



WEST CHESTER GREEN TEAM NEWS

August 2025

Mission: The West Chester Green Team is a civic organization in West Chester, PA, that works to educate the local public and to establish and nourish green initiatives in the community in harmony with nature and each other, promoting the health of all living things and of planet Earth.

Inside

:

Volunteer of the Month, Celebrating Sunshine event, Road Salt, an update on Spruce Alley, Green Wagons, Food Bank Donations, and much more!

WCGT Calendar of Upcoming Events

When – What – Where.



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August 23: Please join us at West Chester Friends Meeting, 425 N. High St., West Chester. Sign up info available later in this newsletter

For details on other August and later events, see listings beginning page 3.

Related groups and committees:

4th Monday of every month: East Bradford Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), 7 – 8:30pm, East Bradford Township Bldg, 676 Copeland School Rd.

4th Monday of every month: East Goshen Sustainability Advisory Committee, 7 – 8:30pm, East Goshen Township Bldg, 1580 Paoli Pike

4th Tuesday of every month: West Goshen Sustainability Advisory Committee, 6 – 8 pm, West Goshen Township Bldg., 1025 Paoli Pike

4th Tuesday of every month: Westtown Environmental Advisory Council, 7 – 8:30pm, Westtown Township Bldg., 1039 Wilmington Pike (Rt. 202)

4th Thursday of every month: West Chester Sustainability Advisory Committee, 6:30 – 8 pm, Room 240, Borough Hall, 401 E. Gay St.

Be sure to visit our Web site at <https://wcgreenteam.com/> and our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/WCGTeam/> (all are welcome to post environment- and sustainability-related items there). If you wish to support our work, please donate here: <https://wcgreenteam.com/contact-2/>

NOTE: Deadline for the September 2025 issue is August 31! We welcome contributions and suggestions from our readers for possible inclusion in a future issue. E-mail your ideas to Dianne Walsh at LDwalsh318@gmail.com.

This and That

More Coming Attractions

WCU OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY & THE WEST CHESTER GREEN TEAM

Fall 2025 Community/Campus Sustainability Events



Transportation Equity in Chester County Panel Discussion

September 16th 6:30-8:30pm
Business and Public Management Center Room 116

Toward a Plastic Free Future Panel Discussion

October 7th 6:30-8:30pm
Business and Public Management Center Room 116



Seeing Stars: Panel Discussion on Dark Skies

October 20th 6:30-8:30pm
Business and Public Management Center Room 110

Green Holiday Event

December 10th 5-7pm
Sykes Student Union Ballrooms



More information to come at wcupa.edu/sustainability

WCU Office of Sustainability in Collaboration with the West Chester Green Team: Four events for the Fall semester

September 16th: Transportation Equity in Chester County Panel Discussion

October 7th: Toward a Plastic Free Future Panel Discussion (see page 4)

October 20th: Seeing Stars: Panel Discussion on Dark Skies (see page 4)

December 10th: Green Holiday Event

Celebrating Sunshine Annual Gathering

August 23rd!!

4 PM: Green Fair featuring live music, Tai Chi demonstration, Games on the lawn, and Lenape Crafts

5 PM: Dinner from Mae's and awards ceremony for Josh Maxwell and John Suplee. Should end by 7:30 PM

Sign up by scanning the QR code or visiting the link below

<https://ticketstripe.com/events/8377107451126880>

Celebrating Sunshine:

A West Chester Green Team Annual Gathering

When: Saturday, August 23rd. Green Fair at 4pm. Dinner at 5pm.

Where: West Chester Friends Meeting House, 424 N High St., West Chester, PA

All Are Welcome!!!

What: Celebrating County Commissioner **Josh Maxwell** (left) with the *Environmental Leadership Award* and Chester County artist **John Suplee** (art pictured right) with the *Philip Jamison Art & Nature Award*.

Join us at 4pm for the **Green Fair** featuring:

- West Chester Coop's baked goods table
- Take it slow Tai Chi demonstration by Sifu Tim Niiler
- Live Music by Mateo Niiler
- Games on the Lawn & Lenape Crafts



Join us at 5pm for a **dinner and awards ceremony!**



Get tickets now by going to wcgreenteam.com or scanning the QR Code

Toward a Plastic Free Future. October 7th

A community panel moderated by:

Elizabeth Gambosi, featuring Dee Durham
(co-founder and chair of Plastic Free Delaware)

Elliott Arnold (Professor of Earth and Space
Sciences at WCU)

Rachel Joy Davis (PA GIT and Sustainability
Leader).

Join us! **50 Sharpless St, 6:30 pm, room 102**
for a reception and migrate to room 116 at 7:00
pm for a wonderful panel discussion!



TOWARD A PLASTIC FREE FUTURE

A Community Panel



October 7th, 2025
6:30pm

Business and Public
Management Center
50 Sharpless St,
West Chester, PA

6:30pm Reception (Room 102)
7:00pm Panel (Room 116)

Moderator
Elizabeth Gambosi,
West Chester Green Team

Panelists
Dee Durham, Co-founder and
Chair, Plastic Free Delaware
Elliott Arnold, Professor, West Chester
University Earth and Space Sciences
Rachel Joy Davis, PA GIT and
Sustainability Leader

Questions? Email sustainability@wcupa.edu



Seeing Stars: Panel Discussion on Dark Skies

Featuring the presentation of the West Chester Green Team
Environmental Leadership Award to State Representative
Chris Pielli by Professor Marc Gagne



**Monday,
October 20th
6:30pm**

Business and Public
Management Center,
Room 110
50 Sharpless St,
West Chester, PA 19383

MODERATOR

- Timothy Lawlor, Penn State University

PANELISTS

- Jeff Buler, University of Delaware
- Marc Gagne, West Chester University
- Kate Frederick, West Chester University
- Mark Grosz, Dark Sky PA
- Bill McGeeney, Light Pollution News
- Suzanne Webster, Elizabethtown College

Seeing Stars: Panel Discussion on Dark Skies. October 20th

Join us at **6:30 pm at 50 Sharpless St, room 110**,
for a wonderful panel discussion!

Moderated by Professor Tim Lawlor (Penn State)

Featuring Panelists Prof. Jeff Buler (UD), Prof.
Marc Gagne (WCU), Kate Frederick (Student
Researcher, WCU), Mark Grosz (Dark Skies,
WCGT), Bill McGeeney (Light Pollution News), and
Prof. Suzanne Webster (Elizabethtown College).

Also featuring the presentation of WCGT's
Environmental Leadership Award to State
Representative Chris Pieli.

Volunteer of the Month: Tim James

By Mateo Niiler



This month, the West Chester Green Team would like to recognize Tim James for his work with the Green Team. Tim has been working with the Green Team for years in many different ways. From running the canoeing at Westtown Lake for our Legendary Lenape program to assisting with food at our Earth Day gatherings each April to even being the Elf at our Green Santa events three separate times, Tim is always willing to help the Green Team however he can. He is also involved with several other environmentally focused groups: Stroud Water Research Center, and Chester, Ridley, and Crum Watersheds Association (CRC), where he has helped with stream cleanup and monitoring.

I had the opportunity to speak to Tim James about how he felt being recognized as the volunteer of the month for August, and he said he felt humbled. “I don’t think of myself as a very important volunteer,” he admitted to me. Tim started working with the Green Team due to his love of the natural world and his concerns over what was happening to the environment, which have only increased with time. “The current climate... is scary, and it’s becoming critical that individuals and nonprofits step up and increase their support of other nonprofits and environmental issues.”



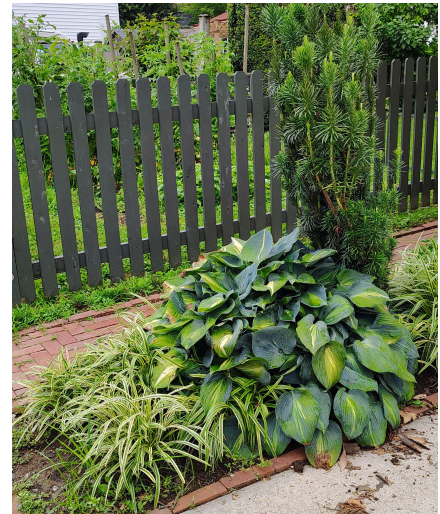
Tim is most proud of his work organizing the canoeing at Westtown Lake for our Legendary Lenape events these past few summers. According to him, when he heard that we would have to pay \$60 per person to canoe at another location, he promised he could organize a better experience for \$60 total. The Green Team has not looked back since then. While Tim may not think of himself as an important volunteer, it is people like Tim James who help keep our community together and make the Green Team what it is.

My sincere congratulations, Tim James, for being our volunteer of the month!

Spruce Alley Retrospective: Looking back, two years later

By Margaret Hudgings--- Edited by Mateo Niiler

In the summer of 2023, the West Chester Green Team launched the Spruce Alley Project, focused on improving the beauty of a residential alley in West Chester borough and propagating native plants within the borough. Two volunteers guided the beginnings of this project: Thomas Dougherty and Chris Pugliese. Dougherty studied architecture and was inspired by the aesthetic appeal of European alleyways, especially those in Holland. Pugliese, the VP of the WCGT and the other initiator of this project, was the landscape architect who designed the garden at the Justice Center. They observed the alley and offered their visions of a more verdant and appealing streetscape. In July of '23, they made a presentation to interested homeowners. Little by little, plans for a beautified Spruce Alley emerged.



Artist and gardener Christiane Torres finished up the final phase of the planning. Her designs were utilized in the presentation given by Pugliese and Dougherty. The owners of 401 W. Union St, Gary and Sunae Hewitt, have worked on her plans, which are coming along beautifully.

So, how did the Spruce Alley project go overall? The project has had mixed success. While some homeowners took on total transformations, others decided to do nothing at all. However, most residents have been on board with the alley project. Many planted flowers. Some followed the plans provided to them while others improvised. Fences, parking areas, a new garage, and even a couple of gargoyles--Spruce Alley has changed.

The focus on native plants was a total success, though. The alley is now in bloom with native flowers. That was the overall goal. It is much more routine now to be serenaded with bird song as you traverse the alley. Since more people have become garden conscious, by limiting herbicides and increasing composting, dimming outdoor lights and letting leaves stay over winter into spring, as well as other Green Team goals, the area has come alive. This summer lightning bugs have returned to the neighborhood in large numbers, delighting everyone and especially our state senator Carolyn Comitta who began the Dark Skies and Fireflies initiative.

Overall, like other Green Team projects such as Porchfest, the Spruce Alley project has built community spirit and made West Chester a happier and healthier and more beautiful place to live.

We asked Christiane about the project recently and she said, "Nice to see that there are more flowers in Spruce alley! You asked me once about my approach to garden design, and I told you I rely on my art school training, especially for color choices, but composition too."

Christiane's garden designs are indeed like paintings. Many thanks for all her work in providing so many individualized garden plans for Spruce Alley. Christiane, the Green Team, and homeowners thank you!

Road Salt

By Nathaniel Smith--- Edited by Mateo Niiler

Water is many things. It is central to life on Earth, and it is in the name of the Stroud Water Research Center in Avondale. And in some ways, the antithesis of water is salt. The increase of road salt has caused many issues to fresh water environments.

A core principle of the Stroud Water Research Center in Avondale is that people don't need to be specialists to understand water issues. That is why Stroud has been promoting the idea of Citizen Science, in which we can all participate to advance knowledge. Be sure to read to the end of this article for an excellent opportunity to do so this fall!

Why do we care in Chester County?

Chester County doesn't have many droughts or forest fires, although it does have floods. The County abounds in fresh water; its many streams powered the mills that started the area on its path to prosperity in colonial times.

In an almost magical natural transformation, our fresh waters join and replenish the salty seas. The tiny amount of minerals contained in streams and rivers, over the ages, has become concentrated in the ocean, which is about 3.5% salt (sodium chloride).

Ocean water is much too salty for even desperate sailors to drink. As Coleridge's Ancient Mariner exclaims, "Water, water, everywhere, / Nor any drop to drink." And even less so in the Dead Sea, so salty that only specialized microorganisms can live there.

Water comprises somewhat over half of the human body, depending on factors like age and sex. We are about 0.4% salt, roughly the recommended salt level in drinking water and the concentration in cow's milk. Blood tastes salty because it has about twice that concentration. People today tend to consume far too much salt, which can cause high blood pressure, dehydration, and other problems (leading to about [100,000 extra American deaths](#) a year).

How does salt harm the environment?

Like humans, life in streams doesn't do well with too much salt either. [A chart from Stroud Center](#) shows that at 0.3% salt in stream water, half of species suffer a 50% loss in numbers. When invertebrates like mayfly larvae decline, so do amphibians and fish, and then too birds that depend on eating the winged phase of aqueous bugs. Any added salinity is bad for the entire fresh water ecosystem.

A Stroud Center article by Diane Huskinson titled "[The Trouble with Road Salt](#)" gives more background: Even more damaging than winter salt concentrations, groundwater contamination keeps salinity high in summer, when warmer temperatures make the growing aquatic organisms more sensitive to contaminants.

This threat is not just to wildlife. Salt harms pets' feet, roadside plants, car undercarriages, footwear, wood floors, and even bridges. Unfortunately, salt spread on a dry road, as often happens, can be pushed to the edges of the driving surface, reducing melting and increasing salt in runoff.

What can be done?

Individuals and municipalities both need to reduce salt use. See more background and some tips at the [Stroud Center Site](#). In short, use only what you need. Shovel and sweep first, and if salt crunches under your feet, there is too much of it. If your municipality is applying excess salt, let its

leaders know that they are wasting your money and harming your environment. Cutting down on salt run-off is one reason that West Chester Borough has been installing rain gardens along some streets: chemicals are filtered out in the soil before they can reach the streams.

Ultimately, we are talking about human health and finances. A June 4 *Washington Post* article, "[A salt crisis is looming for U.S. rivers](#)," shows an alarming increase in salt in waters around the nation's capitol, as well as increasing complaints about a salty taste in tap water there.

[A recent study](#) showed that excessive use of road salt may make some of New York City's drinking water supply too salty to drink by the beginning of the next century. So what can we do to prevent this? There are less harmful solutions to melt snow and ice, but these are more expensive. But it will be extremely expensive when cities like DC and New York need to import drinking water from less salt-polluted sources. This is a problem that must be solved now.

The danger to aquatic life, and particularly the threat to anglers' favorite pastime, is why the Isaak Walton League conducts an [annual salt watch](#), in which individuals across the country get a kit to sample salt in their local streams.

The Stroud Center has been doing similar surveys for a long time. Three of the Green Team's science advisers have been part of that monitoring program: Nur Ritter, Stewardship Manager of West Chester University's Gordon Natural Area, and Tim James, a retired Westtown School teacher of mathematics and theater, who has worked on Goose Creek clean-ups for many years. Additionally, John Jackson, another Green Team science adviser, is among the Stroud Center's specialists studying the effects of salt and planning the surveys.

The Stroud Center is calling for local residents to participate in an October salt survey, at a date to be determined. The goal is to measure the saltiness of the baseflow in the non-salting season and when recent rain is not diluting the normal water flow. If you are interested in participating in this important project, please let us know, and we will connect you to the project after we know more details. You can reach me at nathanielbsmith@earthlink.net or the Green Team at westchestergoesgreen@gmail.com.

Then you will be a Citizen Scientist helping to diagnose and solve a serious environmental problem!



**Save the date!!! West
Chester Porchfest 2026 is
Saturday May 16th! 1-7 PM.
Rain or Shine.**

Last Month's Camp Linden Event

By Margaret Hudgings--- Edited by Mateo Niiler

On July 26th, the WCGT celebrated Lenape heritage with a program and dinner at Camp Linden near Marshallton. The program, led by Camp Linden director Amy Johnston, focused on educating the attendees about Lenape culture and history. Johnston had previously taken a course in Lenape language and had many materials prepared to help demonstrate the history of the Lenape. Among those were a bow and several instruments, which she explained their traditional construction process. Mateo Niiler, WC Green Team's summer intern, helped organize the event and played guitar for the occasion. Attendees appreciated the music, the program presented by camp director Amy Johnson, and the meal: a tasty three sister stew prepared by chef Kim Stack, cornbread by Sue Patterson of the WC Co-op, and peaches from nearby Barnard's Orchard.

As it has rained almost daily this summer, the mosquitos were thriving at camp, and bug repellent was required. I hope that next year we might make this an October event!



Birdie, age 2, and Duncan, 8 months, seemed to enjoy the event. With Duncan sitting happily in the grass and observing, and Birdie and her dad playing catch with tiny lacrosse sticks. Everybody loved the kettle corn; traditionally, an authentic Native American treat made with popcorn sweetened with maple syrup. However, our version was made with sugar by Trader Joe's.

This is the third year the Green Team has offered programs on the Lenape people who lived on this land that we now call home. We have learned some words, made crafts, and developed an appreciation for these people who lived in harmony with the natural world.

Plants on Wheels: Have You Seen Them?

Did I just spy one of our three Plants on Wheels Wagons tucked into a yard or park down the street?

If so, stop by and check it out — it's full of plants and a whole lot of green inspiration!

Help yourself to a free plant or two (choose native or non-native, as you prefer)... and the inspiration. You can also leave a plant (or plants) if your garden is overflowing.

Plants on Wheels move around in different neighborhoods in West Chester Borough. Who knows where they'll be next!

If you'd like to help with this project, contact Anna Secrist at annaisechrist@gmail.com



Donations Needed for W.C. Food Cupboard

by Margaret Hudgings

Fresh vegetable donations to the West Chester Food Cupboard

When the WC Green Team was asked by Dane and Stephanie Gray, owners of Kildare's Irish Pub, if we would like to help out with donations of produce to the WC Food Cupboard which has recently lost funding, the GT stepped up. Many donate individually and, since June, we have donated as a group.

Anyone who has extra produce they'd like to donate, may leave it on the **front porch of 409 W Union Street between 8 and 2 every Tuesday**. We are now halfway through the season so wanted to provide an update. So far our members have donated 135 pounds of produce.



At the Food Cupboard, we have been told that people especially those from the islands really love all the greens we provide. Thank you all for your support. Keep it up. We will be running this program through November 4, 2025.

A Book Rec from Carolyn Comitta

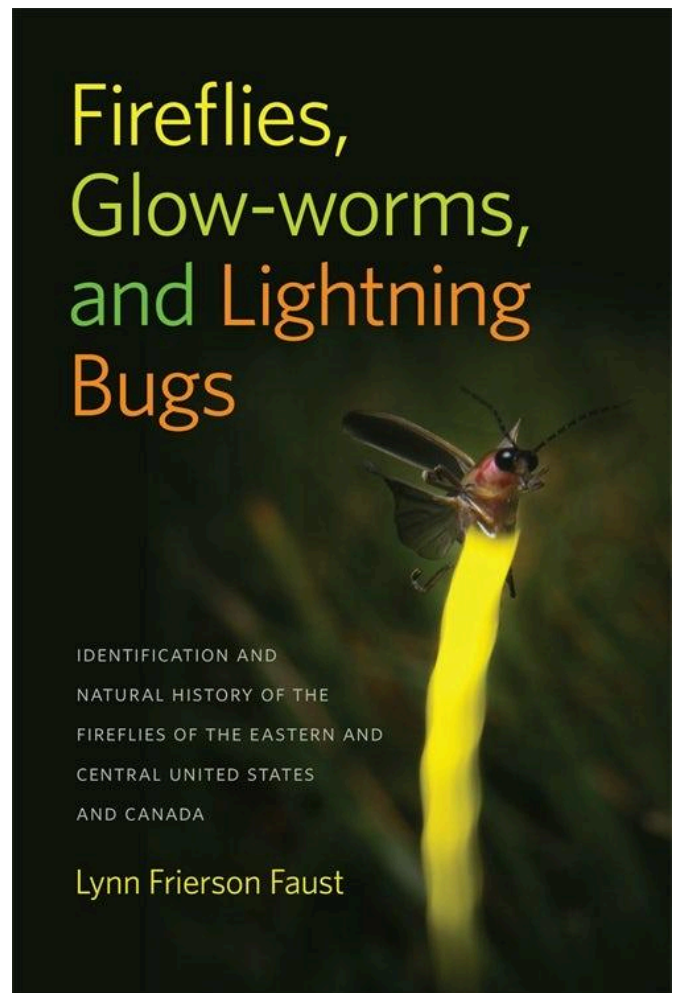
by Margaret Hudgings

Carolyn Comitta spoke in July at the Firefly Party hosted by Friends of Everhart Park and recommended [this book](#).

"Fireflies, Glow-worms, and Lightning Bugs is the first-ever comprehensive firefly guide for eastern and central North America. It is written for all those who want to know more about the amazing world of lightning bugs and learn the secrets hidden in the flash patterns of the 75+ species found in the eastern and central United States and Canada. As an independent researcher working with numerous university teams, naturalist Lynn Frierson Faust, "The Lightning Bug Lady," has spent decades tracking the behavior and researching the habitats of these fascinating creatures.

"Based on her twenty-five years of fieldwork, this book is intended to increase understanding and appreciation of bioluminescent insects while igniting enthusiasm in a fun and informative way. Species accounts are coupled with historical backgrounds and literary epigraphs to engage and draw readers young and old into the world of these tiny sparklers. A chart documenting the flash patterns of the various species will aid in identification.

"Clear photos illustrate the insects' distinguishing physical characteristics, while habitats, seasonality, and common names are provided in easy-to-understand yet scientifically accurate language. The guide will be welcomed by everyone who wants to learn more about fireflies' and glow-worms' unique traits and fragile niche in the ecosystem."



If you want to volunteer to help on our Dark Skies Committee contact Prof Tim Lawlor through the WCGT website.

Photos from Our Garden at the Justice Center

Photos by Chris Pugliese

