

## Nonprofits Going Green

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### Why is it important?

*Energy costs, particularly liquid fuels, have invigorated the concept of conservation for businesses all over the world. Some experts are predicting that gasoline and other fuel prices will eventually change the way we live. One movement gaining momentum is Food Security and community gardening. This movement takes note of the barriers low income families face trying to put reasonably-priced AND nutritious meals on the table. Lack of low-cost fresh foods and transportation are major barriers, exacerbated by increasing fuel costs. Several Maine programs are thriving by approaching the issue strategically.*

### Peak Oil

Peak oil is the point at which the world reaches maximum oil extraction resulting in an overall production decline. Some industry experts believe that the high dependence of modern systems on the low cost and high availability of oil will have a swift and negative implication for economic systems around the world. Initiatives throughout the US are teaching communities, businesses and individuals how to develop strategies to respond to this problem before it is fully realized. There is some debate about whether we are at the point of crisis now and the role oil prices may have played in the current financial crisis. I leave that to others to debate.

### Gardening

Public gardens don't have to be ornamental. They can produce food. Further, agriculture beds can be ornamental. There has been an explosion of interest in community gardening. Movements in Portland and Lewiston Auburn include food security and strategies to bring healthy food closer to low income families. If your business or nonprofit has arable land, consider sponsoring a garden for employees or with your clients and neighbors.

### Strategic energy efficiency management

A strategic approach requires that you approach an issue from all sides. When it comes to using less energy

and being frugal, nonprofit leaders can be genius in adapting approaches to save money. If you add ecological responsibility to the thought process, you will be half way there. It doesn't necessarily take capital – something nonprofits are typically without – to make a significant difference. Though, for larger projects, rebates and tax credits can help you to gain an immediate savings in electricity use. I know of one client who replaced all their lighting fixtures financed using a significant energy rebate and short term financing. They experienced an immediate and significant reduction in their CMP bill. The higher the price of oil gets, the faster the potential payback of such an investment.

### Ten things you can do

Here is a list of strategies you could consider. See the attached document for implementation ideas.

1. Make less trash
2. Don't use harmful chemicals to clean
3. Don't use harmful pesticides to grow
4. Use materials and products made near by
5. Unite community/neighborhoods to share in the cultivation of public land
6. Conserve energy
7. Conserve natural resources
8. Swap/barter and trade instead of throwing away
9. Plant new trees, minimize cutting
10. Practice green building & construction

Poll your employees. You may find you have amateur or even professional gardeners, or you may find employees who are so committed to the concept of conservation, that they would be willing to chair a committee to look at the issue. This can help you promote your workplace as enriched and in tune with community responsibility.

If you have other ideas or would like to tell me about a successful initiative, contact me at the email address below.

Learn how to multiply your efforts  
Training on the combined issue of Peak Oil and Climate  
Change is available at the Transition Initiative Portland,  
go to: [www.meetup.com/permaculture-92/](http://www.meetup.com/permaculture-92/)

## Ten Tips for Businesses Going Green

<b>What you can do</b>	<b>How you can do it</b>
Make less trash	Use electronic copies for editing, use real plates and utensils (clean up uses water but done efficiently, it is superior to throw away stuff.) Recycle paper – there are firms that will pick up. Buy recycled paper. Try: <a href="http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/InformationSheets/paper.htm">www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/InformationSheets/paper.htm</a>
Don't use harmful chemicals to clean	There are many alternatives, try: <a href="http://seventhgeneration.com">seventhgeneration.com</a> , <a href="http://care2.com">care2.com</a> or <a href="http://chow.com">chow.com</a> . There are many others.
Don't use harmful pesticides to grow	Permaculture growing methods are low impact and organic, try: <a href="http://Permaculture.org">Permaculture.org</a> or <a href="http://Portlandpermaculture.com">Portlandpermaculture.com</a>
Use materials and products made near by	Buying local makes sense for many reasons, try: <a href="http://Portlandbuylocal.org">Portlandbuylocal.org</a> , MANP or Portland Chamber. Google: “buy local (your town)”
Unite communities and neighborhoods to share in the cultivation of public land	If you have arable land on or near your business site, consider starting an employee garden or community garden, try: <a href="http://communitygarden.org">communitygarden.org</a> , <a href="http://umext.maine.edu">umext.maine.edu</a> , or <a href="http://commgardens.meetup.com/cities/us/me/portland">commgardens.meetup.com/cities/us/me/portland</a>
Conserve energy	For profits receive tax benefit from energy improvements, nonprofits can save money, try: your own electrical contractor can assess and advise you, <a href="http://efficiencymaine.com">efficiencymaine.com</a> , <a href="http://greenbiz.com/resources">greenbiz.com/resources</a> , and <a href="http://www.business.gov/guides/environment/energy-efficiency/index.html">www.business.gov/guides/environment/energy-efficiency/index.html</a>
Conserve natural resources	Conserve water, gas and fuels – review your gasoline use for staff travel and reduce travel between offices, try: telephone conferencing. Water efficiencies are covered by the sites noted above. Partner with a car dealership for special pricing as an employee benefit, allow certain employees to work at home, consider a four day work-week.
Swap, barter and trade instead of throwing away	Try <a href="http://freecycle.org">freecycle.org</a> , <a href="http://craigslist">craigslist</a> or others for furniture and equipment. One man's trash is another man's treasure. An IT Director I worked with once bought server software on EBay at less than ½ the market price of \$5,000.
Plant new trees, minimize cutting	Join <a href="http://arbordayfoundation.org">arbordayfoundation.org</a> and get free (very small) trees to plant around your property, contact the local nursery and ask for trees they may not be able to keep over the winter. Shade makes the property more inviting and can help to cool the building in summer, not to mention parked cars.
Green building for new construction	Most new construction engineering and construction firms are well aware of efficiency options when doing renovations, build-outs or new construction