

EnviroBriefs



Grapefruit tree

Fruit Fight. The Gersteins of Boca Raton, Florida tried to save their grapefruit tree from Florida's citrus canker eradication program by claiming immunity for the tree under the Geneva Convention (specifically the prohibition against destruction of private agriculture during time of war). Mr. Gerstein stated "we're in a state of war," to which a State official replied "that tree will be coming down."

Bolshevik Blooper. Russia has tested the world's most powerful vacuum bomb (known as the "Father of All Bombs"), which unleashes a destructive shockwave with the power of a nuclear blast. According to deputy armed forces chief of staff Alexander Rukshin, "this weapon does not contaminate the environment...all that is alive merely evaporates." It's probably safe to say that Mr. Rukshin will not be in the running for this

year's Global Environmental Citizen Award (previous winners: Al Gore, Prince Charles).

Metal Mania. To reduce the amount of chlorine in Washington, DC's drinking water, the US Army Corps of Engineers switched to chloramine for disinfecting water. Chloramine is a combination of chlorine and ammonia which is more corrosive to pipes than chlorine alone. As an unintended consequence, there was a temporary increase in blood lead levels among Washington, DC residents serviced by lead water pipes.

Pig Power. Neighbors used to complain to Thai pig farmer Ong-Arj Suwannatee about the smell of his 4000 pigs. After designing his own biogas plant which captures methane gas from manure and turns it into electricity, he says "the smell has gone, the flies have gone and I have

cash in my pocket." Ong-Arj, who also sells manure to local farmers, says "in pig farming, the only thing you can't sell is the squeal."

Dino Demise. New research indicates that the meteor that struck the Yucatan peninsula 65 million years ago may not have been what killed off the dinosaurs. Volcanic eruptions in India at about the same time are thought to have produced vast amounts of greenhouse gases over a million year period leading up to the mass extinctions. A second large meteor impact (possibly in India) may have sounded the final death knell for the dinosaurs.



Gas Moments in History

1500: In the New World's first reported use of *tear gas*, the natives of Brazil, trying to drive back the Portuguese, create blinding smoke by burning chili peppers over coals.

1775: English chemist Joseph Priestly first

synthesizes *laughing gas* (nitrous oxide). He calls it "phlogisticated nitrous air" which ironically is a much funnier name.

1888: The city pharmacy in Weisloch, Germany becomes the world's first *gas station* when Bertha Benz stops to refill the

tank of the first automobile (invented by her husband, Karl Benz).

1942: The Mickey Mouse *Gas Mask* for children is introduced following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Thankfully, no *poison gas* attacks occurred on US soil during WWII.

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Did you Know?

- The word "gas" originated with Belgian chemist J.B Von Helmont in 1650. It comes from the Greek word "chaos" meaning atmosphere or empty space.
- Use of biodiesel fuel reduces toxic air emissions by up to 90%.
- SpaceShipOne, the first privately built manned spacecraft, burns a fuel mixture of rubber and laughing gas (nitrous oxide).

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Common Sense Consulting



Traditional gnome-lighting ceremony

Top 10 Drawbacks of Living Next to an Ex-Mob Lawyer

10. Mailman delivers your FBI Agent Starter Kit to his house by mistake
9. After having an argument with his kid, your kid wakes up with Barbie's head on her pillow
8. Mob informants are always left in the wrong recycling bin
7. Your garden gnome was kidnapped and held for ransom (see photo at left)
6. At your last party, he taped a "Whack Me" sign to your back
5. Your shrubs keep getting scorched by the cars exploding in the driveway
4. Just to mess with your head, he makes you an offer you can refuse
3. On especially hot days, even the refreshing breeze of bullets whizzing past your head doesn't cool you off
2. Mob corpses are constantly clogging your pool filter
1. Monday: paper boy misses porch, Tuesday: paper boy sleeps with the fishes

Green Light Bulbs Raise Red Flag

General Electric (GE) is attempting to reduce the amount of mercury in popular and energy-saving compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs. Use of CFLs can reduce power bills as well as emissions of carbon dioxide, but they contain about 5 milligrams of mercury, a toxic metal that can affect the nervous system and damage the kidneys and liver. With sales of CFLs passing 150 million bulbs per year, environmentalists are worried that most of the bulbs will end up in landfills and



not recycled. Waste haulers are concerned that CFLs that are not recycled will break prior to reaching landfills and contaminate workers. China is phasing out incandescent light bulbs and Canada and Australia are banning incandescent bulbs. GE is opposed to such bans because it is designing super-efficient incandescent bulbs which would have the added benefit of being free of mercury.

Brandy Bridges of Maine purchased two dozen CFLs from a local home improvement store to try to save money on her power bill. She was installing one of the bulbs in her 7-year-old daughter's room when it dropped and broke on the shag carpet. She called the home improvement store, who directed her to call the Poison Control hotline, who in turn told

her to call the Maine Center for Disease Control and the Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP). A Maine DEP inspector measured mercury in the carpet where the bulb broke at levels six times higher than the State limit and advised Brandy to call a professional hazardous waste cleanup contractor. The cleanup contractor gave her an estimate of \$2000 to remediate the area around the broken bulb.

A month later, the bedroom remained sealed off and Brandy was still saving up to pay for the \$2000 cleanup, which won't cover the cost of new carpeting and other items which have to be replaced. Her insurance company said that her policy wouldn't cover the costs because mercury is considered a pollutant.