

Environmental News You Can Use

The Buzz from John Landau (Associate Member)

The emerald ash borer is wiping out approximately 24 million ash trees in NJ, including many thousands of mature ash trees across our Township. This makes the need to plant new trees more urgent than ever before. Every tree on your property provides many important environmental and financial benefits. Use this [National Tree Benefit Calculator](#) to estimate the benefits of a specific tree by size and species.

Let's start with cooling the air around us. Shade trees are like solar-powered air-conditioners. On hot summer days, the combination of tree shade and evaporative cooling can lower the surrounding temperature by several degrees, enhancing outdoor comfort and reducing the need for indoor air conditioning.

Strategically placed trees can increase home energy efficiency. In summer, trees shading east and west walls keep buildings cooler. In winter, allowing the sun to strike the southern side of a building can warm interior spaces. Southern walls shaded by dense evergreen trees result in higher costs for winter heating .

Trees are also critical stormwater infrastructure, resulting in drier basements, fewer drainage problems, and less water flowing downstream where it might cause flooding. This is important because the frequency of heavy rainfall events is increasing, and scientists project this severe precipitation trend to continue due to climate change.

Trees act as mini-reservoirs, controlling stormwater runoff at the source. A large tree can intercept thousands of gallons a year, and a healthy forest can soak up 16 times more rain than a typical lawn. Trees do this three ways. First, trees mitigate runoff by intercepting and holding rain on leaves, branches and bark. Second, the tree's root

system filters and stores rainwater. And third, trees reduce soil erosion by slowing rainfall before it strikes the soil.

Perhaps most importantly, trees support critical biodiversity. Numerous studies have found major reductions in insect and bird populations compared with a few decades ago, mainly due to habitat loss caused by human development. Anyone old enough to remember when a summer evening's drive in Morris County meant washing bugs off a windshield has been a witness to this devastation. Trees are "keystone" habitats for insects, birds, and other wildlife. An oak tree, for example, can host over 500 different species of moths and butterflies.

Which species of trees should you plant? If you can, please plant native trees. Why? Because they are adapted to survive in our environment and our wildlife depends on native trees for shelter and sustenance. Here's [a list of trees native to northern NJ](#), and here's [a list of trees to never plant](#) because they are invasive and damage our forests. Popular trees like Norway Maple and ornamental pears are two of the worst invaders on this "Do Not Plant" list.

A tree choice is for the long term, so always select the right tree for the right place, with consideration given to size at maturity, as well as moisture and sun requirements. Take a little time to study your choices using sources like [Jersey Friendly Yards](#), consulting a professionally certified arborist, or talking with an expert at your local nursery.

Prepare for the Ban on Plastic Bags and Polystyrene Foam Products

Effective May 4th, 2022, all stores and food service businesses in New Jersey are [banned from providing or selling single-use plastic carryout bags or polystyrene foam food service products to customers](#). Grocery stores over 2500 square feet are banned from providing single-use paper carryout bags. Effective November 4th, 2021, plastic straws may only be provided upon request. This state-wide ban supersedes any previous or existing local, county, or city ordinances. Read these [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to learn more.

Tip of the Month: Buy an Insulating "Blanket" for your Water Heater

A blanket for your hot water heater - about a \$20 investment - can lower your water heating costs by nine percent according to the US Department of Energy. You should also check the pre-set temperature of your water heater. It should be set at around 120 degrees, any higher and it will cost you more. This is also an important safety precaution if you have small children and can prevent injuries from water that is too hot. Thinking about replacing a water heater? [A \\$750 rebate is available for very high efficiency Electric Heat Pump Water Heaters.](#)

Students Focus on Electric Vehicle (EV) Adoption Locally

In February 2021, the Morris Township Committee unanimously adopted an ordinance appropriating \$100,000 in the General Capital Improvement Fund to provide for the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at two municipal facilities. Recently, a team of 8th graders at [Unity Charter School](#) researched EV adoption within the Morris Township and Morristown zip codes and presented their [data and insights](#) to the Environmental Commission. One of their findings: Morris Township/Morristown have an annual EV growth rate of about 15 percent. Continuing at this rate, we will register approximately 1,440 EVs in our area by 2025, which is less than half of the number needed to meet New Jersey's statewide goal of 330,000 EVs. A higher local growth rate of more than 25 percent will be needed to reach that number. Read [TAP into Morristown](#) article for more details about their research findings.

Healthy Alternatives to Gas-Powered Blowers

Environmental and public health activists are getting louder in their opposition to gas-powered leaf blowers. First, gas-powered leaf blowers are excessively loud, and the noise they produce travels far beyond the user's property. Second, they emit hydrocarbons and gasoline fumes into the air, as well as fine particulates that can cause lung cancer and other pulmonary diseases. And finally, they can harm wildlife like insects and birds by blowing away topsoil and upsetting the local ecosystem (i.e., nests, eggs, larvae, etc.).

What can you do as a homeowner?

- Planning to buy a blower? Choose battery or electric blowers which are widely available and cost substantially less to operate than gas blowers.
- Already own a gas blower? Limit its use by using a rake to clear garden beds. Avoid blowing small particle dust from driveways and sidewalks or use a push broom to clear the space.
- Already contract with a lawn service? Give them 'permission' to leave small grass clippings on driveways and curb borders. Or purchase an electric blower for landscapers to use on your property.

Your Environmental Commission in Action



Cece Kent, Buz Kenney, Cathy Wilson, and Josh Saks (L to R) at the Whippany River Watershed Action Committee BioBlitz 2021

Get Involved

- [Join](#) our mail list and spread the word by forwarding this email to a neighbor
- Attend [the next meeting](#) of the Environmental Commission on July 8
- Email buzkenney@gmail.com to give us feedback