

NATURE NEWS
Brought to you by the:
Charlestown Township Environmental Advisory
Committee (EAC)
EAC@charlestown.pa.us
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Happy Winter everyone,

The days have gotten shorter resulting in early darkness. It feels like we should go to sleep by 6 PM. This is a great reason to rev up your energy level by going out into nature every day during winter. It helps avoid the blues and we all need the sunshine! Nothing replaces natural sunlight.

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.

You are receiving this email because at some event or activity or through networking you signed up to be on the Charlestown EAC mailing list. Please feel free to share this with others who might be interested in future volunteer activities. To see the EAC's annual meeting schedule go to [Charlestown Township](#).

RECOGNITION

Special thanks to Pete Goodman, our dedicated and loyal EAC Chairperson. He has resigned from his position as Chair but will remain on the EAC as a member. Pete has selflessly given 4 years to EAC efforts involving many different activities. A tireless and contributor and leader, he cares deeply about our Charlestown waterways and the Township in general.

Thank you also to Esther Estes for her year of service as a member of the EAC board. She brought creative and thoughtful ideas to the EAC and has been the liaison between the EAC and the Charlestown Parks and Recreation Committee. All of her efforts have been appreciated. A Persimmon tree will be planted at Brightside Farm in her honor.

HAPPENINGS

- *Our Regular monthly meetings* are open to the public. Please join us on the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Our next meeting is on Valentine's Day, February 14th in Rm 157 - the Choral Room - of the Great Valley Middle School
- We are *very excited* to be having a *tree ecologist, Will Ryan*, come to Charlestown to teach us how to identify tree species. Learn to identify trees by their leaves, bark, flowers and buds.
 - Save the date: April 30th at 10:00 AM. Be on the lookout for more information as spring approaches.
- *Tree and shrub planting at Brightside* - The EAC continues to plant multifunction trees and shrubs at Brightside Farm Park, such as Blueberries, Elderberry, American Plum, and Persimmon. Please contact Carol Armstrong of the EAC (you can use the EAC email address) if you are interested in 'digging in' during the winter months. As long as the soil is not frozen, dormancy is a good time to plant.
- *Weed Warrior Program* - the EAC will be working jointly with Parks and Recreation to begin a Weed Warrior Program in our Charlestown natural areas/parks. There will be a kickoff meeting at Brightside Park on Saturday, April 2 where the work will begin to manually remove Multiflora Rose. Rain date is April 3rd. More information forthcoming. For more details about this program and the invasive

plants being targeted, please send an email to eac@charlestown.pa.us. If you can't join on April 2, you can help by pulling invasives on your own walks and hikes in the township. We can help you recognize what these invasives look like so you are sure not to touch native species.

- If you are passionate about the environment in which we live, consider becoming a *member of our EAC*. Contact us at eac@charlestown.pa.us if you are interested.

THINGS TO KNOW

Wildlife in our area

Be safe when driving in dark or wooded areas by slowing down where deer and other wildlife are prevalent. Hitting a deer can cause severe damage to your car, your person, and the deer. Better safe than sorry. Be Alert. Don't drive distracted.

Winter salt- What You Should Know

- Salt we use on our walkways, roads, driveways etc. in the winter may be helpful for safety when navigating icy areas. However, salt is a problem for our groundwater, streams and wetlands. 98% of the salt entering our streams comes from residential usage. We want to prevent salt from entering our storm drains, which are connected to underground pipes that funnel the salt to the nearest water body.
- Once chlorides (salts) are in a stream or lake, there are no biological processes to remove them. High levels of salt affect fish and crayfish, and smaller aquatic life, all of which are important for a healthy ecosystem.
- Too much salt on sidewalks and roads also damages gardens, trees, animals' paws, and cars.
- Calcium chloride is effective down to 0 degrees F, but rock salt only goes down to 20 degrees.

To minimize salt usage:

- Shovel early and often before adding salts. Radiant sun will often finish off the ice and snow on a driveway.
- Use alternatives such as kitty litter, fireplace ashes, and/or coffee grounds.
- Use Propylene glycol, but NOT Ethylene Glycol.
- Use less than you think you need. Crystals on the ground should never overlap and be up to three inches apart. Never use more than 4 cups per 1000 sq.feet.

References

1. Stroud Water Research Center study on de-icing effects on the environment:
<https://stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/2018/03/07/de-icing-salt-boosts-safety-duringstorms-but-it-poses-a-threat-to-fresh-water/>
2. New Hampshire Dept. of Environmental Services, Environmental Fact Sheet, 2016.
3. Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies. Road Salt: Moving toward the Solution. Special Report, December 2010.

WINTER WONDERS

Don't give up on nature in the winter. Most trees are barren, and yes, it is cold, but bundle up and get outside! Exposing yourself to the sun will help with the winter blues.

Here are some ideas of things to do for yourself and with your family.

1. Gather materials outside to make a wreath. Wild grape vines are excellent structures that can be wound into a wreath and easily secured with a variety of materials. You can also bind the wreath by weaving the end of the vine into the wreath. It is then a treasure hunt to find bird feathers, dried fruits and berries, dried flowers, and anything interesting to insert into or tie to the wreath. This can become a 2 for 1 event - the treasure/scavenger hunt and using what you find to do a craft project. Here is a wreath made by an EAC member.



2. Take a long nature walk. On your walk see if you can identify; birds, trees, plants, and aquatic life if you walk near a stream. Consider walking along the Pickering, McDevitt, Thompson, or Horseshoe Trails or the trails at Brightside and Charlestown Parks. If you don't recognize something you see, snap a picture and match it to a picture you find online. Consider creating a file or scrapbook of what you find and add to it all year round. If you do this for a year, you will see the diverse and abundant natural elements in Chester County. You can also make tracings of leaves and objects and use them to make a shadow box or other craft projects. Online sites such as; iNaturalist, PlantNet, and Merlin Bird ID, can be used to identify what you find.

3. Dig a hole to plant or transplant a tree. Dig a good size hole - twice the width of the root ball or root system - and deep enough for the flare of the tree's trunk or stem to be just at ground level, as if the tree had planted itself. Then in the spring, you can dig up a dormant tree and the hole will be ready for planting.

4. Take reed grasses and learn to weave a basic basket. In your own yard, find materials such as willow wands, pine needles, grasses, wood splints, reeds, reed splints (a reed that is flat on both sides), or bark. (Please note that no materials can be taken from public lands, as all natural resources are protected by the Commonwealth.) There are many sources of instruction from books and online materials, such as <https://www.textileindie.com/beginners-guide-basket-weaving/>

5. Try some winter sowing. Did you know that you can plant some seeds OUTSIDE in the winter? It's called winter sowing and it is a cost-effective, low maintenance way to get a jump start on some vegetables and flowers. Some seeds actually need winter stratification to germinate. Some good choices for your first efforts at winter sowing include: Flowers: alyssum, butterfly weed, calendula, coreopsis, cosmos, foxglove, hollyhocks, petunia. Vegetables: Beets, broccoli, cabbage, chard, carrots, kale, mache, radishes, spinach. Black-eyed susan's are particularly good for beginners. We've assembled a short list of articles and videos to get you started:

[Winter Seed Sowing](#) article

[Winter Seed Sowing](#) video

[Winter Seed Sowing](#) video

<https://www.uwchlan.com/DocumentCenter/View/671/PLANTING-MILKWEED-SEEDS> (courtesy of Toni Gorkin, Uwchlan EAC)

Websites:

<https://joegardener.com/podcast/130-winter-sowing/>

<https://wildseedproject.net/2016/11/ideal-time-for-sowing-native-seeds/>

<http://www.wintersown.org/> has some good lists for recommended seeds.

Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/wintersown/>

6. Challenge Yourself

Try this word search puzzle and use it as a learning tool for bird identification by looking for a picture of the bird on the internet. These are all native birds so you could find them on the nature walk suggested in #2 above. It is even more fun if you set a goal to sight all of them.

Have fun!!!

W H N R E K C E P D O O W D E I L L E B D E R O D
 H C E E E H O U S E F I N C H U U C O B M H A A S
 I N H U R K C C Y R A C V N D R M P N T L H R R W
 T I O O R W C Z A P E F O I W I T Q W W X K A O X
 E F U B I O A E R R A K T O N P G R O X E M R F F
 T D S X G S P N P C O H C O P D Y Y B Y H R I A Y
 H L E C R O A E I D Z L M E N E W L E L A P M X A
 R O S L E Y T A A L O N I J P O R D O P V E I B J
 O G P J A C L M K N O O E N N D J H S H R V A V E
 A N A B T I W E W T S R W S A U O G A I O R P Y U
 T A R M H B O R A E C T A Y N C N O C W R Z Q R L
 E C R H O I D I H C A H A C N O H A W E K G K E B
 D I O D R U E C D N C E O R S W N I D Y A N S P B
 S R W S N A R A E B U R Y D L K O O C M R U M M O
 P E K M E S A N L C H N Z H E I W D D K O I A L B
 A M Z W D K E R I I I C L S E L N V I M A P A X Q
 R A L T O B T O A N S A T S J J F G T E I D W H W
 R C Y O W L R B T I G R M X N D K I U I C S E F A
 O G M J L F O I D D A D L T X X T B W N Y Y C E O
 W C K I P Q H N E L H I O Z U D P Z L N G Q B J Z
 U V C F V A S N R I E N F V E O G O D O J R Z F W
 W O R C N A C I R E M A H T E O L K J S X B D X F
 L W O D E R A E G N O L F S Z T H S C Z Q G N Z N
 J K X H M B C P V R O U G H L E G G E D H A W K M
 W H I T E B R E A S T E D N U T H A T C H K N C F

americancrow
 americanrobin
 carolinachickadee
 darkeyedjunco
 greathornedowl
 housesparrow
 northerncardinal
 roughleggedhawk
 songsparrow
 whitethroatedsparrow

americangoldfinch
 barredowl
 carolinawren
 downywoodpecker
 hairywoodpecker
 longearedowl
 redbelliedwoodpecker
 shortearedowl
 tuftedtitmouse

americankestral
 bluejay
 cooperhawk
 europeanstarling
 housefinch
 mourningdove
 redtailedhawk
 snowypowl
 whitebreastednuthatch

Find the word in the puzzle.

Words can go in any direction.

Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

“Hear! hear!” screamed the jay from a neighboring tree, where I had heard a tittering for some time, 'winter has a concentrated and nutty kernel, if you know where to look for it.' - Henry David Thoreau

