

2009 RE-fest workshops

“Backyard Composting” - Composting reduces the waste in our landfills and creates new soil with yard waste and food scraps. You may have heard the expression “compost happens”, but if you’ve ever tried backyard composting, you know it’s not quite that easy. Aimee Whiteaker, a manager at Dolan’s Landscape Center, will guide you through the mechanical and biological aspects of creating your own compost.

“Because We Can – S.M.A.R.T. Energy Conservation” - Christian Milaster designed and built a 3,600-square-foot home with an annual (yes annual!) utility bill of about \$100. While you might not be able to achieve this immediately, Christian, an energetic environmentalist and project manager in Mayo Clinic’s Division of Engineering, will share ideas on how you can improve energy and resource efficiency in your home to help you save money without giving up comfort.

“Eat With the Seasons” - Eating local seasonal food is not only a green way to live but will also lower your risk for many chronic diseases by up to 80% . Jen Haugen, HyVee dietician will show you how you can accomplish moving to a healthier lifestyle with a few simple steps. What does a healthy way of eating look like? How can I cook for health without removing the flavor? What does it look like to eat by season? Come to this enlightening session to take charge of your own health and get inspired.

“Emerald Ash Borer: What Does It Mean for Our Forests?” - The Emerald Ash Borer, a beetle the size of a grain of rice, is about to devastate ash trees throughout our state. Minnesota could lose more than 900 million trees over the next century. Rochester City Forester Jacob Ryg, a master arborist, will discuss the impact this tiny invader will have on our cities and forests, and he’ll explain what we can do to prevent a similar fate for other trees.

“Energy-Saving Claims – Fact or Fiction” - Learn to separate the reality from the hype when it comes to products with energy-saving claims. Terry Webster, an information officer in the Minnesota Department of Commerce, will help you identify products that will work, those that are unlikely to work, and those that would “require changes in the laws of physics to work.” Terry will help you reduce energy use through informed investment in energy-saving products.

“Energy-Saving Investments – Rebates, Tax Incentives, Stimulus, and More!” - Energy saving investments can have long-term payoffs, but that initial cost can be shocker. Terry Webster, information officer for the Minnesota Office of Energy Security, will help you prioritize your energy investments and inform you about tax incentives, rebates, loans, and more. There’s help out there; you need to know about it.

“Energy Answers are Blowin in the Wind” - You’ll learn how the wind has been harnessed in the past and how today’s turbines generate electricity. You’ll get to work with a functioning model turbine, and staff from the Audubon Center of the North Woods will explain how to determine if your area has enough wind for a turbine.

“Geothermal 101” – This information session will cover what a geothermal system is and how it works. Matt Anderson, sales consultant with Harty Mechanical, Inc., will field your questions about how applicable a geothermal system is for your home or business.

“Geothermal Energy Hands-On Approach” - Through hands-on experiments you’ll learn how geothermal energy can generate electricity and how geothermal pumps help warm and cool homes. Staff from the Audubon Center of the North Woods will explain geothermal energy by discussing the earth’s geology. You’ll even make a steam engine!

“Greening Your Cleaning” - Common cleaning products may get the house clean, but some chemicals in them can be down right bad for you. Chersten Keillor, owner of Lilly Bud Naturals, sells safe and natural cleaning and body-care products. She’ll explain how chemicals in common cleaners can harm your health and the environment. You’ll learn the benefits of switching to green products, and receive recipes and handouts on greener cleaning and self-care approaches.

“If You Can’t Pronounce It, Don’t Wear It!” - Reading labels is a good idea, but those long, tongue-twister words can make it hard to tell if your so-called natural product contains something potentially harmful. Michael Lee, head of sales and marketing for Daisy Blue Naturals, will let you know which substances to avoid. You’ll leave the workshop with a Top Ten List of ingredients to leave on the shelf.

“Journey to the ZONE (Zero Oil – No Emissions) Transportation” - Discover 6 green transportation options, as introduced by **Chris Schneider**, (known as the “Hybrid Guru”) from International Motorwerks in LaCrosse, WI. Chris will explore why hybrids have 2.6% of the transportation market

“Off the Grid, Off the Well ... Off the Wall Savings!” - Christian Milaster will tell the story behind the design and construction of his 3600-square-foot home that costs him \$100 per year for utilities. This Lanesboro home combines modern comfort with environmentally-friendly and energy-sustainable design. Christian, a project manager for Mayo Clinic’s Division of Engineering, will discuss the home’s use of wind and solar energy, its passive solar design, the masonry stove, rainwater collection system and more.

“Helping Restore the Cedar River” - The Cedar River runs about 300 miles, from its headwaters in Dodge County, southern Minnesota, to Louisa County,

southeastern Iowa, where it joins the Iowa River and then winds its way to the Mississippi River. Cathy Rofshus and Bill Thompson of the MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency) will share information on the pollution study being done in the Cedar River Basin. Residents will learn what they can do to help restore the river.

“Storing the Sun and the Wind” - Learn the how and why of storing energy from the wind and sun. Al Christensen of the Energy Harvest Group will explain why storage adds critical value to renewable energy sources. You’ll also learn about the future of the “smart grid” and why changes to the current grid are a must for energy conservation.

“Schools Cutting Carbon” - Go green go! Come and listen to how Austin High School students in the Going Green Club are increasing green awareness and implementing positive changes in their school and community. Students are doing everything from cleaning ditches to spearheading recycling programs to laying the groundwork for a solar- and wind-powered school. The Going Green Club is beginning its second year as part of the Minnesota Schools Cutting Carbon program.

“Society and the Environment” - We will explore two books on going green: Learning Native Wisdom by Gary Holthaus; and Flat, Hot and Crowded by Thomas Friedman. Both writers are from Minnesota. Join in a lively discussion about the possibilities and challenges of moving our society to a "green-based culture" through the models and themes of subsistence, sustainability and spirituality and their interconnections. This workshop will be led by Bruce Heiny, Sociology faculty, Riverland Community College.

“Use It Twice Its Nice!” - Recycling is great, but re-using is even better for the environment! Susan Waughtal, small-scale farmer, artist and all-around thrifty person, will share many ingenious ideas for re-purposing everyday items into useful and beautiful objects. Susan works for the Clean Energy Resource Teams of Southeastern Minnesota (CERTS-SE).

“What Is a MN GreenStar Home?” - The MN GreenStar program provides structure and standards to ensure healthy, durable, energy-efficient, high-performance construction for new and existing homes. Walt Alms, a veteran Riverland carpentry instructor with training in the MN GreenStar program, will review the required elements of a GreenStar home and will offer environmentally- and budget-friendly ideas to homeowners