



# Sustainability Newsletter

September 2014

## Back to School: Five Ways to Go Green!

1. Before you go school supplies shopping, take inventory of what you already have from last year to avoid unnecessary duplicates. If you do need to buy something new, make sure it is durable (eg. backpack) and can be used for years. Be careful not to overbuy. Although it might be exciting to enter the back-to-school section of the store with so many shiny things and bright colors, try not to be tempted to buy more than you need.
2. For the school supplies that you do need to buy, consider greener options. Look for biodegradable pencils, refillable pens, or recyclable writing implements. Use each pencil until it is worn to the nub. Choose paper with a high percentage of post consumer recycled content. Write on both sides of the paper to make notebooks last.
3. Green up your back to school clothes shopping trips by looking through the options at local thrift stores first. If you must buy new, opt for high quality, natural materials (organic cotton or bamboo) that are built to last, instead of trendy, disposable fashions that may wear out within the first year.

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4. Pack waste-free lunches. By choosing a washable, reusable container for packed lunches and reusable containers for food, you can prevent a lot of unnecessary waste from entering the landfill or accidentally being littered in the school yard. To keep lunches cool, opt for an insulated lunch bag and include an icepack to keep food chilled. Instead of pre-packaged granola bars, try your hand at making them yourself. This recipe for Chewy No-Bake Granola Bars is healthy, easy and delicious:

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 cup peanut butter (or any nut butter)
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/2 cup coconut oil
- 2 1/2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup shredded coconut
- 1/4 cup mini chocolate chips (optional)

#### **Directions**

In a medium pot set over medium-low heat, melt together nut butter, honey, and coconut oil, stirring until smooth. Remove from stove and stir in oats and coconut. Pour mixture into a 9 by 13 inch baking dish. Spread into an even layer, sprinkle with mini chocolate chips (if using), and firmly press down with a spatula. Refrigerate for 2 hours or until firm. Slice into squares or bars and remove from pan. Store granola bars in the fridge, in an airtight container with wax paper separating the layers.

5. Walking to school is the greenest form of transportation. To make sure your child isn't walking alone, set up a "walkpool," chaperoning a group of kids on foot to and from school. You'll save on gas, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and get some exercise. If walking isn't an option, try to arrange a carpool with other families in your neighbourhood. School busses are also a great option.



This newsletter can be viewed online at: [www.rdbn.bc.ca/environmentalservices/recycling/sustainability-newsletter](http://www.rdbn.bc.ca/environmentalservices/recycling/sustainability-newsletter)

If you have any questions about the content of this newsletter, please call Carolyann Lane, Sustainability Assistant, Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako at 250-692-3195, toll free: 1-800-320-3339, email: [carolyann.lane@rdbn.bc.ca](mailto:carolyann.lane@rdbn.bc.ca)

# The Problem with Plastic Microbeads

Microplastics, or small plastic particles under 5mm, are causing problems for the world's ocean life. Many of these plastic particles are even smaller—less than 1mm in size. So, where do these microplastics come from, and how do they get into the ocean?

Microplastics come from a variety of sources, both indirect and direct. Indirectly, they can be formed in the environment as a consequence of the degradation of larger plastic material in the ocean as it breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. This happens through mechanical forces, such as wave action, or through photodegradation (ie. sunlight).



Synthetic clothing fibres, such as polyester, are also a significant source of microplastics. Each time synthetic garments are washed, thousands of plastic fibres can be released into the environment.

The most direct source of microplastics comes in the form of plastic microbeads, often found in consumer products including industrial abrasives, consumer exfoliants (face and body scrubs), cosmetics and even toothpastes. Plastic microbeads have replaced more traditional biodegradable alternatives such as ground nut shells or salt/sugar crystal in many products. One single cosmetic scrubbing product can contain up to 350,000 microbeads! When the microbeads are washed down the drain after being used by consumers in the shower or sink, they flow into the sewer system. Often, microplastics are too small to be caught in standard municipal sewage treatment plants and end up being discharged into local waterways. Rivers and lakes in the RDBN ultimately flow and discharge into the Pacific Ocean. Therefore, microplastics originating in the Regional District can have impacts on marine life great distances away.



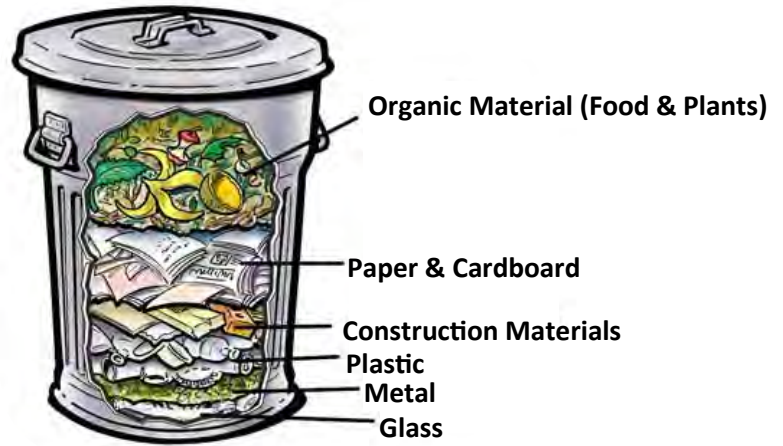
Scientists say that marine species are unable to tell the difference between food and plastic particles and end up ingesting large amounts of plastic throughout their lifetime. Some species excrete plastic easily, but others do not, and instead accumulate plastic internally which ends up being fatal to the animal. Animals that are known to ingest plastics include: Seabirds, sea turtles, fish, and marine mammals. Whales and sea turtles often mistake plastic bags for squid, and birds often mistake plastic pellets for fish eggs.

There are a number of things you can do to help reduce the impact that microplastics are having on the marine environment.

- Use consumer exfoliants with natural abrasive material instead of plastic microbeads.
- Purchase clothing with natural fibres, such as cotton.
- Try switching to reusable shopping bags instead of single use plastic bags.
- Make sure to properly dispose of your garbage. Pick up loose trash to prevent it from getting into waterways.

# It's not Garbage—It's a Resource!

Instead of viewing everything we are done with as trash, try to view it as something that can be repurposed in another way. Take a look at your garbage can. You will see that most of the materials in there can actually be repurposed, recycled or composted.



## Finding Value in your Trash

**Organic Material:** Food scraps and yard waste make up over 1/3 of the residential waste stream. Starting your own backyard compost bin is the simplest way to prevent these materials from entering the landfill. Bonus: you get an incredibly nutritious garden supplement as a result.

**Paper and Cardboard:** Paper and cardboard account for 20% of the residential waste heading to the landfill. This is one of the easiest materials to recycle, and most communities in the RDBN have recycling depots or bins that accept paper and cardboard. Corrugated cardboard is especially valuable, and is recycled into new products such as paper bags, cereal boxes, and even new cardboard. Other types of paper (office paper, magazines, paperboard, etc.) can be recycled into Kleenex, paper towels, telephone books or newspaper. The next time you reach for the garbage can to throw out a piece of paper, consider what it can be remade into and recycle it instead.

Did you know that you can recycle these paper products?



**Metal:** Although not a large percentage of the waste stream, metals are a valuable commodity that often end up in the landfill without a second thought. Some of these metals come in the form of tin cans and beverage containers, but the majority of metals come from discarded electronic devices such as televisions, cell phones, cables/wires, batteries, and small appliances like microwaves and fans. The best place to take these items when they have reached the end of their lives is a depot with an electronics recycling program. Contact the Regional District at 1-800-320-3339 or [www.rdbn.bc.ca](http://www.rdbn.bc.ca) to find out if your local depot accepts electronics.

Although there are not many opportunities to recycle plastic or glass in the RDBN, programs may be changing in the next few years as Multi-Material BC's Printed Paper and Packaging program gets underway. It is the RDBN's hope that all residents will eventually be provided with comprehensive recycling services through this industry-led program.



## Seasonal Eats: Green Beans and Potatoes

Green beans and potatoes are in peak season in September, making each of these items a great option for a delicious side dish.



### Green Beans with Lemon and Garlic

2 pounds green beans, ends trimmed  
1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
3 tbsp butter  
2 large garlic cloves, minced  
1 tsp red pepper flakes  
1 tbsp lemon zest  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Blanch green beans in a pot of boiling water until bright green in color and tender crisp, roughly 2 minutes. Drain and shock in a bowl of ice water to stop from cooking.

Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add the oil and the butter. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes and sauté until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the beans and continue to sauté until coated in the butter and heated through, about 5 minutes. Add lemon zest and season with salt and pepper.



### Warm Dijon Potato Salad with Green Beans

3 pounds Yukon or baby potatoes  
1 pound green beans, ends trimmed  
1/2 cup mayonnaise  
2 tbsp whole grain Dijon mustard  
1 shallot, minced  
3 tbsp red wine vinegar  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1/3 cup finely chopped fresh parsley

Place the potatoes in a large pot and cover with cold water. Salt the water generously, bring to a boil and cook until the potatoes are fork tender, about 20 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold water.

Bring another pot of salted water to a boil and blanch the beans just for a minute or two until they turn bright green. Drain and shock in a bowl of ice water.

In a mixing bowl combine the remaining ingredients and whisk until smooth.

Cut the potatoes in half lengthwise and then into roughly 1 inch chunks. Cut beans in half. Toss the potato chunks in the dressing and then toss in the green beans and the parsley.



### Smashed Potatoes with Garlic and Herbs

1 pound baby potatoes  
2 tbsp olive oil  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 tbsp chopped fresh basil or rosemary  
Salt and Freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 450°F.

Bring a large pot of salted water to boil and add potatoes. Simmer 10-15 minutes, until fork tender.

Drain potatoes and let cool for 5 minutes. Using the bottom of a sturdy glass, smash the potatoes lightly so that they remain in one piece but the skin breaks. Transfer potatoes to a baking dish and drizzle with oil and salt and pepper. Roast for 30-45 minutes until the edges start to turn golden and crispy.

Remove pan from oven. Stir in garlic and herbs.