



The Village of Briarcliff Manor

Sustainability Advisory Committee

- and -

Environmental Advisory Council

April 2024 Newsletter

Welcome to our spring newsletter!



Happy Earth Month! Earth Day 2024 is on April 22nd and the theme is **Planet vs. Plastics**. Plastic production has grown to more than 380 million tons/year. More than 1 million plastic bags were produced per minute in the last year, most of which have a working life of just a few minutes. There were 100 billion plastic beverage containers sold last year in the United States. Plastics have polluted the environment to an extent where they have disrupted ecosystems and have entered our food and water sources. On Earth day this year, countries around the world will pledge to achieve a 60% reduction in plastic production by the year 2040. You can join this pledge by using reusable water bottles, and moving away from single use plastics to help the planet.

**Join us for an Earth Day celebration on Sunday, April 21st
10am-2pm at Law Park Pavilion**

More details on page 14

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SAC Activities Recap

Briarcliff Manor Sports Swap

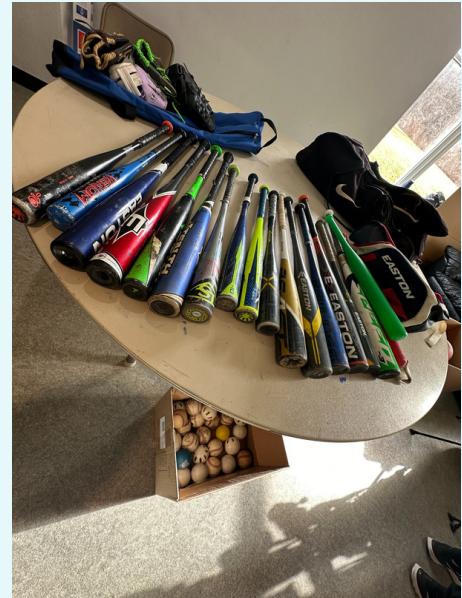


SAC partnered with the **Briarcliff Manor Recreation Department, Briarcliff Youth Soccer, Briarcliff Manor Little League and Briarcliff Manor Youth Lacrosse** to organize a spring Sports Swap on March 2nd and March 3rd.



Over 200 pieces of equipment were donated and community members were invited to “shop” the swap. This event helped to find new homes for gently used sports equipment and keep unwanted items out of landfills. All leftover equipment was donated to Peekskill Recreation Department, Sing Sing Youth Lacrosse, other local organizations and thrift shops.

Thank you to everyone who donated and all of our volunteers who made the event possible!



Energy Advisor Event

On March 7th, **SAC** partnered with **Sustainable Westchester** and the **Mount Pleasant Conservation Advisory Council** to co-sponsor a webinar “**How to Take Advantage of Green Incentives**”. Attendees learned how to reduce their carbon footprint and take advantage of Federal, NY State and utility incentives for insulation, heat pumps, and geothermal. For more information, check out [Sustainable Westchester](#).

Update from the Briarcliff Tree Huggers

Karla Konstantinou, Science Department Coordinator
AP Environmental Science Teacher
Marine Biology Teacher
Briarcliff High School

The first half of the school year has been busy and productive for the Briarcliff High School Tree-huggers Club! We kicked off the semester with an inspection of the pine trees that we planted during the last two years and are happy to report that we have a good number of survivors that we continue to tend to. The white pine seedlings were obtained from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation through the School Seedling Program which provides free native seedlings to school districts around the State.



Another early activity was an inventory of recycling bins in classrooms, offices, and common areas so that we could distribute bins to everyone who needed one in an effort to keep our recycling program rolling along.

We undertook another fun, but messy activity to show appreciation to our teachers with a homemade holiday gift and to help our feathered friends survive the winter by making a natural birdfeeder consisting of pinecones, peanut butter, and birdseed.

Finally, we are happy to report that the water bottle-refilling stations we worked so hard to get in place starting in 2017 are a huge success and are an integral part of everyone's daily routine! The number of students and staff who bring a refillable water bottle to school has sky-rocketed and is the norm rather than the exception.

Happy Earth Day to all from the Briarcliff High School Tree-huggers Club!

Sustainable Fashion

Stacey Winnick (Member, Briarcliff Sustainability Advisory Committee)

In the United States, 11.3 million tons of textiles go into the landfill each year. How can we be more responsible with our clothing donations and buying? It may take some effort, but living your life sustainably is worth it. I work to be mindful of my fashion choices and my mission is to help others do the same. Here's how it can be done.

- **Let's be more conscious before buying new clothing.** Late night web purchases are impulse shopping. The exciting promise of free shipping and getting clothing the next day is alluring, but we have to fight the impulse fast fashion provides. The price we pay is that three billion trees are turned into ninety-five million tons of packaging.
- **Before you buy anything, think about the item's wear.** Will you wear this item more than thirty times? Then it's truly a sustainable item.
- **Buy more second-hand clothing.** Today 85% of my clothing purchases are secondhand. I am helping save fashion waste and often getting a better deal than buying new items. Westchester County is a consignment and thrift store heaven. You can find high quality and designer clothing almost anywhere. When my children were growing up, I was able to get branded clothing for 90% off retail at consignment shops and garage sales. Most of my designer evening clothing was bought online from the [**Real Real**](#) with return and free shipping included. It might take a little more research, but shopping sustainably can be done.
- **Unusable clothing may not be wearable, but it can still serve a purpose.** Any cotton t-shirt can be turned in rags for cleaning. Fabric scraps can be dropped off at the [Household Material Recovery Facility](#) (HMRF) at 15 Woods Road, Valhalla, with an appointment. You can also drop off fabric scraps at the Ossining Farmers Market (parking lot at corner of Spring and Main Streets from 8.30am-1pm).
- **Stay tuned for next SAC Take it or Leave it where you will be able to donate all of your clothing.** Not only will usable clothing be accepted in order to find a new home, the unusable items will be sourced out and made into insulation. It's a big sustainable win!
- **What do you think happens when you return clothing from a chain store or online?** Many companies dump their returns because it's too expensive to sell the returns. Some dumpsters are filled with new items in their original packaging. Other companies damage the returns with paint. These items are ending up in our landfill when you buy from fast fashion sellers.

Sustainable Fashion

Stacey Winnick (Member, Briarcliff Sustainability Advisory Committee)

- **Fast fashion companies overproduce fashion at cheap prices using cheap materials.** Cheap products force us to think about the conditions in the factories and whether those making our clothes are being paid a living wage. Who are the people making your clothes? Make a conscious decision before you buy any fashion item. When you buy in a sustainable way you are helping your community.
- **Don't forget to take your reusable bag when you go clothes shopping!**



Local Hero: Indy



Indy is the mascot of the Tree Streets neighborhood of Briarcliff Manor. She does not approve of plastic litter on the streets and enjoys Stashing the Trash when she goes on her walks.

Here are some of Indy's suggestions to reduce plastic waste:

- Use a **reusable water bottle** instead of a plastic one.
- Say **no to single-use straws and utensils** when you get take-out.
- Remember to take your **reusable bags** when you go grocery shopping.

Embracing a More Natural Garden

Barbara Lalicki (Briarcliff Manor)

I like to see rabbits and groundhogs munching on clover and other vegetation they find in my scant-acre of lawn. It keeps them away from the deer-resistant plants that I started buying when we moved to Westchester 25 years ago. Back then we were surrounded by what I thought of as woods. I was working in the city, and spent weekends pulling up grass to make paths and garden spaces.



Paniculata

When I saw plants with interesting leaves or flowers on our property, I let them grow. This is a paniculata I fostered because of the leaves.

One had vivid magenta flowers and grayish green leaves. Captivated, I spread the plants around. Turns out it's a rose campion. Like Tansy, with its herbal scent and tiny orange-yellow button-shaped flowers, and lacy Queen Anne's Lace, it's not strictly native. All three came with the early colonists, and are appealing to birds and butterflies.



Rose campion



Milkweed, betony and rose campion



Tansy

Embracing a More Natural Garden

Barbara Lalicki (Briarcliff Manor)

When milkweed sprung up in the garden I was taken by its wonderful scent and beautiful dusky pink flowers. I've since learned it is a native. When it grows where I don't want it, I pull it up—or make a garden around it. Goldenrod and daisies also appeared on their own.

There's a small strip of untended land in my backyard. Flourishing there was Garlic Mustard, which has nice white flowers in the fall. I learned, at a Croton Point Park clean-up, that it's an invasive plant. So are those plants that I spread around freely, to mix their shiny yellow flowers with other colors! It's Lesser Celandine, and it is a menace. By its third year it had formed dense mats that were choking off other growth. It has to go.



Milkweed and daisies



Lesser celandine and periwinkle

Every spring I pull out as many invasives as I can and throw them in the trash—not the compost. The reward for eliminating lots of Garlic Mustard has been a natural increase of native asters, which also have white flowers in fall and the benefit of being good for bees and other vital insects.

About three years ago, when I started learning about invasives and the benefits of native plants to birds, bees, and wildlife, the “woods” around me had largely disappeared. Fields of manicured lawn tended by pesticides or large buildings replaced pleasing tangles of shrubs and trees and wildflowers. Animal habitats were being lost. Concerned I began seeking out native plants for my gardens and letting small areas stay “wild.”

Embracing a More Natural Garden

Barbara Lalicki (Briarcliff Manor)

I still love some of my non-natives with no colonial heritage, such as periwinkle (*Vinca*) and the Fairy Rose. And luckily, some of the plants I bought for looks, such as the lovely Penstemon (Beard Tongue), *Liatris*, and Red Dogwood are natives.



Penstemon



Purple betony



Penstemon and daisies

I can now heartily recommend Jacobs Ladder, Anise hyssop, Blue Mistflower, Hoary Vervain and Purple Betony. There are many others, but, as you can tell, I'm no expert.

You don't have to be an expert to enjoy the feeling of contributing something to nature, which gives us so much.

Leave it on the Lawn! How to “Grasscycle”

Did you know that there is a simple way to protect pollinators and the environment, save money, improve your lawn, and make your life easier? Try grasscycling! It is an environmentally friendly option for your lawn care, and will save you time and money. Just leave your grass clippings on your lawn after mowing. No more bagging grass clippings or using environmentally harmful gas blowers to remove them!



Why You Should "Leave It On The Lawn"

Most of the commercial landscapers who work in Briarcliff blow grass clippings off the lawn with gas blowers every time they mow. Besides the noise and harmful pollutants these blowers emit, this method harms pollinators and the birds and plants that depend upon them. Grass clippings are approximately 80% water and decompose quickly. They also contain 2% to 4% nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and other nutrients, and release these valuable nutrients back into the soil as they decompose. Composting your grass clippings in place can also help you cut down on the use of pesticides and/or fertilizers on your lawn. Studies have shown that grass recycling reduces the need for fertilizer by 25%. The chemicals in pesticides and fertilizers can wash into our local streams and other waterbodies, so cutting back on their use benefits all of us. Composting in place can also help save time and money spent on watering your lawn.

How To "Leave It On The Lawn"

Allow your grass to grow to three inches and then cut no more than one inch off the top every week. This is the "one-third" rule. This helps your grass develop a deeper root system, which is a natural defense against weeds, disease, and drought. Then simply compost/recycle your grass clippings in place after your lawn is mowed. We are confident that you will be happy with the results!

For more information and details on how to get started, visit [Leave it on the lawn](#), or contact your lawn service company and ask if they offer any eco-friendly solutions.

April Showers Bring May Flowers... and Stormwater Runoff

Spring has finally arrived, and if this is a typical year, it will bring lots of rainfall. April and May are the雨iest months in Westchester County. Of course, this precipitation is necessary -- to recharge aquifers and reservoirs, to replenish lakes, streams, and wetlands, to saturate the soil for trees and other plants whose roots will soon wake up and tap into groundwater. In early spring, especially before trees "leaf out" and begin drinking up water, heavy rainfall events can result in flooding and stormwater runoff.



Image Credit: KQED.org



Image Credit: Housatonic Valley Association

Stormwater runoff is the term used to describe rainfall that does not infiltrate into the ground, but instead "runs off" of surfaces and into stormwater drains or natural waterways like wetlands and streams. Runoff comes mostly from impervious surfaces -- like asphalt and concrete -- but can also occur on bare or compacted soils with low organic matter content. The greater the area of paved surfaces and buildings there are in a local watershed, the higher the volume of stormwater runoff. After a heavy rainfall event, stormwater that is channeled via culverts and storm drains into natural waterways can cause damage to streams and wetlands.

Carried along in stormwater runoff are pollutants like fertilizers, pesticides, pet wastes, motor oil, petroleum residues, and other chemicals that harm aquatic life and put drinking water quality at risk.

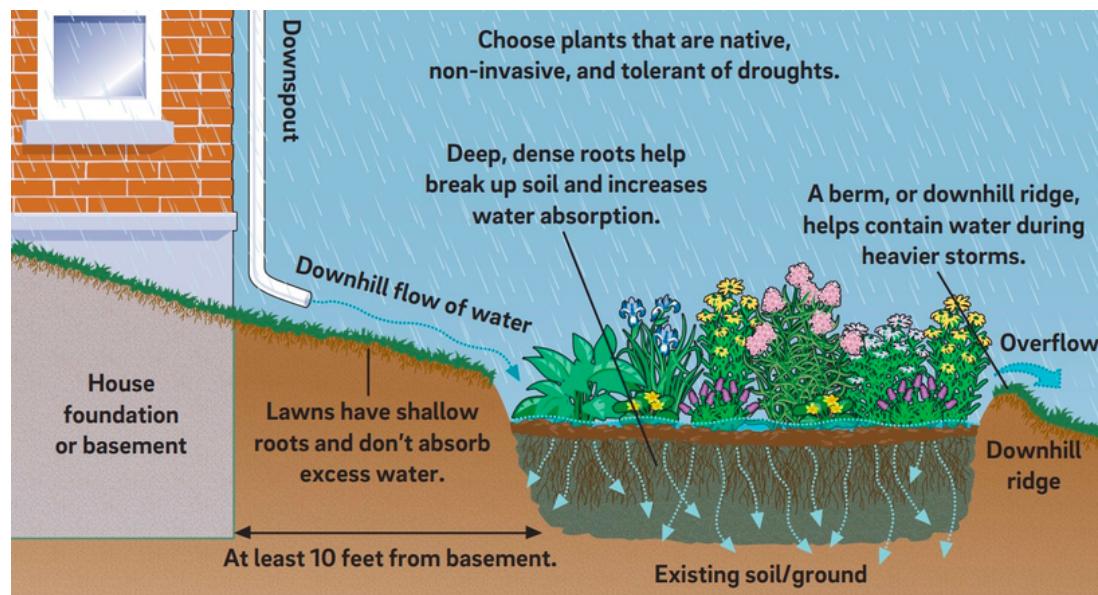
In order to protect water quality, large-scale sustainable stormwater management is necessary. An excellent approach to managing stormwater is installation of green infrastructure along streetscapes, in downtown business districts, in residential areas, and anywhere that buildings and pavement dominate. Green infrastructure, which integrates vegetation into stormwater management solutions, is different from grey infrastructure, which relies on artificial and constructed materials.



Image Credit: ASLA.org

Whereas grey infrastructure for stormwater management includes things like pipes and concrete retention basins, green infrastructure includes bioswales, green roofs, tree trenches, rain gardens, and constructed wetlands. These are also referred to as “Nature-based Solutions,” and are widely recognized as being superior to conventional grey infrastructure. Additionally, porous paving can be an excellent compromise where a hard surface is needed, as water can still penetrate through the open pores into the soil below (see it in action along the new Hudson Valley Trailway Connection between the NY Empire Trail and the Village business district!).

In addition to advocating for the inclusion of green infrastructure in our community’s public spaces, homeowners can include nature-based stormwater solutions on their own properties, too. Green stormwater interventions at the backyard scale include **rain barrels or planters** at gutter downspouts, **rain gardens** in places where water collects, and reducing lawn area in favor of **native flowers and shrubs** whose roots penetrate deeper into the soil and allow the ground to absorb more water. **Reducing or eliminating chemical fertilizer and pesticide applications** also helps tremendously to keep pollution out of our local water supply and natural waterways.



For more information on the technical specifications of these green infrastructure ideas, check out this excellent resource: [Green Infrastructure Techniques from GrowNYC](#).

*Rain Garden schematic.
Image Credit: Philadelphia Water Department*

Native Plant Spotlight

Woody Plant: *Cornus florida* (Flowering Dogwood)

Flowering dogwood is a graceful spring-flowering small tree in our region, growing wild in woodlands and planted in landscapes. The “flowers” are actually modified leaves, while the actual flowers are small and inconspicuous in the yellow-green center. Bees and beetles visit the flowers, and caterpillars of some butterflies and moths feed on the leaves. The bright red fall fruits are an important food resource for migrating birds and small mammals. This tree prefers shade to part-shade; dry to moist soils.



Image Credit: UT Gardens

Herbaceous Plant: *Arisaema triphyllum* (Jack-in-the-Pulpit)



Image Credit: Gardenia.net

Jack-in-the-Pulpit is a wonderful native addition to a woodland shade garden. The strikingly unique spring flower of this long-lived perennial can actually switch between being male and female from one year to the next. It tricks fungus gnats into pollinating it by falsely advertising an egg-laying site with its fungus-like odor (undetectable to us!). It can usually be purchased as bare-root plants and planted in fall or late winter. It prefers humus-rich, moist soils with a layer of leaf litter, and the bright red fall fruits are eaten by birds.

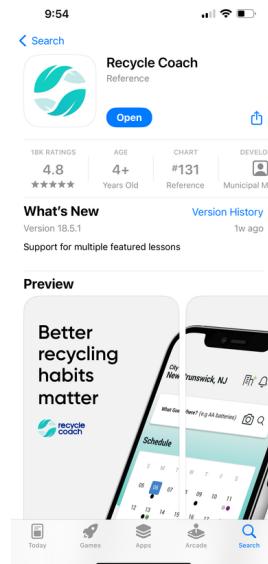
Recycle Coach and GridRewards apps for Briarcliff Manor residents

Download the free **Recycle Coach** app today at the [App store](#) or [Google Play](#).

How does Recycle Coach work?

The app sends you timely reminders about DPW pickup schedules, and information about local trash/recycling guidelines.

The app also allows you to take a picture of an item and guides you on where it can be dropped off for recycling.



**HEY NEIGHBORS,
LOWER YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT.
EARN CASH.**

IT'S AS EASY AS...

1. Download the free GridRewards app from the Google Play or App Store
2. Connect the app to your ConEdison account* (ensure you have online access to your ConEdison account)
3. Begin to learn & save money
4. Respond to alerts in the summer months by taking simple energy actions to earn cash rewards.

Learn more at Sustainablewestchester.org/GridRewards

If you don't have the app, you can download GridRewards here

[App Store](#) [Google Play](#)

 Point your camera here to get an app link.

*The program requires that you are serviced by a ConEdison Smart Meter.
Participants enrolled in the Smart Usage Rewards program with their Honeywell, Nest, or Emerson smart thermostats are ineligible.
No access to a mobile device? You can also enroll through your desktop computer.

Download the **GridRewards** app now at the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)

Use code 5de526 and sign up by April 30th to maximize your cash rewards.

How does GridRewards work?

The app will notify you of high energy events (mostly on hot summer afternoons, 5-10 times a year) when you should reduce your electrical consumption. The app offers suggestions such as turning up your thermostat by 1.5 degrees or running your laundry at night. You then collect cash payments for conserving energy. Last year, 98% of GridRewards participants got paid for reducing their energy usage.

Where does the money come from?

Con Edison pays you to reduce electricity at peak times to help maintain system reliability in your community.

Upcoming Events

SAC in collaboration with the Briarcliff Recreation Department and the Briarcliff PTA brings you Earth Day 2024 on Sunday, April 21st (10am-2pm) at the Law Park Pavilion

The event will feature

- A spotlight on electric vehicles sponsored by the **Greater Hudson Valley Electric Vehicle Association**.
- A spotlight on clean energy brought to you by **Sustainable Westchester**.
- A spotlight on native plants brought to you by the **Environmental Advisory Council**.
- Drop-off bins for fabric scraps, sneakers, and Legos.
- Stash the Trash community clean-up event which will be **Briarcliff Manor PTA's National Day of Service**.
- **Poster competition** (details available through BPTA).
- "Green" food trucks/Ice cream truck.
- Craft activities and live music.

Stay tuned for information about our annual **Take it or Leave it** event (May 2024)

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, email us at
SAC@briarcliffmanor.gov or EAC@briarcliffmanor.gov
Visit us at

[Sustainability-advisory-committee](#) and
[Environmental-advisory-council](#)

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