



News from

# The Front Porch

Spring 2011 - Brought to you quarterly by The McCue Mortgage Company

## Easy Composting for a Greener Garden

There's no great secret to composting – simply mix up some organic matter, add a little water and a little sunshine, and in a few weeks, you've got compost! But if it's so easy, why don't more people do it? In addition to reducing waste in landfills, compost provides rich organic (and free!) nutrients to your garden, shrubs, and soil. Why not give it a try this spring?

How to get started? If you're going to have an open compost pile, simply choose a spot that is near enough to your home that it's convenient, but far enough away that you don't find it unsightly. Some composters build a simple enclosure with a lattice-type cover if they don't like the look of a compost pile. The pile should be in the sun – sunshine speeds up the decomposition process – and away from tree roots, which will suck all the nutrients right out of the compost pile! If you have a vegetable garden, somewhere near the garden is a perfect spot, so it's convenient when you need it, and you can easily toss unwanted items into it. Remove any grass (just dig it up and turn it), and simply start adding organic matter (kitchen waste, newspapers, leaves, hay, etc.). Remember to keep the pile moist and turn it frequently to speed up the composting process. A good size for your compost pile is approximately 3' x 3' x 3'.

If you don't have a lot of space, or don't like the look of a compost pile, an old metal trash bin can make a great composting spot. Simply punch some holes in the bottom with a hammer and large nail for drainage, place a few inches of soil on the bottom, and add your compost in layers (e.g., layer organic waste, newspaper, leaves, soil, and begin again). Add a little water to keep the pile moist. Place the bin on top of some bricks or concrete blocks so air can circulate. Keep the lid on. This method requires no turning, but can be very ...aromatic... when you open it to add materials!

One more note of warning. Compost piles have been known to attract bears. Enclosed composting can help reduce the problem – using the method described above, or by purchasing a bear-resistant compost bin. Experts suggest that it is the strong odor of the compost pile that can attract bears. They recommend simply burying your new organic matter at least 8 inches deep and avoiding adding items such as meat, bones, fish and dairy products. ▲



THE McCUE MORTGAGE COMPANY

### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

What a winter it has been! As of this writing, this winter is already fourth in terms of measured snowfall. Many homeowners have dealt with ice dams, shoveling snow off their roofs, leaks, floods, and more. But then again, we probably don't really need to remind you, do we? Enough of the white stuff! As we celebrate the gradual greening of New England, we thought it would be fun to welcome this greatly needed and much appreciated spring with a "Think Green" issue of the Front Porch ... a celebration of everything green!

In this issue, you'll find some new ways to go green in your own home, greener gardening, and a little more green fun thrown in for good measure.

As we welcome spring, we at McCue sincerely hope you and your home have weathered this brutal winter without too much difficulty, and send wishes for a lovely mild spring!

Sincerely,

*Bill McCue*

William J. McCue, President  
The McCue Mortgage Company

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## Healthy Garden Greens for a Healthier You

Now that you've started a compost pile – it's time to start planning your garden. Green vegetables – especially dark greens – are high in antioxidants, fiber, and other essential nutrients. Here are several that are easy to grow, and particularly good for you:

**Kale** will grow throughout the summer – and is hardy enough to withstand a light frost. Slightly bitter in taste, kale is a healthy leafy green that is rich in vitamins A, C, K, folate, iron, and calcium. In small amounts, kale can add pizzazz to your salad, but it's also delicious stir-fried with onions, garlic, and a little bit of olive oil – and for a little extra flavor, add some nuts and/or raisins!

**Collard greens** are similar in taste and nutrients to kale – but the leaves are smoother and rounder, and collards have a slightly longer growing cycle than kale. Collards also taste great raw in a salad, or prepared as described above.

**Spinach** is sweeter than kale and collards and a great source of iron, magnesium, calcium, and vitamins A, many B vitamins, C, E, and K. Enjoy spinach in your salad, cooked, steamed, or on top of your pizza! Spinach will bolt in your garden as soon as it gets hot, so consider planting a spring and fall crop.

**Green beans** are good for you and great for your garden. They're known as nitrogen-fixing legumes because they improve the quality of your garden soil and help eliminate or reduce the need for fertilizers! Best of all, green beans are amazingly easy to grow, and add vitamins A, C and K, as well as iron, manganese, folic acid, potassium, magnesium, calcium, and fiber to your diet.

**Broccoli** is one of the best sources of vitamin C, as well as iron, folic acid, magnesium, vitamins K & A, and omega 3 fatty acids! You can enjoy broccoli raw or cooked, and be sure to add the young tender greens to your salad!

**Asparagus** taste delicious lightly steamed with a little bit of lemon! They're also rich in iron, folic acid, fiber, phosphorus, potassium, and vitamins A, B1, B2, B3, B6, C and K. ▲

## Green Up Your Home in Eight Easy Steps

Consider these easy – and green – ways to “green up” your home this spring:

- Mix 1 quart of water with 4 teaspoons of baking soda in a refillable spray bottle for an inexpensive, environmentally friendly all-purpose cleaner.
- Vacuum the coils behind your refrigerator at least once a month to keep it operating as efficiently as possible.
- Unplug major “energy sucking” electronics such as TV, microwave, computer, coffee maker, etc. (anything with a light or clock that stays on even when not in use). These electronics drain energy even when they're not on. Also, only plug in your cell phone charger when you're charging your phone.
- Only wash your laundry in cold water.
- Use low-VOC paints. They're healthier for you and the environment – and Home Depot's inexpensive Behr low-VOC paint was recently named one of the best quality paints on the market!
- Consider buying used – from cars, to furniture, to clothing – buying used or “freecycling” will save you money and keep these items out of the landfills!
- Use both sides of your printer paper. Cut up papers – from the office, home, or kids' school papers – and use the back sides for scrap.
- Eliminate bottled water. If you do nothing else, do this. ▲



Time is running out!



Enter today. It's simple! Go to our website [www.mccuemortgage.com](http://www.mccuemortgage.com) and look for the Got Email? Win Cash! icon. Click and fill out the simple online form. If you've already entered, there's no need to enter again.

On March 30<sup>th</sup> we'll randomly select a winner from all entries received. If you're a winner, you'll receive a check equal to your monthly mortgage payment.

Each quarter, we'll conduct contests where you could win a monthly mortgage payment. These contests will be communicated via email, so make sure we have yours. Enter the Got Email? Win Cash! contest today! Your next mortgage payment could be “on the house” if you win! ▲



**LIVE UNITED!**

McCue Mortgage is proud to have been a finalist in the United Way's “Best of Awards” in the categories of Best Rise to the Challenge and Campaign Coordinator of the Year at a ceremony held on February 17<sup>th</sup> at the Hartford Club.

Select companies were recognized for their outstanding 2010 campaigns at the event.

## Hike and Bike Connecticut's Greenways

According to the CT DEP, a “Greenway” is “a corridor of open space that (1) may protect natural resources, preserve scenic landscapes and historical resources or offer opportunities for recreation or non-motorized transportation, (2) may connect existing protected areas and provide access to the outdoors, (3) may be located along a defining natural feature, such as a waterway, along a man-made corridor, including an unused right-of-way, traditional trail routes or historic barge canals or (4) may be a greenspace along a highway or around a village.”

Make it your goal to visit, hike or bike each of Connecticut's Greenways this year! Visit the CT DEP's Greenway site (<http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?A=2707&Q=323852>) to access a downloadable pdf map of all of Connecticut's officially designated Greenways (the map also indicates which are paved and which are not), and to purchase or view online “Pathways Through Connecticut” – the DEP's book about all of Connecticut's Greenways. Happy trails! ▲



## The Front Porch

is a quarterly publication of The McCue Mortgage Company. Comments or inquiries can be sent to the publisher via mail at:

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## From the back porch...

### Did You Know?

- If everyone recycled their Sunday paper, Americans would save a half-million trees a week.
- Wind is the fastest-growing renewable energy source.
- The energy used to make one aluminum can from virgin metal could produce 20 using recycled aluminum.
- In America, we celebrate Earth Day on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, but the first Earth Day was celebrated on March 21, 1970, selected by founder John McConnell because it is the date of the Vernal Equinox in the northern hemisphere.

### Gardening Humor

**Gardening Rule:** When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.



## Got a Clue?

Which of these items will take the longest to decompose in a landfill?

- A diaper
- An aluminum can
- A banana peel
- A Styrofoam cup

Email your answer to:

[puzzle@mccuemortgage.com](mailto:puzzle@mccuemortgage.com) and include your name, loan number, address and phone number.

Remember to play the puzzle every issue to increase your odds of winning! We take all the correct answers and select a winner each November who receives one month's mortgage payment courtesy of McCue Mortgage. The winner will be notified and published in The Front Porch. You must be a McCue Mortgage customer to win.

Answer to last issue's puzzle:

Betelgeuse, one of the brightest stars in the Orion constellation, is how many light years from earth?

Answer: c) 528