



Landfill's green energy helping to reduce harmful emissions

The Buncombe County Landfill Gas-to-Energy Project began producing electricity in 2011 with a generator powered by landfill gas. The landfill gas project is

total greenhouse gas emissions.

The Landfill Gas-to-Energy Project began in 2010 with the installation of additional gas collection wells at the

landfill. These wells tap the methane gas that is produced as trash decomposes in the landfill. Instead of releasing this powerful greenhouse gas into our air, which can negatively affect air quality and trap heat in our atmosphere, the wells capture it and divert it to the generator. Creating electricity from this gas reduces the demand for coal or natural gas, which are both non-renewable resources.



approved by the Climate Action Reserve to register carbon credits for the capture and destruction of methane emitted from the landfill. At the beginning of 2013, over 2,000 credits had already been registered. By the end of the year, we expect to register 26,900 more carbon credits, which is equivalent to offsetting the emissions from 5,040 passenger vehicles. Carbon credits are a market-based mechanism to reduce

The generator at the landfill will produce 1.4 megawatts of electricity annually over the next several years, enough to power about 1,100 homes per year.

The electricity generated is being sold through a joint venture between Progress Energy and French Broad Co-op.

A native makeover

Native plants are better suited to local conditions than their imported cousins. They thrive with less intervention than is required to simply sustain exotic plants. As a bonus, they often provide food and cover for native wildlife.

In terms of area, the most popular landscape plant is turf grass. However, it is also one of the most expensive landscapes to maintain and one of the least environmentally friendly. Regular mowing to maintain a lawn is labor and energy intensive. Widespread use of synthetic fertilizers, chemical pesticides, and weed killers to keep a lawn lush and uniform can be harmful to pets, plants, and wildlife in the immediate area and can disrupt downstream waterways in the form of runoff.

A transition to native plants will eventually require less work, appear more natural, and allow you more time to enjoy the garden rather than spending every free moment maintaining it. While changing your entire landscape to native plants can be expensive, a phased transition will be affordable and allow you to learn as you grow.

For more information about lawns, gardens, and native plants, check with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension's

Buncombe County Center by calling 255-5522 or visiting <http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu>. You'll also find information at <http://ncbg.unc.edu/plants-and-gardening>.



© iStockphoto.com | Holly Kuchera

This is your water on drugs Improper disposal of medications

Every year, many families are faced with the challenge of how to dispose of medicines that are not entirely consumed. Prescriptions change, symptoms improve, patients die, and individuals fail to take their



© iStockphoto.com | G.M. Vozz

medications as directed. All these situations can leave people wondering what to do with the unused portions. In addition, over-the-counter

medications purchased in large quantities often expire before they are used. These medications are usually thrown in the trash, flushed down the toilet, or simply left to pile up in the medicine cabinet. This, in turn, can lead to drugs contaminating our water supply, accidentally poisoning children and pets, or being stolen for illegal use.

A wide array of pharmaceuticals are present in our waterways—hormones, antibiotics, analgesics, antidepressants, and tranquilizers, to name a few. In 1999-2000, the U.S. Geological Survey evaluated 139 streams in 30 states for pharmaceuticals, hormones, and other organic contaminants. They found contamination in 80% of the streams tested. Septic systems and wastewater treatment plants currently in use were not designed to remove pharmaceuticals. Several layers of additional and expensive treatment would be required to remove all of these chemicals from the water. Over multiple generations, the presence of medications in these bodies of water could impact aquatic life, animals, and even humans.

Improper storage and disposal of medications can also have tragic consequences for our children and pets. Every year, about 54,000 children under the age of six are treated in emergency rooms for poisoning from self-ingested prescription and over-the-counter medicines. Children are not the only ones

at risk from accidental poisoning. In 2011, the Animal Poison Control Center received over 25,000 calls about pets consuming prescription drugs intended for people.

Finally, improper disposal or indefinite storage of certain pharmaceuticals creates opportunities for drug abuse. Commonly abused prescription drugs include opioid painkillers (narcotics), depressants prescribed for anxiety or sleep disorders, and stimulants used to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder or narcolepsy. In 2009, 16 million Americans over the age of 11 had taken a prescription pain reliever, tranquilizer, stimulant, or sedative for non-medical purposes in the year prior to being surveyed. Simply throwing these drugs in the trash leaves the possibility that someone may end up using or distributing them in an illegal fashion. And, simply allowing them to build up in your cupboard is not any better. Of surveyed teens who abused prescription pain relievers, 62% had to look no further than their parents' medicine cabinets.

Proper disposal of unneeded medications protects our environment, our communities, and our families. The Buncombe County Sheriff's Department now offers a drop-off program for safe drug disposal. There is a Pill Drop Box in the lobby of the Sheriff's office, which is located at 202 Haywood Street in Asheville. Here's how it works:

- ◆ Pills should be taken from the original containers and put into the storage bags supplied at the drop point. ALL PILLS (vitamins, aspirin, pain medications, etc.) can be placed into the same storage bag. They will be incinerated as one item.
- ◆ TAKE YOUR CONTAINERS AND LABELS AWAY WITH YOU. You should dispose of your personal identification information yourself. The plastic containers can be recycled with all other plastics in your curbside or drop-off recycling program. Medications can be dropped off Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If you have questions about this program, please call the Sheriff's office at 250-4503.

Celebrate Earth Day!

The fifth annual Asheville Earth Day will take place on Saturday, April 20, on Lexington Avenue in downtown Asheville. This FREE, day-long event will provide family-friendly fun and promote green living. There will be speakers, musical entertainment, a Kids' Village, an Eco-Village, and more!

Learn more at <http://avleearthday.org>.



Our dirty love affair with trash

Edward Humes' new book is a surprisingly entertaining overview of the wealth wasted and resources lost in America's trash. *Garbology: Our Dirty Love Affair With Trash* reveals the past and current status of our trash addiction in a way that keeps you turning the pages. He brings the subject to life through the stories of a dozen or so interesting individuals who are real characters. Likewise, the last part of the book highlights several people, organizations, communities, and nations that create less waste and deal with the waste that is produced in more productive ways.

In the introduction, Humes grabs our attention with the story of an elderly Chicago couple rescued from their trash-choked home in 2010. The nearly 6 tons of debris which made their home impassable were the result of just about 3 years of hoarding their trash. To Humes, such trash hoarders provide a lesson for the rest of us about how much of what we buy is wasted. He then introduces us to a woman who became China's first female billionaire by exporting used paper from the U.S. to China. In 2010, China's number one export to the U.S. was computer equipment, valued at \$50 billion. The same year, America's top two exports to China were waste paper and scrap metal, valued at \$8 billion. In Humes' words, "America, a country that once built things for the rest of the world, has transformed itself into China's trash compactor."

Beginning with the story of Big Mike Speiser, the colorful equipment operator who helps sculpt 13,000 tons of trash each day into a landfill cell 15 feet tall and the length and width of a football field, the book outlines in fascinating detail how a modern landfill works and the ways it is superior to the open dumps, open burning, and just plain littering of the past. But despite the use of liners to prevent water pollution, methane systems to produce energy, and daily cover to discourage vermin, potentially useful material is still being locked away and wasted. One number you won't forget after reading this book is the 102 tons of trash each American produces in his or her lifetime. Much attention is given to the value of this material and how avoiding that waste can be a way to improve our environment, reduce energy consumption, and improve our economy.

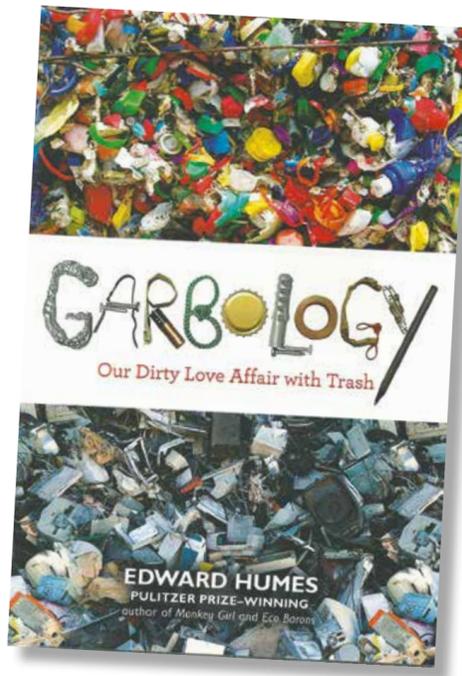
Humes suggests it is the very efficiency of our modern sanitation systems that keeps most people from realizing there is a problem. As long as the trash disappears from the curb, we don't have to question too strongly why we bought all of that stuff in the first place. He believes the idea of buying our way to happiness began with the post-World War II explosion of marketing and the consumer economy. Humes summarizes: "This was the moment in which the Depression-era version of the American Dream—which held that hard work, diligent saving, and conserving resources paved the road to the good life—began to fade, surpassed by the notion that the highest expression and measurement of the American Dream lay in material wealth itself, the acquisition of stuff."

While the first two parts of the book relate a bit of our trash history and raise our awareness about the impact of our current waste habits on the environment, the last part is devoted to "a small but growing number of businesspeople, environmentalists, communities, and families who see in our trash the biggest untapped opportunity of the century."

Most of these later stories are about innovative ways to reuse or recycle the material currently being wasted. However, the last is about Bea Johnson, a

woman whose family of four decided to avoid creating waste altogether. Their simplified, downsized lifestyle leaves them with a minuscule amount of waste that cannot be recycled, repurposed, given away, or composted. In one year, their household trash can fit inside a mason jar. That lifestyle also reduced their family expenses by 40% compared to what they used to spend. Humes says that the Johnson family has discovered less waste translates into more money, less debt, more leisure time, and less stress. "When you stop wasting, everything changes," said Bea Johnson. "There is a way back. And, if it can work for a family, it can work for a country."

Humes closes with a reminder and a few suggestions. First, the reminder—which he calls "the coolest thing about trash"—our creation of trash is one of the few "societal, economic, and environmental problems over which ordinary individuals can exert control." As he notes, "you can choose to be more or less wasteful." And his suggestions? They begin with a simple, "No, thank you." Refuse what you don't need. Choose used and refurbished items when you do need something. Replace bottled water with chilled tap water in a washable and refillable bottle. Carry your own shopping bags. And, finally, think about what it really costs to buy, maintain, and store goods.



Condition Soil, Conserve Water, Coax Growth, Contain Disease

What can do it? Compost can!

When worked into the soil, compost improves soil structure, making clay soils looser and sandy soils tighter. As a result, compost helps both types of soil use water more efficiently, keeping clay soils from getting waterlogged and sandy soils from draining too quickly. Whether preparing the soil for vegetables, flowers, turf grasses, or new trees and shrubs, these characteristics of compost will help promote root growth, reduce plant stress, and reduce plant loss due to disease. It is also an excellent organic fertilizer which tends to stabilize the acid/alkaline balance of the soil. This can reduce or eliminate the need for first year fertilization.

Used as a top dressing on established lawn turf or as mulch over established beds, compost can reduce the need for watering and synthetic fertilizer. If coarser compost is used as mulch, it will also help suppress weeds in the garden.

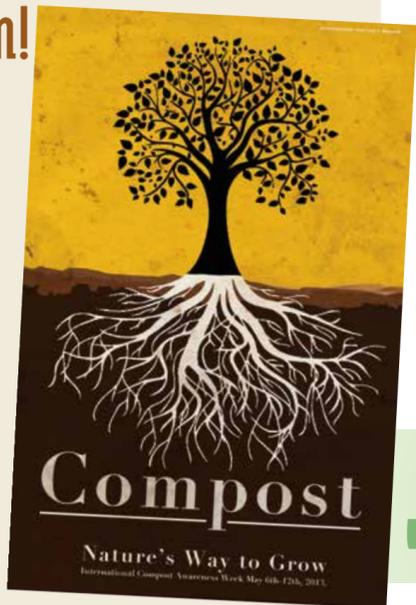
Best of all, compost is made from materials you normally have available. The process is technically the controlled aerobic decay of organic nitrogen and carbon. That sounds complex, but you actually have organic sources of nitrogen and carbon readily available. Organic sources of nitrogen include fresh grass clippings, green foliage, and weeds pulled from your garden, as well as

household food scraps. Organic carbon includes dried, dead branches, twigs, and leaves, as well as shredded paper, wood chips, and sawdust. These are mixed in a pile, compost bin, or tumbler, watered lightly during dry spells, and turned occasionally. During most weather conditions, your material should be moist but not soaking wet. If your pile becomes soggy during wet weather, turn and mix the material to add air and help it dry.

If you want to speed up the process, try to chop the organic debris into finer pieces, cover the pile to keep it warmer, and turn it more often. The use of a tumbler expedites the process by increasing the heat and making it easy to turn the material. It also has the added benefit of controlling pests and odors better than bins or open piles.

Give your compost up to six months to cook and cure. For faster compost, turn the pile more often. When the waste has become dark and crumbly, you have compost!

For more information, visit <http://epa.gov/recycle/composting.html>, <http://compostingcouncil.org>, or http://eartheasy.com/grow_compost.html. You can also contact our local Extension Service or call us.



International Compost Awareness Week is May 6-12, 2013. Learn more at <http://compostingcouncil.org/icaw>.

A growing pile of gadgets

Electronic gadgets are all around us. According to the Consumer Electronics Association, the average American household had 24 electronic products in 2008. With the increased use of game systems, smartphones, tablet computers, and other devices, that number will continue to grow.

While electronics are handy, they are hardly benign. Electronics of all sorts, from TVs and computers to smartphones and tablets, contain heavy metals and chemicals which can pose a serious health risk if released into the environment. Lead, mercury, and cadmium, which are heavy metals commonly found in electronic products, can cause brain damage and respiratory illness if they are handled improperly. The plastics in consumer electronics contain odorless and tasteless chemicals that can accumulate in both the environment and the human body, damaging the liver and the thyroid in adults and putting children at risk of mental and physical impairment.



Responsibly recycling electronic waste reduces these risks. In addition, recycling reduces the energy expended and pollution produced during the manufacture of new electronic products. It also reduces the need to mine and process valuable new mineral resources. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, for every 1 million cell phones recycled, 35,274 pounds of copper, 772 pounds of silver, 75 pounds of gold, and 33 pounds of palladium are recovered. For every 1 million laptops recycled, enough electricity is conserved to power 3,657 homes for a year.

Over 100 million pounds of reusable materials are already recovered from electronic products annually. However, this represents only 15-20% of the electronic waste produced in the U.S. each year. Too many electronics remain in storage or end up in landfills where they don't belong.

If you have working electronics that you no longer want or need, consider selling them or giving them away to someone who will use them. Otherwise, be sure to recycle them along with broken or outdated electronic items. Not sure how? Contact us!



Here are some tips that will make cleaning greener and healthier for your family:

- Think mechanical first. A scrub brush, a dish scrubber, and a retired toothbrush can provide a lot of cleaning power with no chemicals at all. Drain baskets keep drains free of debris that can lead to clogs.
- Use up chemicals that you have on hand before purchasing replacement products. If you have cleaners stored in multiple locations (some in the laundry room, others under the kitchen sink, and a few in the garage), find them and inventory what you have available.
- Consider creating your own cleaners from common household products, such as vinegar, baking soda, salt, lemon juice, and mineral oil. Many of these cleaners are easy to make, effective, and less expensive than pre-mixed chemical solutions. (Remember that even homemade cleaners can be irritating to skin and eyes. Always use caution in mixing, storing, and using homemade cleaners.)
- If you choose to purchase a cleaning product, choose the mildest and most benign chemical product available. Although it is not mandatory, a few manufacturers do voluntarily provide a complete list of ingredients. Try to select products that provide complete information on ingredients, offer the most clear instructions on use, and don't require extraordinary safety measures for use or disposal.

GREEN-UP YOUR CLEAN-UP

- When you purchase products or containers, look for recycled-content and recyclable containers. Rather than using paper towels, choose reusable towels and old rags. If you purchase paper towels, opt for those made from recycled-content paper.
- Buying concentrates reduces packaging waste. Some cleaning products are now sold in concentrated form; you finish making the solution by adding tap water at home. Other products, such as laundry detergent, are concentrated and ready to use when you get home. Remember—if you have softened water, you can use even less detergent.
- Keep unfinished products in their original, labeled containers. Never pour potentially harmful chemicals into food or beverage containers for storage. Store all cleaning products out of reach of children and away from pets. Do not store potentially hazardous materials close to sources of heat or in direct sunlight.
- Dispose of containers and unused chemicals properly. Follow the label instructions. If the instructions are unclear, call the manufacturer for more details or call us.

FAST FACTS



CAUTION

According to the Cooperative Extension System, the average U.S. household contains from 3 to 10 gallons of materials that are classified as hazardous.

LITTER: IT'S NOT TRENDY!

Litter may not be trendy, but the song "Gangnam Style" by South Korean pop star PSY definitely is! One of the many parodies of "Gangnam Style" is a video produced by the Malaysian Plastic Manufacturers Association to discourage littering. See the video at <http://youtu.be/R8uenmu04eA>.

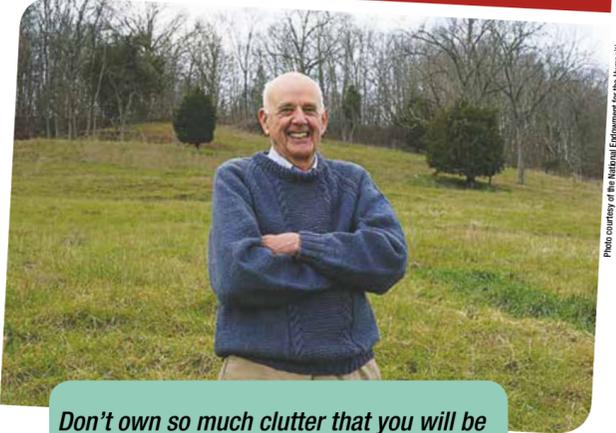


ANTICIPATION



Have you ever noticed that wanting something feels better than having it? University of Missouri Professor Marsha Richins explores this phenomenon in her article, "When Wanting Is Better Than Having: Materialism, Transformation Expectations, and Product-Evoked Emotions in the Purchase Process," which was recently published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. In three separate studies, she found that more materialistic consumers got a large "happiness boost" from thinking about a future purchase but, upon acquiring the item, saw those feelings of happiness dissipate quickly. Richins concludes, "Learning that acquisition is less pleasurable than anticipating a purchase may help [consumers] delay purchases until they are better able to afford them."

QUOTES REQUESTED



Don't own so much clutter that you will be relieved to see your house catch fire.

Wendell Berry, 1934-American poet and farmer

What's UP?



Buncombe County accepts electronics every Friday between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. at a special drop-off area at the landfill, excluding Fridays around a holiday. At these Friday-only drop-offs, you can drop off televisions, computers, and other electronics. We will accept up to three televisions per week from RESIDENTS for free (unless stripped or broken); additional TVs will be accepted at \$8 per plastic TV, \$10 per wooden console TV, and \$20 for stripped or broken TVs. We will also accept up to three computers per week for free from RESIDENTS; after that, there is a charge of 30 cents per pound. Businesses are permitted to recycle electronics and televisions for the fees outlined above.

On Fridays only, you can also drop off household hazardous waste (HHW), such as household, automotive, and lawn and garden chemicals. The following HHW items are accepted from Buncombe County households:

- Paint and paint-related items, such as water sealer, paint thinners, enamels, and polyurethane – \$2.00 per gallon with a 20-gallon limit
- All flammable liquids (gasoline, kerosene, etc.) – Recycling fee of \$2.00 per gallon, 20-gallon limit
- Pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, motor oil, antifreeze, and lead-acid batteries – No charge
- Rechargeable household batteries – No charge for typical household quantities

Businesses are never allowed to drop off hazardous waste. However, electronics are accepted from businesses for a recycling fee as noted above. Special arrangements must be made prior to acceptance. Contact the Solid Waste Department prior to arrival. Proof of county residency is required. Please call the landfill at 250-5462 if you have questions about the electronics or HHW program.

Wide range of materials accepted at landfill

At the landfill, we accept a wide range of materials for recycling. All of these items can be recycled at no charge:

- ◆ All plastics marked #1-7, including bottles, jugs, and jars, as well as yogurt and margarine tubs, dairy containers, clear clamshell containers, plastic drink cups, deli containers, and produce boxes
- ◆ Aluminum pie tins and food trays
- ◆ Milk, soup, and juice cartons
- ◆ Juice boxes
- ◆ Glass bottles and jars
- ◆ Metal food and beverage cans
- ◆ Empty aerosol cans
- ◆ Newspapers and inserts
- ◆ Mixed paper, including catalogs, junk mail, magazines, egg cartons (paper only), envelopes, manila envelopes, office paper, phone books, glossy paper, Post-It Notes, cereal and similar boxes, brown paper bags, empty paper towel tubes, and shredded paper
- ◆ Corrugated cardboard
- ◆ Used cooking oil
- ◆ Lead-acid batteries
- ◆ Used motor oil and oil filters
- ◆ White goods, including stoves, refrigerators, air conditioners, freezers, and all metals
- ◆ Empty, triple-rinsed pesticide containers
- ◆ Empty propane tanks (20-pound, gas grill type ONLY)

Reusable medical equipment, such as wheelchairs and crutches, is also

Directions to the Buncombe County Landfill:

From I-240 East or West, take Exit 4A to 19/23 North. Travel 1 mile and then take UNC-A exit. At the end of the exit, turn left. Go to traffic light and turn right onto 251 North. Continue on 251 North for 9 miles to Panther Branch Road. Turn right onto Panther Branch Road and travel 1/10 of a mile to the Buncombe County Landfill, which is located on the right. The new landfill is 6 miles north of the old landfill.

accepted at the landfill. There is no charge to drop this equipment off, as long as it is suitable for use. These items are loaned or donated to people who need them but cannot afford them.

You may also recycle tires. Each year, residents may recycle 10 tires without rims at no charge. After that, tires may be recycled at \$2 per tire. All tires on rims (even the first 10) are \$2 per tire.

You can drop off household trash, as well as bulky waste, construction and demolition waste, and yard waste, at the landfill. There is a fee to dispose of trash,

bulky waste, wood pallets, and yard waste. Fees are lower for clean pallets and yard waste than for trash.

No matter where you live in Buncombe County, you can drop off materials at the landfill for recycling or proper disposal. The landfill is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. If you have questions, call the landfill at 250-5462.

Household hazardous waste (HHW) and electronics are accepted at the landfill on *Fridays only* (see "What's Up?" for details).

Transfer Station offers convenient recycling and disposal for household trash

At the Buncombe County Transfer Station, you can drop off bagged residential trash at a cost of \$1 per bag. This is a convenient, low-cost method for properly disposing of your household trash.

In addition, you can recycle many materials at no charge. Reduce your disposal fees by recycling all of these materials for free:

- ◆ All plastics marked #1-7, including bottles, jugs, and jars, as well as yogurt and margarine tubs, dairy containers, clear clamshell containers, plastic drink cups, deli containers, and produce boxes
- ◆ Aluminum pie tins and food trays
- ◆ Milk, soup, and juice cartons
- ◆ Juice boxes
- ◆ Glass bottles and jars
- ◆ Metal food and beverage cans
- ◆ Empty aerosol cans
- ◆ Newspapers and inserts
- ◆ Mixed paper, including catalogs, junk mail, magazines, egg cartons (paper only), envelopes, manila envelopes, office paper, phone books, glossy paper, Post-It Notes, cereal and similar boxes, brown paper bags, empty paper towel tubes, and shredded paper
- ◆ Corrugated cardboard
- ◆ Appliances
- ◆ Lead-acid batteries
- ◆ Drained oil filters

You can also drop off reusable corrugated moving boxes and shipping cartons for reuse. This program is offered in partnership with Beverly Hanks

Directions to the Transfer Station:

From I-240, take exit 1B (Brevard Road/Hwy. 191). At the traffic light, take Highway 191 North. Turn left onto Shelburne Road. Turn left onto Hominy Creek Road. The Transfer Station will be on the left. From I-40, take exit 47 (Brevard Road/Hwy. 191). At the traffic light, take Highway 191 North. After crossing I-240, turn left onto Shelburne Road. Turn left onto Hominy Creek Road. The Transfer Station will be on the left.

Realty. If you are planning to move, you can pick up boxes at no charge. If you have already moved, simply break down and drop off your used boxes.

We also accept medical equipment, such as wheelchairs and crutches, for reuse.

You can drop off "sharps," such as needles and lancets. Please place sharps into an approved sharps container (available at pharmacies) or in a sturdy, thick-walled plastic jug.

All other garbage items, including bulky waste, construction and demolition debris, mattresses, wood, and other oversized items, must be disposed of at the Buncombe County Landfill.

The Buncombe County Transfer Station is open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. If you have questions, call the transfer station at 250-6205.

We want your suggestions, questions and comments!
Buncombe County
Solid Waste Department
81 Panther Branch Road
Alexander, NC 28701
828-250-5460
www.buncombecounty.org

Copyright© 2013
 Buncombe County and
 Eco Partners, Inc. All rights reserved.

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER
 70% POST-CONSUMER NEWS
 CONTENT, USING SOY INKS

Important Phone Numbers for County Residents	
Mobile Home Removal/Environmental Control – Roger Presley.....	828-250-5470
Junk Yards/Junk Cars – Mason Scott.....	828-250-5471
Bioreactor Manager – Kristy Smith.....	828-250-5473
Buncombe County Landfill.....	828-250-5462
Buncombe County Transfer Station.....	828-250-6205
Waste Pro – Residential Trash Pick-up.....	828-684-7790
Important Phone Numbers for City of Asheville Residents	
Asheville City Sanitation – Trash Pick-up.....	828-259-5857
Curbside Management – Recycling.....	828-252-2532