

THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY: Sustainable Practices at BPC Parks

In February 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a report concluding – with 90 percent certainty – that humans are the primary cause of global warming and that only an immediate reduction of greenhouse gas emissions could limit catastrophic effects to human and natural systems worldwide.

Climate change may well be the most important environmental issue of the 21st century. How do we begin to address a problem so monumental? “Start small,” Huxley advises, “and continue one step at a time. Each of us can help reduce carbon emissions, and we can encourage others to do so, too.”

Since its establishment in 1987, Battery Park City Parks Conservancy has been a green workplace – inside and out – having adopted sustainable practices in all its operations. “Nineteen years ago, what we were doing was revolutionary,” says BPCPC executive director Tessa Huxley. “Now many of our practices are commonly found not only in the business arena, but also in the home.”

Here are just a few of these practices:

Horticulture

- Compost (from plant waste, vegetables, fruit, coffee grounds, Christmas trees) and compost tea applications instead of commercial fertilizers (chemical or organic)
- Non-toxic pest and disease control and use of beneficial insects instead of chemical pesticides
- Pruning trees and shrubs to follow natural growth patterns (to prevent disease and breakage that weakens overall health of plant)
- Careful plant selection to reduce pest and disease problems
- Mow lawn grass 3” (higher than normal) to protect plant crowns and control weeds
- Irrigation practices that promote deep root growth (to protect plants against drought) and conserve water

Maintenance

- Least toxic snow melt, cut 50% with recycled sand from playgrounds
- Electric vehicles, charged after 8 PM following peak power demand, and bicycles
- Non-VOC paints
- Non-toxic cleaning materials
- Electric eye water faucets and light switches
- Collection of rainwater for plant irrigation
- 100% use of non-treated, sustainably harvested lumber

- Thermostats kept at 74° in summer, 68° in winter
- Compact fluorescent lights
- Recycle fluorescent bulbs, motor oil and batteries as well as newspaper, glass and aluminum
- Air-dry staff uniforms

Programming

- Through programs and example, teach children – our future – sustainable practices
- Recycled cardboard, bottle caps and hangers in art projects
- Left-over art supplies collected for other projects
- Non-toxic soaps to disinfect children's toys and seating mats

Administration

- 100% post-consumer waste copier paper
- Vegetable ink and 100% recycled paper for printed materials
- No disposable plates, mugs, silverware, or glasses