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FROM
AT-HOME BINS
AND CONTAINERS
TO DEPOSITORIES
OF HOME
REMODELING
MATERIALS,
RECYCLING IS
EASIER—AND
MORE
NECESSARY—
THAN EVER

BY DEBRA MCGAUGHEY

Picture this scenario: Your plans for a new kitchen are about to begin. There's a floor to replace, new cabinets to hang and several new appliances to install. Before you park a large, open dumpster on your driveway for two months to catch all your debris, consider a better alternative — recycling your reusable material for others to use... and helping the environment at the same time.

RECYCLE TO THE MAX

64



The new Ecopod Recycling System from Williams-Sonoma crushes plastic and aluminum beverage containers and stores 50 of them in a plastic pod that slides out for easy curbside transfer. Internet/catalog purchase only



Here, Historic Houston rescues and restores an Arts & Crafts-style cabinet with glass doors

THE THREE "R'S"

The days of tossing every unwanted household item into the curbside trash can are slowly fading. Now it's becoming economical, if not fashionable, to not only use recycled items, but also to donate items for recycling projects.

"We encourage people to consider the three 'R's' — Reduce, Reuse and Recycle," says Gary Readore, solid waste planning manager for the city of Houston. "The first goal is to reduce the amount of waste you create, then reuse and then to recycle it."

The key to any recycling effort, Readore says, is to first determine if the material is in reusable shape.

"If people just go in





A "Tiny Texas" rustic cabin, left, and Victorian-style home, right, by Discovery Architectural Antiques in Gonzales features salvaged wood materials, siding, windows, hardware, flooring and ceiling. Only the electrical, plumbing and insulation portions are new. These houses are environmentally friendly, perfect for ranch guest houses and built to last for another 100 years

there with a sledgehammer and just tear things up, that's not going to make items reusable. Residents should try to remove items intact as much as possible," he says.

The city of Houston has an extensive recycling program paired with solid-waste and garbage collection. In addition to typical household items collected in curbside recycling bins (such as paper, glass and metals), homeowners can get the city's help to recycle large household appliances, or "white items," at www.houstontx.gov.solidwaste/schedule.html.

To recycle appliances, Readore says residents can put them out on heavy-trash days. If the item contains Freon, the chemical must first be removed in an environmentally safe manner and tagged to show it has been removed, otherwise it won't be picked up. Readore says most appliances are then turned over to a scrap-metal business for collection and reuse.

Houston residents can bring old flooring and wood to one of its neighborhood depositories (5565 Kirkpatrick, 9200 Lawndale and 5100 Sunbeam). The rule of thumb here is if you can bring it in a SUV or car, your debris will be accepted. Large quantities of remodeling debris won't be accepted.

The city also will not remove household debris created by a contractor during a remodeling project, Readore says. The contractor is responsible for removing debris, which includes roofing, wood and new-construction items.

"There is a market for Sheetrock," Readore says. "There are some companies that will turn Sheetrock debris into the paper backing for new sheetrock." Homeowners should check with local companies first.

Water-based paint can be recycled through the city at its Westpark Recycling Center (5900 Westpark), as well as scrap electronics.

PRESERVING HISTORY

For those who have historical recycling material, Houston has several businesses interested in preserving these items. Historic Houston, (www.historichouston.org), a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and conserving Houston's architecture and architectural resources, has its own Salvage Warehouse at 1307 W. Clay St. near downtown Houston. The warehouse features historic wood windows, screens, doors, interior and exterior wood siding and trim, flooring, roofing, kitchen and bath fixtures, cabinets and bricks.

Adkins Architectural Antiques also will buy old doors, tubs, sinks from the 1920s, '30s, '40s and '50s for resale.

"We like things from those decades because architects are looking for them. They are used sometimes more than the new stuff," says owner Herve De Salve, who with this wife, Nancy O'Connor, operate the business on a quarter-block site in Houston's Midtown area. De Salve cautions that any items brought to the business must be in reusable condition. "If you bring me a rotten door, it's not going to be good to me or anyone else," he says. "We can only buy so much."

The business is chock-full of stained glass, plumbing, hardware and odds and ends. "You can buy something for 50 cents, and you can buy something for \$10,000. It just depends."

Another source for recycled wood is Discovery Architectural Antiques (www.discoverys.com). The company, which is located in Gonzales (17 miles south of Interstate 10 between Houston and San Antonio), buys long-leaf pine, mesquite oak and "any reclaimed lumber we can



A countertop compost pail from Gardener's Supply Co. has a removable liner to tote your kitchen scraps to the compost pile. A charcoal filter inside the lid controls odors.



No need to hide your composter with Gardener's Supply Co.'s Compost Cottage, featuring a decorative sun emblem on the side.



A softer, more yielding version of traditional recycling containers, these brightly colored recycling bags by Design Within Reach can function as hold-alls for recyclables as well as reusable shopping bags and gardening totes.

get," says Johann Benkendorfer, salesperson. "There are a lot of people who come in to use recycled wood for their walls and floors. They also come here for bead board and wainscoting."

The company also builds small guest and vacation houses from recycled wood. (www.tinytexashouses.com). "We bring the wood to the location and build the house on site with a pier-and-beam foundation," says Benkendorfer. "If you bring us a picture of grandpa's house, we can even scale it down and make it like grandpa's."

RECYCLE HOT LINE

One excellent source for recycling materials is this Web site: www.earth911.org. The site, which started from a hot line in Arizona in 1991, gives residents detailed information on how to recycle everything from old carpeting, tile and furniture and more via state and ZIP code.

"Basically the goal is to empower residents to find local environmental information on a national level," says Anne Reichman, director of public affairs for earth911 and its telephone counterpart, 1.800.CLEANUP. "It's basically an information network. It's grown from a reuse and recycle site to inclusion of such issues as water quality and global warming. It's a one-stop environmental shop."

DAY-TO-DAY EFFORTS

If your recycling consists of small, everyday items, you can be environmentally sensitive and stylish at the same time.

Design Within Reach, a national chain of upscale design stores, offers colorful, softer versions of traditional recycling containers through its Recycling Bags product. Made of industrial-strength tarpaulin, a heavy double-warp fabric that is plastic-coated, these recycling bags are waterproof and can be quickly washed out in the sink or outside with a garden hose. Velcro tabs allow the bags to be grouped together in a row. A set of four sells for about \$22.

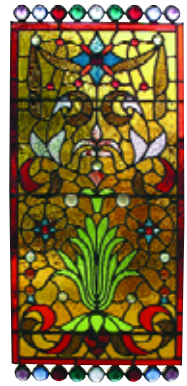
Compactors have come along way in trash reduction. GE's new Profile Built-in Compactor, with 1.4 cubic feet of capacity, uses a 1/3-horsepower motor for maximum compacting power. And Williams-Sonoma's new

Ecopod Recycling System crushes plastic and aluminum and includes two more pods for holding newspapers, glass bottles, plastic bags and other recyclables.

For outside, compost collector bins now allow you to turn your leaves or materials by restacking the bottomless shelves. Even look for compost "cottages," offering you an attractive way to keep mulch materials.

"People are getting the message that they've got to change their habits," Readore says, "and see if there is a reuse for the material, instead of just throwing it away."

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RESOURCES

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www.dwr.com

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409 St. Francis, Gonzales
888.686.2966
www.discoverys.com

GARDENER'S SUPPLY CO.
888.833.1412
www.gardeners.com

HISTORIC HOUSTON
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(Salvage Warehouse)
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www.historichouston.org

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