



The Village of Briarcliff Manor

Sustainability Advisory Committee

- and -

Environmental Advisory Council

Summer 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to our summer newsletter!



It's that time of year when we make plans to relax at the beach, splash in the pool, watch fireflies while grilling in the backyard, and enjoy watermelon and ice cream! But it's also a time when many of us start worrying about energy costs and water bills, and wish that having a beautiful yard didn't cost a fortune.

Energy conservation is not only the most effective way to cut costs, but also the best way to combat climate change. Recent investment in this area has given us innovative technologies ranging from clean energy for homes, energy efficiency, and water conservation measures. These innovations are economically -- as well as environmentally -- sensible. We are excited to work with all of you to invest in our community's future by helping build a green and clean environment!



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Clean Energy Technology Revolution

There is a clean energy revolution happening all around us, with an enormous expansion in solar, wind, water, and geothermal technologies. This is creating enormous economic opportunity while also driving a rapid transition to a cleaner, domestic and more secure energy future for the country. Local programs like the **EnergySmart Homes** program run by **Sustainable Westchester** help residents learn about clean energy options for their homes, and get connected to experts, professionals, and resources to help them transition to cleaner ways of heating and cooling their homes.

Solar Energy

Solar energy is the fastest growing and most affordable source of clean energy in the United States. There have been 56 new solar panel installations in Briarcliff Manor since January 2021.

The technology converts sunlight to electrical energy through photovoltaic panels. If you are replacing your roof, it's a great time to install solar panels. A number of tools are available to estimate energy savings (**ENERGYSAGE**), energy production and cost for grid-connected systems (**PVWATTS**), and solar suitability of individual rooftops (**SUN NUMBER, which partners with Zillow**).



Image Credit: cnet.com

Solar tax credits: All residential solar PV systems installed between 2022 and 2032 are eligible for a 30% federal solar tax credit. This credit is only for "original installation" of the system. There is also a New York State credit of 25% of the installed cost of the system or \$5000, whichever is less. Installing solar panels can eliminate almost all of the energy charges on your ConEd bill, although you will still pay the mandatory charges, taxes and fees.

Community solar: Community solar allows everyone to benefit from solar energy, even if they cannot install their own solar panels. Customers are able to buy or lease a portion of solar panels located in off-site arrays, and receive an electric bill credit for electricity generated by their share of the community solar array.

For more information on solar panels, contractor selection, financing options, and rebates/incentives, visit www.coned.com and www.nyserda.ny.gov

Solar Panels: Case Study with the Leitman Family (Briarcliff Manor)



B-SAC: When and why did you decide to install solar panels?

SL: I wanted to save as much as possible on my ConEd bills, and decided to install solar panels in 2018. I got a great deal from Tesla at the time after I made the announcement of their partnership with Panasonic at the CES convention in 2018.

B-SAC: Please describe the installation process.

SL: Tesla installed the panels. The installation took 6 months. The panels cover only 83% of my roof since it was done per the old Village code. The code is now revised and allows you to size the system up to 110% of your load.

B-SAC: How much electricity do you produce annually?

SL: In 2022, we produced 13.93 MWh.

B-SAC: How long did it take you to see savings on your energy bills?

SL: I see big savings in the summer and fall. Once I installed two Tesla powerwalls, I saw savings immediately. Powerwalls are basically battery banks that you can use to store power. You can use them to power your home during power outages. If you don't use the AC, clothes dryer, oven etc., it can power your home overnight until the solar kicks back in. Last year, I used 2.05 MWh from my powerwalls.

My solar panels give me savings, savings, savings. Summer months make it easier to pay down my solar note. Plus, the tax breaks are very generous now.



Summer Water Conservation

Rockland, Ulster and Northern Westchester counties experienced drought or "abnormally dry conditions" through the summer of 2022. Even if we are not currently in a drought, droughts are becoming more frequent (New York has experienced historic droughts in 2016, 2020, and 2022), resulting in reduced groundwater levels and ongoing wildfire risk.

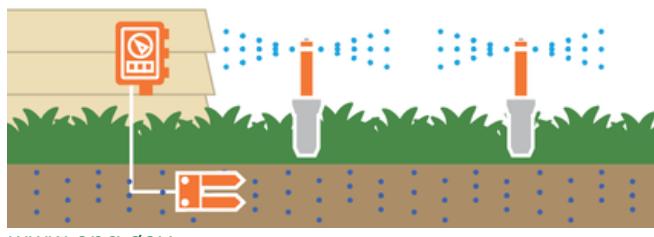
Water conservation indoors

- 1) **Track usage.** Check for leaks by reading your meter before and after a two hour period when no water is being used.
- 2) Install **WaterSense** labeled toilets and showerheads.
- 3) **Fix leaks.** Commercially available smart water detectors track water usage, flow rate, and can detect leaks and shut off water supply to prevent damage. You can lose up to 200 gallons a day with a single leaking toilet
- 4) **Take shorter showers**, and run full loads of laundry and dishes.
- 5) Install **faucet aerators**.



Image Credit: Forbes.com

Installing a **WaterSense labeled** soil moisture sensor could save an average home with an automatic irrigation system more than **15,000 gallons of water every year.**



www.epa.gov

Water conservation outdoors

- 1) **Raise lawn mower cutting height** (longer grass has stronger roots and needs less water)
- 2) **Select drought-resistant native plants.** Add hardscapes like patios and reduce turf grass.
- 3) **Design and schedule irrigation systems efficiently** by grouping plants according to their water requirements.
- 4) **Use soil moisture probes** to decide when to water. Inspect and maintain irrigation/sprinkler systems regularly.
- 5) **Reuse water** collected in rain barrels or dehumidifiers to water plants.

Spotlight on Invasive Trees in Your Yard

We all know that invasive plants and insects can disrupt our gardens. But did you know that trees can be invaders as well? There are several trees growing right here in Briarcliff that are considered invasive threats in New York. These trees are fast-growing and multiply quickly, crowding out all other vegetation. Sometimes the trees are deliberately planted, but they can also take hold in your yard without your knowledge. When possible, these foreign trees should be removed, and native trees should be planted in their place.



Photos Courtesy of NYS

Norway Maples became popular street trees because they can survive sub-optimal growing conditions, like low quality soil and pollution. They are now regulated as an invasive species in New York State because they are prolific seed producers and have escaped from cultivation.

In many New York suburbs, stands of this species have completely displaced native Sugar Maples and other trees. In addition, Norway Maples have a very heavy, dense canopy that blocks light from plants and grass growing underneath them, thereby reducing plant diversity. To stop the spread of Norway Maples, it is important to remove all sprouts and to prevent saplings in your yard from growing to maturity.

For more information and a list of plants that are considered invasive in New York, go to: <https://nyis.info/>

Spotlight on Invasive Trees in your Yard



Photos Courtesy of NYS

Black locust trees are native to the Southeastern U.S., but are considered invasive in the Northeast. Black locusts are very fast-growing trees that reproduce through their roots. Once they become established in an area, black locusts spread easily because they out-compete other plants that need sunlight. To remove black locust trees, cut them back at the base every growing season. Cut both new stems and new growth. You may need to repeat this step several times to prevent regrowth.

Tree of Heaven (or Chinese Sumac) produces large quantities of seeds, grows very rapidly, and can quickly overrun native vegetation. Even worse, they are the host plant for spotted lantern fly! One way to identify them is by their bark, which resembles the skin of a cantaloupe. Once established, Tree of Heaven may take over a site and form a dense thicket. The trees also produce toxins that prevent the establishment of other plant species nearby, and have highly aggressive and deep root systems. If you try to cut down their saplings, they may grow back faster and stronger. So how to get rid of them? Hand pulling young seedlings is effective if you can remove the entire root system. Unfortunately, digging up the entire root system will not work for a mature tree, so you may need to bring in an arborist for advice.



Photos Courtesy of NYS

For more information and a list of plants that are considered invasive in New York, go to: <https://nyis.info/>

Native Plant Spotlight

Woody Plant: *Clethra alnifolia* (Sweet pepperbush)



Image Credit: missouribotanicalgarden.org

Sweet pepperbush, also called Summersweet, is a deciduous native shrub that produces fragrant showy flowers in summer. It can grow in medium to wet soils in full sun to part shade, even tolerating full shade, to a height of 3-6'. The flowers are a favorite among bees and butterflies, and the sweet scent makes for a lovely addition to foundation plantings and around outdoor gathering spaces. The wild type has white flowers, though pink-flowered cultivars are also available at garden centers.

Herbaceous Plant: *Lobelia cardinalis* (Cardinal flower)

Cardinal flower is a striking native wildflower of rich, medium to wet soils, often found adjacent to streams and ponds. Spikes of bright red flowers appear in late summer and are hummingbird magnets! It is somewhat short-lived, but new plants will grow from dispersed seeds.



Light Up Your Yard with Fireflies!

Fireflies (or "lightning bugs" to many) are one of the most magical elements of summer. Emerging at dusk and making our yards sparkle, fireflies captivate children and allow adults to recall the long summer days of their own childhoods.

In addition to adding wonder to our neighborhoods, fireflies serve an important role in the ecosystem. Most of their life is spent in the larval stage, during which they live in soil and leaf litter for 1-2 years. During this stage, they feed on snails, slugs, insects, and worms -- many of which are common garden pests -- thereby performing bio-control. Adults only live for 2-4 weeks. At all stages of development, fireflies are a food source for other invertebrates and amphibians.



Image Credit: firefly.org

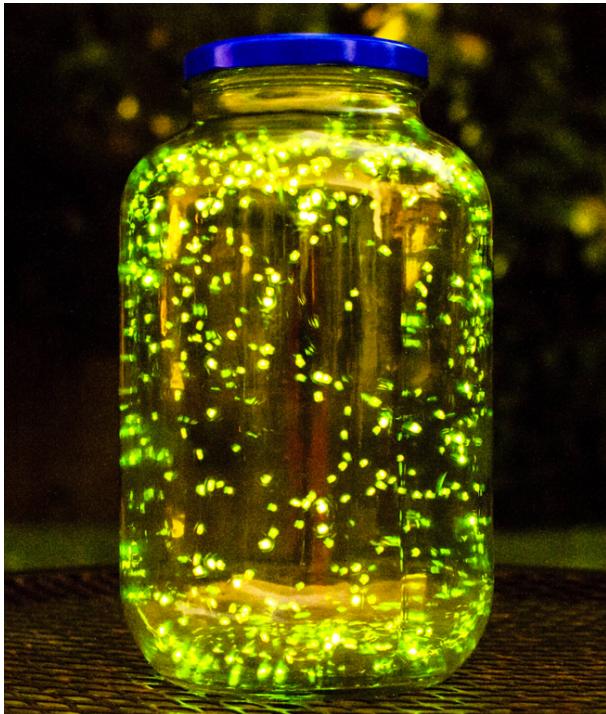


Image Credit: firefly.org

Unfortunately, firefly populations have been declining. Fireflies are sensitive to pollution, pesticides, and habitat loss -- all common features of our suburban landscapes.

If you'd like to help reverse firefly population decline, there are actions you can take in your own yard. With these best practices of firefly conservation, you might even end up with the sparkliest yard on the block!

To turn your yard into a firefly haven:

- *Eliminate pesticides, especially lawn chemicals.* Fireflies are especially sensitive to these chemicals, even ones advertised as "natural" or "organic." Pesticides of all kinds broadly kill many insects -- not just the "pests" -- leaving a toxic and denuded ecosystem.
- *Minimize artificial nighttime lighting.* Outdoor lights interrupt the firefly courtship and mating process -- the entire reason fireflies light up in the first place!
- *Leave the leaves.* Because firefly larvae live in the leaf litter, how you deal with fallen leaves in autumn affects the abundance of fireflies you'll have in summer. Raking or blowing leaves and putting them on the curb means we are throwing away firefly larvae. Consider leaving leaves, gently raking them to borders or perennial gardens, or collecting bags of wet leaves to make "bag compost," which can be added to your flower garden in spring.
- *Plant native grasses.* Native grasses are a preferred egg-laying location of female fireflies.
- *Encourage mosses and keep rotting logs.* These damp places are great habitat for firefly larvae. Consider leaving a part of your yard to stay "natural," where logs and branches can slowly decompose.
- *Celebrate your efforts and inspire neighbors with a "Certified Firefly Habitat" sign, available from firefly.org!*



Image Credit: firefly.org



Image Credit: firefly.org

More Summer Yard Tips

In addition to helping fireflies, sustainable landscaping practices protect and enhance habitat for butterflies, moths, bees, birds, and more. This summer, we encourage you to welcome nature into your yard and experience the satisfaction of knowing you are doing good for the local ecosystem. Here are some tips to help make your yard more enjoyable, while avoiding the negative environmental impacts of common practices.

Mosquito Control. Landscaping and pest control companies are highly skilled at convincing us that we need to spray chemical pesticides to keep mosquitos away. But these pesticides kill other important insects, too, and can be harmful to human and pet health. Instead, be sure to drain areas of open standing water, and use solar-powered aerators in ponds and bird baths to disrupt mosquito reproduction. Mosquito dunks can also be used in standing water where aeration is not possible. And, don't forget that birds and bats provide natural mosquito control, so welcome them to your yard!



Image Credit: Lowes.com

Tick Prevention. Like mosquito sprays, tick sprays also carry environmental and health risks. Interestingly, the common invasive shrub Japanese barberry has been found to be favorable tick habitat. Removing barberry could help curb tick populations. Another interesting approach is DIY "tick tubes" -- take cotton balls or dryer lint, spray with permethrin (an effective tick deterrent), stuff them inside of empty toilet paper rolls, and set them out in your yard. Mice will use the cotton as nesting material, coating themselves in permethrin in the process, making them less likely to carry and spread ticks.

More Butterflies and Gorgeous Moths! Like fireflies, butterflies and moths overwinter in leaf litter. Leave the leaves to enjoy more of them in summer, like this stunning luna moth!

Songbirds Galore! Planting native plants provides food for songbirds in the form of seeds and insects that eat native plants. Reducing lawn area and planting natives is a surefire way to attract beautiful birds to your yard.



Parks and Trails Corner

The Kate Kennard Trail is a hidden gem in Briarcliff Manor, offering a picturesque escape into nature. The trail is named after the late daughter of a former Mayor of Briarcliff. It was officially dedicated in 1988 and is part of a permanent public easement made possible by the Rosecliff residential development.



The hike on this mile-long trail begins from a small parking lot off Long Hill Road West. The majority of the trail resides on a wide, former service road with some original pavement as well as softer dirt sections with scattered rocks. The first tenth of a mile, beginning at the trailhead, features unpaved and uneven terrain, with some loose rocks and exposed tree roots, so make sure to watch your footing! There is also a second entrance about 100 yards down Wilderness Way on the right for those looking for a smoother entrance to the trail.

The Kate Kennard trail winds through dense forests and along flowing streams. As you hike along, you'll be treated to peaceful forest views without any distractions from the roads. Take a minute to enjoy the natural canopy which covers the trail and provides much needed shade during the hot summer months.

*Obie and Monty May 2023.
Leashes were removed for photo only.*

The Kate Kennard trail is a great place to take kids or dogs for a nice walk in a quiet area surrounded by beautiful scenery and wildlife. Dogs are required to be on leash, though they are still sure to enjoy this wonderful trail.

Hiking Project app: Yes, Kate Kennard Trail

Parking: Long Hill Road West, Briarcliff Manor just west of the Rosecliff entrance (Wilderness Way)

Dogs allowed: Yes, on leash

Village News



Department of
Environmental
Conservation



Climate Smart
Communities

The Village of Briarcliff Manor is proud to announce that they have received grant funding of \$25,800 from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation through the Municipal Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Infrastructure Grant Program.

The transportation sector accounts for 29% of all greenhouse gas emissions in New York State, leading to an accelerated push towards zero-emission vehicles. All new passenger cars and trucks sold in New York will need to be zero-emissions by 2035. The exponential increase in the number of electric vehicles on the road today is changing the way people think about “filling up” their cars, and creating an urgent need for charging stations where people can “top off” their batteries. The ZEV Infrastructure Grant Program provides funding for municipalities to install ZEV infrastructure, including Level 2 (L2) and Direct Current Fast Charge (DCFC) electric vehicle supply equipment, as well as equipment for dispensing hydrogen to hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.

The Village plans to use the grant to install a total of 4 destination (Level 2) EV chargers in the Village Hall parking lot. The grant funding will cover at least 80% of eligible ZEV infrastructure installation costs including purchase of materials, equipment, hardware and software, and site preparation work. Installation of the chargers will help Briarcliff Manor earn points through the Climate Smart Communities and the Clean Energy Communities certification programs towards future grant funding from the State. Additionally, this initiative will help New York State achieve the greenhouse gas emissions reduction required under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, and to meet its commitments under the Multi-State ZEV Memorandum of Understanding which aims to put 3.3 million ZEVs on the roads of participating states by 2025.

Funding initiatives like this which help build a safer and cleaner environment are an important investment in our community’s future.

SAC Spring Recap

Earth Day (April 22nd, 2023)

We collaborated with the **Briarcliff Recreation Department** and the **Briarcliff PTA** to organize our annual **Stash the Trash** community clean-up event. With a total of approximately 50 bags of garbage collected during the event, our efforts helped the DPW save time and money!

The event featured information on clean energy and Grid Rewards by **Sustainable Westchester**, information about electric vehicles by the **Greater Hudson Valley Electric Vehicle Association**, information about native plants by the **Environmental Advisory Council**, donation bins for fabric scraps, sneakers, and Legos, kids crafts and activities, live music, and a food truck. We had a perfect spring day to celebrate our commitment to keeping our environment healthy and beautiful.



We ended the day with almost **50 bags of garbage collected** from around town! The 9th grade group got the prize for most trash collected!



Mayor Vescio and Deputy Mayor Chatzky stashed some trash with us!



It's never too early to learn how to segregate trash and recycling!!



All the Legos collected at the event were donated to **Jawonio**, a non-profit provider of lifespan services to people with special needs in the Hudson Valley.

SAC Spring Recap

Take it or Leave it (May 6th and 7th, 2023)



Briarcliff Manor's first **Take it or Leave it** event was announced through social media, yard signs, the Briarcliff Manor Village Manager's newsletter, as well as word of mouth. People were incredibly generous with their donations, and shoppers were thrilled to take home A TON of stuff ranging from designer clothes to household appliances! The enthusiastic turnout was beyond all our expectations. **Approximately 300 people showed up, and approximately 4000 lbs of material were donated, keeping them out of the landfill.**

Donations included household goods, clothing, toys, bedding, and bric a brac. Approximately **1000 lbs of fabric scraps** which were donated were picked up by **Green Tree Textile Recycling NYC** and turned into insulation.

We had the perfect spring weekend for our event. We accepted donations on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. There was free "shopping" on Sunday afternoon. We are very grateful to all our volunteers who helped sort, set up, and clean up after the event! We thank the local businesses (**Briarcliff Bagels, and Susan Lawrence**) who donated food for volunteers. We are grateful to Cindy Cassuto (**Corcoran Legends Realty**) who sponsored the event.



SAC Spring Recap

The first Briarcliff TIOLI was a smashing success!

Stacey Winnick,
Member, Briarcliff Sustainability Advisory Committee

Sunday, May 7, 2023, was the Briarcliff Sustainability Advisory Committee's take-it-or-leave-it day. The idea for a community-wide event centered on sustainability and helping those around us was conceived several years ago when our committee members were talking about how much we needed to get rid of in our own homes. From there we started planning a donation extravaganza for the entire community to donate almost anything from their homes for others to pick up for free.

For months prior to May 7, our committee worked with a team of over fifteen volunteers, solicited donations, planned the event, and got the word out. To say the Take-it-or-Leave-it day was a smashing success would be a massive understatement. In all, over 4000 lbs. of merchandise was diverted away from landfills and into the hands of community members. This is what sustainable living is all about. 4000 pounds of items were reused and found new homes with the over 300 community members who attended the event.

There was zero waste at this event. To give a picture of some of the items we had, here's a small sample of some inventory stats: 2 roasters, 4 vacuums, 3 hot plates, 4 coffee makers, 8 sets of knives, 35 pots and pans, 6 sets of silverware, 400 toy items, 10 bikes, hundreds of men's, women's, and children's clothes, 1 drum set, and so so much more.

In the end, there were less than 20 bags of various items left over. This was sorted and given to various charities like the Community Center of Northern Westchester and several other Take-it-or-Leave-it events throughout our area.

We learned so much through this event. Not only did we recognize the immense volunteer power it takes to accomplish a goal like this, but also saw firsthand the impact we can have on those in need. So many people were able to take home needed items for free. This process of recycling not only helps our community become more sustainable but also more vibrant, supportive, and giving.

We cannot wait to have another event like this again soon!

SAC/EAC Spring Recap

Outdoor Movie Event (May 5, 2023)

SAC and EAC partnered with the **Briarcliff Public Library** to host an outdoor movie event at the Law Park pavilion on May 5th. **Uninvited: The Spread of Invasive Species**, is a documentary produced by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC).

Invasive species like the **spotted lanternfly, ash borer, and scotch broom** have caused great damage to New York's communities, local ecosystems, and the economy. The documentary highlights the efforts of the DEC in combating these threats.

The Environmental Advisory Council set up a display of the most common invasive plants found in our local area. These include **Japanese barberry, garlic mustard, porcelain berry, and burning bush**. Being able to identify and remove invasives from our own backyards, and replacing them with native species is an important way of protecting our local ecosystems.



Upcoming SAC Events

Summer Sustainability Walk

Thursday, July 13

Pocantico Lake Park trail

Come over to meet us on **Community Day!**

September 9th with a rain date of September 10th

We will be collecting gently used Halloween costumes for a **costume swap event** which will be held in early October. We will also be collecting linens for donating as well as scrapping.

Join us at our meetings to learn what we are working on, and to see how you can contribute to making Briarcliff cleaner and greener!

SAC meetings: First Thursday of every month. 7:00 pm

EAC meetings: Fourth Thursday of every month. 7:00 pm
Village Hall, Court Room

For more information, visit us at

www.briarcliffmanor.gov/sustainability-advisory-committee and

www.briarcliffmanor.gov/environmental-advisory-council

SAC

Padma Sridhar, PhD (Chair)
Mary Torres
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Jennifer Sendek
Melissa Rinzler

EAC

Amy Karpati, PhD (Chair)
Brooke Beebe
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Dawn Orza