

## *Conservation Matters*

A monthly column focused on conservation education, as the result of collaboration among several area conservation commissions and organizations. If your town's commission or conservation organization would like to contribute articles, please contact Jessica Tabolt Halm [jesshalm78@gmail.com](mailto:jesshalm78@gmail.com)

### **Title: 5 Ways to Make Autumn a Little more Eco-Friendly**

**Written By:** Janice Mulherin, Rumney Conservation Commission

As the brilliant colors of fall fade many of us are preparing for the long winter ahead. In between dusting off our snow boots and digging out our favorite cozy sweaters, we can take some time to think about living sustainably in the cooler season. Here are a few ideas:

#### **1. Check Your Tires**

Cooler temperatures can lower tire pressure and under-inflated tires reduce your car's fuel efficiency. It takes just a few minutes to inflate your tires to the proper pressure. While you're at it, check your car service records; is it time change your oil and filters? A properly maintained vehicle runs more dependably and gets better gas mileage.

#### **2. Your Furnace**

Did you know that your furnace needs a regular cleaning? Throughout the year, it collects lots of dust and debris, both of which can affect the furnace's performance and could even cause a fire. Clean out or replace your furnace filter regularly and get your furnace serviced by a professional before the cold weather calls. Go through each room and ensure all the vents are properly open and exposed to make sure your furnace is working most efficiently.

Did you know that you can actually use your ceiling fan during the winter months to help distribute the warm air that rises to the ceiling? There should be a switch on the side of your ceiling fan that changes the direction of the rotation. In the winter, you want to have your ceiling fan rotating clockwise, or in a forward direction, to move the warm air that gets trapped up by the ceiling around the room. This can be especially helpful in homes that have high or vaulted ceiling where the heated air rises so high that it doesn't help to warm the room.

It can be hard to remember to change your thermostat every morning as you're trying to rush out of the house, or every evening when you're practically asleep before your head even hits the pillow. So the best way to make sure that you're keeping your heat turned down is to install a programmable thermostat. You can program it so that it lowers the heat on days when you're away from home, or any other time throughout the day when you are okay with your heat being lower. An even better choice is to listen to what our parents used to tell us, if you are cold, put on some thick socks or a warm sweater.

#### **3. Do Some Yard Work**

If you have a yard, spend some time getting it ready for the winter. Scoop up any fallen leaves and use them in the garden to protect plants throughout the winter — or add them to your compost pile. Fall is the time to plant spring bulbs and some perennials. And you can also plant many types of trees and shrubs in the fall, which will give them enough time to develop a deep root system over the winter months and reduce their water needs come spring.

If your house plants spent the summer outside, remember to bring them in before it gets too cold. If you don't have any house plants, maybe now is a good time to consider getting one or two. Not only do plants brighten up the interior of your home, they will also help clean the air. Since most of us in cooler climates open the windows less frequently in the winter, houseplants can do a lot to improve your indoor air quality

## 4. Buy local

When you buy vegetables and fruit out of season, not only are they being shipped longer distances, burning more fuel than usual to get to your grocer, but they also ripen during transport instead of being picked ripe. Seasonally-appropriate produce requires less energy for transport, is less expensive and often tastes better. According to [healthyeating.org](http://healthyeating.org), eating fresh fruits and vegetables provides the body with more nutrients, easier digestion and a boost to the immune system. Examples of produce in season from October through the winter months includes apples, pears, beets, pumpkins, cranberries, blackberries, cabbage, celery, broccoli, kale, Brussels sprouts, carrots, cauliflowers, potatoes, beans, winter squash, sprouts, leeks and spinach. For locally-grown produce, check out Local Foods Plymouth at <https://www.localfoodsplymouth.org/>

From clothes to food to Christmas gifts, the closer to home these products are made and bought, the less carbon is created with their transportation. Not only that, but you'll be supporting the local economy which means that in time you'll likely have even more local items to choose from. And look for packaging that is recyclable.

## 5. Turn it off

Energy conservation is one of the most important things you can do to reduce your carbon footprint. Leaving your electricals on standby needlessly uses up energy – hit the off switch and you could see improvements, most noticeably in your energy bills. Want to go further than simply turning it off? Make sure that the tech you have is as energy-efficient as possible. This way, you're using less energy for the time that the appliance is on, saving money.

For your indoor, use LED light bulbs. Not only do LED light bulbs last longer than conventional bulbs, they're far more efficient too! This means that you'll be using less power and having to replace your bulbs less frequently – everyone's a winner. What's more, they're available in a range of brightness and designs so you can really tailor the lighting to your needs or to suit the room.

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Regardless of whether you've decided to go green to help the environment, to save money, or just see how easy it is, every step you take towards eco-friendly living is one that helps the world.

