

JUNE GREEN WATER FILTRATION ARTICLE

Filters, Filters, Everywhere...

Residential water filtration systems—go 'green' today.

By Mark Howlett

“Water conservation and water filter technology,” aren’t exactly barnburner topics during an economically stressed business environment. Yet innovative water filter products continue to be developed, offering consumers leading edge filtration technology with a “green” twist.

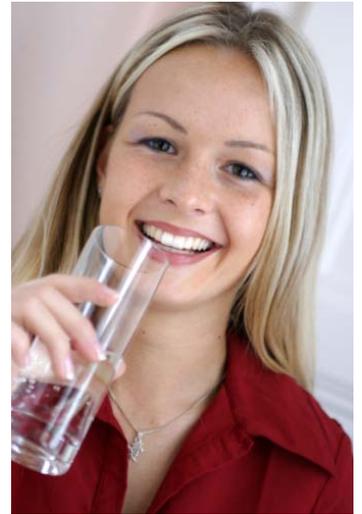
So, why bother with “green” considerations when water filters already reduce the number of plastic water bottles that wind up in the landfill? A 2004 Gallup Study indicated that one in three American households have “serious concerns about the quality and healthfulness of their tap water.” Not surprisingly, household water filters have become more popular as environmental impacts of plastic water bottles become publicly unacceptable.

The Cause

If you haven’t yet Googled the “Pacific garbage patch,” take a moment and do so and see how many sites are out there providing oodles of environmentally disastrous examples of the impact from plastic water bottles. [*Save yourself the Googling--just point your browser to <http://science.howstuffworks.com/great-pacific-garbage-patch.htm> to learn the basics of how waste plastics are wrecking large parts of our Pacific ocean. —Ed.*]

Plastic water bottles are considered to be a major contributor to global warming pollution. In 2005, some 2 million tons of plastic water bottles ended up clogging landfills instead of being recycled. And the kicker, plastic debris in the environment takes between 400 and 1,000 years to biodegrade.

Why? It’s simple, really--consumers have been manipulated into believing that bottled water with a brand on it is healthier, tastes better and is more convenient than generic city tap water. In fact they’re so convinced, bottled water has become a \$10 billion dollar business in the U.S. alone.



As the demand for more responsibly delivered clean water becomes *en vogue*, so does the need for environmentally acceptable water filtration technology.

Solving the Plastic Paradigm

While die-hard bottled water drinkers may resist the need to change their drinking habits, one technology has quickly been growing in popularity that provides a simple alternative: residential water filtration.

Residential water filters are available in a variety of configurations. Under-counter filters are reasonably priced, reduce significant contaminants and offer long-term water filtration production. Whole-home water filters provide more gallons of capacity with a tradeoff of less contaminant removal. Portable water filters such as pitchers, countertops and filter bottles are useful as portable devices, but require filter replacements on a more frequent basis.

Ultimately, consumers can choose which water filter solution best fits their lifestyle. Many times, a combination of several technologies can be used to provide a more robust water filtration package.

Yet, water filters are not without environmental considerations. Much like bottled water, water filters may have negative environmental implications. While a typical water filter system can eliminate up to 9,000 or more plastic bottles from reaching landfills, water filters can also pose some environmental risks.

When a water filter is exhausted, a replacement filter cartridge needs to be purchased. What happens to the spent filter? Consumers should ask water filter companies how their filters are recycled. Filters that are made of plastic can be recycled *if* a filter company has a recycling program in place. But be careful, some cartridges contain a mixture of aluminum (or other metal) and molded plastic. There's no way to effectively recycle these spent filters.

More than 75 percent of the water we drink is away from home, and built-in filtration systems aren't exactly portable. Fortunately, in some cases, water filter companies have developed portable water filter bottles that eliminate the need to buy plastic water bottles while away from home. This technology translates into huge savings while on the go, and responsibly reduces plastic waste from hitting landfills and the ocean.

Corporate Awareness

Packaging is also a vital component to water filter conservation. Some water filter companies are wrapping their filters in corn-based labeling, and

packaging their products in packaging that uses as much as 50- to 70 percent recycled content.

Green companies, with water filters requiring pre-rinsing, encourage consumers to capture flush water for landscape watering. Water filter companies that promote green components to their filter products should be able to substantiate their marketing claims.

Green statements are only effective if there is a legitimate and working program that supports the claim. Unfounded environmental claims are socially unacceptable and represent marketing fraud. Consumers should challenge water filter companies when any green statement is made before making a purchase decision.

Consumers should ask filter companies which non-profit environmental organizations they financially support in an effort to clean plastic waste. Corporate cooperation with environmental organizations is a key indication of responsible capitalism.

A partnership with environmental non-profits is a good start in the right direction when searching for a filter company. Ultimately, balancing business obligations with environmental considerations is a difficult task at best.

Mark Howlett is brand manager for Water, Inc., a worldwide distributor of water appliances. A partnership between Water Inc., and water sports giant Body Glove has resulted in the release of the environmentally-friendly Body Glove Water Filters and a concerted effort to encourage consumers to use filtered instead of bottled water.