

EAC NATURE NEWS

Brought to you by the Charlestown Township Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC)

EAC@charlestown.pa.us



Exhale! Spring is here. The trees and plants are turning green and we are done with the snow for 8 months. It was a snowy February!!

MISSION

The Charlestown Environmental Advisory Committee's (EAC) mission is to advise the Board of Supervisors on environmental issues, the protection and preservation of natural resources, the use of open land and creating inventories of natural areas with unique features. All of the aforementioned advice to be focused within the township and in the best interest and general welfare of its residents.

HAPPENINGS

Environmental Activities Coming Up



Earth Day - Celebration of Service locally is April 10th. We are spending the day picking up trash along our roads and vegetated areas, which otherwise will blow and wash into our streams, rivers, wetlands, estuaries, and oceans. National Earth Day is April 22nd. If you would like to join the EAC in cleaning up Howell Rd in

Charlestown on April 10th beginning at 9:00, please send an email to eac@charlestown.pa.us. Dress for the weather expected, boots in case the ground is wet, a hat for the sun, hydration, and a snack if desired. Gloves, trash bags (paper and plastic) and reflective vests will be provided.

As an alternative, consider organizing a cleanup event for your neighborhood. We will be glad to provide paper collection bags if desired at the township office. Stay tuned for more information. The Charlestown EAC would like to reward small groups/individual efforts to clean roadside litter on our township Earth Day. After the event, please email us at eac@charlestown.pa.us with the location, contact information, and pictures of your litter collection (before/after or bag collections) and your name will be entered into a raffle to win a "reduce your plastic use" basket (contains non-plastic alternatives for common products: toothbrush, floss, Hydro Flask water bottle, Lush shampoo bar, BlueLand liquid hand soap with tablet refills).

MORE HAPPENINGS

Guided Wildflower Walk on the Pickering Trail scheduled for **April 24th**, with a rain date of May 1st. Great for the whole family. Maybe you will get some gardening ideas! Check the Charlestown Township website, <http://charlestown.pa.us> in April for time and meeting place.

EAC Virtual Education Series - Reduce, Reuse, Recycling, Respond Webinar - **April 19th, 7:00**. Use the Zoom link below to enter the webinar. If you are unable to attend and want a copy of the presentation, please let us know by email. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81850711485>.
Meeting ID: 818 5071 1485.

EAC Virtual Education Series offered by the Uwchlan EAC: **April 13, 7 pm**. "Guess who's coming to Dinner: How and Why to create a year-round buffet and habitat for our pollinators" Link: Uwchlan.com/262/Environmental-Advisory-Council.

EAC Virtual Education: June 16. Join Charlestown Township for a program on celebrating National Pollinator Week - further details will be on the EAC page of the Charlestown Township website.

Watershed Certification - You can certify your property as Watershed friendly, including signage, at [Certify your Property | Nurture Nature Foundation](#). Remember to have supporting pictures ready when you complete the application form. See Carol Armstrong for more information if needed (mnem.np@gmail.com).

Pollinator Certification: You can certify your property as a Pollinator Garden, including signage, at <https://aadl.org/node/575509>. Remember to have supporting pictures ready when you complete the application form.

Things to Consider This Spring....

When you clear your yard of branches and plant matter, keep them to start a compost bin. Try to avoid throwing this material into your trash. It is unlawful to put discarded leaves in a landfill. If you are new to composting, join us for our live webinar as described above.

Leave a light layer of dry leaves on your garden as mulch protection from drying during summer months. The rest you can compost in a pile or container.

Leave mowed lawn droppings on the ground to add nutrients to your soil. Set your lawnmower blade to cut grass to approx. 3" to allow more ground water absorption. Pick plants and trees that are native to our area and are good pollinators. Some ideas are (Note: these are examples only. You need to know your soil, light, space, and drainage conditions to pick properly):



- a. Trees, such as Oak, Willow, Cherry (plum), Birch
 - b. Perennial plants:
 - Mint family, such as monarda and mountain mint, anise hyssop
 - Aster family, such as asters, goldenrods, joe pye weed and boneset
 - Milkweed family, such as butterfly weed, common milkweed, purple milkweed, swamp milkweed, whorled milkweed
 - c. Grasses, such as Sweet Grass, Bottlebrush Grass, Pennsylvania Sedge
 - d. Ferns, such as Maidenhair Fern, Lady Fern, Wood Fern
 - e. Shrubs, such as Paw Paw, Witch Hazel, Pasture Rose
 - f. Annuals, such as Sunflowers; Salvia, Homestead Purple Verbena;
5. Fertilize your trees and plants with compost. Leaf compost is available at the Chester County Landfill:
<https://www.chestercountyswa.org/DocumentCenter/View/1871/leaf-compost>
6. Prune your trees and bushes. Some flowering shrubs should be pruned in the fall, while others should be pruned in the spring.
<https://extension.psu.edu/how-and-when-to-prune-flowering-shrubs>
Consider letting an area of your lawn become a meadow or a rain garden.
7. Use native plants to attract more pollinators to your property. Important terms are productive and keystone. *Productive* is any plant that supports our pollinators:

two non-natives that bees love are Dahlias and Seven Son Tree. They attract pollinators so they are considered 'productive.' *Keystone* is an important term because it refers to the plants that support the most pollinators such as Oaks and Willows.

8. Succession planting is an important part of planning your garden. This means selecting plants that will bloom throughout the growing season rather than just in the spring when we initially plant.

By doing this you will have color in your garden beds as well as food and habitats for our local critters throughout the growing seasons.

Look for '4-season plants' that serve a purpose year-round. An excellent example of a 4 season plant is the highbush blueberry because they flower in the spring, followed by berries in the summer, followed by bright red foliage in the fall, followed by bright red stems in the winter landscape.

Note: Below are some good informational sites FYI only - the EAC does not promote any products, vendors, or brands. We are only providing these as resources for information you may find useful.

National Wildlife Foundation: <https://www.nwf.org/>

Arbor Day Foundation: <https://www.arborday.org/>

Homegrown National Park: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

National Audubon Society: <https://www.audubon.org/>

Audubon Society of Valley Forge: <https://valleyforgeaudubon.org/bfn>

The Xerces Society: <https://www.xerces.org/>

Native Plant Society <http://www.panativeplantsociety.org/>

Did you know.....?

1. Waste

Let's think about reducing waste at its source. Start by:

- Buying fewer things made of plastic, especially single use plastics such as water bottles.
- Reusing and repairing what you already have.
- Communicating with manufacturers and sellers that you are dissatisfied with the amount of plastic packaging that was used. Let them know how you feel about the environmental impact. Consider leaving online reviews if you can. Ask them to find sustainable ways to present their products, and that you will be glad to purchase them at that point. There is a growing wave of people asking for Extended Producer Responsibility. We have this for electronic items in PA, but other states are extending it to other products. Jump on this positive wave to change the way products are designed so that they are not made of plastic or can be effectively recycled, but not disposed of in a way that harms humans, wildlife or our environment.

2. Pollinators <https://www.pollinator.org/pollinator-week>

The week of June 20th is pollinator week - pollinator plants protect our important wildlife especially; bees, birds, caterpillars, butterflies, and insects by providing nutrition and habitats so that they can pollinate our plants for future growth. We need to have beautiful landscapes with productive plants that support our essential workers, ie pollinators.

3. Plant Names

Most of us are aware that plants have long latin names that most amateur gardeners do not memorize or use. However did you know that any given plant, even a plant within a species, will have a unique name? The common names we ascribe to a plant may be a grouping of plants that look different and have different needs but the same name. Also, there may be many plants with the same name, such as hydrangeas but only one, the Oakwood Hydrangea, is a native plant. When you are choosing plants, trees, shrubs etc. try to choose a variety that is native.

Suggestions of the month:

- Take a walk outside and while you are out there, take a paper bag to collect plastic bottles and aluminum cans you find along the way.
- Since Earth Day is in April, consider doing something earth-friendly this spring such as:
 - Cleaning up your neighborhood streets and lawns.
 - Visiting the eco-store in Phoenixville (<http://www.communityecostore.com/>).
 - Using electric tools for your yard work rather than gas-powered tools.
 - Looking at the Terracycle and Tenderly websites for ideas on how to recycle difficult items (terracycle.com and tenderly.com).
 - Trying to adhere to the buy-nothing program for a specified period of time (buynothing.org).
 - If you do buy something, try buying it used, especially books, jewelry, clothing, and appliances.
 - If you have some plants that have spread beyond where you would like, dig a few up and share with neighbors. Bee balm and other members of the mint family are great pollinator plants that often spread and need regular thinning.

*“And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.”*
— **Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Complete Poems***
*Milkweed,
Courtesy of Chesna, Pixabay*

