

# *NORTHWEST EARTH INSTITUTE ECO-TIPS*

## REDUCING JUNK MAIL

*If you are an average American, you will spend eight months of your life just opening and sorting junk mail. About 850 pieces of advertisement and solicitations arrive at a household each year. Much of this goes directly into the recycling bin or trash can.*

### WHAT IS JUNK MAIL?

Junk mail is anything that comes in the mail box that you don't read. It doesn't matter how classy the catalog, how convenient the product, or how much your support is needed to save the rain forests. If you don't want it, it's junk.

One of the worst offenders is the catalog. Some consumers report receiving up to 500 in one year. How could one person possibly get on that many mailing lists?

An innocent request for a catalog can result in two things. First, your name and address go into the computer whose memory never goes bad. This means you may receive every periodic, seasonal or specialty catalog published by the company. Second, the company may rent or sell its mailing list to other catalog advertisers, who in turn may pass your name and address on to others.

### REDUCE WHAT YOU CAN.

Your best strategy is to reduce the amount of junk mail coming to your home. Here are some steps you can take:

- Write to DMA Mail Preference Service, PO Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512. This will stop your name from being sold to large mailing list companies for five years.
- If unwanted mail is accompanied by a return envelope, fold up everything you received, place it in the return envelope and mail it back. A note next to your address label should state that you want to be removed from the mailing list.
- Call the sender to request that your name be removed from the mailing list. Catalogs generally include 800 numbers. When you order from a catalog, tell them how many catalogs per year you are willing to accept.



- If you are being overwhelmed with credit card offers, call the opt out number for major credit bureaus, 1-888-567-8688, available 24 hours a day. Ask to have your name removed permanently.
- Keep a stack of postcards handy with this message: "Please take me off your mailing list." Tape the label with your address onto the postcard and send it off.
- Cancel all publications you don't have time to read.

## **KEEP YOUR NAME OFF LISTS.**

The best way to keep off lists is to be very careful whenever you give out your name and address. Information that you send on warranty cards or in entering contests may go directly to a marketing firm. When filling out forms for credit cards, subscriptions, or memberships, state that you do not want your name released to any other business. Avoid giving your name and address for a store “buyers club” card. If you move, fill out the post office’s temporary change of address form instead of a permanent one. Notify important parties yourself.