

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

DECEMBER 2024

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Christmas Recycling Guide

An incredible amount of waste is created over the Christmas season. You can reduce it by avoiding non-recyclable products, planning ahead, choosing better products that last longer, reusing or donating. Here are some recycling guidelines, but check with your own municipality's guidelines to be sure.

Wrapping paper. Plain printed paper is recyclable, but paper that is foil or sparkly is not, it goes in the garbage. If you are recycling the paper, remove all other trims, and fold it to save space in your bin. Wrap with kraft paper, newspaper, old maps or sheet music for a recyclable option. Or use fabric that can be reused or part of the gift: baby blanket, scarf, tea towel etc.

Gift Trims. Most gift trims, such as bows and ribbon, are not recyclable. Be sure to reuse what you have, and get creative with bits from nature: leaves, flowers, pinecones, dried fruit etc. If you use string or cloth ribbon instead of paper ribbon you can use it again.

Gift Bags. Start building your collection of fabric and paper gift bags. Paper gift bags are recyclable unless they are shiny. Remember to remove any fabric handles. Kraft bags are more likely to be made with recycled content. The ropes can be reused if you are making fabric gift bags.

Cards. Plain Christmas cards are recyclable, but if it has anything added like foil, glitter, bits of fabric etc, it is not. Reuse cards for tags or other crafts. Consider ecards and phone calls instead of paper cards. When purchasing cards, look for recycled content or ones whose proceeds support a charitable cause.



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Christmas Recycling (continued)

Styrofoam. Not recyclable, it goes in the garbage.

Tissue Paper. Reusable, and recyclable if there is no glitter on it.

Other Packing Materials. Plastic, bubble wrap, foam peanuts, air pockets are not recyclable. If you can't reuse them they are garbage.

Corrugated Cardboard and Boxboard. Light cardboard and corrugated cardboard can be recycled, but remember to remove any other materials including plastic, and break it down for your bin.

Christmas Light Strings. Lights are not recyclable in your municipal program. Anything long (including garlands and ribbons) gets tangled in their sorting equipment. You can bring them to REAL to go in our ewaste bin. Look for LED lights if you are replacing them.

Trees. The debate continues. Artificial trees need to be reused about 20 times to match the environmental footprint of a natural tree. If you buy artificial, look for polyethylene (PE) and avoid polyvinyl chloride (PVC). If it can be reused by someone else, REAL will accept it. Most municipalities offer natural tree pickup after Christmas. But be sure to remove all decorations from the tree, and skip the fake snow. A natural potted tree that can be planted outdoors may be an option for you.

Dishware. Try to use real glasses, cutlery and plates. Disposables are not generally recyclable, and once they have food waste on them, are definitely not. Look for cloth napkins and tablecloths. There are lots of cheap glassware, mugs and plates at the REAL Deal if you need to purchase more for a



Bottles and cans. These are recyclable, but must be unbroken and rinsed. If the container is from the LCBO or Beer Store, take it to the Beer Store and claim your deposit.

Foil. Foil and aluminum pie plates are recyclable if they are clean. Otherwise they go in the garbage.

Plastics. Just because there is the mobius loop recycling symbol on something does not make it acceptable in your program. Don't be fooled! Find out what your municipality will take. It is usually just limited to container plastic that food, toiletries or cleaning supplies come in. i.e. no bags or toys or blister pack plastic etc.

Electronics and Electric Appliances. If someone ends up with a replacement item, say as a gift, the old one can be donated to the REAL Deal if still usable. If it is not usable, it can be brought for recycling. Leave it against the wall by our big black bin after our Christmas shutdown.

Here are some guides you may want to consult for further explanation:

- [EcoEnclose](#) - very detailed
- [Metro Vancouver](#) – includes other low waste holiday ideas
- [Quinte Waste Solutions](#) – helpful but remember to check with your own municipality

REAL Deal News

The store has been having a busy fall with some record breaking sales days (and weeks), which is great after a slightly slower than normal summer.

Christmas. The big activity of course has been getting all that Christmas stuff we accept throughout the year down from upstairs and priced. By the third week of November that inventory was out and we started receiving Christmas donations through the back door! We truly get a little bit of everything, particularly cookie tins, stockings, mugs and lights. Some other observations: the glass ball ornaments are moving faster this year, and we don't seem as many ceramic Christmas trees coming in as we used to, people don't seem to keep their metallic bead strings, and Christmas sleighs sell quickly! Look for a 50% off sale, probably starting Dec. 11, as we need to sell as much as possible by Sat. Dec. 21, our last shopping day for 2024.

Online Auction. Our fifth annual online auction was a big hit. For several weeks we featured some of the items in the auction on the front table of the store so people could see them close up. Wed. Nov. 27 was particularly busy as about two thirds of the top bidders stopped by to pay for and pick up items. There were a handful of things that were not bid on, so we priced them accordingly and featured them there also. We put aside potential auction items throughout the year, and for various reasons (imperfections, duplicates etc.) some do not make the cut, so some of those have been put out also, and might make nice Christmas gift for someone.

Winter Preparations. There is a long list of tasks that need to be accomplished before we get any substantial snowfalls. In particular, obstacles need to be arranged in the yard so staff can clear snow more easily, and so the customers can see what we have and be on safe footing. Note that there may be times when we have to close the yard temporarily until it is safe.

Windows are a big seller at the store. Staff have set up window display area along the fence in front of the dome that they hope to keep clear of snow so customers can keep window shopping in the winter.

Staff and Volunteers. Congratulations to both Josh (yard staff) and Max (Tool Library volunteer), for finding full-time employment at the same local manufacturing business. Jim MacPherson has had a health setback and will not be returning for paid work, but we may see him as a volunteer. As a result, Andrew and Marshall, who have worked for us in the past, will be taking on some more shifts.

Christmas Dinner. A full turkey dinner was organized for REAL Deal staff, volunteers and board members for Friday December 6. Thanks to the Community Health Centre for allowing us to use their kitchen, and to everyone who contributed to the celebration. Everyone received a Christmas mug of treats and a \$25 REAL Deal gift certificate. Some people spend it all at once, and some people make use of it throughout the year.



Fifth Online Auction a Hit

Our fifth online auction was an unqualified success. We attracted \$3557 in bids on the 176 items up for auction. About 170 people took part, and in the end 69 people won the right to purchase one to 11 items. People were asked to come to the store to pick up their treasures starting November 27. There are always a few buyers who have not been to the store before so they take the time to look around and learn what we have to offer.

The last half hour is always very interesting as there is intense bidding for certain items, and a few things that had no bids up to that point suddenly have a few people bidding on them. It is all in good fun!

Top earning items:

- Kitchen Aid Professional Mixer - \$180
- Pet Portrait - \$100
- Fire Pit - \$76
- Alice in Wonderland Rabbit Cookie Jar - \$62
- Ceramic Christmas Tree - \$60
- Mark Henderson Hummingbird Print - \$60

Items Receiving Most Bids:

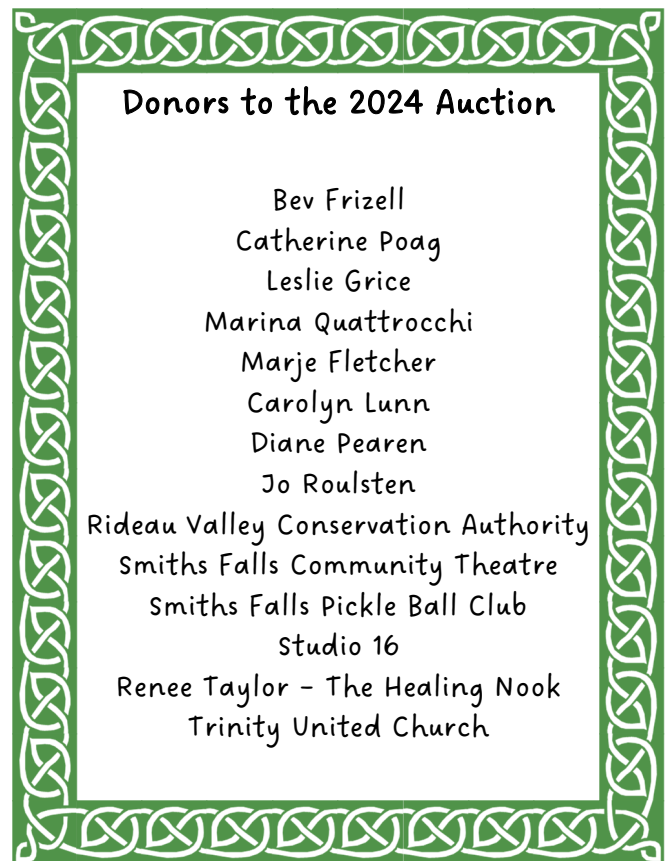
- Alice in Wonderland Rabbit Cookie Jar – 24
- Kitchen Aid Professional Mixer - 24
- Pottery Mixing Bowl – 22
- Mastercraft Tool Combo Kit – 22
- Medalta Potteries Crock – 20
- Legends of Zelda Monopoly – 19

If you are curious about the more popular items you can still see them at 32auctions.com/REAL2024. Past auctions items are there also, just the change the year of the code, e.g. REAL2022 to see what we had in 2022.

Thanks to everyone who contributed items and services specifically to the auction, and to those who did the asking! Most of the auction items were “anonymous” donations to the store and were set aside for this fundraiser. So if you saw something on the 32auctions site that looked familiar, it could very well have been your donation. Without you this store would not be possible, so we appreciate your ongoing contributions.

We are also grateful for the continued support of some REAL folks who contributed as sponsors, adding \$600 to our total. These were the Smiths Falls Optometrists, Lynda Ferguson, Katie and David Hoffman, Peter and Daisy Au, and Karen and Jack Schecter.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who participated, and especially those who ended up purchasing items. Your enthusiastic bidding did not go unnoticed.



Phantom Power Costs You Money

If you're serious about reducing your energy usage, take a look at phantom power. Phantom power or standby power is the amount of electricity that an electronic device uses when it's turned off or in standby mode. This can account for 5–10% of a household's energy use. Most appliances use very little, less than 0.5 watts, but it still adds up. According to HydroOne, the average Canadian home has over 25 devices that use phantom power, costing them about \$150 a year in wasted electricity.

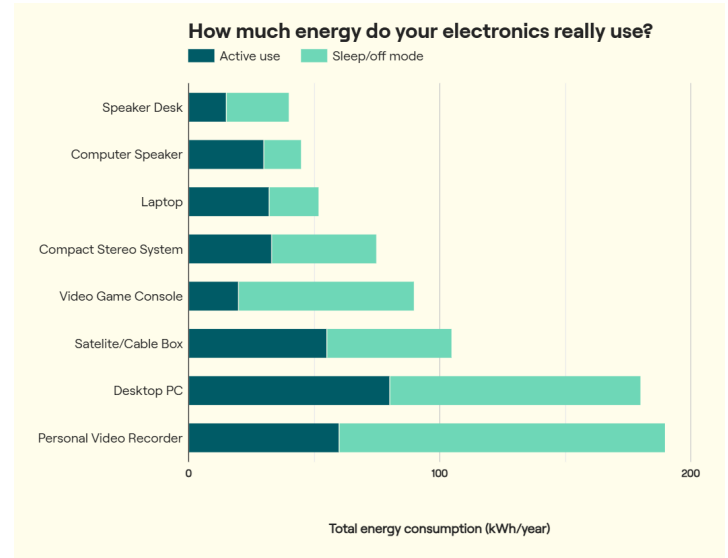
Appliances that use the most standby power are:

- DVD/DVR or Blu ray players
- Cable/satellite TV boxes
- Games consoles
- Garage door openers
- Desktop computers or laptops
- Printers
- Appliances with a clock
- Modems and routers
- Smart speakers
- Older TVs

Newer appliance often consume less standby power that older ones, as they are designed to achieve a better energy usage rating. Any appliance with a remote control function will be using energy in standby mode, waiting for a signal to operate fully.

There are lots of things you can do to minimize phantom power in your household.

- Unplug appliances you are not using, like lamps, hair dryers and shavers.
- Unplug chargers once the device has charged.
- Group appliances used together on a power strip so you can turn them off and on all at once, e.g. a computer, monitor and printer.
- Use a power bar with timer to shut off the power to a group of appliances on a schedule, e.g. a TV and game console.
- Consider switched outlets if you are renovating or building a new home.
- Look for Energy Saver appliances. They use less energy and have built-in power-saving features.
- Disable screen savers. Activate sleep mode or unplug the computer.



Source: HydroOne

Some other tidbits that will help you make informed choices:

- Streaming media through a TV is far more energy-intensive than through a laptop
- Laptops are 90% more efficient than desktop computers, but their chargers draw extra power when plugged in, so unplug them when not in use
- When purchasing a power bar with timer, look for an “always on” outlet for appliances that need it. For example, a PVR has to stay on to record programs.
- Coffee makers with glass pots draw as much as 1,000 watt to keep coffee warm, use an insulated carafe.
- Chargers draw power even if your phone or tablet is not connected.
- The digital display and clocks on small appliances drain power. Consider if you really need them.

Most of the above has come from the [HydroOne website](#). Check there for more energy saving tips.

Mini Forest Planting Day

Our Mini Forest Planting Day at Corbett-Hyland Park October 5 went splendidly. It was a beautiful day and at the end quite a sight to see it all planted.



We couldn't have made it happen without the amazing volunteers who came out with shovels in hand and smiles on their faces excited to help contribute!

There were about 130 one metre squares to plant with three seedlings, so most volunteers had at least two squares to plant. It took some planning and scheduling to make sure volunteers did not get in each other's way or trample what was already in place, but it all went smoothly.

Thanks to everyone who helped it come to fruition:

- Dave Thornley was the man behind the whole project who started with an idea to bring a Mini Forest to Smiths Falls and pulled everything together to make it a reality!
- Joyce Hostyn of Little Forests Kingston was a great resource, as their group has created many mini forests in the Kingston area.
- Steve Rauche of [Diggin it Nursery](#) worked with REAL to source the plants at a very reasonable price and delivered them first thing Saturday morning. He also stayed the whole day to advise where necessary and planted some of the trees too!
- Craig Sinclair was there from the beginning of the project, helped select the plants for the forest and participated in a mini forest planting in Kingston to see who it was done. He also trained team leaders in advance and volunteers that day, so everyone how to plant the trees to ensure their success.

- Ron Lyons, who lives beside the park, allowed us to access his outside tap to water the trees as they went in.
- The [Town of Smiths Falls](#) – especially Stephanie Clark and her group—provided the site and coordinated many elements: compost, leaves, mulch in the Spring and sustenance for the volunteers day in the way of a BBQ.
- The REAL Board of Directors and Mini Forest committee worked diligently over the past months making it a reality: Karen Schecter, Peter Au, Donna McKenna, Dave Thornley, Barb Hicks, Nathaniel Morris, Craig Sinclair, Joanne Constantine, Ginny Toffanello, David Andrew, Gerry Baker and Dale Horeczy.
- Thanks to Carol Lyng and Barb Hicks for their photographs, and Rick Millette for the drone photography.
- Campbell's Trucking donated the large landscaping stones that were added shortly after planting.

Some extra trees were planted along the fence on the Empress Avenue side of the park, close to where the five larger trees were planted in late April.



Again, we couldn't have done it without all the volunteers who showed up on a weekend to get their hands in the dirt! Thank you once again. It will be great to watch how Smiths Falls first mini-forest grows over the coming years!

In REAL Life

Volunteer Fair. Thanks to volunteers Dale Horeczy and Dave and Joni Thornley for representing REAL at the Nov 27 Volunteer Fair organized by Economic and Community Development department of the Town of Smiths Falls. They came away with 10 names of residents who would like to be involved with REAL in some capacity. If you were unable to attend and would like to explore the possibilities, please contact us. Completing our volunteer form is a good start. It helps us to get to know you better and get an indication of where your time and skills could best be used.



EcoLiteracy at Local Libraries. Congratulations to the Rideau Roundtable for being awarded a Trillium grant to run a Rideau EcoLiteracy Program in partnership with six local libraries: Perth, Smith Falls, Merrickville, Rideau Lakes, Westport and North Grenville. REAL will be making a contribution to help cover the salary of the intern.



Municipal Presentations. Many municipalities are moving to a system where organizations must apply for community grants to get a share of the money set aside for community groups. REAL has made applications to Smiths Falls, Rideau Lakes and Montague for some of the 2025 funding. As the composition of local councils changes every four years, the Board felt it was time to present to those councils to explain what REAL is about. So in November a representative delivered a 10 minute presentation to those three councils. It will take some time for these councils to make their decisions.



New Apartment Contributions. REAL was pleased to help the local organization [Smiths Falls Help Me Help Them](#) that helps homeless people with basic needs and helps establish previously unhoused people in new apartments. We gathered a supply of basic items from the REAL Deal to help two families get started: dishes, cutlery, lamps and so on, and will do so again when the other families find accommodations.



Two Wetlands Awareness Voyageur Canoe Tours went ahead Sept. 28 after being postponed due to bad weather Sept. 7. Participants toured the Swale, a provincially significant wetland on the west side of Smiths Falls, to learn about the importance of wetlands and the plant and animal life there. They also had a chance to experience some water testing. Rideau Roundtable organized the tours, with REAL and the Rideau Roundtable splitting the cost, which was offset by \$270 in free will donations.

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**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
February issue by January 15 to
dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

**We accept gently used, resellable items that are clean, in good repair,
working, and with all their parts, subject to assessment by our staff.**

Please do not bring us these items:



- ◆ **Clothing**—take clothing and fabric items elsewhere
- ◆ **Mattresses**— never accepted
- ◆ **Large appliances**—we do not have space and cannot test them property, we take small household appliances only.
- ◆ **Appliances Containing Coolant**—air conditioners, water coolers, dehumifiers, fridges etc. need their coolant removed by a professional before disposal
- ◆ **Hazardous Waste**—save for your municipality’s household hazardous waste depot. We are not authorized to take it.
- ◆ **Infant Items**—we can not legally sell these for safety reasons

**Make a
REAL
Difference**

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

Or bring to
The REAL Deal

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a donation of

\$ _____

A charitable receipt for
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www.Canadahelps.org.

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