



handsOn

A Newsletter of the Boston Building Materials Co-Op
and the Building Materials Resource Center

summer/fall 2000

Water, Water. . . Where?

By Beth Ginga

If April showers bring May flowers, what do June downpours bring? For some the answer this year may have been damp cookouts and rainy parades. This past June, water resource managers or environmentalists weren't complaining; they'll tell you that more rain is good news for water consumers. (And in case you didn't notice, the flowers just plain loved it.) With Mother Nature letting loose with more rain in a single day this past June than the typical 3" average, area aquifers were given the opportunity to replenish their supplies.

Did this short-term boon mean that water conservation measures headed to the hills? "Let me put it this way," said Lois Robinson of Conservation Services Group's Mass Save division. "There was a water ban in effect in my town starting in June, as well as in many others. Warmer weather in July and August signified marked increases in water consumption, in volumes that short-term variations in rainfall could not keep pace with."

The average family of four uses up to 260 gallons of water – PER DAY! Says Robinson, "Water conservation awareness is a mind-set and an ongoing campaign." Here are some ways your family can reduce its water consumption (up to 40,000 gallons/year!) and save money (as much as \$500/year):

Three-quarters of daily water use occurs in the BATHROOM:

* Install a 1.6 gallons-per-flush low-flow toilet. Compare this to the 3.5 gallons-per-flush of older models. The savings in

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Kid's Can't Fly

By Matthew St. Onge

Once again the Co-op has teamed up with Children's Hospital in Boston and the City of Boston's Child Injury Prevention Program to distribute child safety window guards. It is our collective goal to prevent even one child from falling from an open window this year. (Last year there was one.) We encourage every household with a child six years or under to install safety guards in all windows that may prove to be a danger to your youngster.

Through our collaboration with Children's Hospital, low and moderate-income residents of Boston may obtain free window safety guards (while supplies last). If you are low or moderate-income

and would like to receive free window guards for your home, the first step is to call Joan Westbrook at Children's Hospital at (617-355-6900) for an application. Once you qualify, you will need to take a class to learn how to install and operate the window guards. The classes are taught by and at the Boston Building Materials Co-op. Even if you're not income-eligible, you may purchase the guards for just \$17.25/apiece, down from \$29.95 thanks to City-sponsored subsidies.

To apply for your free window guard, call Joan Westbrook at Children's Hospital at 617-355-6900. For information about the window guards and/or the classes, call the Co-op at 617-442-2262.

Inside This Issue:

Welcome, Don Malloy!

Co-op acquires new 20-20 software program for kitchen and bath design

BMRC gets a new truck

"Don't-Throw-It-Away" posters appear on the Red Line

BMRC adopts new pick-up policy

Welcome, Don Malloy!

The Co-op is pleased to inform its members that Don Malloy has now joined Linda, Matthew, and Allison at the retail desk. An experienced builder and businessman, Don will help with sales, provide homeowner support services, and oversee the window shop.

A long time proponent of home energy conservation, Don was part of the Co-op in its earliest incarnation — when blown-in insulation was our focus. Don then started and ran his own carpentry business, Urban Carpentry, for over a decade. He was popular member of our Tradesperson Referral File during that time and, from 1996 - 1999, served on our Board of Directors.

Please take a moment to welcome Don during your next visit to the Co-op.

20/20: New Computer Program will Enhance Co-op's Kitchen Design Services

The Boston Building Materials Co-op has recently acquired the popular 20/20 software program for kitchen and bath design. The 20/20 program allows Kitchen Consultant Linda Lesyna to do plans, elevations, and perspectives of the kitchens and baths we design with and for our customers. It also allows us to get price estimates from our kitchen vendors electronically. Linda has received training in the use of the 20/20 program and has been steadily incorporating its use into her work with Co-op members and customers.

For more information about the 20/20 program, or to make an appointment to talk about your kitchen or bath, call Linda at 617-442-2262.

Co-op to Offer Free Homeowner Support Services in Mission Hill

The Boston Building Materials Co-op and Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services have joined forces to make successful, long-term homeownership a reality for Mission Hill homeowners.

The collaboration between NHS and the Co-op provides (1) low-interest loans to eligible Mission Hill homeowners (from the NHS' Revolving Loan Fund), and (2) 10-to-20 hours' free homeowner support services (from the Co-op).

The Co-op's Homeowner Support Specialist will visit residents in their homes to help them understand their home repair project(s) more fully and to guide them through the process of hiring and overseeing the work of an outside contractor.

The Co-op/NHS collaboration reinforces our shared belief that all homeowners deserve high quality home repair services.

Used and Surplus Building Materials Made Available to General Public

A reminder that you don't have to be low or moderate-income to shop at the BMRC. You just need to be patient.

Last winter, the board adopted a policy allowing anyone, regardless of income or non-profit status, to purchase building supplies from the Building Materials Resource Center. All you need to do is wait until an item has been in the warehouse for three or more weeks (giving our

income-eligible customers first crack) and pay a higher price (double the BMRC price, still a bargain by anyone's standards). So don't forget to peruse the BMRC warehouse before you write that big check for new materials. You'll be amazed with the quality and range of materials there.

The Building Materials Resource Center is a non-profit spin-off of the Boston Building Materials Co-op.

BMRC Gets A New Truck!

We are pleased to report that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has awarded the BMRC a grant in the amount of \$25,000 to help with the purchase of a new truck to collect the large volume of donated building materials coming into the project. We are also grateful to the Trustees of the Harold Whitworth Pierce Charitable Trust for their gift of \$10,000, which was the final piece we needed to buy our truck.

Our old truck – which was donated by Kennedy & Rossi Construction Co. in 1996 – has served us well these past four years. More and more, however, the advanced age and deteriorating condition of the vehicle has increased the amount of time (and money!) it spends in the shop for repairs. We will miss the old truck but are thrilled at the prospect of having a new, reliable truck to meet the huge demand for pick-ups. Our sincere thanks go out to John Kennedy of Kennedy & Rossi

BMRC News

for what will one day (soon) be remembered fondly as “our first truck.”

By the time you read this, our new truck will be on the road four or five days/week picking up donated building materials. Given its large size and extensive travel, we intend to paint and letter the truck brightly

so that it doubles as a traveling advertisement. Getting the word out about the BMRC remains a top priority; as we travel throughout eastern Massachusetts picking up donated goods, we will be driving a truck that turns a lot of heads along the way.

Working with the Public Sector to Reduce Solid Waste

You may have seen our “Don’t Throw It Away” posters on the Red Line in May, June, and July. The posters were part of a donor outreach campaign that we conducted in collaboration with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

In addition to the Red Line, we distributed posters to building departments in the cities and towns that are served by the Red Line. We asked Building Commissioners to hang the posters in prominent places and to instruct their inspectors to give “Don’t Throw It Away” cards to all who receive permits. Cambridge Building Commissioner, Robert Bersani, is so excited about the BMRC that he staples our cards to all building permits issued in

Cambridge. “I do what I can to get the word out [about the BMRC] because I think the program is worthwhile,” says Mr. Bersani.

By supporting the BMRC with the purchase of a new truck and for the Red Line Project, the EOEA and DEP are acknowledging the important role that the BMRC plays in reducing the construction industry’s burden on Massachusetts landfills.



**don't
throw it
away
donate**

The BMRC hung posters like this on the MBTA's Red Line in May, June, and July.

“Through personal experience with [the BMRC’s] high quality of service, it gave me confidence to help promote them [in Newton and Cambridge].”

— Scott Cassel, Director of Waste Policy and Planning for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (as quoted in The Cambridge Chronicle, June 2000)

Used Refrigerators and Job Training: An Unlikely Pair?

The BMRC is now working with Madison Park Technical Vocational High School in Roxbury to sell reconditioned refrigerators from the school's HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning) training program.

"We were looking for a place to sell the refrigerators that our students were repairing," instructor Tom Younis tells us. "Then someone told us about the Building Materials Resource Center." The school's HVAC training program was launched in 1999 to give inner city youth the skills needed to get a job in the HVAC field.

The Madison Park Technical Vocational High School accepts most refrigerator donations. If a unit is not suitable for rehab, its parts are removed and inventoried for future repairs and the rest is broken down for recycling.

One of the goals of our collaboration with the Madison Park Technical High School is to help raise money through the sale of the refrigerators that can be awarded to the students. "It's important for students to be paid for their work," one instructor tells us. "It keeps their motivation high."

The Building Materials Resource Center is happy to partner with Madison Park's HVAC Training Program and hope that we will become a well-known outlet for high quality, affordable refrigerators!



Architects Take Up the BMRC Cause

Thanks in part to the outreach efforts of Richard Fitzgerald and the Boston Society of Architects, more and more architects are finding out about the BMRC and encouraging their clients to donate their surplus and good quality used building materials to us – instead of shipping them off to the landfill. At least one firm has incorporated a "re-use" clause in the job specifications they give to clients.

Architects who have become involved with the work of the BMRC, either by referring their clients to us, writing the BMRC into their standard construction specs, or lending their financial support, include:

ADD Architects, Cambridge
David Amory Architects, Brookline
Berg Howland Architects, Cambridge
Blake Allison Architects, Cambridge
Edward Bing Architects, Cambridge
T. Chalmers Architects, Weston
Classic Restoration, Watertown
E T J & A Architects, Boston
Elton & Associates, Boston
Gerard Ives Architects, Boston
Gorman Richardson Architects, Hopkinton
JCA Architects, Boston
LDA Architects, Cambridge
Next Phase Studios Architects, Jamaica Plain
Anthony Pangaro, Architect, Boston
Payette Associates, Boston
Payne Bouchier, Boston
ER Racek Architects, Boston
Rosenbaum Architects, Meriden, NH
Rover Architects, Newton
Shawmut Design & Construction, Boston

If you would like to find out more about how your firm can participate, give us a call at 617-442-8917.

Updating your refrigerator? *Donate your old one to Madison Park Technical High School's HVAC Training Program. Call Tom Younis at 617-635-8079 to find out how.*

Looking for a refrigerator? *The Building Materials Resource Center has a new source of newly reconditioned refrigerators for low, low prices! Note: You don't need to be low or moderate income to purchase these refrigerators.*

BMRC Approves New (Higher) Income Limits

You may now be eligible to shop at the BMRC, thanks to the BMRC's new income limits. (For those of you who understand such things, the new income limits are based on 95% of area median income.) They are as follows:

1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons	6 Persons	7 Persons
\$41,750	\$47,700	\$53,650	\$59,600	\$64,400	\$69,150	\$78,700

If you qualify, all you need to do is bring in your most recent tax return, fuel assistance card, or SSI benefits letter. We will sign you up and you may begin shopping the same day!

If your income exceeds the above figures, don't forget that we recently adopted a policy that allows non-income eligible people to purchase materials at the BMRC after an item has been in the warehouse for three or more weeks. The price is higher than it is for our regular customers, but still a deal by anyone's standards.

BMRC Adopts New Hold/Deposit/Pick-Up Policy

Due to the BMRC's continued fast growth, we have amended our Hold/Deposit/Pick-Up Policy. We ask that our customers read the new policy carefully and cooperate by abiding by it whenever they purchase materials.

Effective immediately, the following Hold/Deposit/Pick-Up Policy is:

1. If you put a 50% (or more) deposit on an item on a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday, you must pay the balance and pick up the item by Saturday of the same week;
2. If you put a 50% (or more) deposit on an item on a Thursday, Friday, or Saturday, you must pay the balance and pick up that item by Saturday of the next week;
3. If you do not pick up your item by the date indicated it will be put back into inventory and your deposit will be converted to a merchandise credit.

We understand that customers may not be able to take their purchases with them on the same day they purchase them. For that reason, we are allowing a "grace period" that will give our customers a few days to arrange a pick-up. (The BMRC offers delivery services, for a fee. Call us if you would like more information on this.) Unfortunately, our space is limited and we cannot give our customers more than the allotted time to collect the items they have purchased.

A point of clarification: The BMRC does not consider an item "sold" until it actually leaves the warehouse. Even if a customer pays for an item in full, which we consider a "deposit-paid-in-full," s/he does not own it until s/he takes it away.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have about the BMRC's new Hold/Deposit/Pick-Up Policy. Call us at 617-442-8917. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

BMRC Wish List

- 3 Pentium class, networkable computers
- Stereo with speakers (for warehouse)
- Stools (for warehouse)

Water, Water. . . Where? *continued from page 1*

water and sewer fees offset the cost of purchasing and installing a new toilet in just one-to-three years. Thereafter the savings just accumulate. (Toto and Kohler make affordable, efficient products; see details below.)

- ☛ **Install a low-flow showerhead in all showers.** This uses 2.5 gallons per minute versus the hefty 6 gallons of the non-water savings devices.
- ☛ **Install a low-flow aerator on all bath and kitchen faucets.** This reduces water output volume by half.
- ☛ **Locate and repair all leaky faucets!** One dripping fixture can waste hundreds of gallons of water per week!

The YARD is another place where water consumption is high:

- ☛ **Water your lawn and garden ONLY when necessary.** Soil typically stays moist for several days after a rainfall.
- ☛ **Water only early in the morning or in the evening.** This reduces the likelihood of both evaporation and scalding, which damages plants. Use soaker hoses to apply water directly where it is most useful, as near to the roots as possible.
- ☛ **Collect rainwater – it’s FREE!** Install a rainbarrel beneath downspouts. *(The Co-op sells rainbarrels for a fraction of the cost of similar products sold by garden supply centers and catalogues; see below.)*
- ☛ **Infrequent, deep soakings are best.** Frequent, superficial watering encourages roots to reach for the ground surface, weakening plants’ stability.

The Lowdown on Low-Flow Toilets

Many people have expressed concern about the effectiveness and reliability of low-flow toilets. Indeed, when they first appeared on the market, there were complaints of inadequate waste removal and blockages. Since then, low-flow toilet design has evolved to the point where they are now as effective as older, water guzzling models. (State regulation mandates that ONLY low-flow toilets may be installed in all new construction.)



Our research indicates that there are still cheaper, poorly designed brands out there. “I refuse to install any brand other than Toto or Kohler (low-flow toilets),” says one plumber. “Those models are the highest quality for the price. Using inferior products results in aggravation.” Toto and Kohler are the only two brands the Boston Building Materials Co-op sells.

- ☛ **Mulch.** Mulching keeps ground temperatures lower, reducing evaporation, protecting roots, and beautifying your garden.
- ☛ **Mow often and leave the clippings.** Clippings return vital nutrients to your lawn. (Shorter clippings decompose quickly.)
- ☛ **Expect lawn to have a yellowish hue in summer.** The grass is not dead, just dormant. It will revive and turn green again without excessive, expensive watering.

And don’t forget about APPLIANCES:

- ☛ **When it’s time to replace your washing machine or dishwasher, look into energy efficient, water saving models.** They cost more up front – but save you money on fuel and water bills.

The Co-op sells a number of water saving products:

PRODUCT	MEMBER/NON-MEMBER PRICE
Low-flow toilets	
Toto	\$101.00 / \$111.00
Kohler	\$128.00 / \$141.00
Showerhead	\$6.19 / \$7.24
Aerator	\$4.99 / \$5.79
Rainbarrel (55-gallon drum) . . .	\$40.00 / \$46.00

Sale Starts October 1 and ends October 31

Your Window of Opportunity



*Now, you the homeowner,
have a unique opportunity
to buy one of the best rated
storm windows available
and at sale prices.*

When buying storm windows you need to look at a whole range of factors;

- **quality of construction**
- **price point**
- **air infiltration rate**

The **Harvey Industries** Tru-Channel storm window which has an **air infiltration factor of .01*** is one of the top rated products in the industry and a favorite of contractors and architects.

**The closer the number is to zero, the better the window and the warmer you will be this winter.*



Boston Building Materials Co-op
100 Terrace Street
Boston, MA 02120

T: 617.442.2262
F: 617.427.2491

Come by the **BBMC** for a demonstration of this amazing product or join us for our seminar on September 23 entitled *Installing Replacement Windows/Storm Windows*. **Call for details.**

BMRC Director to Present at Regional Sustainability Forum

On September 25, 2000, BMRC Executive Director Matthew St. Onge will be presenting at the *Regional Sustainable Development Forum: Making Connections, Highlighting Successes*. The Forum is being sponsored by New Ecology, Inc., a nonprofit environmental organization that promotes economic development in distressed urban communities throughout New England.

This day-long conference will help connect planning and development practitioners in the region and highlight model projects and programs in the area of sustainable land use, economic development, affordable housing, and transportation. Approximately 250 participants are expected to attend.

For more information and to register please visit New Ecology's website at www.newecology.org, or contact Kit Perkins, New Ecology, Inc., 617-354-4099.

Free Leaf Bags for Boston Residents

This spring the Boston Building Materials Co-op handed out more than 2,500 free paper leaf bags to Boston residents.

Through the Co-op and several other sites across the city, the Boston Recycling Department offered ten free leaf bags to city residents for the collection and environmentally friendly disposal of leaves and yard waste. On each of the five

Saturdays in May, city trucks collected the bags and deliver them to a city site where they are being made into compost. The city distributes the composted material, free-of-charge, to more than 100 community gardens throughout Boston.

Everyone wins with the city's leaf bag program. Residents may bag their leaves and yard waste knowing that they will be put to good use enriching

the soil – instead of piling up in a landfill. The city saves on disposal costs. And community gardeners enjoy the fruits (and vegetable and flowers. . .) that are the result of sowing their seeds in compost-rich earth.

Speaking of compost, don't forget that the Co-op sells two types of composters. And they're only \$23/apiece!



handsOn

HandsOn is the semi-annual newsletter of the Boston Building Materials Co-op and Building Materials Resource Center.

The Boston Building Materials Co-op is a 21-year-old, member-controlled building materials retailer and technical assistance provider. We specialize in cabinets, counters, windows, and doors. We offer a range of affordable technical assistance services, including in-home consults, phone and office consults, educational workshops, a Tradesperson Referral File, a lending library, and a Saturday morning window and screen repair clinic. You don't have to be a member to shop at the Co-op, though members get product discounts and other benefits.

To find out more contact the BBMC at:

100 Terrace Street, Roxbury, MA 02120
phone 617.442.2262
fax 617.427.2491
www.bbmc.com

The Building Materials Resource Center is the nonprofit spin-off of the Boston Building Materials Co-op. Founded in 1993/94, the BMRC is a building materials re-use project. We accept donations of good quality used and surplus building materials and distribute them, for a very modest fee, to low and moderate-income homeowners and nonprofits. Many of the technical assistance services of the Co-op — in-home consults, phone and office consults, workshops, window shop — are available to BMRC customers for a reduced price.

Contact the BMRC at:

100 Terrace Street, Roxbury, MA 02120
phone 617.442.8917
fax 617.427.2491
www.bostonbmrc.org

The Building Materials Resource Center is a nonprofit building materials re-use project. Your tax deductible gift will help us divert perfectly good building materials from landfills and place them into the hands of needy homeowners and nonprofits.

Yes, I would like to make a contribution to the Building Materials Resource Center. Enclosed is my tax deductible gift of:

\$200 \$150 \$100 \$75 \$50 \$35

Name _____

Address _____

Please mail your check to: **Building Materials Resource Center
100 Terrace Street, Roxbury, MA 02120**

Thank you!

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