

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

APRIL 2023

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## Look for Alternatives to Peat this Garden Season

Peat has been a favourite soil additive of gardeners since the 1950s, but it is becoming clear that its use is not environmentally sustainable. In the UK, a ban on the sale of peat moss for private gardens is coming into effect in 2024, and people are scrambling to find effective alternatives.

Peat moss come from bogs and other waterlogged areas, created by the incomplete decomposition of sphagnum moss and other bog plants over thousands of years. Bogs act as carbon sinks, storing more carbon than forests. Covering just 3% of our planet, peat bogs store 1/3 of soil carbon on earth. Extraction or mining of the peat releases thousands of years worth of stored carbon. The bogs are being depleted, because the creation of new material is as slow as 1 mm a year. Harvesting peat begins by draining the surface water, removing the surface vegetation, so contributes to biodiversity loss and wildlife habitat destruction. The exposed decomposed material is left to dry before the peat is vacuumed off. Removing the peat disturbs the natural water cycle on that site. Because the natural filter is gone, there is an increased risk of water contamination, flooding and forest fires.



Gardeners like peat because it is cheap and convenient. It retains water without becoming too wet, provides nutrients, and remains spongy, so avoids compaction. It does not include parasites or disease causing bacteria or fungi. So it is no wonder it is popular. Unfortunately, it is tricky to get all these features in any other medium.

Canada is one of the world's most peat-rich countries. About 12% of Canada's surface is peatlands, which represents about a quarter of the world's peat supply. Peat is also used in wastewater systems, kitty litter, and as a fuel, but most of the 1.3 million metric tons extracted goes to the United States for horticulture. We are beginning to wake up to the potential impact on climate. Unfortunately, only 10% of Canadian peatlands are officially protected.

*continued inside...*



### Alternatives to Peat (continued)

You can avoid becoming part of the problem by looking for peat free soil additives, compost and potting soils. When doing your own planting, look for alternatives like coconut coir or compost. Coconut coir, shredded coconut fibre, is relatively sustainable, but does have an environmental impact through shipping from where it is produced.

Commercial peat-free compost may be made from woody materials, coconut coir, municipal green waste, straw waste, and even waste sheep's wool.

You can make a good growing medium with home-made compost, leaf mold, and inorganic soil elements like loam or sand. Other gardeners have had success adding dried leaves, perlite or vermiculite.

For more reading see:

Tree Hugger : [Peat-Free Compost is a Must for Sustainable Gardens](#)

ON Nature: <https://view.publitas.com/on-nature/spring-2023/page/30>

Planted: <https://allplants.com/blog/lifestyle/why-is-peat-compost-being-banned>



*Commercial peat extraction. The area is drained, the surface vegetation is scraped off, the decomposed plant layer is left to dry and then vacuumed off.*

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### REAL Deal—End of a Challenging Winter

It is always helpful to get a look at the big picture at the end of the year (see page 4) to see how the store is thriving when things aren't going as smoothly. Challenges the last few months have included bad weather, some physical challenges and slow donations.

You may have noticed that the bad weather has been happening on Fridays and Saturdays, which has led to slow sales and even having to close the store early. From frozen door and gate locks, a dripping ceiling, furnace failures, water coming up from middle of the floor, and giant puddles at the entrance, yard and parking lot entrance, we've had it all. Thanks to the Town of Smiths Falls for filling some major potholes in our parking lot. Hopefully the worst is behind us!

Donations are typically slow over the winter, but seem to have been even slower this year. Thanks everyone for taking the time to pack up and bring us your gently used but still usable stuff. It is great to have a steady flow of new and interesting stuff for everyone to browse. We are also pleased to see so many visitors from further afield coming to the store—Ottawa, Kingston, Montreal, you name it!

Promotions have included a blue tag furniture sale and a \$10 chair sale. We were tickled that many people noticed other items displayed in our Facebook posts, and made a point of inquiring and purchasing them also. When the yard is a little drier we will be doing a \$10 art sale.

March 8<sup>th</sup> we did a store tour for the Perth Chapter of the Canadian Federation of University Women. It was good for us to expose more people to our store and the other services offered. Please get in touch if you have a group that might be interested in seeing our operation.

## Area Environmental Events

Here are some of the many upcoming environmental events. REAL will be playing a role in most.

Sunday, April 16, 10 am – 3 pm  
Sustainable North Grenville Sustainability Fair and EV Show, North Grenville Municipal Centre, 285 County Rd 44, Kemptville

Saturday, April 22, 11 am - 3 pm  
Carleton Place Environmental Action Committee Market Square, 7 Beckwith St, Carleton Place

Saturday, April 22, 1 am - 4 pm  
Earth Day Celebration, Heritage House Museum Old Slys Road, Smiths Falls

Saturday, June 3, 10 am – 4 pm  
Ecofest Westport: Doing Better Together Westport

Saturday, June 17, 2023  
Rideau Roundtable's Paddlefest Lower Reach Park, Smiths Falls

Saturday, July 1, 2023 (to be confirmed)  
Wetlands Awareness Tours by Rideau Roundtable The Swale

Saturday, August 12 8 am – 1 pm  
Friends of the Tay Watershed Discovery Day Crystal Palace, Perth



## Book a Home Energy Assessment Think Globally, Act Residentially

An EnerGuide home energy evaluation will identify areas of improvement for your home and qualify you for up to \$10,600 in rebates and incentive. REAL now has two certified Energy Assessors (EAs), John Appleby and Alan Leonard, available to do assessments across K7A, K7H and K0G postal regions.

This service is helpful if you want to reduce your home's carbon footprint. We all share responsibility for reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, and a home retrofit is our biggest opportunity. An assessment will help if you are having home performance problems (drafty rooms, condensation, summer overheating etc.), are paying too much to heat and cool your home, or are considering replacing your furnace or windows.



To take advantage of the rebates and incentives being offered through the HER program, you need to book an energy evaluation. The EA will examine your house and its performance and provide recommendation for improvements. Your EA can help you interpret the dollar amounts allowed for Enbridge and non-Enbridge customers for specific home improvements. These include ground- or air-source heat pumps, insulation, draftproofing, doors, solar PV panels, waterproofing, and thermostats.

After the work is done, a followup audit will be required as well. The program allows \$600 for the energy evaluations. REAL charges \$450 for the initial audit, and \$250 for the followup. As an environmental non-profit, we will not try to sell you something you don't need.

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(613) 784-9320



**REAL Deal Results: Feb. 1, 2022 to Jan. 31, 2023**

Buyers	9147
Materials donated	44.6 tonnes
Materials purchased	43.2 tonnes
Ewaste collected	26.5 tonnes

**Top five donor municipalities (by weight)**

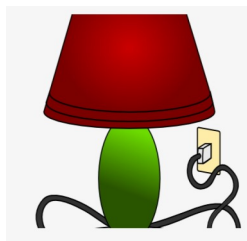
1. Smiths Falls	(42%)
2. Rideau Lakes	(14%)
3. Montague	(16%)
4. DNE	(7%)
5. Merrick/Wolford	(6%)

**Top five buyer municipalities (by weight)**

1. Smiths Falls	(35%)
2. Rideau Lakes	(14%)
3. Other	(11%)
4. Perth	(6%)
5. DNE tied with Montague	(5%)

**Top sales departments (by revenue)**

Décor	(17%)
Furniture	(12%)
Housewares	(11%)
Yard and garden	(8%)
Sports and leisure	(7%)

**Top sales departments (by quantity)**

Hardware	(24%)
Décor	(19%)
Sports and leisure	(10%)
Music and video	(9%)
Three departments: Yard and garden, hardware and books each	(6%)

**Sales Over the Week**

Wednesday	24%
Thursday	23.5%
Friday	22%
Saturday	30%

**Notes:**

Buyers were up from 7634 the previous year, but we were closed many weeks that year due to COVID. We exceeded our sales target by 6.5%, which was good news as the closures made that impossible in 2020 and 2021.

The quantity of materials donated is increasing, but our ewaste total is going down. Two of the reasons are fewer very large TVs and electronics being a little more compact. We expect this weight to increase now that we can accept additional electric appliances.

Donors and buyers refer to customers who identify as residents of those municipalities. Both were typical distributions, except that Merrickville/Wolford residents are in the top five donor municipalities for the first time.

“Other” refers to municipalities outside of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Counties. This proportion has been increasing over the years: 2017 (6%), 2018 (5%), 2019 (7%), 2020 (10%), 2021 (11%). We would like to increase the donation rate from those “other” customers, also.

Note that REAL applies for and usually receives community grants from the Town of Smiths Falls, as well as Rideau Lakes and Montague townships.

The high volume in sales of inexpensive items (often just .50 or 1.00) like books, DVDs and hardware means the high quantity and revenue rankings don't match.

Saturday continues to be our busy day, and is often the time when customers from outside LLG visit the store. They often comment that our prices are very reasonable compared to second-hand stores in the region.

# PITCH IN SMITHS FALLS

APRIL 15TH - 29TH 2023

Lets keep our community clean!



**RIDEAU  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE**

## **SHORELINE CLEANUP**

**SAT. APRIL 29TH**

**10 am** - Bascule Bridge

**1 pm** - Jasper Rd. Boat Launch  
near Eric Hutchinson Rd.

Please contact  
[jakeharrisonwilson@gmail.com](mailto:jakeharrisonwilson@gmail.com)



## **CONTACT**

[PitchInSF@REALAction.ca](mailto:PitchInSF@REALAction.ca)

The REAL Deal Store  
(613) 283-7999  
85 William St. W.,  
Smiths Falls ON  
[www.realaction.ca](http://www.realaction.ca)

Volunteer as an individual  
or as a group to collect  
garbage within the two  
week cleanup period.

Bags available from *The  
REAL Deal Store* from April  
5th (Open Wed-Sat,  
10-5pm).

Prizes will be awarded for  
participating! Please see  
our Facebook page for up-  
dates. **#PITCHINSF**



## Rideau St. Lawrence Science Fair

The Rideau St. Lawrence District Science Fair wrapped on March 31 in Brockville. The district science fair is open to youths in grades 7 – 12 enrolled in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Schools. This year's in-person fair at the Brockville Aquatarium attracted 40 projects. To support environmental exploration by youth, REAL makes a financial contribution to the [charity](#). This year REAL was pleased to present a cash award to Mary West for her project "Expose Style" on the impact of the fast fashion industry. (adapted summary on this page). Mary is a Grade 8 student and North Grenville and District High School. Her project was also the recipient of the Greenfield Award. The three winning projects at the fair are advancing to the Canada-wide fair in Edmonton May 14-19.

### **Expose Style** by Mary West

**Purpose.** I wanted to show people how fast fashion can have many negative environmental effects. This struck my interest as I realized I am regularly buying clothing, yet a single small piece of clothing carries an absurd number of issues along with it.

**What is fast fashion?** Fast fashion is clothing that is designed quickly and cheaply and is mass produced when demand is at its highest. This can cause overproduction of clothing that is trending, which can lead to most of it landing up in landfills.

**Water pollution.** The fashion industry contributes to 20 % of the global water pollution, and is the second largest polluter of water. Each piece of clothing takes gallons of water to produce: 2000 liters for a single pair of jeans and 2000-7000 litres for or a cotton t-shirt. Furthermore, microplastics in synthetic fabrics and clothing makes up 85% of ocean plastic pollution.

**Fast fashion and the earth.** The amount of pollution that is caused by something so rarely thought about is remarkable. The fashion industry accounts for up to 10% of carbon emissions and 35% of all microfibres. Eighty billion new pieces of clothing are produced per year, which has increased 400% in the last 20 years. We produce so many clothes but 57% end up in landfills. It takes 200 years for polyester fibres found in clothes to decompose.



*Peter Au of the REAL Board and a RSLD Science Fair Judge presenting award to student Mary West.*

### **Fast fashion vs sustainable development goals**

There are 17 world goals established by the United Nations (UN) to end poverty and protect the planet. Six of the 17 goals are related to the pollution caused by the fashion industry: life below water, climate action, life on land, sustainable communities and responsible consumption and production.

The mass production of clothing affects life below water with the dye ending up in oceans and rivers causing harm to all life within. Carbon emissions and toxic chemicals cause negative health effects. The industry is also known for its unethical treatment of workers.

**Canada's clothing consumption.** 2020 statistics show the average Canadian owns 115 pieces of clothing. With the population of Canada at 38 million that all adds up to almost 4.5 billion articles of clothing in Canada. Europe and the US are the main consumers of fashion.

**Upcycle.** What can we do to help? Shop local businesses that make their clothes with natural fibers and under safe working conditions. Not only shopping locally but thrifting is also beneficial for reusing clothes. Reusing old pieces of clothing for crafts, sewing or rags can help. We as people view ourselves as so small in a world so large but everything can help in one way or another.

*In REAL Life*

**Membership Renewal.** Thanks to everyone for getting those membership renewals in, as well as for your many financial donations. If are not already a member of REAL, this is a good time to join! Individual memberships are just \$15, family memberships \$20 and student memberships \$5. There are many options to pay including by cheque, interac e-transfer, credit card through CanadaHelps, paypal or, if you are stopping by the store, good old-fashioned cash.



**2023 Annual General Meeting.** Our annual AGM is scheduled for Wed. June 21, 2023. While details are still being finalized, we expect it will take place by Zoom and feature a guest speaker. Members will receive an email notice and the few of you without email will get a paper notice. But you don't have to be a member to join us!



**Community Garden.** Katie Hoffman has contacted all the community gardeners from last year to see if they wish to rent their plots again this summer. Additional soil and compost will be available to top up their beds. If anyone would like to put their name on the wait list for one of the 12 garden spaces, please call Katie at 613-983-3360. Cost is \$25. Happy planting!



**REAL Canvas Bags.** These attractive tote bags have been selling very well, so we are ordering more! They have sturdy handles, snap closures and promote our favourite local environmental organization. Available at the REAL Deal cash, the \$7 price includes the necessary HST.



**Journey to Sustainability.** If you missed the latest J2S presentation on fungal dominant compost (FDC) with Kelvin Hodges and Scott Hortop, a recording is available. Many of the past presentations recordings are on YouTube, or on the J2S Facebook page. [Check the webpage](#) or contact Peter Au for assistance. You can also get on the J2S mailing list to receive notifications of upcoming presentations.



**REAL Tool Library.** Keep our Tool Library in mind for your projects! See the website for a [list of what we have available](#); the first page is a summary. Memberships are just \$25 for six months, and \$45 for a year. Katie Hoffman will let you know when your membership needs to be renewed. The fees go toward purchasing new and replacement tools. If you have suggestions for us, [please complete our online survey](#).



**Seeds for Sale.** The Monarch garden team collected seeds from the garden last fall and will be selling them for \$2 a package. They will be near the REAL Deal cash, but some we are reserving for our May 27 sale. We have: Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepius Incarnata*), Common milkweed (*Asclepius Syriaca*), Black Eyed Susan (Indian summer) (*Rudbeckia Hirta*), False Blue Indigo (*Baptisia Australia*), Mexican Sunflower (*Tithonia*) and Turtle Head (*Chelone Galbra*). We also have some Cherokee Trail of Tears bean seeds donated by Nancy Taylor. They are lots of fun to grow!



RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE

Box 1061  
Smiths Falls ON  
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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,  
contact John Appleby at:  
jappleby@realaction.ca

Find us on  
Facebook and  
Instagram

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

**REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment**

# Garden Fundraiser

## Rain Barrels and Native Plants

**Sat., May 27, 2023**  
**10 am. - 2 pm**  
at the REAL Deal Store  
85 William St. W., Smiths Falls

**Proceeds to REAL's  
Monarch Gardens.  
Come take a look!**

Preorder and pay online  
at [rainbarrel.ca/REALDeal](http://rainbarrel.ca/REALDeal)  
for pickup May 27

for details contact  
Lauralee Merkley  
[lmerkley64@gmail.com](mailto:lmerkley64@gmail.com)  
(613) 283-3069

Large selection of native plants  
and perennials from Grow Wild  
Nursery

Seeds from REAL's garden

Earth Machine Composters

Mushroom Compost

**Please bring cash.**  
**For more info:**  
**[www.REALaction.ca](http://www.REALaction.ca)**



**RIDEAU  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE**



Made with PosterMyWall.com

### Make a REAL Difference

Please return this form to:  
REAL  
Box 1061  
Smiths Falls, ON  
K7A 5A5

Or bring to  
The REAL Deal

#### Make a Donation

☐ I would like to make  
a donation of

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

A charitable receipt for  
income tax purposes will  
be issued. To donate by  
credit card, go to  
[www.Canadahelps.org](http://www.Canadahelps.org).

#### Volunteer

☐ I want to help

#### Become a Member

I would like to become a member

- ☐ Individual membership \$15  
☐ Family membership \$20  
☐ Student membership \$5  
☐ Corporate membership \$50

#### Join our Email List

Use the green signup button on the  
bottom of our homepage.

#### Contact Information

Name .....

Street/RR Address .....

Town, Province .....

Postal Code .....

Home Phone .....

Work Phone .....

Best time to reach me .....

Email address .....