

There are many electronics out there that have a built-in expiration date. Engineers call this "planned obsolescence."

What are we supposed to do when these items give up the ghost? Finally, some of the national chains are stepping up to the plate.

Best Buy recently held a E-Waste Recycling event in their parking lot. The first 50 participants received a \$5 gift card for their efforts. They now have a free year-round program where people can bring in two e-waste items per day. They accept most e-waste, except major appliances and larger old televisions.

Friends led me to a new Costco member service. Members can trade-in usable items and get a Costco gift card in return. Their trade-in list includes desktop and notebook PCs, digital cameras, MP3 players, LCD monitors, game players, camcorders, and smart phones. They recycle CRTS, personal printers and fax machines, but offer no trade-in value. Register at www.greensight.com/CostcoTrades and get a trade-in quote and free shipping instructions.

We are not Costco members so I went to www.ebay.EZtradein.com and printed out a shipping label that I can use to recycle my broken digital camera. Other online trade in services include www.myboneyard.com and www.greenphone.com.

When I dropped into the Amador Street Post Office last week, I noticed a recycling box on the counter. No, it is not for all the junk mail they deliver, although it should be. The U.S. Postal Service has a Mail Back pilot program for small electronic devices and inkjet printer cartridges. You simply place your old cell phone or printer cartridge in their prepaid plastic envelope and drop it in the mail.

VALCORE Recycling accepts inkjet and laser cartridges, cell phones, laptops, and PDAs. You can bring e-waste, VHS tapes and CD/DVDs to the next local e-waste event. Log onto www.recycle-guide.com, the Solano County Recycle Guide, to find the next free event.

Green 4th of July

How can you make your holiday BBQ green? Start by using your nose. Charcoal lighter fluid emits pollutants that you can smell. Opt for an electric starter or an old coffee can punctured with lots of holes and crumpled newspaper to start the charcoal.

According to Pete Davis from www.terra-pass.com, "if you are using a propane grill, you

would have to use a whole tank (roughly eight and a half hours of cooking) to equal the carbon emissions of the average daily commute.

"A green BBQ is also about what you cook. Think about your actual ingredients such as meat which has a high carbon footprint. Diversify your menu and buy local, fresh or organic.

"Use reusable plates and cutlery. It might seem easier to use the paper plates, but you will look eco conscious if you use the real things and wash them afterwards."

On the 4th of July, look for the VALCORE truck at the parade. This year, members are creating two mascots: Lovely Rhea Cycle and a Bad Bag Bobby. Volunteers will also be trading nickels for your empty CRVs at the end of the parade.

Green Wedding Advice

You may have heard that tossing rice at newlyweds is harmful to birds. According to Organic Gardening, there is no scientific evidence to support this. Many prohibit the practice anyway because the rice is hard to cleanup and may be a hazard to people walking on it. Besides, throwing away food is wasteful. Try one of these ecofriendly alternatives.

--Bells: Ringing bells are a signal of good luck.

--Sunflower seeds or bird seed: Your feathered friends will handle the cleanup.

--Flower Petals: Lovely and fragrant.

--Ecofetti. Biodegradable and water-soluble from www.ecoparti.com

VALCORE Recycling Board Secretary Jane Bogner's "A Sorted Affair" is published every other week in the Times-Herald. For recycling information call VALCORE Recycling at 645-8258 or visit www.VALCORErecycling.org.

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