Dyeing eggs with fruit- and vegetable-based dyes provide a broad range of colors and are safer for you and the environment than artificial colors. To dye eggs naturally, follow these easy steps with the help of an adult:

1. Prewash eggs with soap and water to remove any dirt or oils.
2. Hard boil the eggs and let cool.
3. To create 1 cup of dye, choose 1 tablespoon of a spice or 1 cup of fruit or vegetables from the list to the right.
4. Combine the spice, fruit or vegetable with 1 cup of water and a 1/2 tablespoon of white vinegar.
5. Bring the pot of ingredients to a boil, then reduce heat and let simmer 15-30 minutes (the longer it simmers the more intense the color will be).
6. Once you have your desired color, remove the pot from the stove and run the liquid through a strainer to remove any large chunks; let cool.
7. Once the liquid has cooled, place a hard-boiled egg in the dye and let it sit for at least 15 minutes – longer if you want a darker color.
8. Remove eggs once they reach the desired color and let dry.

### Items used to create various colors of dye:

- ▶ **Pink/red:** Pomegranate juice, red onion skins, beets, chopped rhubarb stalks, cranberry juice, red grape juice
- ▶ **Orange:** Yellow onion skins, paprika, chili powder
- ▶ **Yellow:** Orange or lemon peels, shredded carrot, celery seed, ground cumin
- ▶ **Green:** Spinach
- ▶ **Blue:** Red cabbage, blueberry juice, blackberries, purple grape juice
- ▶ **Brown:** Dill seeds, black walnut shells, instant coffee, tea



# EnviroTalk

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We want your feedback and story suggestions. E-mail us at [envirotalk@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:envirotalk@cityoftacoma.org).



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City of Tacoma  
Public Works  
Environmental Services  
747 Market Street, Room 408  
Tacoma, Washington 98402-3769

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TACOMA, WA  
PERMIT NO. 2



## Keep the fish happy... Make sure only rain goes down the storm drain

While rain might be clean when it hits your sidewalk, it is exposed to many potential pollutants as it flows – untreated – into our local waterways.

### Please do your part to keep pollution out of our local lakes, streams, rivers and Puget Sound:

- ✗ Pick up after your pet
- ✗ Wash your car on the grass or at a commercial car wash
- ✗ Practice natural yard care
- ✗ Fix vehicle leaks
- ✗ Recycle motor oil and dispose of chemicals properly
- ✗ Dispose of cigarette butts properly
- ✗ Don't dump anything down a storm drain

### Ever wonder why you pay for what happens to an act of Mother Nature?

To put it simply: You're paying for what happens to the rain *after* it hits the ground.

As Tacoma continues to grow, there are fewer places for rain to soak into the ground. Your surface water rates help pay for a stormwater system that gets the rain from your sidewalk to our local waterways. Rates also help pay for pollution prevention, restoration and flood prevention efforts.



For more information:  
(253) 591-5588  
[www.cityoftacoma.org/surfacewater](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/surfacewater)