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homes. It's the potential buyers who need to be encouraged to seek out those possibilities. That's what we are doing.

And yes, the diversity of our home town is what keeps me here. If it gets too upscale, I'll have to leave as many of my friends have said they will as well. Mono-cultures are just as bad for communities as they are for agriculture. - V

To: Editor Vesta Copestakes

In the August 16th issue there was a letter exchange about the fate of used batteries. As always, the subject was framed in terms of two poor alternatives, disposal and recycling. In fact neither one is a good fate for batteries and I wish the conversation could be lifted above this simpleminded level.

There is a far more advanced view of resources available today than recycling. It is called Zero Waste and it contemplates the redesign of every commercial and industrial product so that wasting it down the road is not allowed to even be contemplated as part of the design. Instead every functional unit (much more important than the materials though it can include materials) will be designed for reuse perpetually.

Recycling is not the divinely inspired insight that its adherents claim. It was the first response in the seventies to the perception that way too much garbage was going into dumps. As such it was a mad scramble, not well thought out, not efficient and, as thirty more years of experience have shown, not even effective. In the intervening time, the amount of garbage going into dumps has increased by every measure. The problem with recycling is that it depends on FIRST CREATING GARBAGE and then desperately trying to find a way, any last minute way, to drum up some kind of reuse, after all the cards are stacked against reuse. Zero Waste, on the other hand, demands a complete design focused on reuse right from the git-go. The most important things to reuse are the highest functions, not the lowest materials - that means computing abilities, containers, floor coverings etc. not crushed computers, broken bottles or worn out carpets. Once this kind of redesign is demanded, simply amazing insights begin to emerge.

Batteries are complex chemical assemblies. These anecdotal stories about "who is taking batteries in town" are not useful. "Taking" is not doing anything valuable. The recyclers have basically no game plan. Why? Because they are scared stiff of chemicals. As a chemist who worked for thirty years on chemical reuse I can tell you that when chemicals are targeted for reuse, they are among the easiest things to reuse. But batteries are all made today with a dump in mind. The way that batteries are made has got to change. What kinds of metals are in the dump is meaningless. What is really important is what kinds of mineral inputs are we raping the planet to obtain for a one-way trip into pollution and oblivion. We need to stop it. We need to force new designs to be adopted so that every battery (or newly designed portable energy product if batteries are

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found to be non-optimal) has a well understood home for regeneration and reuse before it is ever allowed to be sold. Civilization and a healthy planet demand nothing less.

This short letter cannot do justice to the ideas presented so please go to the websites below for a fuller presentation.

Paul Palmer PhD, Sebastopol
<http://www.zerowasteinstitute.org>
<http://gettingtozerowaste.com> (a book)

Vesta,

I was at a Rose Society meeting last night and one of the members referenced your article on the Mango Mulch. She talked about a new "Tango Mix" that will not have manure in it. Good going!

Regards, Barbara