

SECTION E
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SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

sv life

The dogs are back on TV-20. Page 9E

home+garden

www.mercurynews.com/homeandgarden

Inside this section: comics, Dear Abby, movie times, TV times. Puzzles are in Classified section



Actor Ed Begley Jr. bought an electric car in 1970 and runs his house on solar power.

Actor Begley walks the green walk

By Kelley Lugea
for the Mercury News

Don't dismiss Ed Begley Jr. as just another Hollywood-actor-turned-activist — this calling has been in the making for a long time.

The environmental movement caught the 58-year-old actor's attention in 1970 — well before his acting career was launched by television's "St. Elsewhere" — when a looming oil crisis moved him to buy an electric car.

Since then, not only is living green a personal mission, but he also has made a second career of imploring others to "live simply so others can simply live." This after finding fame in movies such as "Best in Show," "For Your Consideration," and most recently in the HBO film "Recount."

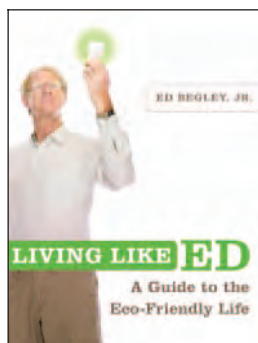
Begley will speak at Greenfair Silicon Valley, hosted by the Mercury News, which is being held June 7 and 8 at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center.

"I think we have to protect this planet, our most important asset, and stop using it up like we're having a going-out-of-business sale," Begley said in an e-mail interview.

"Trees standing in a forest have value. As much if not more value than if we cut them down for lumber. After all, we wouldn't tear down the Smithsonian just because we needed some bricks."

Begley's home in Studio City — which he shares with wife Rachelle Carson-Begley and daughter Hayden — isn't your typical celebrity dwelling. The windows are fitted with double-paned windows, and

See **BEGLEY**, Page 2E



LIVING LIKE ED
Clarkson Potter, 240 pp., \$18

Greenfair Silicon Valley

Where: San Jose McEnery Convention Center's South Hall, 435 S. Market St., San Jose

When: 10 a.m.-7 p.m. June 7 and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. June 8

Special guests: Political satirist Will Durst (1 p.m. Saturday, June 7); actor and green activist Ed Begley Jr. (1 p.m. Sunday, June 8); and Daniel Kammen, director of University of California-Berkeley's Renewable and Appropriate Energy Lab (2:30 p.m. Sunday) who will speak about the Bay Area's future in green jobs, schools and buildings.

Seminars: Make green changes at home. Be sure to catch Saturday's seminars on composting, switching to solar and the future of health care. Stick around Sunday for "35 Ways to Garden for the 21st Century" at 2 p.m.

Exhibits: Companies will offer products and services to help people "green" their businesses and homes. There will also be a "Kids Go Green" booth, raffles, and project demonstrations.

Getting there: Parking is limited, so to encourage guests to go green, Greenfair will offer \$5 off the \$10 admission to those who take a bicycle or public transportation to the event. Valid Valley Transportation Authority ticket or pass is required. Admission for kids 12 and younger is free with an adult.

For more information: visit www.greenfair.siliconvalley.com or call (925) 302-1724.

Presto!

A raised garden bed



CHARLIE MCCOLLUM — MERCURY NEWS

The kits include pre-cut planks, connectors, ground stakes and screws.

KIT TAKES A FEW BASIC TOOLS AND A COUPLE OF HOURS OF WORK

By Holly Hayes
Mercury News

Four weeks ago in this very space, I committed to growing a rainbow of 10 tomato plants in my garden this year, in what I hope will be a fun trial of some unusual and colorful varieties.

There was only one problem, something I realized as the giddy anticipation of warm-from-the-vine heirloom tomatoes faded: My existing raised beds had enough space to accommodate just eight of the 10 giant cages I'd need to support all this exotic fruit. (I always overload at the Sunday brunch buffet, too.)

So the tomato ranch set-up had to be expanded, and quickly.

Eight plants had already been settled into their beds and cages; the final two were getting pot-bound even in their one-gallon containers and were tapping their little root-feet, impatient to get into the ground.

There was room for another raised bed, but the thought of schlepping to the lumberyard and wrestling with heavy 2-by-6 boards knocked the wind out of my sails. Not to mention it would take my husband and me an entire weekend to construct a wood-sided bed like the others.

And then I came upon a raised-bed-in-a-box — an ingenious kit that produced extra space for the tomatoes after about an

See **KIT**, Page 7E

The many pluses of a raised bed

By Holly Hayes
Mercury News

What are the benefits of gardening in raised beds? Let us count the ways:

Warmer soil, sooner: Since the soil is above ground level, the sun warms it faster in the spring, which means you can plant earlier and get better seed germination.

Oh, my achin' back: Soil in raised beds is easier to work and plants are easier to tend. You bend over less, which takes less of a toll on the back and knees. Raised beds make it possible for older gardeners and people in wheelchairs to enjoy this wonderful hobby more.

Controlling the soil within: Most Bay Area gardeners do regular battle to lighten up our heavy clay native soils. But in a raised bed, you are in charge of what goes in it. Top-quality topsoil and organic compost will give you a rich growing medium for most vegetables and ornamental plants. Or you can control for plants that prefer acid or alkaline soil.

Good drainage: Fluffy soil has excellent drainage, so rains drain off better and standing water is eliminated.

Protection from critters: Lining the bottom of your raised bed with hardware cloth makes it more of a chore for burrowing pests such as gophers and moles to get to your plants. Roots will grow right through the barrier. And if your pests are of the winged variety, raised beds are easy to cover with bird netting — or garden fabric to exclude insects. Lightweight garden fabrics admit as much as 85 percent of sunlight and can be left on beds all season long.

Armor against nippy nights: Some garden fabrics protect plants from frost damage down to 28 degrees.

Don't tread on me: Soil in a raised bed doesn't become compacted because (ideally) you're not walking on it — which makes it easier to work in the spring and throughout the growing seasons.

No wasted space: A properly configured raised bed — no wider than four feet — allows access on all sides, which means you can use high-density plantings and boost your yield. If the bed is accessible only from one side — if it's built against a fence, for example — limit the width to three feet so you can reach in — not step in — to tend it.

Looks count: Raised beds look neat and tidy.

Contact Holly Hayes at hhayes@mercurynews.com or (408) 920-5374. Fax (408) 271-3786.

MORE IDEAS

Other ways to get a raised bed include using concrete blocks, straw bales or corrugated sheet metal.

PAGE 7E

GREENQ&A

Itching to find repellent without chemicals

By the Mercury News

Q Mosquito season arrives at the worst time — just as we shed layers of clothing to beat the summertime heat. How should I protect myself from insect bites but minimize the use of chemical repellents?

A The chemical repellent DEET is highly effective against ticks and mosquitoes. Originally developed by the USDA's Agricultural Research Service for the Department of Defense to protect soldiers from disease-carrying insects, it became available to consumers in the mid-1950s.

But DEET (N-N-diethyl-m-toluamide) can cause skin rashes and eye irritation and is not suitable for very young children. It has also been found in drinking water and natural bodies of water throughout the United States, Europe, and Australia.

There are alternatives. Oil of citronella and oil of lemon eucalyptus are bio-pesticides made from natural materials. They are usually less toxic, decompose quicker and result in lower exposure than conventional repellents.

If you choose to use DEET,



GREAT FALLS (MONT) TRIBUNE

DEET is a highly effective insect repellent, but there are alternatives made from natural materials. Prevention also is recommended.

follow manufacturer instructions. You can minimize exposure by spraying DEET on clothing instead of skin.

And don't forget basic prevention measures. Wear light-colored clothing with shoes and socks when mosquito bites most often occur — from dusk to dawn or during cloudy days. Bugs are attracted to floral fragrances, so avoid scented perfume, hair spray and sunscreen, and skip floral fabric

softener.

Information on insect repellents and alternative products can be found on the EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov/pesticides/health/mosquitoes/insectrpt.htm.

This week's question was answered by Mercury News researcher Diana Stickler. Have a question about living a greener life? E-mail green@mercurynews.com.

Reader tip of the week

Plastic wrap is sold in one size — about 11.5-inch rolls. For most uses, such as covering cut produce and small bowls, the full width is not required, and much of it is therefore wasted, ending up in landfills. For the past several years I have been cutting these rolls in half, using a long sharp knife such as a bread knife. (This takes a bit of elbow grease.) Although I also keep a full-width roll around, I've found that the narrower rolls meet more than 95 percent of my needs and are more economical.

I suspect when the manufacturers discover there's a market for smaller width wrap, they'll offer it — at higher cost per square inch, of course.

Laurie Naiman
Palo Alto

We want your ideas

Want to share a green tip? How about your favorite green blog or product? Maybe you just have a question we can help answer. We want to hear from you. E-mail green@mercurynews.com.

BEGLEY | Actor has more than earned his green credentials

Continued from Page 1E

walls are insulated with energy-efficient recycled denim. Solar panels on the roof supply enough electricity to power his entire home.

Begley also sells his own non-toxic cleaner at a farmers market and rides public transportation to downtown Los Angeles.

It's not always glamorous, but it's green.

His reputation has long been that of an eco-freak, but now it's chic to count your carbon emissions. Riding a bike to the Vanity Fair party was once akin to social suicide in Hollywood. Now it's the sort of thing that helped the actor land a reality show and a book deal.

The HGTV show "Living With Ed" follows Begley and his family as they try to implement his latest plan to make life more eco-friendly.

Dad wants remodeling to be resourceful and energy-efficient, while Mom pushes for them to be aesthetically pleasing as well. Watching them tangle over a 20-year-old stained and damaged carpet — which he insists still has purpose — is both inspiring and amusing.

(The show moves to the new Planet Green channel on June 9; see story Page 3E.)

In his recent book, "Living Like Ed" (Clarkson Potter, 240 pp., \$18), Begley breaks green living into six categories: home, transportation, energy, recycling, garden/kitchen and clothing/beauty products. Topics range from the easier "low hanging fruit," such as using compact fluorescent light bulbs, to those that require substantial up-front investments, such as installing solar panels.

Begley points out the frugality of implementing such changes.

"I found out, almost by accident back in the early 1970s, that the things I was doing for the environment were also good for my bottom line," he says. "Now, people see a direct connection there: Drive less, save money. It's a great way to motivate action, and it's a win-win for everyone."

Begley's latest project has been "super-insulating" his home using infrared cameras and a series of blowers to find and fix holes in the existing insulation.

He encourages readers not to get frustrated or feel their small changes won't make a difference.

"You don't run up Mount Everest. You get to base camp, get acclimated and then continue the climb," he says. "Not everyone is Sir Edmund Hillary. Not everyone will have the resources to reduce their carbon footprint to zero. You do what you can and climb as high as you can."

Green events

SOUTH BAY

Greenfair Silicon Valley. Featuring actor Ed Begley Jr., comic Will Durst and industry experts; how-to seminars; and hybrid and electronic vehicles. Presented by the Mercury News. 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. June 8. South Hall of the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, 435 S. Market St. \$10. Half-price for Valley Transportation Authority users with a ticket stub, bicyclists and those who pre-register. Free for children 12 and younger with a paid adult. (925) 302-1724, www.greenfairsiliconvalley.com.

EAST BAY

"Build It Green" East Bay Home Tour. Tour 17

single- and multi-family residences that were built or remodeled using healthy, energy- and resource-efficient products and practices. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday. Tour participants will purchase a guidebook and choose homes they wish to see. \$30 per person or \$50 for two people. (510) 845-0472, www.builditgreen.org.

Green Building Fair. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. June 6. Truitt & White, 642 Hearst Ave., Berkeley. (510) 841-0511, www.builditgreen.org.

SAN FRANCISCO

Water Fair: Exploring Water Crisis Challenges and Opportunities. The event will include a lecture

by Dorothy Green, founder of Heal the Bay; exhibits by Bay Area groups; a "take-back" center for unused drugs; a screening of "Delta Warning"; and a panel discussion. Noon-3 p.m. June 1. First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Francisco, 1187 Franklin St. Free. (415) 215-7292, www.uusf.org/Flame/images/water-fair-flyer.html.

Publicize your green living events at: <http://events.mercurynews.com>. All submissions appear instantly online and select events will be featured Saturdays in the Mercury News.

SAVING WATER

"The high-efficiency clothes washers at my laundromat have helped me save water, energy, and money. Plus, my customers are happier with the improved quality of the wash process."

~ Jamil Shaikh
Owner of Moffett Laundromat



Clothes Washer Rebates

REBATES for residents **\$125-\$200** and for **businesses \$400** when you buy and install a new high-efficiency washer.

* Some restrictions apply.

Santa Clara Valley
Water District

For pre-approval or for more information, call
(408) 265-2607 (ext 2554)
www.valleywater.org

Green Your Business, Home and Life at Greenfair Silicon Valley Green Made Easy

June 7 - 8, 2008
San Jose Convention Center - South Hall on Market St.

Help

assure a better world for you...and your children. Enjoy a sustainable, greener lifestyle **TODAY!** Save money and conserve our planet's resources.

Greenfair Silicon Valley Features:

- Over 150 exhibitors offering the latest green products and services.
- Visit the PG&E pavilion and learn how to save money through improved energy use.
- Learn how to green-certify your business.
- See the 2,000 square foot NARI Green Showroom (National Association of the Remodeling Industry) remodeling professionals from over 20 companies will guide you to saving time and effort remodeling in a green way!
- Product sampling, give-aways and raffle prizes such as \$2,600 street legal electric scooter by GreenEMotors and \$900 floor and wall remodeling package by Porcelanosa.
- Listen to informed speakers at the Green Vision Stage presented by PG&E on subjects such as: green jobs, energy, our climate, green schools and much more.
- A full schedule of How-To Green seminars.



Ed Begley, Jr.
Sunday, June 8th
at 1pm

Will Durst
Saturday, June 7th
at 1pm

GreenfairSiliconValley™

For details, discounted tickets and to pre-register go to
www.greenfairsiliconvalley.com



Parking is limited in downtown San Jose. Show us your bicycle helmet, VTA ticket or ride pass, and we will give you \$5 off the cost of admission to Greenfair! Cash only!