

What Shade of Green?

“Forever in a landfill.”

I have to admit, that gets to me every time I hear it. It's the tagline to a series of commercials on U.S. television for a water filtration system. The advertisements show various sports and other activities, then they show an empty water bottle afterward—then the words, forever in a landfill. An estimated 22 billion bottles were thrown away last year. This isn't just a U.S. phenomenon either, Mexico and China are right behind us in the count, and Italy is the highest per capita. How did we ever get to the point where we bottle and sell water—billions of bottles each year—and it is preferred by many over what is available for free? In the U.S., the government standards of tap water are more stringent than those for bottled water. Some brands of bottled water actually are tap water from various municipalities. And each bottle requires resources to manufacture and transport.

I try to do my part. I've been a recycler since the very first Earth Day in 1970. I was in the 7th grade. Back then we organized newspaper drives and tried to educate our parents about avoiding products with excess packaging. Nearly 40 years later, I'm separating out my garbage into various recyclables, switching out light bulbs in my house, riding my bike to work (when the weather is nice), and I installed a programmable thermostat and a water heater blanket to conserve energy.

We all work as arborists and urban foresters, a green industry in many senses of the word. I'm proud to be a part of a profession that plants and cares for trees. This is a great time to be associated with trees, as the “Going Green” movement extols the benefits of trees to the environment. What a terrific opportunity to spread our message and advance our mission, as Jim Skiera says, “Making the world a better place one tree at a time.”

Yet we have to be careful about getting caught up in the “greenwashing” schemes that are also growing in number and form. The website TerraChoice.com defines greenwash as: the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service. The environmental marketing website goes on to list the seven sins of greenwashing, including false claims, irrelevant claims, and hidden trade-offs that amount to a net negative effect on the environment. Some legitimate and good intentioned groups have been used in plans in which their tree planting programs have been credited toward offsetting environmental sins, but in which there have been some disturbing reports. I've read about double and triple counting of plantings, planting inappropriate species for the hardiness zone, and mass plantings that

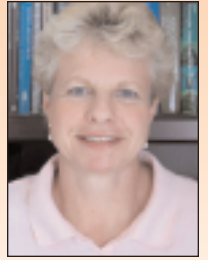
are not cared for and allowed to die. Sometimes it really isn't easy being green.

ISA is trying to become greener at the headquarters office in Champaign, Illinois. We're investigating LEEDS certification, conserving and managing energy use, and reducing and recycling waste. We've also gone electronic with several publications and mailings and we're reducing travel by conducting e-meetings.

This issue of *Arborist News* is a special “green” issue with most of the articles related to the topic of trees and the environment. You may have noticed that this issue is printed on recycled paper... which brings me to our next dilemma. The additional cost of printing this magazine on recycled paper starts at about \$3,000 per issue (the price goes higher depending on the quality of the paper and the percentage that is post-consumer waste). If we made a permanent switch, that would be \$18,000 per year that would have to be covered by our members' dues. Although that sounds like a lot of money, it works out to less than \$1 per year, per member. And if we decide to make that change, shouldn't we also look at the printing of the catalog, scientific journal, member directory, dues billings, and all other major paper uses?

As with any decisions of significance, there are costs and benefits either way, and certainly there is some controversy over what the right direction to go might be. So, we are putting the question to you, our members and readers. Should *Arborist News* switch to publishing on recycled paper? Send me an e-mail (slilly@isa-arbor.com) and let me know what you think. We'll publish some of the responses in upcoming issues.

Meanwhile, we'll continue with our other green initiatives and we'll keep spreading the message: trees are good; trees need care; and arborists care for trees. And I will continue using my washable sports bottle and refilling it with water from the faucet because every time I drink from a “disposable” bottle, I think, “Forever in a landfill.” **AN**



By Sharon Lilly

Director of
Educational Goods
& Services