

Chautauqua Watershed Notes
December 20, 2009

Going Green
By Susan M. Songster-Weaver



Planting trees is an excellent way to "go green." Photo by Sue Weaver

Seems like everyone is “going green” these days. Slogans like “Every day is Earth Day” and “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle” are ones we’ve heard forever. “Real men go green,” “I’m green, you’re green, we all love being green” and “Going Green... all the cool kids are doing it” are new ones to me. Lots of people are talking the talk but are they really walking the walk? Is “going green” just the buzz or are people willing to make changes to help our environment?

“Going green” might have some people confused. The color green has some negative connotations. Jealous people are green with envy and if you imbibe, you may just end up a little green around the gills. Inexperienced workers are green and you should never eat green bread. But, when associated with Mother Earth, “going green” products and ideas should be all positive shouldn’t they? I’m not so sure.

I Googled “going green products” and found some that were wonderful, like reusable shopping bags. Reusable shopping bags are one of the best ideas since sliced bread. Groceries fit in them better and they don’t rip open on the way into the house. Unfortunately, some products like earth friendly hand brushes and brooms made me go “HMMMMM...” I didn’t know hand brushes and brooms were high on the naughty list. And, other products like unscented baby wipes and biodegradable cups and plates made me think, “Why do we need those?” What’s wrong with a using a wet washcloth and real dishes? Aren’t they more earth friendly than throwaway items?

There are also websites giving solid ideas for “going green.” I visited www.squidoo.com/agreenlife and sat a little taller in my chair when I realized I was already practicing 20 of the 29 tips! You can take quizzes to see “How green are you?” I have a “Heart of Green” and live a life where I see the big picture by balancing living well with living green. In truth, I try to be self-sustaining, save money and be a good steward of the watershed.

We plant a garden in Busti where we harvest carrots, tomatoes, radishes, zucchini and other vegetables. In our little yard at the lake we grow lettuce, onions and Swiss chard for fresh green salads. Instead of ornamental shrubs, we have currant bushes and raspberries for jellies. Freshwater fish such as calico and perch are a mainstay of our diet and venison is “what’s for dinner” instead of beef. Living off the land without over-harvesting is the way we live, not because it’s cool but because it feels right.

Saving money by saving energy is important to us, too. I hang out my laundry in the summer, take shorter showers and primarily use the cold setting on my washer. Our thermostat is set at 65 during the day and 60 at night. We layer our clothes and run a small electric heater to warm the house up. We’ve insulated and replaced many of our windows. I bike or walk whenever I can and our car has low emissions and is fuel-efficient.

Being a good watershed steward is important to me. We’ve planted trees and don’t use lawn fertilizers. Grass clippings are put back into the soil with our mulching mower. We recycle and reuse as much as we can. I buy fresh produce and look for products with less packaging. I bury my dogs’ waste and try to pick up litter along the roadway. These are little things but if everyone does a few little things, maybe things will change and our green planet will thrive.

“Going green” shouldn’t be a fad but a way of life. Margaret Mead said it best, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” So, if you haven’t joined the green movement, maybe the time has come for you to make some changes. Our world depends on it.

CWC’s mission is to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams and watersheds of the Chautauqua region. CWC’s 2009-2010 membership campaign is underway. Persons, businesses and organizations are encouraged to join the CWC by calling 716-664-2166 or joining online at chautauquawatershed.org.