

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

FEBRUARY 2025

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## REAL Offers New Heat Pump Advisory Service by Alan Leonard

This service might be right for you if you're thinking about putting a heat pump in your home, and if you currently heat with a centrally-ducted furnace/air handler.

The heat pump advisory service is done along with an **EnerGuide** audit which evaluates the energy efficiency of your home and performs the calculations of the heat loss/gain for the building. The EnerGuide audit is a very thorough analysis of the energy performance of the house and which retrofits/upgrades will save the most energy. You receive a very comprehensive EnerGuide report about your house with our recommendations, an EnerGuide rating label and the CSA F280 compliant heat pump report.

Our research has shown that most air source heat pump installations are undersized and cannot supply the whole heating load for the house. Occasionally heat pumps are oversized and can cause problems like noise in the ductwork.

REAL's energy advisor Alan Leonard has recently completed specialized training that allows us to provide you with important information that can help you and your contractor select the best heat pump system for your home.

### Our heat pump advisory service builds on your EnerGuide evaluation, and adds:

- **CSA F280 Heat Loss/Heat Gain calculations**, which assist in determining the amount of heating and cooling your home needs to optimize comfort.
- **Duct flow measurement** using specialized TrueFlow metering equipment, which will help your contractor understand which heat pump systems will be compatible with your current ductwork. This information will allow your contractor to size the heat pump to the actual heat loss of the house and the capacity of the duct system.



continued inside...



### Heat Pump Advisory (continued)

- **Electrical panel capacity assessment**, to help you understand whether or not it is likely that an electrical panel upgrade will be required when switching to a heat pump.

**We are offering this service to you along with an EnerGuide audit at a discounted price of \$550.** An EnerGuide audit alone is \$500. We can offer this service at this low price because we have funding for a short period during the pilot project.

**If you already had an EnerGuide pre-retrofit audit done by REAL recently,**

haven't had the post-retrofit audit done and you are considering installing a heat pump, then we can come back to do the heat pump/duct testing for just \$100. If you have had a post-retrofit audit done then we can still do the heat pump/duct analysis but at a higher fee because we won't have the pilot project funding.

We are beginning bookings in February 2025. If you have any questions about the service or if you would like to make an appointment, email Alan Leonard at [alanleonard9@gmail.com](mailto:alanleonard9@gmail.com) or call him at 613 864-3099.

The **Greener Homes zero interest loan program** is available which will lend up to \$40,000 for a term of ten years with *no interest!* This can save you many thousands of dollars and make it easier to do efficiency upgrades. A \$40,000 loan at only 5% interest will cost \$10,911 over ten years! The loan is for energy efficiency upgrades, including heat pumps and you must have an EnerGuide audit to apply.

See REAL's "Home Energy Assessment" page under the Energy tab at [www.reaction.ca](http://www.reaction.ca) for details.



### Tool Library Coordinator Needed

REAL would like to find an enthusiastic individual with a knowledge of tools to coordinate our Tool Library.

Our Tool Library opened in a corner of the REAL deal in October 2021. We keep a collection of about 100 tools (mostly power tools) available for people to borrow. They do that by purchasing a Tool Library membership for \$25 for 6 months, or \$45 for one year. With that membership they can borrow whatever they want for one week at a time.

Tasks of the volunteer position include maintaining records, assessing and potentially repairing tools and assisting tool borrowers. We also have a small budget for acquiring new tools and buying replacement parts and supplies.

Since the REAL Deal store is open Wednesday thru Saturday 10 -5, your volunteer hours should fall on those days. The timing of visits to the library is quite random, so you could choose your hours, ideally two short 2-3 hour shifts a week. If you are interested, we can always find various little fixit jobs for you as well.

This could be an ideal volunteer job for an older retired handyperson,

If you are interested in learning more, please email [info@realaction.ca](mailto:info@realaction.ca) or call Barb at (613) 283-9966.



## Monarch Garden Seeds for Sale by Donna McKenna

Looking forward to the gardening season? There are some plant seeds for sale at the REAL Deal for \$2.50 a package. The seeds were gathered in the fall from our butterfly gardens and have been cold stratified over the winter so will be ready to plant. Seed sales go to support our two butterfly garden locations at the REAL Deal and the downtown Market Square. We have some native and some non-native seeds.

### Native Plant seeds:

#### Echinacea purpurea - purple coneflower

Coneflowers are perennials—plant once and they come back year after year. Echinacea is a perfect native plant because they are so easy to grow and if planted early will often bloom the first year. They are easy to plant from seed indoors in late winter or you could try your hand at winter seeding in containers outdoors for early germination. Their blooms are quite stunning and they bloom for 4 to 6 weeks. The scent of coneflower generally is not appealing to deer so they are a good choice if you have these visitors to your garden. Coneflower seed pods also provide food for birds in winter. Can grow from 4 to 6 feet tall.

#### Baptista - false blue indigo

One of the most attractive plants in our butterfly garden, blue wild indigo is a bushy,



robust perennial with blue-purple pea like flowers. Bumble bees are well adapted to access the nectar and pollen within their flowers. This plant maintains a nice shape and healthy looking foliage until the end of the season. It is easy to maintain and adapts well to a variety of soil conditions. Blooms often do not appear until the second or third year as it spends the first few years developing below ground. They are deer and rabbit resistant, drought tolerant and generally low maintenance once established.

#### Milkweed - Asclepius syriaca, incanata and tuberosa

Milkweeds are well known as the only host plants for monarchs to lay their eggs and for food for their young caterpillars to eat to survive. Their flowers are rich in nectar and pollen and support a wide diversity of beneficial insects. Unfortunately, monarch butterfly populations have been declining over the years largely due to shrinking milkweed availability. Let's encourage their return in numbers by planting milkweed in your garden. We have three types of milkweed seeds for sale from our gardens: common milkweed, swamp milkweed and butterfly milkweed

### Non native seeds:

#### Zinnia - State Fair Mixed

Beautiful tall stately plants with large 4 - 6 inch blooms in vibrant colours are sure to attract butterflies to your garden. Annual plant that must be sown each year but seeds are easily collected.

**Calendula—Orange Flash** These peachy blooms have a bronze underside and appear throughout the summer and look lovely in your garden or containers. This annual is very easy to grow; you can almost sow and forget. Calendula attracts bees, butterflies, ladybugs, lacewings, and hoverflies. These insects help control pests and pollinate plants.

#### Mexican sunflower- tithonia rotundifolia

This plant is a butterfly magnet. Tall bushy plants with bright orangey red flowers, can grow to 6 feet tall. Drought resistant and blooms late into the fall.



## ***Eco-Literacy Program for Children Launches Soon*** by Tina Bye

The Rideau Roundtable is proud to announce their initiative called the Rideau Eco-Literacy Center for Children. Consistent with the Roundtable's mandate of promoting the social, environmental, cultural and economic health of the Rideau waterway and its communities, the Eco-Literacy Center's efforts are directed towards children ages 6-12.

The brainchild of Roundtable board members Peter Au and Richard Doherty, the Rideau Eco-Literacy Center is partnered with six Ontario Public Libraries that are located along Rideau Waterway. Using the facilities of the partner libraries, the Eco-Literacy Centre will soon be delivering engaging and hands-on learning and enrichment opportunities to the environmental stewards of tomorrow.

The program aims to inform and empower children with tools and knowledge to make a positive impact on their local eco-systems as well as to act as environmental advocates. There will be regular workshops with titles such "Pollution Solutions", "Who is Eating Who (the Great Food Chain Mystery)", and "Invasive Species vs Native Plants: Death Match". Not only will each topic have a catchy title and hook, but the activities will be fun and informative. For example how do impervious surfaces (pavement and housing) change the dynamics of a watershed? On a scale model we will experiment with hands-on materials, an inclined surface and some water running over it. What can we do to change the erosion, pollutant run off, and flooding patterns we observe? How could we implement some of our ideas in our own backyards?

Some of the Eco-Literacy workshops will be indoors, but as the weather improves we will be moving outdoors to learn about more biological systems and environmental factors. Lots of observing, noting, collecting and testing will help turn some of the knowledge gathered at the inside sessions into outdoor experiments driven by participant curiosity.

The culminating activity will be a day-long adventure that includes a tour in one of the large Roundtable voyager canoes, nature and wildlife exploration with

eco-interpreters and guides, and lots of other fun games and activities.

The ultimate and overarching goal for this initiative is healthy and happy kids. The Eco-Literacy Program aims to increase both physical and mental health in participants. Being engaged in cooperative physical play through indoor games and outdoor adventuring increases flexibility, cardiovascular health, endurance, muscle strength and improves balance, gross motor and fine motor coordination. The mental health benefits of sharing ideas in a safe and playful environment, such as social skills, creative problem solving, team building and self-reliance are equally important. Regular attendance for children to maximize these possibilities is encouraged.

The workshops will be offered monthly, with increasing frequency during the summer months, and will be free of charge. The first series of workshops "**Take your Best Shot- Easy Tips to Improve Your Smartphone Photographs**" will be during March Break.

For more information, please keep a look out at one of the following partnering libraries: **Perth & District Union Public Library, the Rideau Lakes Public Library** (with five branches in Elgin, Delta, Portland, Newboro and South Elmsley); **Merrickville Public Library, North Grenville Public Library, Westport Public Library** and the **Smith Falls Public Library** or see the website [www.rideauecoliteracy.com](http://www.rideauecoliteracy.com).



*Last summer's Rideau Eco-Literacy pilot program with Andrea Howard at the Merrickville Library. Photo by Mary Kate Laphen.*

**REAL Deal Staff and Volunteers**

*Christmas Dinner 2024. Roughly left to right: Kevin, Julia, Josh, Marshall, Una, Joel, Brenda, Edwige, Jane, Heather, Chester, Andrew, Jim, Bev, Dan, Nancy, Lori, Barb, Donna, and Diane.*

**Scavenging is Stealing**

We managed to catch on camera two young men removing items from our e-waste bin Jan.23 between 7 and 8 am, and are hopeful they will be caught. Removing materials from our scrap bin and ewaste bin is stealing. REAL is paid for these items by weight and rely on this income to keep within budget. Our biggest expense, of course, is staff wages. So please, no scavenging in our e-waste or scrap metal bins. REAL is a non-profit profit organization and beside paid staff, over 2000 volunteer hours are year go into making it all work. You should also know that items in the bin are end of life and often do not even work! The closed gate at the entrance to the site should be a signal that people are not welcome on our property outside of store hours. If you see unusual activity on our property please notify us or the Smiths Falls Police.

**REAL Deal Sales and Donations**

Sales at the store have been reasonably brisk over January so we hope it continues. Saturday morning has been busiest when we tend to see a lot of new faces and people from out of town. Many pieces of furniture have sold, and people are making their way to Facebook Marketplace to learn about some more unusual items. We have received some large donations as well. There are lots of Christmas decorations still coming in, and hopefully this will slow down, as we only have so much storage space!

We are particularly happy to see donations this time of year, as the winter can be very slow for us. You do not have to be a local resident to donate. If you are coming from "afar", please see if there is anything in your household you are ready to part with to bring along.

## Reducing Your Food Waste

Reducing your food waste is one of the top three ways you can reduce your environmental footprint. Check these numbers from the UN Food Waste Index: The average Canadian household creates 79 kg of food waste per year, and 60% of that is avoidable through better planning and awareness. Fruits and vegetables account for 45% of food waste. Canada's yearly food waste is equivalent to 9.8 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. That's quite the number! We eat two to six times a day, so this where people can really make a difference with minimal effort.

The environmental organization Earth Day Canada has a program called "Food Fight" that aims to reduce food waste by Canadians, and is funded by ecolGA. One of the resources in this program is a set of three workshops available free of charge, that provide some great ideas for taking action. "Meal Planning" is a little over an hour. The other two sessions are "Preservation" (37 minutes) and Cooking Without Wasting (45 minutes). Here are some of the tips from the Meal Planning workshop.

They suggest starting with an inventory of what you have on hand in your fridge, freezer and pantry. What have you got and does any of it need to be used soon before it goes bad? Keeping a written inventory is helpful, too. Frozen food should be rotated every six to nine months.

Do some meal planning with the people in your household. Plan for two or three meals. Try a new recipe now and then. Remain flexible and plan for the unexpected. Maybe you'll end up eating out, or not everyone will be home, or you'll have less time and will need to make a simpler meal.

Make a list of what you need for meals and snacks, and categorize them on your list according to where you shop. Plan to keep some basics on hand so you will have the ingredients for a simple meal, like some pasta and canned protein (tuna, beans etc.) , or the ingredients for a pizza. Have a snack before you head to the store so you won't be as tempted to buy too much or what you don't need.

Buying at a bulk food store or in the bulk food department can help you buy just the right amount of a product, so it is not as likely to be wasted. Don't forget your reusable containers!

Make good choices when you shop. Be careful of buying in large quantities. It can be a great deal if you can eat it before it goes bad, if not, you may be better off buying smaller quantities eg. one or two lemons instead of a bag of them. Look for the discounted blemished fruits and vegetables and cook them soon.



Learn the best ways to store the foods you buy. Use clear containers. Label and date your food. Create an "eat me first" section of your fridge.

The "Preservation" workshop, is about the best ways to use storing your food in the fridge or freezer (not home canning)!

The third workshop, "Cooking Without Wasting" gets into some more specifics about food – using the entire vegetable in different ways, substitutions, jazzing up leftovers, that kind of thing. A lot of new ideas there.

To access these videos, go to YouTube.com and enter "Earth Day Canada Food Fight" and you will see their food waste videos, including some one to two minute ones on more specific food waste topics if you are short of time.

**In REAL Life**

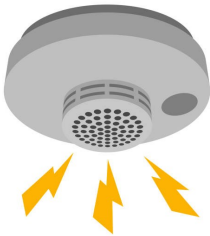
**Ecolce Available at REAL Deal.** Ecolce is a cleaner, more eco-friendly way of dealing with icy surfaces. This product is a traction aid made from treated natural wood chips. It is safe for pets and can be recycled in your compost. The wood chips are non-corrosive to metal and concrete, carpet, flooring, footwear or clothing. Another bonus: it is light and easy to spread. Unlike salt, it will not contaminate surface or groundwater. It's \$7.99 a bag plus tax. You won't find it anywhere else in Smiths Falls.



**Thanks Vacuum Depot!** A shout out to Christina and Stephanie for giving us a working vacuum cleaner to use at the store. Please note we do not accept vacuums for resale at the store (they all tend to have issues), but you can contribute it to our e-waste bin provided the dirt bag or canister has been emptied or removed.



**Ontario Election Day February 27.** When you go to vote on February 27, give some thought to which candidates you feel will better address the environment and climate change. The Bradford Bypass, Hwy 413, bike lanes, Bill 165, conservation authorities, endangered species and renewable energy projects are just a few issues where provincial actions have taken a step backwards.



**Smoke Detectors.** We have just confirmed that smoke detectors can be included with electronic waste, but please remove the batteries first. We accept used household batteries for recycling as well. Put them in the bottom right blue bin that is just inside our customer doors.



**December Newsletter.** The postal strike was still on when the December newsletter was completed, so we made a decision to not attempt sending them to the few people who get their newsletter "snail-mailed". There are still printed copies at the store if you want one, or read it [on the website](#).

**The Sinclair's Garden.** The story "[Defending a Native Garden from Misguided Laws](#)" tells the story of how Craig and Beth's Sinclair's Smiths Falls native property came to be, and how they ran up against town bylaws. Lots of nice photos are included with the post on the Joe Gardener website.

**It's Membership Renewal Time**

If you are not already a member of REAL, this is a good time to join!

In February we ask our members to renew their commitment to our organization, and we are always happy to add people to our list! Individual membership are just \$15, family memberships \$20 and student memberships \$5. Members receive our newsletter five times a year, notices of environmental events or volunteer opportunities, and have the right to vote at our Annual General Meeting. Our annual report is made available at this time as well, and provides a snap shot of what we have been up to over the past year.

We sincerely appreciate everyone's support of environmental action in our community. Together we can do even more!

Box 1061  
Smiths Falls ON  
K7A 5A5  
info@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  
Tool Library**

For Home Energy Audits,  
contact Alan Leonard at:  
alanleonard9@gmail.com

Find us on  
Facebook and  
Instagram

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

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

# Check the Dome and Yard for



- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Small hardware       | Plastic totes   |
| Hand and power tools | Wooden/office chairs  |
| Electrical           | Lawn and garden   |
| Outside lights       | Outdoor furniture   |
| Doors and windows    | Luggage   |
| Painting supplies    | Pet cages, aquariums  |
| Bathroom Vanities    | Sports  |
| Countertops          | Misc. reno materials:<br>pipes, trim, lumber ,<br>range hoods etc.) |
| Plumbing             |   |
| Sinks                |   |

**There are staff out there to assist you.  
Payment must be made inside.**

## 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 .....