

IN THE LOOP!

Free newsletter of MassRecycle, the Massachusetts Recycling Coalition

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Boston 5th Least Wasteful

By Courtney Cann



Image: www.boston.com

Boston has reason to celebrate this year, as Nalgene has named it the #5 Least Wasteful City in America. The annual rankings take into account not only waste level but also transportation options, sustainability, shopping habits and reuse of items in cities throughout the country. This marks a big improvement for Beantown, which placed at #9 in last year's ratings.

Yet not everyone is satisfied with this achievement; *Commonwealth Magazine* recently published an article that sees Boston in a different light. The article compares Boston to the #1 least wasteful city on Nalgene's list: San Francisco. "They both are small, hilly cities surrounded by population-dense suburbs; both are rich with history, culture, and educational institutions," Allison Lobron, the article's author explains, "Yet when it comes to recycling, Boston lags light years behind its West Coast counterpart."

Lobron's statement is backed up by facts: while Boston maintains a feeble recycling rate of 13%, San Francisco diverts a whopping 72% of its waste from landfills. So to what does San Francisco owe its success? The article claims that their victory seems to lie in mandatory recycling and composting laws. Unlike San Francisco and even some surrounding Massachusetts towns, Boston has not yet implemented a "pay as you throw" system of garbage disposal. Such systems make residents pay for the amount of garbage they accumulate, inevitably leading to increased recycling rates.

Nalgene's 5 Least Wasteful Cities	
1	San Francisco, CA
2	Seattle, WA
3	New York, NY
4	Portland, OR
5	Boston, MA

Despite the different recycling laws of the two cities, the Commonwealth article hypothesizes that San Francisco's success isn't entirely due to rules—in fact, their legislation isn't backed by any fines or tickets. Instead, the article claims San Francisco's accomplishments can be credited to their treatment of recycling as a community value instead of a sacrifice.

One thing is certain for Massachusetts; we need to do more to encourage recycling in the city and across the state. This can be done by increasing recycling education, enforcing existing recycling regulations and enacting laws that further promote recycling. Keep in touch with MassRecycle (subscribe online at www.massrecycle.org) to be a part of making these changes.

About MassRecycle

MassRecycle is a non-profit statewide coalition that works to:

- Strengthen local recycling programs,
- Educate businesses and the public about sustainable practices,
- Advocate for recycling in the Legislature,
- Reward recycling champions by presenting annual awards.



Join us at www.massrecycle.org!

Got Drugs? DEA Announces Prescription Drug Take-Back Day

The Drug Enforcement Administration announced their plan for a prescription drug "take-back" initiative that seeks to prevent increased pill abuse and theft. The program will urge people to get rid of unused prescription drugs that could be a potential safety and health hazard. The DEA will be collecting expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs for destruction at sites nationwide. The service is free and anonymous, no questions are asked.

When: Saturday, September 25th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Where: Collection sites in every local community can be found by going to <http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/takeback/index.html>

Checklist: Green Back-to-School Supplies

It's that time of the year again! To save you the hassle of shopping around, we've compiled a list of Earth-Friendly products you'll need for the upcoming school year:

- ❑ **ReBinder:** Most binders are made out of a type of vinyl that is associated with toxic emissions in manufacturing. Instead, opt for cardboard binders which are 100% recyclable. Rebinders is a great brand and you can find a number of other great recyclable office supplies on their website www.rebinder.com
- ❑ **Earth Drive:** This biodegradable USB drive is made out of corn and can be purchased at most stores that carry computer accessories.
- ❑ **EPEAT-Registered Computers:** Planning on purchasing a computer for school? Check out EPEAT, a system that helps consumers compare and select electronics based on their environmental attributes.

Popular brands such as Apple, Acer and Gateway all have Epeat-registered laptops and desktops. Visit www.epeat.net for a complete list.
- ❑ **Safe White:** A more natural alternative to harsh, chemical-filled white-out, Safe White contains no harmful solvents, is ozone safe and non-toxic. Find it at www.greenlinepaper.com
- ❑ **Staple-Free Stapler:** This device binds paper together so it requires no staples or refills of any kind. Find it at www.CB2.com
- ❑ **Laptop Lunches:** For those of us with children, try a lunch box with compartments so that you can avoid plastic, disposable baggies. There are a number of colorful options at www.laptoplunches.com
- ❑ **Low VOC Craft Supplies:** Planning on doing some eco-conscious crafting? Try these non-toxic options.
 - [Ecoglue](#) contains less than 1% VOC and virtually no hazardous air pollutants.
 - earthsafefinishes.com carries all sorts of low VOC paints, from acrylic to stains and varnishes.
- ❑ **Recycled Paper:** It seems like a no-brainer, but make sure the paper you're purchasing is 100% Recycled. Both Office Max and Staples carry a large array of recycled paper.

Waste Fact of the Month:

Plastic bags and other plastic garbage thrown into the ocean **kill as many as 1,000,000 sea creatures a year!** Ever heard of the [Great Pacific Garbage Patch](#)? It's twice the size of Texas and is floating somewhere between San Francisco and Hawaii. It's **80 percent plastic**, and weighs in at **3.5 million tons!**

ASK BINNIE!



Dear Binnie:

I've seen a lot of biodegradable products on the market. I was thinking about buying some, but I am not sure how to dispose of them! Do I recycle them?

-Tessa A.

Tessa,

Great question, I'm sure a lot of folks are curious about this! No, biodegradable products are not recyclable. While regular plastics are designed to last hundreds of years, biodegradable items are meant to break down within months in a composting facility or in the natural environment. Because of this difference in material durability, mixing biodegradables with regular plastics may jeopardize the quality of the recycled products made from recycled stock. My advice: compost biodegradables or send them to a composting facility. If you can't compost these products, place them in the trash (with the knowledge that, at the very least, you have supported the growing market for biodegradable products). Your next step? Ask your city or town to start a residential food composting program.

-Binnie

To ask Binnie a question, go to www.massrecycle.org and click on "[ask the staff](#)." We will email you the answer. The best questions will appear in the next issue of *In The Loop!*

Stay in the Loop! Make sure we email you the next issue!

- Sign up online at www.MassRecycle.org using the "Request in the Loop" button or,
- Send a blank email to info@massrecycle.org with *In the Loop* as the subject line.