



Natural Connections

November 2006

Greetings!

The wind has been whipping off the shoreline here at Mercy Center. These are the mornings I'm reminded that winter is coming - whether I'm ready for it or not. This time of year is when nature slows down, or perhaps goes dormant. It is also a time for us to slow down and reflect on the beauty of leafless trees and snow.

The Ecology Program has been busy preparing for winter too. Our library at the Ecology Center is almost completely catalogued and should be ready soon for browsing. You can watch the snow outside the window and curl up with a good book. Some new items in the library include Lauren Brown's, *Wildflower and Winter Weeds*, a DVD, *The Amazing World of Bats*, and *This Fine Piece of Water* about Long Island Sound by Tom Andersen.

The Ecology Center is open Tuesdays from 2-4:30. I encourage you to visit. Browse the library and sit with a nice book.

Sincerely,

Sherill Baldwin, Ecology Director at Mercy Center

Upcoming Events & Activities at Mercy Center

- Ecological Footprints
- Nonviolence: Spirit & Practice of Personal & Social Change
- Winter Greens
- Red Wiggler Worms at Mercy Center
- 108 Sun Salutations to Celebrate Winter Solstice
- Electronic Recycling

Ecological Footprints

Nonviolence: Spirit & Practice of Personal & Social Change

What are they and how do we calculate our footprint?



After the movie *An Inconvenient Truth* last month, we talked about issues related to carbon, carbon footprints and eco-footprints. Some folks may not be familiar with this concept. Below is more information and resources.

Ecological Footprinting is a resource management tool that measures how much land and water area a human population requires to produce the resources it consumes and to absorb its wastes under prevailing technology.

In order to live, we consume what nature offers. Every action impacts the planet's ecosystems. This is of little concern as long as human use of resources does not exceed what Earth can renew. But are we taking more or using more at a rate faster than what Earth can replenish itself?

Today, humanity's Ecological Footprint is over 23% larger than what the planet can regenerate. In other words, it now takes more than one year and two months for the Earth to regenerate what we use in a single year. We maintain this overshoot by liquidating the planet's ecological resources. This is a vastly underestimated threat and one that is not adequately addressed.

By measuring the Ecological Footprint of a population (an individual, a city, a nation, or all of humanity) can assess our overshoot, which helps us manage our ecological assets more carefully. Ecological Footprints enable people to take personal and collective actions in support of a world where humanity lives within the means of one planet.

Source: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org>

Calculating your eco- footprint

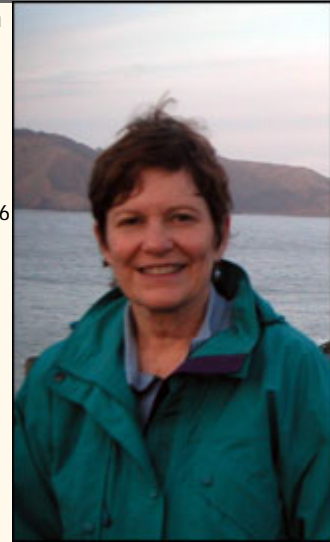
There are many different websites to help you calculate how many resources you use based on your lifestyle. When you get the results - it can be a humbling moment. As someone who works to live simply, I too require a lot of resources to live my life. I recycle and compost and I eat low on the food chain. I live in an apartment, get fairly good gas mileage (my commute is 1 hr round trip). However, I still consume a vast amount of resources to sustain my 'simple' lifestyle. The ecological footprint calculates how much land and water I need, or rather use, to support that lifestyle.

So how big is my footprint?

My consumption needs require a total 13 acres (for

With Janet Chisholm

Mercy Center
167 Neck Road
Madison, CT 06443
Friday, December 08 to
Sunday, December 10, 2006



What kind of world do you want for yourself and for the children of the future? A foundation in active nonviolence will provide the principles and tools to help you change the world. You are not powerless, you're one of the people we've been waiting for! As Dr. King declared, "It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence; it is a choice between violence and nonexistence." Active nonviolence is a spiritually-grounded power for transforming daily life; it's a path toward personal, community, national and global change. Discover how to talk more openly without avoiding sensitive topics, such as politics and sexuality. Reconnect to your own power and resources for active peacemaking. No matter what your previous training, experience or spiritual path, you will leave refreshed, inspired and committed to transformative nonviolence as a way of life and a vehicle for social change.

Janet Chisholm is a Nonviolence Trainer and Peace and Justice Coordinator at Kirkridge Study and Retreat Center in Pennsylvania. Janet developed a nationally-recognized interactive program on nonviolence called "Creating a Culture of Peace," trained in 30 states, and prepared 300 trainers, including in Palestine. She is a popular speaker and writer on active nonviolence and the Chairperson of the national Episcopal Peace Fellowship. Formerly, Janet worked at the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), the oldest multi-faith peace organization in the United States, as Interim Executive Co-Director and as Coordinator of Nonviolence Training.

[Register for this event now!](#)

production of food, fuel, shelter and goods and services). However, in comparison, the average ecological footprint in the U.S. is 24 acres per person.

Also note, there are only 4.5 biologically productive acres that exist per person worldwide!

The website stated that if everyone lived like me, we would need 3 planets.

[To calculate your Ecological Footprint, click here.](#)

Winter Greens

Experiments in the Greenhouse

Mercy Center's Greenhouse
All Winter Long

Those familiar with Mercy Center know we have a wonderful greenhouse. About ten years ago it underwent some renovations - new vinyl windows to replace glass that was in disrepair. And a couple of years ago we got a new furnace too.

I was given the opportunity to use the greenhouse - so I have a few projects in the works. One involves growing winter greens and another involves growing plants for a plant sale that will be held in conjunction with an Equinox Celebration next March.

So what are winter greens? In the warmer months we eat greens such as lettuce and spinach. Also chard, beet greens, spinach, mustard and kale are greens that grow well in the spring and fall. Other types of greens which we might choose to grow include arugula, collards, endive, cabbages, and more exotic greens like burnet, dandelion, fennel, mache, sorrel and raddichio.

I took a workshop this past summer on growing winter salad greens in a greenhouse. During the workshop I became convinced this would be a great experiment to do at Mercy Center. I say experiment because I have little experience growing food crops in a greenhouse. I may grow a lot of mud - or enough greens may be grown to provide fresh greens for the chefs in our kitchen!

A grower in Boston gave me his list of 'favorites'. After reviewing his list, these are the greens we'll be growing in Mercy's greenhouse:

Green Deer Tongue Lettuce: A romaine that can take picking after picking and still regenerate. This means it does not form a head, rather loose- leaf, that will be harvested more than once.

Winter Marvel Lettuce: A green looseleaf with outstanding winter survivability!

Winter Density Bibb/Romaine lettuce: Everything the name

Red Wiggler Worms at Mercy Center

Silently munching our waste!



A few weeks ago a pound of red wiggler worms came to Mercy Center, not just for a visit, but to live permanently. Perhaps you have heard about worm composting or vermicomposting. This is a type of composting that relies on worms to ingest bacteria from decaying food instead of a diverse population of microorganisms in a pile of compost.

Worm composting is an activity that can be done small- scale and large-scale. At Mercy Center, in the Shalom building, we are practicing small-scale worm composting. We have a small bin, in this case a 'Can-O-Worms', where the worms live in a little bit of bedding (shredded up and dampened newspaper) and are fed weekly.

Redworms (*Eisenia fetida*) are a different species of earthworm than nightcrawlers (*Eisenia hortensis*). They are much smaller and are a species that are good for eating kitchen waste. Nightcrawlers eat natural litter - leaves and other materials that are generated by nature.

However, both types of worms need to live in a moist and cool environment. Their bodies need to remain moist and cool. Even holding a worm in your hand is enough to dry out its surface and warm it up!

Red wiggler worms eat food equal to their weight everyday. So if you're interested in setting up a home system, you first need to determine how much food waste you generate at home. Usually a pound of worms works well for a household of 2 adults and 2 children. If you're a household that eats primarily a vegetarian diet and cooks most of your meals at home, you probably will need 2 pounds of worms.

So why compost with worms? If you live in an apartment and

implies - hearty and heavy.

Rouge D'Hiver Romaine Lettuce: A winter hearty red romaine. Good constant picking.

Brune D'Hiver Romaine Lettuce: A great bronzed leaf lettuce for deep winter. Survives packed conditions and low air circulation.

Sylvetta Arugala: Spicy and nutritious. Not everyone may like the flavor.

Green Wave Mustard: Spicy and productive. Very rot resistant, heavy leaves.

Gigante d'Italia Parsley: I don't know if we'll eat this as a green, but thought I might be able to grow parsley for the culinary department.

Palla di Fuoco Radicchio: White to red leaves. Sometimes this can be quite bitter - not for the faint of tongued.

Broad Leaved Sorrel: Lovely lemony flavor, vigorous in the cold. Thick foliage.

Tatsoi: Productive Asian green. Leaves are green and dense.

I will be growing the greens in succession, meaning every 2-6 weeks I will start more seeds. If you're interested in helping with this project, or want to see if anything is growing and get a taste for these new greens, please email me at sherill@mercybythesea.org or call me at Mercy Center at 203.245.0401 x190.

108 Sun Salutations to Celebrate Winter Solstice

Event at Demoiselle Yoga & Wellness

Mercy Center
167 Neck Road
Madison, CT
December 9, 2006

Demoiselle Yoga & Wellness center is offering a workshop to celebrate the return of the sun. They are located at Mercy Center.

According to Demoiselle, the Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar) is practiced to develop a connection to the solar energy, to make our bodies light, lean and supple, purify the endocrine system and calm our nervous system. Indian philosophy considers the number 108 to be a special number. The tradition of doing 108 Sun Salutations at the change of seasons is sacred and detoxifying.

The workshop will be two and a half hours. You will do 108 Sun Salutations, nine sets of twelve, with a brief Savasana (relaxation) between each set. The workshop will begin with centering and breathing; concluding with Triangle, Shoulder stand, Twist, calming breathing and a lengthy Savasana.

Note, it's not necessary to complete all 108 Sun Salutations, but rather it's about being mindful of the practice and

don't have a yard, you can still reduce your food waste by composting with worms. Worm composting can be done in the basement, the bathroom or the kitchen (all cooler rooms). I've seen one house where they had the worm bin under the kitchen sink!

Like outdoor composting, this indoor system produces an end-product. In this case, they are referred to as castings or vermi-compost. Castings are basically, well, er, worm poop. It is an incredible fertilizer which can be used in gardens and potted plants.

If you're interested in seeing our worm bin and visiting the worms, please contact me at sherill@mercybythesea.org or call me at 203.245.0401 x190.

[Learn more about vermicomposting](#)

Electronic Recycling and other Volunteer Projects

We need your help with a number of ecology projects.
Please consider giving some time to Mercy Center.

- Electronics - need help to determine what works and what is broken for reuse or recycling
- Reuseable books - need to sort through books for equinox celebration
- Weatherize the greenhouse - help caulk, prevent mice visits, lay pea stone and prepare for winter
- Heirloom garden - need help planning garden for next year, researching different heirloom varieties and designing the space in 'the cage'
- Spring Pansies - need help organizing this activity - ordering seed, potting seeds and getting pansies ready for equinox celebration

Garden Parties through the Winter

Garden Parties will continue through the winter. On good days, we may play outside, but colder days or days of inclement weather, we will work in the greenhouse. Join me for an upcoming garden party.

No need to call ahead - meet at the Ecology Center (Emmanuel House, door with the Earth flag) at 1:30pm.

Upcoming Garden Parties:

Wednesdays:

celebrating the sun's return.

For more information please contact Demoiselle Yoga & Wellness at 203-318-9642

Or visit Demoiselle's website:

Nov. 22 1:30- 4 pm
Dec. 6 1:30 - 4pm
Dec. 20 1:30 - 4pm
Thursdays:
Nov. 16 1:30- 4 pm
Nov. 30 1:30 - 4pm
Dec. 14 1:30 - 4pm

Contact Sherill about volunteering!

Wildlife Spotted in October



Here is a red-shouldered hawk seen in the wetland at Mercy Center.

Surprise in the Greenhouse



When I was cleaning out the greenhouse basement, I uncovered a snake - most likely a garter snake. It wasn't too happy getting it's picture taken and proceeded to hiss at me.

Free Magazines

In an effort to clear out some space in the Ecology Center for new books and magazines, we have many different magazine titles that we're giving away. if you would like to see what we have, please stop by during regular hours or email me at sherill@mercybythesea.org and let me know when you'll be visiting.

Ecology Center Hours

ECOLOGY CENTER HOURS
(In Emmanuel House)

Tuesdays 2 - 4:30pm.
Come by and browse through our books, videos or magazines!

ECOLOGY CENTER WISH LIST

Books - on nature, environment, ecology, eco- spirituality
Blenders!
Paper shredder

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167 Neck Rd.
PO Box 191
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Mercy Center is a conference and retreat center for human development. The Ecology Program is supported with funds from the Mercy Northeast Community, Mercy Action and ministry funds from Mercy RI and Mercy VT.

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