

CO-EXISTING WITH NATURE IN A SUSTAINABLE AND BUSH-FRIENDLY MANNER

A GPNR forum on guidelines relating to the interaction between humans and the natural environment

This month we deal with another frequently asked question pertaining to living in the bush in a responsible manner.

GUIDELINE 4

WHAT MUST I DO WITH MY RUBBISH?

As you know, there is no rubbish removal on Grietjie, except by the baboons – and rubbish removal by baboons is quite clearly not a solution to the problem! What are the options?

1. Should I burn my rubbish?

- 1.1. **Burning is NOT an acceptable method for getting rid of rubbish.**
- 1.2. **Burning rubbish is dangerous and may cause veld fires.** For this reason, the **Forest Act 122 of 1994** and the **National Veld and Forest Fire Act, 101 1998** provide that during certain periods it will be illegal to make any fires in the open, if so decreed by the relevant governmental authorities. Make sure that you do not fall foul of any of these provisions, since the penalties involve heavy fines and/or even imprisonment.
- 1.3. Burning **pollutes** the environment. It releases toxic fumes into the air and allows plastics and various other pollutants to contaminate the soil.
- 1.4. Many items, such as glass, cans and bones do not burn properly, or not at all. These and other half-burnt items accumulate and pollute the area. They also encourage baboons and other animals to scratch in the ashes and scatter various items of rubbish all over the reserve.
- 1.5. Half-burnt items pose a serious **hazard** to animals. Many animals have been found with foreign objects around the hooves, legs, necks or mouths, causing some animals to die.
- 1.6. Fire pits and drums are unsightly and out of keeping with the natural bush environment that we love so much.

2. Should I bury my rubbish?

- 2.1. **Burying rubbish is NOT an acceptable way to dispose of rubbish**, because many of the problems associated with burning are exacerbated when we bury rubbish.
- 2.2. Burying rubbish merely hides it until the next rains come, or until baboons and other animals find it.
- 2.3. Burying rubbish could amount to the feeding of animals and/or the introduction of alien vegetation into the veld. Please see our previous guidelines which explain why these two things are so undesirable from an environmental perspective.
- 2.4. Burying rubbish **pollutes** the environment and poses a serious **hazard** to animals, as discussed above.
- 2.5. Many items do not decompose for many years. They pile up over the years, causing environmental degradation, and are a nightmare to remove. Exposed rubbish and rubbish pits are obviously hideous in a bush environment.

3. Removal of rubbish to the municipal dump or bins in Phalaborwa

- 3.1. The removal of rubbish is the most eco-friendly way of dealing with our rubbish, because it ensures that rubbish ends up where it belongs, namely at the municipal dump.
- 3.2. There are many bins in town, and it is also a lot less onerous to pop our rubbish into a bin instead of burning it or burying it. Here are a few things to remember:
 - Do not let the rubbish pile up, but regularly take it to town. It is not at all difficult to get rid of one or two bags at a time.
 - Make sure that the place where the rubbish is kept until removal is secure. Many owners have a lockable cage, room or container in which the rubbish is kept.
 - Keep the bags or bins well sealed and under no circumstances leave food items in view of animals, because it will encourage them to congregate around the area and to try breaking in.

4. Recycling and making compost

- 4.1. Recycling is of course an even better way to get rid of rubbish, and recycling is very easy in Phalaborwa.
- 4.2. There are various recycling points:
 - The municipal dump in Phalaborwa. The entrance is situated on Spekboom Road, which is the road going to Selonque, on the boundary of the town. There are people at the dump who sort the rubbish; or you can take your recyclable items in separate bags.

- Phalaborwa Recycling, in 6th Ave, Heavy Industrial Area, Phalaborwa, tel: (015) 781-3710. They take, and pay for, scrap metal and glass. They take paper, but do not pay for it.
- 4.3. Making **compost** from vegetable cuttings and other organic matter for use in the garden, could be a good, eco-friendly way of dealing with this type of rubbish. However, it is very important that animals cannot see the compost matter, or get into the place/container where the compost is made. Should they be able to do so, the same problems relating to the feeding of animals and the introduction of alien plant seeds could apply.

5. What can I do with building rubble?

- 5.1. Clearly, building rubble cannot simply be taken away in black bags, and many owners have opted for burying theirs. However, it is a most unsatisfactory solution, because the same principles apply as for the burying of ordinary rubbish, discussed above, except to a greater extent. There are also other differences:
- The sheer volume of building rubble tends to be much greater than that of ordinary rubbish.
 - Building rubble does not decompose.
 - It therefore interferes with the growth and distribution of natural vegetation.
 - Many products used in building are highly toxic and detrimental to the environment.
 - The visual impact remains for a long time, even if the rubble has been buried carefully.
- 5.2. The good news is that **Phalaborwa Recycling** in 6th Ave, Heavy Industrial Area, Phalaborwa, tel: (015) 781-3710, will bring a skip to your property and collect it again when it's full. This involves a fee, but consider the money well spent as it prevents the degradation of your property.

6. Lastly, it is vitally important that we instruct and monitor our staff and visitors not to pollute Grietjie, and to make proper arrangements for the removal of their rubbish.

Compiled by Liz Lewis

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