The Three “Rs” for 2011: Reduce, Reuse AND Recycle

By Ginger Easton Smith, County Extension Agent

Reduce, reuse, recycle; we’ve all probably heard that phrase a million times but it still bears repeating.  These practices conserve natural resources, save landfill space, conserve energy, and reduce water pollution, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.  These three “R’s” are not an all or nothing kind of thing; any effort to reduce, reuse and recycle is helpful.

The first, “reduce” is the most important because it is about reducing the amount of resources used in the first place.  An example of how to “reduce” is reducing the amount of garbage each of us generates.  This could mean purchasing products with the least amount of packaging, using washable plates rather than paper ones, and taking reusable bags to the grocery and other stores.  Some other ways to reduce are to buy used items (love those garage sales!); buy products made from post-consumer recycled materials, especially paper and bathroom tissue; and select appliances and electronics that are energy efficient.  Also, remember to conserve water and energy in your yard and home.

Reusing items (either by you or someone else) should be considered before throwing them away or even recycling them, since it keeps resources in use longer.  Clothes, household items and other things that are no longer wanted but are still in good condition can be donated to a thrift store.  Appliances and computers can often be repaired, cell phones can be donated to certain charities or turned in at the cell phone store to be refurbished, and jars can be used to store leftovers rather than purchasing more plastic containers.  Composting yard and kitchen scraps is another way to reuse, and so is using mulch from the Aransas County transfer station (and mulching around plants is also a great way to conserve water).

Although recycling is an excellent thing to do, it is the last of the three “R’s” because it requires a large amount of energy and other inputs in comparison to reducing and reusing. For example, it takes 20 times more energy to make aluminum from bauxite ore than using recycled aluminum. Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to power a computer for 3 hours!

Recycling is easy to do in Aransas County.  If you live in the Rockport city limits, recyclable items can be picked up at the curbside at no additional charge. Curbside recycling bins are available free of charge at Rockport City Hall.  The City’s contracted garbage collector recently upgraded their facilities enabling them to expand the items they pick up for recycling.  Now picked up for recycling are: newspaper and newspaper inserts, plastic containers with 1, 2, or 5 symbol; tin, steel and aluminum cans; typing, writing and computer paper; mail flyers, magazines and catalogs, cardboard-cut down to 2’x2’, paperboard boxes (such as shoe and cereal boxes) and steel.

Items that are not accepted are glass, paint, automotive fluid, hazardous materials, paper or cardboard products with food stains (i.e. pizza boxes) and plastic bags.  For more information, including the pick-up schedule, see [http://cityofrockport.com/FAQ.aspx?QID=4](https://webmail.indstate.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=e15a0478c60a4c698f37b48aace49397&URL=http%3a%2f%2fcityofrockport.com%2fFAQ.aspx%3fQID%3d4) or contact the City of Rockport.

People who don’t live in Rockport can take their recycling to the Aransas County transfer station at 872 Airport Rd. in Fulton.  They accept plastic with the 1 or 2 symbol, tin and aluminum cans, auto batteries, appliances, oil, oil filters, anti-freeze, paints, metal, and concrete less than 30" in diameter with no steel protruding.  The transfer station is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.  Contact them to find out when they are closed for holidays.  For more information, see [http://www.aransascounty.org/envirohealth/transferstation.php](https://webmail.indstate.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=e15a0478c60a4c698f37b48aace49397&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.aransascounty.org%2fenvirohealth%2ftransferstationphp) or give them a call.

Schools and clubs often collect aluminum drink cans to raise money for various projects.  Collecting cans for them helps them and the environment!  Another idea is to check the phone book for recycling businesses in the area that pay for materials.

Although plastic bags are not accepted by the city or county for recycling, many grocery stores have receptacles at their entrances to deposit clean, plastic bags for recycling.

Reducing, reusing and recycling can make a difference to our community

*Texas AgriLife Extension Service - Aransas County Office can be reached by phone at 361 790-0103 or by email at* [*aransas-tx@tamu.edu*](https://webmail.indstate.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=e15a0478c60a4c698f37b48aace49397&URL=mailto%3aaransas-tx%40tamu.edu) *and is located at 611 E. Mimosa, Rockport, TX.*

*AgriLife Extension education programs serve people of all ages, regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap or national origin.*