

News from Nan

NEWS 'N' VIEWS

TIPS FROM “THE TRASH TWINS”

AUGUST 27, 2021 | ANNA



Recently I read in the *Press Democrat*, our regional newspaper, that Governor Newsom is about to take California trash more seriously.

As unofficial neighborhood “picker-uppers,” we have a few observations that might be of help to the governor and others hoping and working for a more trash-free environment for us all.

Top 5 neighborhood trash problems

5. Trash that simply “got away.” This can happen to anyone, and it has certainly happened to us: a napkin is simply caught in a gust of wind and blows away before its owner can stop it.

Fortunately, we estimate that this is only maybe 10% of the problem. Now, on to the 90%...

4. Mostly food wrappers, but anything small and light in the area around schools and day-care settings, construction sites, and bus stops – places where people gather and eat in a hurry or on the go. There are almost always trash receptacles nearby, but some people are just thoughtless, lazy, or even rebellious.

Volume-wise, this is our biggest problem. We steel ourselves as we approach the local day-care center. The teachers probably have a trash patrol at the end of each day, but it’s too late – many of the candy-bar wrappers and drink containers have already migrated through and over the fence, and into our territory.

3. Aftermath of celebrations. We love birthday and graduation parties, and thank goodness they’re back (and hopefully back to stay). However, the most recent extravaganza right across the street from where we live produced a literal trash HEAP of champagne bottles and corks, paper streamers, and literally thousands of tiny PLASTIC circles, stars, and moons. What could be worse for our local critters and beleaguered environment than that! We continue to find additional offending items months after the event!

What to do about 4. and 3.? Since these are local problems, and the offenders are right there on site, why not have a daily (or, in the case of a special event, an after-event) pick-up party. Include a quick “recycling reminder” at the beginning of the party! Offer prizes for the participant with the most trash at the end of the party!

2. Cigarette butts. Of course, nowadays cigarette smokers are not welcome to pursue their habit indoors, so they “step outside” and smoke next to the sidewalk. Rather than putting the butts into a portable ash tray, baggie, or pocket and taking them home for disposal, most people seem to simply stamp them out and leave them where they lie. They are nasty, toxic, and difficult to pick up.

How to mitigate the butt problem? Why not have sponsored “butt stands” (like “poop stands”) that offers a gentle reminder message and receptacles for safe disposal. They could be sponsored by individuals or (better yet) by the owners of the buildings that are forbidding smoking inside (yay!) but kicking the problem “out the door.”

An additional thought about butts: Shouldn’t cigarettes be biodegradable? If so, they could be collected and composted.

1. **Our weirdest trash item so far. A cat carcass!** We couldn't believe it, either! It was in the curb strip and had been picked clean, probably by scavengers. It was a little heavy and awkward for us, but we managed to get it into our bag and carried home. Cat owners, keep an eye on your beloved pets!

A few final thoughts: Shouldn't we volunteers be able easily get hold of the equipment we need (picker-uppers, bags – for sorted, unsorted, and mixed trash, and gloves)? Shouldn't we have official, day-glow t-shirts to wear?

We extend special thanks to folks in our neighborhood who cheer us on when we are on trash patrol. We are grateful for the encouragement!



◀ 2021 ◀ CALIFORNIA ◀ JOHNSON ◀ PRESS DEMOCRAT ◀ ROHNERT PARK ◀ TRASH ◀ VAN RAAPHORST