

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

SEPTEMBER 2022

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Biochar: A Climate Change Mitigation Solution by Jasmine Friedrich Yap

What if the effects of climate change could be reduced or eliminated? Smiths Falls may already have a key solution to the climate change crisis which becomes more pressing each and every day.

News outlets are continuously reporting extremes such as the hottest and coldest temperatures being recorded, more severe storms are being experienced, and increased drought and forest fires are being seen world-wide. With this dark reality upon us, now is the time to be looking for solutions.

Biochar, formed by burning animal and plant biomass at extremely hot temperatures in low oxygen environments, presents a solution to climate change. The Rideau Roundtable, in collaboration with REAL, have begun to explore how to produce and implement large amounts of biochar in the Smiths Falls community. This past summer, they hired Jasmine Friedrich Yap through the Canada Summer Job program, to work alongside Nathaniel Morris, who is the team lead of the biochar project.

Biochar has numerous benefits. To name a few, biochar would radically shrink Smiths Falls' carbon footprint, it is proven to increase crop yields, and it is known to absorb soil pollutants and remove heavy metals and acids from soil. Biochar works to increase the cation exchange capacity (CEC) which results in an increase in soil's richness and potential fertility.

The concept of biochar is nothing new; in fact, the earliest known form of biochar was created and used by the pre-Columbian Indigenous Amazonians. Biochar is also known as terra preta de Indio, as coined by European settlers. Now, in the 21st century, biochar is becoming increasingly popular due to its many benefits. This has led to more research being conducted on the production and use of biochar.



Construction of the biochar pit at the Smiths Falls municipal compost site..



Biochar (continued)

Over the past four months, members of the Rideau Roundtable have been working at the Smiths Falls compost site to burn the town's green waste to make biochar through a process called pyrolysis. This green waste would otherwise be something that would need resources to eliminate. Each bio-char burn results in improved methods to produce more biochar, a charcoal-like substance, with greater quantities of carbon.



Burning the biochar.

In the future, the Rideau Roundtable and REAL plan to increase biochar production to spread its benefits around the Smiths Falls community and further. The potential of biochar is endless and is well suited for home gardens, agriculture, and waste management. This project serves as a perfect platform for education as well as a way to fight climate change. The possibilities are endless!



Team lead, Nathaniel Morris, shows off the solar panels which, in addition to a water pump, were generously funded by REAL.

Home Energy Assessments by John Appleby

Climate change is upon us and many home-owners wonder how they can make a difference. The residential sector, which is of course comprised of millions of homes, each with their own level of GHG emissions, accounts for about 12% of greenhouse gases in Canada.

Home-owners can find out how many tonnes of GHGs their home produces through the Energy Audit process of Greener Homes and Enbridge Gas. The Report tells home-owners their current level of GHG emissions. It then compares this with how many tonnes would be produced if their house was built to today's standards and finally what the potential savings of GHGs would be if the renovation upgrades were implemented. This can be dramatic. For example, by installing a heat pump you can displace the GHGs from burning fossil fuels from oil, propane or natural gas with cleaner emitting electricity and gain increased efficiency from 90% to 250%.

REAL continues to conduct energy audits in the Smith Falls area with limited availability. If you are interested in having an Energy Audit and would like to take advantage of the rebates for upgrades please start by registering with the Greener Homes program <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy-efficiency/homes/canada-greener-homes-grant/23441>.

You can contact John by email: jappleby@realaction.ca.



Elva Corless Recognized in Remarkable Women Exhibit at Heritage House

One of REAL's founding members was recognized in the "[Remarkable Women of Smiths Falls](#)," exhibit at Heritage House Museum. The exhibit highlights 28 women from different walks of life with a connection to the town and highlights the impact they've had on the community. REAL heard that the museum was putting together an exhibit and nominated Elva Corless in the Environment category, and were delighted when she was accepted. Brenda King, Norma Wrightly and Barb Hicks collaborated on providing a brief summary of her accomplishments. Brenda and Barb were able to attend the opening of the exhibit at the museum on July 13.

The following is a condensed version of the description, which is available on our website.

Elva Corless – "Grandmother of Recycling"

Elva Corless was a long-time advocate for recycling and environmental causes in Smiths Falls, a tireless supporter of her church and a key community builder.

Elva kickstarted the recycling movement here in Smiths Falls in 1979 by organizing a monthly recycling depot at Trinity United Church, along with the Interchurch Women. The paper, glass and tin collected originally just filled a car trunk, but then as word spread in the community, filled multiple dumpsters and involved dozens of volunteers. All this happened before the Blue Box recycling program came to Smiths Falls and Lanark County.

Her interest in recycling led her to be one of the founding members of the Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL), a local non-profit environmental group, in 1989. Elva served as president of REAL from 1997 to 2000. She was a key organizer and volunteer for the town's first Reuse

Centre in 1990, which operated in space donated by the town on Beckwith St. N. The Reuse Centre later developed into the REAL Deal Reuse Store which opened in 2006 and is still going strong at 85 William St. W. She was an enthusiastic organizer of Waste Reduction Week and Composting Week events each year, and was a key player in Pitch In Smiths Falls, an annual spring litter cleanup that continues today.

Elva was also a member of an earlier group called CLEAN, the County of Lanark Environmental Action Network. She also served on the Public Liaison Committee for the Waste Management Master Plan Study for Smiths Falls and Lanark County in the early nineties. Her work in recycling was recognized by the Recycling Council of Ontario in 1995 with a special award.

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Elva made the members of the Church more active and informed, benefiting Smiths Falls and the wider community. She was recognized with a Canada 125 medal in 1992, and was named Smiths Falls Citizen of the Year in 1991.



Elva in 2012 by the her stone on Evergreen Avenue in Victoria Park.

In appreciation of all her environmental efforts, Elva was named Director Emerita of REAL in 2008. Elva lived her whole life in Smiths Falls, but in her final years moved to Angus, Ontario in to live with her daughter. A granite stone was placed in her honour along Evergreen Avenue in Victoria Park in 2012. It was inscribed "Grandmother of Recycling" to recognize her pioneering work on recycling and her commitment to Waste Reduction. Elva was able to make the trip back to Smith Falls for the presentation. Elva passed away in 2015, but she is

still remembered for her dedication to her church, family, friends and community and her tireless efforts on environmental issues.

REAL Deal News

Summer Staff. REAL was fortunate to receive federal HRSDC funding to hire two young people for 11 weeks this summer. Jonathon Drummond, who worked for us last year, was in smalls every Wednesday through Saturday, sorting, cleaning, pricing and displaying incoming donations. He also helped people using the Tool Library. It was great to have consistent help there so that our regular smalls volunteers could take some days off. Aira Sarmiento worked four days a week also, primarily in the yard, accepting and sorting donations. But she also did lunch hour cash relief and was in charge of watering the Monarch and downtown Depave gardens. Both students finished up with us in late August to return to school, although Aira will be around for a few more Saturdays yet.

Summer Promotions. Due to the nature of our operation, it is a challenge to keep certain items that are donated often moving out the door. Most weeks we try to have some sort of promotion going on. Outdoor furniture, table lamps, suitcases, best selling books, vases, kitchen utensils, cookbooks, wall art and picture frames have been some of the season's specials. As a last resort we allow people to help themselves to the smaller, less expensive items we put out on our free tables. There are usually lots of drinking glasses, mugs, punch bowls and VHS tapes to be had, but other than that, you never know what you'll find. Periodically, we do remove items from the free table that aren't moving.

Security. We have had various security challenges this summer, which is becoming very frustrating. We frequently have unwanted visitors in the yard and dome after hours, helping themselves to whatever they want. The police are notified each time but have not made any headway on catching these people. Please, if you see any suspicious activity on our property, provide details to us, maybe even call the police. We are a bare bones, non-profit operation, with a significant contribution of volunteer hours, so cannot afford the lost income and to replace equipment and locks repeatedly. It is unfortunate that a few individuals are making it difficult. Our sincere thanks to the overwhelming majority of

you who support our operation with your donations and second hand shopping!

Outdoor Materials. Take a look at the list of materials we keep outside the store. You are welcome to head out there from the big garage door at the back of the store or enter directly through the doors in the chain link fence, opposite the front of the big green dome. All purchases must be made inside at the cash, however. Please don't take any unpaid purchases out there; the cashier will be happy to put them behind the cash counter while you continue to shop. There are a few categories that vary a bit depending on space. Examples: most pet supplies are inside, but large pet carriers and cages or aquariums are usually in the dome. Small accent shelves or row of hooks are usually outside. Household organization items are generally inside, but waste paper baskets are in the dome, and large totes are usually outside by the back door. Outdoor lighting and ceiling fans are in the dome, but other lighting is inside. And furniture is everywhere! So make sure you look inside and in the dome if you are looking for chairs, tables, desks and dressers.

Check the Dome or Yard for These Items:



Small hardware	Kitchen/bathroom Sinks
Power tools	Wooden Chairs
Electrical	Lawn and garden
Outside lights	Outdoor furniture
Doors and windows	Luggage
Painting supplies	Pet cages
Bathroom Vanities	Sports
Countertops	Misc Reno Materials
Plumbing	(pipes, trim, lumber etc.)

There are staff out there to assist you.

Payment must be made inside.

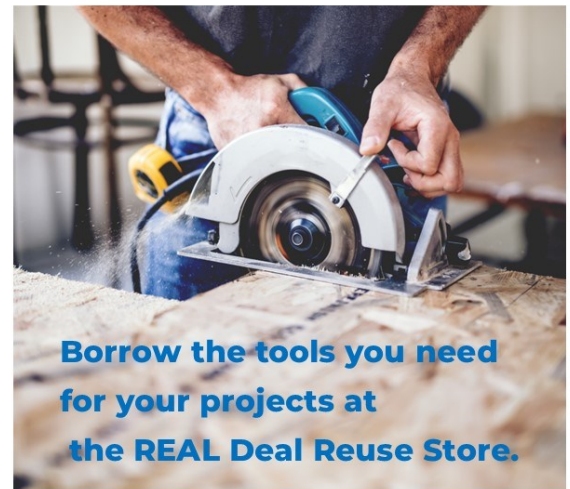
Tool Library Waiting for You!

If you are planning a handyperson project and don't have the right tools, be sure to check out what is available at the REAL Tool Library. Membership has been growing steadily, but we have lots of excess capacity! For a membership of \$25 (6 months) or \$45 (one year) you can borrow any tools in our collection for a week at a time. If you find you need the tool longer, just call (613) 283-7999 or email toolibrary@REALaction.ca. If no one else has requested it, you can keep it another week.

We have added a few garden implements to our collection over the summer, thanks to the efforts of Nancy and Bill Berthiaume. Thanks to Jim McVeety for ensuring the tools are in good shape and the library itself is kept organized. He is in Friday mornings, so if you need tool advice, that's the time to connect. At other times (Wed. to Sat. 10 – 5) another staff member or volunteer can help you, just ask at the cash. For more details, look for the tool library tab at the top of our website's home page.

Summary of tools available. We are still accepting donations of tools we don't have, and would be interested in suggestions of additional tools that would be useful to our members. This list is the first page of the Tool Catalogue.

Angle Grinder	A001, A002	Measuring Tape	M001
Band Saw	B001	Mitre Saw	M002, M003
		Multi Cutter	M004
		Muli Tool	M005
Chain Saw	C001		
Chisels (Variety)	C002	Paint Sprayer	P001
Chisels(Cold)	C003	Pipe Wrenches	P003
Circular Saw	C004, C005, C009	Planer	P004
Clamps	C006, C007	Post Hole Digger	P006
Clippers	C010	Power Pack	P005
Compressor	C008		
		Ratchet	R001
Drills	D001 to D008, D011	Reciproc Saw	R002, R003
Drill Sharpener	D009	Riveter	R004
Drill Press	D010	Reciproc Saw	R006
		Rotary Tool	R005
		Router Spin Saw	R007
Extension Cord	E001, E002	Router	R008, R009
		Router Bits	R010
Finish Nailer	F001, F003	Sander Belt	S010
Framing Nailer	F002	Sander Belt Oscillating	S011
		Sander Detailed	S015
Heat Gun	H001	Sander Palm	S012, S013
Hedge Trimmer	H002	Sanding Cylinders	S001
		Saw - Electric	S002
Jigsaw	J001, J002	Scissors Cordless	S009
		Scraper	S003
Ladder	L006	Screwdriver/Bit	S004
Laser Level	L001, L004	Soldering Iron	S014
Leaf Blower	L009	Stapler	S005, S006
Level	L002, L003, L007	Stapler / Nailer	S008
Lopper	L005, L008	Studfinder	S007



One of the two Facebook ads we have run to promote our Tool Library.

Table Saw	T001
Tile Cutter	T002
Tile Saw	T004, T005
Tool Box w Tools	T003

Vacuum Portable	V001
Vacuum ShopVac	V002

Walpaper Steamer	W005
Wrench Impace	W006
Wrenches	W001-W004

BITS & SOCKETS

Compost Demo Site

We've been wanting to make better use of the demonstration compost site we have at the edge of REAL's Community Garden. Greg Charette, who also works in the REAL Deal yard, has been coordinating that. The first step was getting the compost shelter that had blown over back upright. A three bin composter was then added to the site, made from recycled materials. Besides general cleanup there, Greg is making sure the contributions of compostable materials get into the right bins and are balanced, and that the compost is turned frequently and kept moist. Here are a few of his observations:

Compost Turners. I spent some time looking for a compost rotating tool both locally and online. All of the ones I could find online in Canada were expensive and the others I could find came from the US so with shipping were also expensive. The only place I seemed to be able to find them reasonably priced was Rona's online store. We purchased this corkscrew type model for about \$30, and it works quite well. <https://www.rona.ca/en/product/tumbleweed-compost-aerator-000090c-330773300>. They

also have a cheaper model that looks similar to what you can find at Lee Valley, and is only \$14. <https://www.rona.ca/en/product/gestion-usd-compost-mixer-630505-44115004>



Pallets. I built a three-stage compost bin out of discarded pallets. While I was searching for useable pallets I learned that some pallets may be treated with certain chemicals that are unsafe to use directly with anything that may be consumed. If you are going to be building something out of used shipping pallets you should definitely research the labels on



them. The pallet compost built consists of one large pallet with three smaller pallets attached to it and anchored by some metal fencing posts.

Shade. I recommend that you construct or place your composter someplace that's not in direct sunlight, as the one that I built at the REAL Deal dried out very quickly with the amount of sun it got all day. I was watering it with 2 or 3 5-gallon buckets of water every 2-3 days and it was still drying out. I ended up having to build a wall on the first stage and started looking for more pallets to build a roof to provide more shade. It is working quite a bit better now with just the front wall providing some shade.

Backyard Composters. We still have Earth Machine composters available at the REAL Deal for just \$50. As an added incentive, we are throwing in a \$10 REAL Deal gift certificate as well. We have sold about half of the 50 we ordered in.



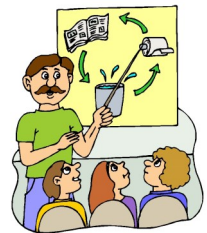
Fall and Your Composter. This is the time to harvest any finished compost. It's also a good time of year to apply compost to your gardens and lawn, and it frees up lots of space in your composter for kitchen organics you'll generate over the winter months. Once you've separated out the finished product, replace any unfinished material in the composter, placing a layer of woody, high carbon material on the bottom. Be sure to put aside a few extra bags of leaves to stack around your composter for insulation and to use as a source of carbon to blend with fresh food wastes you add to your pile over the winter.

In REAL Life

Journey to Sustainability Presentations. The J2S team's latest presentation took place Aug. 11, and was an update on the Rideau Roundtable's biochar project. (see the first page.) You can watch the zoom talk on the "[Journey to Sustainability](#)" Facebook page. The next zoom will be on fungi in late September or early October. See our website or Facebook pages for the date, or sign up to REAL's or the J2S mailing list to receive an email notification. Most past presentations [have been recorded](#).



Food Cycler for Borrowing. Following an email update, several people indicated they would like to give the Foodcycler, an electric counter-top composter, a try. The loan period is three weeks. Let us know if you would like to be added to the list. If the list gets long, REAL members and tool library members have priority. Contact Barb at (613) 283-9966 or dhicks11@cogeco.ca.



Community Events. Summer staff member Aira Sarmiento represented REAL at the **Friends of the Tay Watershed Discovery Day** on August 20 at the Crystal Palace in Perth. One rain barrel and one composter were awarded to two lucky people who had entered our draw. Aira will also be at the **International Plowing Match** in Kemptville Sept. 24 to talk about the Food Cycler.



Turtle Island Final Steps. The finishing touches on the Rideau Roundtable's shore-line planting demonstration project continue. Still to come is the ceremonial planting of four larger trees, dedicated to certain individuals, that will provide shade to the benches that have been installed there. The Tentative date is National Tree Day, Wednesday, Sept. 21. It is hoped the signage will be placed this fall also..



Evergreen Avenue Dedication. This commemorative event is on track for Sunday, September 25, 1 p.m. at the RCL Branch 95 in Smiths Falls, the first time the event has been held indoors. With a couple of missed Victoria Park dedication ceremonies during COVID, there are 29 memorial stones to two community leaders, WWII and other veterans to be dedicated. Guests will be encouraged to take a walk over to Victoria Park following the dedication to see where the new stones have been placed. The bios of those being recognized will eventually be on our website.



Wetland Awareness Tours. Free voyageur canoe tours of the swale were offered on August 6 and August 20. Preregistered participants toured the provincially significant Class I wetland at the edge of Smiths Falls by canoe. The groups started with a demonstration of the basic paddling strokes and a short explanation of the voyageurs and their canoes. Then the paddlers were off to learn about the flora and fauna of the Swale and the importance of wetlands. Participants got to experience locking through the Abbot St. Lock on their way to the Swale. The tours were organized by the Rideau Roundtable with financial support from REAL. Desmond Devoy from the Smiths Falls Record News participated in one of the August 6 tours, and provided an account in the [August 19 issue of the newspaper](#).

**RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTION LEAGUE**

Box 1061
Smiths Falls ON
K7A 5A5
info@REALaction.ca

www.REALaction.ca

**REAL Deal Store &
Environment Centre**

85 William St. W.
Smiths Falls ON
613-283-7999

Open Wednesday
through Saturdays
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Ask about our
new Tool Library**

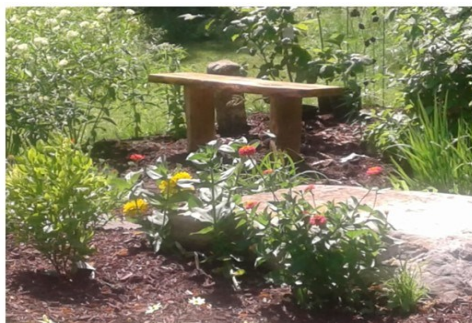
For Home Energy Audits in the K7A
region, contact John:
jappleby@realaction.ca

**Find us on:
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Instagram**

Send contributions to the
December issue by November
15 to dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Like What REAL Does?



You Can Help!

- Become a Member
- Volunteer
- Join the Board
- Participate in Our Programs
- Support a Fundraiser
- Join our Email List
- Support the REAL Deal Store
- Join our Tool Library
- Share your Expertise
- Say Nice Things about Us
- Thank our Corporate Members and Supporting Municipalities
- Donate Dollars



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