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Spring Cleaning and Greening

This past winter my boyfriend and I traveled across Canada and back. Not wanting to leave anything in our vehicle overnight we had to pack very light so it was nice to get back home and rediscover my old wardrobe. Unfortunately, instead of looking like a whole new closet of clothes, some of it just looked a little “ho-hum, been there before”. This inspired me to do some spring-cleaning – out with the old and in with the new, or at least new to me.

I have never been one to just throw things in the garbage, and after all “one person’s junk is another’s treasure”. So after reading an article about new ways to save money and earn money, I figured I would take some of those old clothes into the consignment shop where I would find some new treasures of my own too. Then a friend mentioned she was planning a yard sale and if I wanted to contribute anything I was more than welcome. This compelled me to continue with my spring-cleaning and look around the house for things we hadn’t used in a long time.

Coincidentally, the next day I found myself speaking with another friend about spring-cleaning. She had recently read a great book called *Slow Death by Rubber Duck* as well as a newsletter article on cosmetics put out by the David Suzuki Foundation. Based on this new knowledge, she decided to do a clean sweep of her home and contacted the Fredericton Regional Solid Waste Commission to see which products she could dispose of through the hazardous waste program and which she could dispose of safely on her own. She replaced those products with new environmentally friendlier ones and has found new lines of cosmetics to replace the old brands as they get used up.

By this time I could see that spring-cleaning was becoming the theme of my week back in Fredericton but it wasn’t about to stop there. A couple of days ago I received an email about a program called **Mow Down Pollution (www.mowdownpollution.ca)**, which “encourages people to replace their old, inefficient two- and four-stroke gas-powered lawn mowers and other lawn and garden equipment with cleaner alternatives.” It is Canada’s only gas lawn equipment exchange program, offering instant rebates to purchase zero- or low-emission alternatives. If your gas-powered lawn equipment is older than January 1, 2005 it may be less efficient and more polluting than models made after that. This is because government-introduced engine emissions standards regulating greenhouse gas and smog emissions from gas-powered lawn equipment manufactured on or after January 1, 2005.

I couldn’t believe I had never heard of this national program before, now in its tenth year. It is operated by Summerhill Impact, a non-profit organization focusing on environmental public engagement. The retail partner is Home Depot; and other program partners are manufacturers of lawn-care equipment, who promote their environmentally friendly alternatives; and the Canadian recycling industry, who

responsibly recycle the old mowers. Since the program launched in 2001, a total of 34,027 inefficient mowers and trimmers have been responsibly recycled in Canada; and more than 1,100 tonnes of greenhouse gas and smog forming emissions have been prevented!

Think this program might be for you? Then simply take your old gas-powered mowers, trimmers or leaf blowers to any Home Depot location (across Canada) between April 22nd and May 2nd, 2010 and you will receive an instant rebate on the purchase of an environmentally preferable alternative product. The program ensures that your old lawn equipment is recycled responsibly. And the great thing is that no purchase is necessary to take advantage of the free mower recycling.

Now you may be thinking you are not ready for a push mower or manual trimmer, even if they are the best environmental alternative, but there are other options. There are electric or cordless rechargeable mowers that are easy to start, require no gas or oil, and are inexpensive to maintain and operate. Additionally, they are quite a bit quieter than the gas-powered alternative. That said, we have owned a push mower in our household for nearly 10 years and it still works beautifully. It cost us \$100 at the time of purchase and the only maintenance required is to keep the blades clean and sharpened – the only cost to that being a little sweat equity.

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