



Environmental Crusader  
**WAYNE NEALE**



**Greening** the Caribbean

The ways in which we dispose of our waste in the Caribbean is of growing concern and an issue we need to start taking seriously. Here in Saint Lucia we see roadsides, gutters and bushes littered with dumped general waste not to mention plastic bottles, boxes and plastic bags. There are those who proactively go out and organise clean ups but this is something we ALL have to do as a community to keep our island pristine, our oceans clear of garbage not only for ourselves but also for the future generations.

So what can we do and how? This is what we asked passionate environmentalist and Greening the Caribbean founder Wayne Neale about waste management and recycling best practices here in Saint Lucia. ►

# garbage recycled

How big is the "waste pollution" problem in the Caribbean and Saint Lucia?

If we accept that pollution is the introduction of a thing that has harmful or poisonous effects on the environment then the problem is massive in Saint Lucia, and in the Caribbean. Our region is in the midst of an exponentially increasing waste disposal crisis. This is not my opinion. It is a fact documented in a range of research studies and reports. Litter is one source of pollution which persists in a very visible way, however pollution is not visible. Overall the region lacks strong environmental laws and an integrated solid waste management (ISWM) infrastructure. What is ISWM? It is a strategic approach to managing solid wastes in a way that reduces risks to human health and the environment by incorporating waste-to-landfill minimization, sorting, recovery, and recycling. This is the system used in North America and a host of European countries.

What are the health risks and implications for the environment?

Based on the legislated practices for waste disposal in Saint Lucia, the environmental implications of waste and its risk to our health and that of future generations are catastrophic. Our waste disposal crisis, a key source of the waste pollution problem, is anticipated to weaken the competitiveness of the region as a tourism destination. Again, not my opinion, nor is it fake news. Each type of waste creates its own unique health risk when disposal is absent of known best practices. The public is becoming more aware of the dangers of our over dependence on single use plastic products. In Saint Lucia, MASSY Stores is raising public awareness on the dangers of plastic waste. And of equal significance is their bold move to replace plastic grocery bags with re-useable shopping bags as the primary means of carrying groceries.

Electronic and electrical waste is a major and increasing source of a new and complex hazardous material to the environment. Health consequences can include cancer, mortality, birth defects and low birth weight according to World Health Organization. When no longer of use to the owner, these materials are discarded in landfills. Ozone-depleting substances released from discarded electronics contribute to ozone-layer depletion, which exacerbates climate change. Many of these materials become unstable and can contaminate soil and groundwater; but when handled correctly, as we do, 90% to 100% of the materials extracted can be recycled. This greatly reduces the local environmental impact of landfill dumping and pollution. JE Bergasse, a leading retailer of IT equipment, is an environmental trailblazer in responsible e-waste handling of the end of life equipment it uses and sells.

Why is it important for an island like Saint Lucia to get to grips with its waste pollution problem?

WN: Self-preservation or fear of loss should be a motivator. If you want to live and have a desire for your offspring to live within a healthy Caribbean ecosystem, then each of us should take action on issues related waste disposal and pollution where we live, work and recreate, namely our neighbourhood, beaches and of course our country.

We talk about social responsibility, what does that entail?

Good Question, we hear the phrase, however it lacks relevance to most. By definition social responsibility means a duty every organisation or individual to act for the benefit of society at large. The modern parlance is corporate and social responsibility. And now we have to get people to care about preserving the space, ecosystem/environment/community/ocean/island, we all share and need to thrive. Go figure? It's all about preserving Mother Earth. 🌍



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I wanted to create a business that protects the environment by reduces landfill dumping while creating jobs and developing a localised green economy in St. Lucia

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