



by Bernadell Larson, HCMG

WITH CONFLICTING PRIORITIES
... which resources do you choose to manage?

I received an email on a statement in my last column on LEED-H water management and grey water systems, which I would like to share with you. First I would like to say that I am thankful for the comment and welcome others. Creating dialogues with people who have done their own research affords us the opportunity to learn from each other, and ultimately come to a consensus on what is the best path to take in managing our precious resources.

Just to refresh you – the State of Texas changed the rules and definition of greywater discharge in January 2005. Washing machine water can no longer be considered greywater suitable for discharge directly onto the land. One of the reasons given for this was the fact that fecal matter could be discharged due to washing baby diapers in a washing machine that discharges the water through a greywater system. I made a flippant remark to the effect of who washes cloth diapers anymore. I have come to understand that a number of people are choosing to use cloth diapers and wash them instead of disposables, which end up in our landfills. Using disposables puts an enormous amount of bulk in the landfills, and because synthetics are one of the components, they will remain there for centuries. On the other side of the coin, cloth diapers need to be washed, which takes another precious resource – water. If the diaper is washed in a top loading washing machine, it takes anywhere between 45 to 55 gallons per load of diapers!

Several of our natural resources are being consumed faster than we can replenish them due to the nature of the resource and increasing consumption. In the scenario of using disposable diapers vs. cloth diapers and washing them, and you have to pick one to focus on, which one do you choose? This is a dilemma that I struggle with and I am sure others do also.

I tend to focus on saving water because I feel that it is being consumed much more rapidly. But, I am also trying to significantly reduce my consumption of items that end up in the landfills. In the past there have been a lot of communications to educate the public on recycling. In addition to recycling, we are beginning to see public campaigns to communicate the importance of reducing and reusing. I believe reducing is the key.