

A few thoughts on composting, carpooling, water usage, reduce/reuse/recycling, and local foods.

From Liz Rog, Daniel Rotto, Sophie and Ida at Fern Hollow Cabin, Decorah IA

The most important idea we would like to pass along is a philosophy that is much more radical, engaging, and exciting than “reduce, reuse, recycle.” It’s “Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.” You see, LONG before you even acquire the stuff to reduce, reuse, or recycle, you can take a different route. Doing without, or making it do, or using it up, or wearing it out, are all really legitimate options. You can’t ALWAYS take this route, but you surely can take it more and more often, once you start thinking in this way.

Other ideas:

- 1) When you’re brushing your teeth, turn off the water. Only turn it back on when you are really rinsing your brush. Likewise for showering, washing dishes, etc.
- 2) Consider wearing your clothes many more times before you throw them in the dirty clothes. Unless you are a physical laborer or an athlete, you can probably wear a clothing item 4 or 5 times before you wash it. Maybe even more!
- 3) Learn to know a small area in your neighborhood that has trees and birds and earth. Visit there often, watch it through the seasons. Once you know it, you will love it. Once you love it, you will want to preserve it and other places that it represents.
- 4) Hold community swaps. Invite friends to bring usable stuff – maybe just clothes, or maybe more – that they would like to pass along to another. Make it into a fun event, and everyone will take home “new” stuff without buying anything new, and perfectly good stuff will be kept out of the landfill.
- 5) Eat seasonally. The best way to do that is to shop at a Farmer’s Market. To eat seasonally in the wintertime, learn to store squash, potatoes, carrots, and other root crops in your basement. Grow them yourself or buy a lot at the farmer’s market in the fall. (ask the farmer to sell you good keeper varieties)
- 6) Do a personal trash audit! Make yourself look through your whole garbage can, and you’ll learn a lot about the trash you are making. What embarrasses you in there? What do you already know how to reduce? What would you like to learn how to reduce?
- 7) Put a barrel under a downspout of your house or apartment, and use the water you collect to water plants or the yard
- 8) Try buying only used clothes for a whole year. Then, store the off-season ones away and pull them out the next year. Learn to love rediscovering good old clothes with all their memories.
- 9) To carpool, you might need to start relaxing your life schedule a little so that you can handle waiting for someone for a while until they’re ready. Could you

find something to do for 40 minutes while you wait for your ride? Do you need to start a new hobby, like knitting or pleasure reading?

10) Use your tech skills to set up a cyberspace method for neighborhood carpooling. Twitter? A Facebook group? How could you effectively organize carpooling among people who might have ever-changing schedules?