

Recycle, Recycle, Recycle

When I saw a Press article this summer reporting the potential need for another landfill in Bibb County, it simply reinforced the resolve I share with many colleagues, friends and partners to continue and expand efforts to encourage recycling.

After all, the Earth is not ours. We are merely borrowing it from our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. If we don't recycle and teach our children to, we won't be leaving behind much of Earth's natural beauty for future generations.

One of the easiest ways to recycle and help conserve our Earth to take is to stop buying bottled water and bottled soft drinks. Shirley Whitten, Regional Extension Agent for Human Nutrition, Diet and Health, explains this week why you should 'give up the bottle.'

Sales of bottled water have more than quadrupled since 1998, making it the second leading beverage in number of sales, with soda still being first.

Bottled water is convenient and is a healthier choice than most other beverages sold, but is it worth the cost? One gallon of tap water in most locations in Alabama costs less than 1 cent. Compare that to the average cost of a gallon of store-brand bottled water at 64 cents or designer water at \$3.78 per gallon.

The first bottled water products on the market were labeled as spring water or mineral water, making them sound as if they were healthier choices than tap water. But bottled water drinkers need to understand that today most water comes from the same municipal water supplies as tap water does.

Also, while municipal water sources are tested throughout each day, as required by the Environmental Protection Agency, testing of bottled water is less stringent. In July 2009, a congressional committee contacted 13 companies for more information on sources and testing of their bottled water products.

Then, consider the environmental hazards created by the packaging and transportation of bottled water. One city in Australia has even banned the sale of bottled water because of effects on the environment.

Even though bottled water is convenient, it is less expensive and more environmentally friendly to fill reusable water bottles. Keep a few on hand and wash them in the dishwasher, so there is no risk of bacterial growth. Yes, it takes some planning, but it will soon become as habitual as grabbing the cell phone or iPod on the way out the door.

If you don't like the taste of your tap water and don't have a filter with your refrigerator, there are inexpensive filters that can be placed on the sink faucet and pitchers with filters that remove any undesirable tastes.

If your water has an off-color as it comes from the tap, it is probably caused by the pipes in your house. A filter will usually remove the substances that cause the off-color also.

In the current economy, many people say they cannot afford to buy fruits and vegetables for their family because of the cost. However, now is a great time to re-evaluate and adjust your food buying habits. Consider spending more of your food dollar on healthy beverages and foods, and less on bottled water and sweetened beverages.

