



## Things You Can Do to Be Clean and Blue-Green...

By Peter Hanlon, Massachusetts Bays Program

**Recycling—you want to do the right thing, but what are you supposed to do with that old Macintosh SE?** Or all that house paint in the garage? Or that antique can of what appears to be rat poison hidden in the basement corner? As with politics, all recycling is local. So, by far the best strategy for answering your reduce-reuse-recycle questions is to contact your town hall, specifically your community's Department of Public Works (DPW). Read on for some suggestions for what you can do with all that stuff you no longer want...

**Curbside Recycling:** Chances are good that your community provides those ubiquitous plastic recycling bins for free. Use one for recycling paper (newspaper, magazines, phone books) and cardboard, and another for rinsed out glass, metal, and plastic containers (typically #1-#7). Visit "The World's Shortest Comprehensive Recycling Guide" at [www.obviously.com/recycle](http://www.obviously.com/recycle) for recycling information for "regular folks."

**Yard Waste:** Leaves, grass, plants, shrub prunings, and twigs are not trash! If you can't convert them to mulch or compost them, then they are typically collected on specific dates in late spring to early winter. Visit the Greenscapes Massachusetts website at [www.Greenscapes.org](http://www.Greenscapes.org) for more on how to turn those grass clippings into mulchy goodness.

**Furniture:** If the furniture you want to get rid of is in good condition, then please donate it to organizations such as the Salvation Army, Big Brothers Big Sisters, or Goodwill Industries to be reused and kept out of the waste stream. Visit Excess-Access online at [www.excessaccess.com](http://www.excessaccess.com) to learn how to match business and household item donations (furniture, office supplies, and electronics) with the wish lists of nonprofits that can provide pick-ups or accept drop-offs.

**Appliances:** As with furniture, if you're looking to get rid of working appliances, donate them instead. If they don't work anymore, items such as washing machines, air conditioners, stoves, water heaters, and refrigerators may require your town's sticker and a fee for removal and recycling. Try joining a Freesharing group ([www.Freesharing.com](http://www.Freesharing.com)) in your town to list working appliances that you want to give away. And maybe you can pick up an old-timey popcorn popper while you're at it.

**Electronics:** Have we mentioned donating your unwanted but working electronic devices? Well we should have. But if you have broken down televisions, computers, cell phones, etc., then your community's DPW may pick them up for recycling if you purchase a special removal sticker. Sign up at [www.freecycle.com](http://www.freecycle.com) to find neighbors that are just dying to take that old black-and-white Philco television off your hands. Or if you have a computer to donate, visit Computers for Schools at [www.pcsforschools.org](http://www.pcsforschools.org) to help out local schools and youth organizations.

**Hazardous Materials—aka hazmats:** Yes, chances are good that you have some hazmats in your home that you'll need to bring in to a special hazardous waste collection day in your community. What could these possibly be? Look for items such as glue, tires, automobile fluids, fluorescent light bulbs, household cleaners, oil-based and latex paints, insecticides, and pesticides. Sorry, but only the kind folks who run the hazardous waste collection usually want things like your unwanted pesticide and paint thinner. (If you live in a town with a dump/transfer station, check your town's web site, or call town hall to see if your town has designated hazmat days.) And there are exceptions: Radio Shack will recycle your old household batteries, used motor oil can be brought back to the store from which you bought it, paint can be donated to local theaters and community organizations, and you can visit [www.lamprecycle.com](http://www.lamprecycle.com) to learn how to recycle any light bulb in your house.

*I sure am glad that not all of this stuff ends up at the bottom of the ocean... Although, come to think of it, I wouldn't mind having an old Barcalounger to relax in.*