



S E Essex Women's Environmental Network NEWSLETTER

**Women's
Environmental
Network**

March 09

Word from the Secretary

I feel I should apologize. This Newsletter is coming to you over a month late. What with the pressures of work and trying to find a new place to live, I have found it hard to focus on pulling it together...but here it is! We have articles on our new allotment, plastic bags, Tesco news and other items which I hope you will find interesting.

We also had our AGM last month, and I would like to thank Eileen for staying as Chair for another year. I think she is a marvellous lady, and have much respect for the amount of time and effort she inputs to our local vibrant WEN group.

As word of the allotment spreads, we are being contacted by more people who wish to become involved in WEN. I hope to meet some of you soon.

Dairy Dates -

- 16th April April meeting at Carols House - subject Mammograms
- 21st May May meeting at Fresh Horizons - Lynn from the Art Factory
(www.theartfactory.org.uk) will be coming along to demonstrate her work using mainly recycled materials.
It should be fun.
- 13th June Earth Day
- 18th June June meeting - a social get together before the summer break.
- 21st June Summer Solstice Mini Festival in Hockley - more details to follow

We have regular coffee mornings at Utopia in the Royals, Southend, on the first Saturday of the month. Our regular meetings are held at Fresh Horizons on the third Thursday of the month. For more details, contact Eileen on 01268 752264

Text Alerts

If you wish to receive information on the next WEN event direct to your mobile, text 'Yes Please' with your name to 07941154166. You will not be charged for any texts you receive, and you can cancel at any time by texting 'no more' to the same number. Its a great way to receive a little reminder in the busy world we live in.



The Plastic Bag Argument

Things aren't always as simple as they seem as was brought home to me this week when I learned that conventional plastic bags (if recycled) make less impact on the environment than biodegradable plastic bags.



Riverford (www.rivernene.co.uk) who grow and distribute locally-grown organic produce through a nation-wide network of growers and distribution agents says that they have - "Reviewed research into the different types of plastics available and the environmental impacts that come with them, and based on this work we have decided to switch from the current degradable bags to conventional plastic which we will collect from our customers and recycle."

Their argument goes like this: The plastic bags Riverford use at present are a conventional plastic (LDPE or polythene) with an additive that causes them to break down under exposure to sunlight, air and stress. The energy used to produce these bags is pretty similar to that for a normal polythene bag, so the environmental impact is similar.

But, what happens to the degradable bags after use? Composters are not keen to take bags that look just like normal plastic as they would have to check each one. The bags can't be recycled as the plastic breaks down. This means the bags end up in landfill where the bags begin to break down generating greenhouse gasses carbon dioxide and methane (which is 23 times more powerful than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas).

So, Riverford have decided to deliver their goods in old-fashioned plastic bags and collect them from their customers each week for recycling.

Eileen Peck

(THANKS TO Carolé Shorney, S E Essex Organic Gardeners, for sending me the link to this very interesting website)

PS - While we're on the subject of plastic bags did you read this item ... THE global battle against plastic has taken a draconian turn with officials in Delhi announcing that the penalty for carrying a polythene shopping bag would be five years in prison. Officials in India's capital have decided that the only way to stem the rising tide of rubbish is to outlaw the plastic shopping bag. According to the official note on Friday, the "use, storage and sale" of plastic bags of any kind or thickness will be banned.

Allotment News

Well, we have got our allotment at Manchester Drive. We are on plot 181 which is in the southwest corner of the allotments. It is a great spot because there is a grassed area right next to us so it will be fantastic for when we have our open days.

Our aim is to work it as a community allotment and invite people to share it with us, particularly those who are socially isolated, single parents and ethnic minority groups. We will welcome all who want to experience growing their own food but who haven't the experience or opportunity to do so. We will be sending out letters to groups in the area and leafleting the houses in the surrounding streets.

We have been extremely lucky to receive £4000 from Grassroots Grants. This is managed by the Community Development Foundation and funded by the Office of the Third Sector. The grant is spread over 2 years so part of the project will be developed in the spring of 2010. We have already purchased a shed - now officially called WENdi House and are progressing with the planning of the plot.

Our open day on the 21st March proved very successful. We had representatives from Leigh Council, Manchester Drive Allotment Society and from Southend Adult Community Centre. We are planning to have more open days throughout the year.

If you are interested in coming to the allotment, please contact Carol (01702 342148), Pauline (01702 712596) or Eileen (01268 752264) to find out when they will be there next.

We also have a regularly updated blog showing how the allotment is progressing, check it out at www.seewen-allotment.org.uk

What the ooffoo??

Natural Collection have started a new scheme called ooffoo which encourages us all to minimise the amount of waste we send to landfill by RE-USING. Details of the scheme on their website – www.naturalcollection.com - or accessing ooffoo direct via www.ooffoo.com. To introduce you to what they are doing, they say

Now here's a way you can make even more of a difference – ooffoo is a free exchange for people who think the way you do. You can exchange almost anything, in almost anyway you like: buy, sell, swap, receive, teach, learn – its up to you. It might be clothes, furniture, music, skills, ideas, help, books, articles, recipes – again, you decide.

Remember you can help WEN financial twice by accessing the WEN website using www.everyclick.co.uk and then using the WEN site's link to Natural Collection. WEN needs money to keep on with its campaigning and every little helps!

YET ANOTHER REASON TO BOYCOTT TESCO!

Tesco chief executive Sir Terry Leahy has signalled that the retailer is willing to back genetically modified (GM) foods, saying consumer attitudes have changed and it has a vital part to play.

The science of GM is complicated, can the argument be put simply?

On one side the GM industry (MONSANTO) claim that by genetically modifying food they can help to face the challenge of feeding the world's poor.

BUT the United Nations recently produced a report based on the work of over 400 international scientists which claimed that GM crops didn't have much to offer in facing the challenge of global food production in the face of climate change and population pressure.

The Soil Association believes that 'the risk of using genetic engineering in agriculture is too great and genetic modification has no place in the production of safe and healthy food.'

Who do you believe?

Reading Group

Ever fancied getting together with other bookworms? Always fancied an environmental twist to the tale? Well a new group has started in Southend Central Library that should fit the bill! Its organised by one of our very own WEN ladies, Dawn French, and they meet the last Saturday of the month, 2-4 on the top floor by the biographies section. For further information, call Dawn on 01702 534100.

The **Recycle for Southend** team needs help to raise the recycling rate in Southend and make it a greener borough for everyone. Southend residents already recycle over 35% of their waste but with your suggestions and involvement we think we can push that number much higher. On average 70% of a rubbish bin could be recycled – if you know how we can get more of that rubbish being recycled, if you have influence in your street or group, or if you are interested in learning more about the environmental impacts of recycling, we would be delighted to hear from you at one of our recycling feedback sessions. There will be refreshments and plenty of time to discuss Southend's recycling service with other people. If you would like to attend the next session please contact Rebecca Lee or Jane Rayner on 020 8256 0023 or info@sauceconsultancy.co.uk

The Women's Environmental Network is one of Britain's leading environmental charities and aims to educate, inform and empower women and men who care about the environment. WEN campaigns on environmental and health issues from a woman's perspective and with a sound scientific basis. For more information - Local contact **Eileen Peck 01268 752264**; National Contact P O Box 30626, London, E1 1TZ; Website - www.wen.org.uk.

WHEN YOU HAVE READ THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE PASS ON TO A FRIEND OR LEAVE IN A WAITING ROOM