



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor Laurel Lunt Prussing and Members of the City Council  
**FROM:** William R. Gray, Public Works Director  
Bart Hagston, Environmental Sustainability Manager  
**DATE:** January 6, 2011  
**RE:** Planned Event to Promote Backyard Composting and Use of Rain Barrels

### Concept and Purpose

This memo details a planned one-day truckload sale of backyard compost bins and rain barrels to the public at prices well below retail. Such an event will support the Urbana City Council and Mayor Goals relating to water conservation, waste reduction, and sustainable landscaping and gardening. An event like the one planned will also: a) get large numbers of residents to purchase and utilize compost bins and rain barrels much more quickly than they might otherwise; b) allow residents to purchase these items at a discounted price; c) increase community awareness through promotion surrounding the event; and d) not require any monetary contributions from the City.

### Event Details

The City will contract with a vendor qualified to conduct a one-day truckload sale of backyard compost bins and rain barrels. The items will be available for purchase at the event by the general public. The price will be \$55/each for the rain barrels and \$45/each for the compost bins (including sales tax). These prices are substantially lower than what residents would pay elsewhere, especially for items of a comparable quality and with a significant manufacturer's warranty (compost bins – 10 years; rain barrels – 5 years). Each item comes with assembly directions and the compost bin comes with a simple composting guide.

The selected vendor will conduct some pre-event advertising and Environmental Management staff will also help spread the word through a news release, website, e-mail, and other means. A sample of each item will be placed on public display prior to the event, in a public location such as the City Building. On the chosen Saturday (likely in April 2011) we will set up the event site (likely to be Lincoln Square parking lot) and conduct the sale from 9am to 3pm (or until we run out of supply). A semi-trailer containing approx. 600 rain barrels and an equal number of compost bins will be on-site.

The vendor will supply an event manager who runs the collection event. Environmental Management employees and volunteers will make up the rest of the event staffing. The local unit of the University of Illinois Extension has tentatively agreed to provide Master Gardener volunteers to help staff the site and answer questions from the public about use of the bins and barrels. Several forms of payment will be

accepted by the vendor. The vendor also supplies a security guard since money will be on hand during the event.

### Vendor Selection

There are two known vendors that promote their ability to conduct truckload sales of these items (Norseman Environmental Products and Enviro World Corporation). We solicited and received proposals from both of them. A third vendor which formerly advertised their ability to conduct truckload sales was contacted, but did not respond. We required each vendor to submit samples of their products for our evaluation. We still await a sample from one of the vendors, and we will hold off on a decision until we can evaluate all samples. A decision on a vendor should come by early February.

### Event Consideration Issues

**Local vendors:** The City has an existing rain barrel rebate program. Urbana residents that purchase rain barrels at Illini FS or Farm & Fleet receive \$25 off the retail price, which the City then rebates directly to the store. Rebates will not be available to residents who utilize this event, as these barrels will already be heavily discounted. The rebate program will be continued for residents that locally purchase rain barrels, thus continuing support to these local vendors.

**Technical assistance:** Master Gardeners will be at the event to educate residents on the use of these items. Following the event, Environmental Management staff will be available to assist residents with questions and they can also be referred to the Extension Master Gardeners. The City's website already features some information on rain barrel use, but we may add additional information.

**City Code:** We're working with Community Development to ensure that City Code allows for proper use of these items, with minor rules in place to minimize nuisance situations.

**Date:** We looked at ways to incorporate the event into the Market at the Square. However, due to the space requirements of this event, and the desire to hold the event earlier in the year than the Market will commence next year, we are looking at an April date (but not Easter weekend).

### Conclusion

The event has much potential to help the City of Urbana achieve some of its environmental sustainability goals. If this event meets that expectation, we will consider holding similar events in the future.