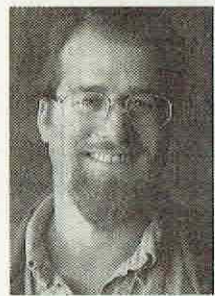


A bit about EcoVersity; graywater bill OK'd



Permaculture in Practice

by Nate Downey

With so much world instability, now is the time to learn about sustainable living. Check out EcoVersity, a school for "sustainability practioners."

Founded in 1999 by Frances "Fiz" Harwood, EcoVersity moved to its 13-acre campus along the Santa Fe River in 2001. Last year it started an academy offering classes in solar power, natural building, vegetable gardening, beekeeping and water harvesting and related topics. Classes (\$45 to \$220) range from one-day workshops to 10-week courses.

This August, EcoVersity premieres a new, 20-week program for students of all ages. After exploring numerous fields of inquiry and immersing themselves

in a real-world internship, graduates will receive a certificate in "earth-based vocations."

"Renewable Energies" and "Natural Building" include hands-on experience and classroom study concerning "active and passive solar design, hydro applications, bio-diesel, hydrogen and fuel cells, and clean energy initiatives" as well as design and construction of energy-efficient buildings. Just imagine if every college offered this kind of inquiry! Would we depend so much on foreign oil?

Similarly, if the kind of "agroecology" that EcoVersity teaches were spread around the globe like so many innocent young people in uniform, we would likely prevent wars over food and water. Of course, changing the world into EcoVersity's positive vision will likely take decades, if not centuries. Fortunately, three other fields of inquiry teach community organizing. For more information, contact EcoVersity at www.ecoversity.com or 424-9797.

Speaking of community organizing, thanks to many overflowing committee hearings and a "virtual" march on the New Mexico Legisla-

ture, the graywater bill passed both houses nearly unanimously and was quickly signed by the governor. This means that you can use up to 250 gallons of gray water per day on your residential landscape without a permit.

Even with the new law, there is a lot to learn about using gray water safely, efficiently and legally. The state can levy fines for illegal use of wastewater. The maximum fine of \$10,000 per day could max out your credit cards pretty quick.

In the meantime, since most of us live without easily accessible piping in crawl spaces or basements, the place to consider installing a graywater system is behind your clothes washer. The key here is that all washing machines have an easily accessible hose that comes out the back.

First, install a valve in the hose so overflow can go down the sewer. Feed a longer hose through the wall to a covered, temporary storage tank, which will handle surges and allow water to cool down. The tank also creates backflow prevention so that gray water is never accidentally siphoned back to your clothes.

A hose may be connected at the bottom of the tank. The best way to deal with the water from here is to divert it into an underground pumice wick, which uses capillary action to get water to the roots of plants and trees. Especially if your property is sloped, you can get away with directing water directly into well-mulched garden beds or tree wells.

Do not water edible root crops in this way, and remember that it is illegal to spray gray water into the air, allow it to pond for more than 24 hours, or allow it to flow onto your neighbor's property. But that's not all. For a full text of the legislation search the Bill Finder for HB114 at www.legis.state.nm.us.

If you're a do-it-yourselfer, check out www.oasisdesign.net. This site was created by graywater guru Art Ludwig. It offers a great deal of free information and sells several helpful books on the subject.

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