

Landscaping Green Purchasing Practices

Environmentally preferable goods and services are those that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when specifically compared with other goods and services that serve the same purpose. Green Purchasing includes taking into account the *embodied energy* of products to be purchased. Embodied energy is the energy consumed to extract, manufacture, transport, install and maintain materials. Items made up of materials that have a lower embodied energy are more sustainable than those with a higher embodied energy. Green Purchasing considers various environmental impacts from the overall life cycle of a product - from extraction of raw materials to disposal - when acquiring items for a business.

Green Purchasing and use of environmentally preferable products can have a profound impact – and not just on the environment. From worker safety to budget savings, wise purchasing has a number of additional tangible benefits. Some questions to ask before making a purchase might include:

Hazardous Substances and Toxicity – Does this product contain or emit hazardous or toxic materials? Buying less-hazardous products can reduce regulatory liability, improve worker safety, and lower disposal costs.

Conservation of Energy and Water – Does this product conserve energy or water? Does this product have a low embodied energy?

Products Made with Salvaged, Recycled, or Agricultural Waste Content– Is a virgin product needed, or can a product with recycled content be used?

Prevent Waste – Can this product be recycled after use or will it need special disposal?

The following checklist includes aspects of items that need to be considered when making Green Purchases of equipment and tools, office supplies and landscaping chemicals and supplies for your business.

Equipment

- ! Consider buying items that use the least amount of hazardous or toxic materials to run or clean. Also take into account emissions of greenhouse gases from the item to be purchased.
- ! Gasoline-powered landscape equipment (mowers, trimmers, blowers, chainsaws) emit over 5% of our urban air pollution. Purchase equipment that uses alternative fuels such as propane, electric and re-refined oil.
- ! Choose to purchase equipment that operates with fewer emissions such as 4-cycle engines over 2-cycle engines.
- ! Instead of purchasing electric hedge trimmers and blowers, use hand shears, rakes and brooms.
- ! Buying locally produced equipment supports the local economy and reduces energy used for transportation.
- ! Does a new piece of equipment need to be purchased? Consider repairs or modifications to broken items, in addition to the options of sharing, renting or leasing.

Office Supplies

- ! Purchasing paper, paper products and janitorial paper products that are unbleached or that are processed without chlorine or chlorine derivatives minimizes dioxin formation and other toxic pollutants.
- ! The Energy Star label can help with identification of office supplies and equipment that have been approved as energy efficient.
- ! Purchase recycled paper for printing needs. It is sold in a variety of colors and finishes and most contains a minimum of 10% to 30% post-consumer materials.
Also available is 100% post-consumer paper.

- ! Consider purchasing items that do not use excessive packaging that is not recyclable.

Landscaping Chemicals and Supplies

- ! Does the product contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs)? Choose products with low-VOC content as VOCs create ozone and can cause adverse health effects.
- ! To keep gardens pest-free, consider purchasing products that use biological controls and organic methods without the use of chemicals.
- ! Look for mulch made of shredded wood waste. This keeps wood out of landfills and incinerators.
- ! Consider purchasing Hydraulic mulch (commonly called "hydromulch") which consists of small pieces of cellulose fibers, which can be made completely from wood waste or recovered paper.
- ! Try to reduce the purchase of chemicals and supplies as much as possible to meet needs but not create waste or excessive storage.
- ! When making large bulk purchases, buy items that are packaged in larger containers or totes that can possibly be reused instead of many smaller packages.
- ! Buy from suppliers that will accept back unused materials for reuse.
- ! Buying locally produced supplies supports the local economy and reduces energy used for transportation.
- ! Purchase chemicals with spill protection in the design of the packaging such as premixed formulas.
- ! Avoid chemicals with long time periods for chemical breakdown or that have high fish toxicity (see www.SalmonSafe.org for a list of undesirable chemicals)