



Local Earth Advocates & Friends

www.metroeastleaf.org

February 2010

Metro East LEAF is an all-volunteer, civic oriented group. Our mission is to engage our community about environmental issues, to provide a forum for discussion and seeking small-scale local solutions while building coalitions of local groups towards these aims. LEAF is open to all residents of the Metro East area.

Monthly Meeting Dates

February 2, 2010

We are in the process of changing our meeting schedule. Visit www.metroeastleaf.org for updates.

LEAF JUMPS INTO SPRING

We are now planning for Spring! Potential projects include: The Belleville Saint Patrick's Day Parade, Earth Hour Awareness Campaign, and An Earth Week in Belleville. We will be scheduling several planning meetings in the weeks ahead. We will need your time and talents to make things happen! To get involved, contact Amy Funk at amymkfunk@yahoo.com

Participate in Girl Scout's Environmental Day

The River Bluffs Girl Scout Association is having an Environmental Day March 6, 2010 at SWIC from 10-2 p.m. They would like LEAF to take part and present ways to go green. We hope you can participate as this is a great way to share our green message in a positive and fun way! If you have ideas on activities/presentations that would be appropriate for children ages 9-13 years of age, please contact Amy Funk at 215-2011 or amymkfunk@yahoo.com.

Sign-up to Adopt a Topic

We are looking for members to "adopt" a topic---do a little research, put it into action and then briefly share it with the group (or share something you've already done). If you are not comfortable taking on a topic but would like something addressed, email it to us. This is a nice way to learn together! Email Peg at wombatwig@charter.com with your topic idea and preferred date to present to the group.

A Few Topic Ideas

- Inflating car tires for gas efficiency
- Power Smart Pricing with Ameren
- Local sources of seasonal produce
- Low cost draft reducing projects
- Making your frig the most efficient
- House plants and air quality
- Local e-recycling safe disposal locations
- Winterizing windows and doors

Community Happenings

Community Helpings Food Co-op

Bi-Monthly

Co-op offers baskets containing fruits and vegetables on a bi-monthly basis. Additional items can be purchased such as nuts, eggs, free-trade coffee, and other items. You can buy in as often or seldom as you like. Prices may fluctuate with last month's basket costing \$23.00. (additional charge for extras). There are two locations where you can order your baskets: Fairview Heights and Shiloh. For more information:

Shiloh: Katherine Reel at thereelgourmet@gmail.com

Fairview Heights: Dina Volkman at dina@communityhelpingscoop.com

Oil Development & Climate Change in America's Arctic Feb. 8, 2010 at 7:30 pm

First Unitarian Church; 3rd and Alby Streets; Alton, IL

The speaker is Kit McGurn, a National Arctic Organizer for the Sierra Club working to educate and engage citizens across the country in Arctic conservation issues. The Arctic ecosystem represents a microcosm of the realities that society at large faces with regard to fossil fuel dependency, climate change and the importance of protecting our last wild and pristine places.

Illinois Stewardship Alliance Composting Symposium: Backyard, Business, and Beyond

February 8, 2010

Springfield, IL

12:30-6:30pm

See website for details: <http://www.ilstewards.org/calendar/8808>

Gateway Green Industry Conference & Tradeshow Feb. 16-17

Collinsville, IL

Sponsored by U of I Extension

<http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/madisonstclair/downloads/20512.pdf>

Student rates available, must register by February 5, 2010. For more information contact the Extension Office at 618-650-7050.

For more information, visit us at www.metroeastleaf.org



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Soil Preparation for Spring By Peg Rombach-Riggs

In the early spring, until at least mid-March, the ground is still too frozen to dig in readiness for the next growing season. Too much digging at this time can actually damage the soil, because it may be saturated just beneath the surface, and by turning it over, you may compact it and cause aeration and drainage problems. On the whole, it's better to wait until the soil is warmer and dryer to turn or double-dig it. But there are still some ways you can work on getting organic matter into your garden, even in a week of freezing temperatures.

One method is to turn out a shallow trench about 6-8" deep, at one end of your garden bed, as if you are getting ready to plant a row. Don't worry if your soil is spaded up in large, unbroken chunks; simply shift these clumps over a few inches, as if piling them on top of the next row. Then lay down a shallow layer of compost material (food scraps are fine, as long as they are free of meat or fat scraps), and push the clods back on top of the trench. Resist the urge to tamp down the soil; you don't want to compact it. This can be done up until about 3 weeks before you plant on the site. If you are planting close to 3 weeks after trench composting, you may still see some larger scrap chunks in the loose tilth, but the decomposition will be well underway, and your spring plants will benefit from the accessible nutrients and microbial growth you've encouraged.

A second method is called "sheet mulching", or "lasagna mulching", and is just what it sounds like. Layers of compost material, such as cardboard, newspaper, leaves, straw, manure, etc. are layered in sheets directly over the site you will be planting on. This is ideally started in November, for early plantings of bulbs or cool season vegetables in March. But if you won't be planting anything until the last frost, and plan to put in mostly bedding plants and warm-season seeds, you could start still build up a few layers this month. The insulating warmth caused by the extra layers will feed the top surface of your existing soil, and give you a jumpstart for the season. Restrict your layers to dead leaves, manure, straw, and/or fine mulch at this time, and it will be in good shape to turn under in early May.

If you'd like additional advice about composting, you can contact us at our website. But take inspiration from the words of Stu Campbell, author of the composting classic *Let it Rot*: "Successful composting requires the realization that no matter what you do, no matter how many little mistakes you make, you are still probably going to come up with reasonably good, usable compost."

Energy-Efficient Appliance Rebate Programs

The state of Illinois will offer a two-phase instant rebate program this year to help you replace inefficient appliances with Energy-Star qualified models. This program, popularly known as Cash for Appliances, is one of 56 such rebate programs nation wide. Select retailers will offer 10-15 percent off Energy Star qualified models at point of sale, and there will be an additional rebate of \$50-\$100 for recycling the old appliance.

In the first phase, consumers can receive rebates on eligible heating and cooling equipment. This phase was scheduled to start January 2010.

The second phase of the program is projected to begin on Earth Day, April 22, 2010. During this phase, consumers can receive rebates on the following eligible appliances at select retail associations: refrigerators, freezers, clothes washers, dish washers, and room air conditioners.

For details on the program and participating retailers, visit the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity website at www.commerce.state.il.us/dceo/.

Note Worthy Website: Freecycle

www.freecycle.org

This grassroots nonprofit aims to change the world "one gift at a time." Do you have something you plan on giving away? Perhaps you are looking for a certain household item but would like to avoid buying something new? Then this website may be worth the look. Belleville has a local group that allows you to post things you would like to swap or find things you might be in need of. Membership is free. To sign up, find your community by entering it into the search box at www.freecycle.org.

Newsletter Submissions

We welcome newsletter submissions that pertain to environment and health. The next submission deadline is February 25th. Please send your articles/community event announcements to Amy Funk at amymfunk@yahoo.com or call at 215-2011.

In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy. ~William Blake