

WEST CHESTER GREEN TEAM NEWS

November 2026

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.

The deadline for submissions for each issue is the 28th of the previous month

Email:
westchestergoesgreen@gmail.com

We welcome contributions and suggestions from our readers for possible inclusion in a future issue.

This issue is edited by Nathaniel Smith and Isabella Gigliotti;
And thanks to all contributors

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WCGT Calendar of Upcoming Events

When – What – Where.



See more local environment-related events on our web site and countywide events at https://chescoenvt.org/

Friday, November 13, 3:30pm: **The Promise of America: Our Roots and Branches**. A program of gratitude for the Natural World from indigenous peoples and patriotic readings at WCU's Anderson Hall Outdoor Classroom, 725 S. Church St., West Chester 19383. Rain location: Philips Autograph Library, 700 S. High St. Hot chocolate, coffee and cookies provided. See more in this newsletter.

Wednesday, November 25, 8pm: Our 2027 West Chester Green Team **auction** will take place online, from your phone or computer, beginning at 8pm November 25 and finishing at 8pm on December 5. See more in this newsletter.

Saturday, December 5, 5-8pm: WC Green Team **auction dinner**. And last 3 hours of online auction! Tickets for dinner at https://givebutter.com/c/seasons-greenings-2026/. A catered dinner at Holy Trinity church by Mistral French & Fast includes vegetarian options; former restaurant owner Kim Stack will prepare vegetarian minestrone and a pasta main course; the dessert buffet offers a lemon wedding cake from The Master's Baker, apple strudel, key lime pie and Dubai chocolate cake. Bid from home till 8pm or join us for dinner (adults $25, children $10) and view all the baskets in person.

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/

The Background and Brilliance that Dianne Walsh Brought to Us

Dianne has been editing our newsletters, to a very high standard, since November of 2021. You can see all our back issues here. Now, after her much-regretted husband Tom's death earlier this fall, Dianne is preparing to move to South Carolina to be with family there. The Green Team and all her friends will greatly miss her! We asked Dianne about her editing and writing background, of which we only knew some tidbits like the anti-submarine part. Here is what Dianne sent us:

I had 30 years of writing experience, the first three as a technical editor and then the remainder as a tech writer. I wrote a variety of material including manufacturing manuals, then electronics catalogs and

brochures, then military (manuals for an anti-submarine warfare project), and finally medical financial software. I also designed and taught business writing seminars for my fellow employees. Along the way, I and my team won several awards for our more innovative manuals from the Society for Technical Communication and the APEX Publishing Awards. Several years back I produced a newsletter for the Chester County Sports Hall of Fame and wrote some publicity for the Brandywine Ballet. Of course, I edited and sometimes re-wrote some of Tom's work, too!

SEASON'S GREENINGS!



PLACE YOUR BIDS for:
Week in Hilton Head
Make Sushi w/ Japanese expert
Various Local Produce Baskets
Stay a Week in France
Three Tai Chi Lessons
Bulgarian, Syrian and Indian dinners
And Much More

A VIRTUAL FUNDRAISER AUCTION
November 25 - December 5

https://givebutter.com/c/seasons-greenings-2026

IN PERSON DINNER at Holy Trinity Church

December 5 - 5:00pm - 8:00pm Auction Closes

Where: Bid from Holy Trinity on High Street or from your house!
For more information and to register for the Auction: www.wcgreenteam.com

Auction proceeds support the Green Team's PORCHFEST 2027
& Gardens all around the borough

Dinner will include

Kim Stack of 3 Little Pigs and Mistral: French and Fast soups, La Baguette Magique bread.For dessert, Dubai chocolate cake, apple strudel, key lime pie

Tickets to be purchased at https://givebutter.com/c/seasons-greenings-2026 under "Donate & Tickets



Another chance to celebrate the 250th

The Promise of America: Our Roots and Branches. A program of gratitude for the Natural World from indigenous peoples and patriotic readings. Friday Nov. 13 at 3:30pm at the Anderson Hall Outdoor Classroom, 725 S. Church St., West Chester 19383, at West Chester University. Rain location: Philips Autograph Library, 700 S. High St., West Chester 19383. Hot chocolate, coffee and cookies provided.



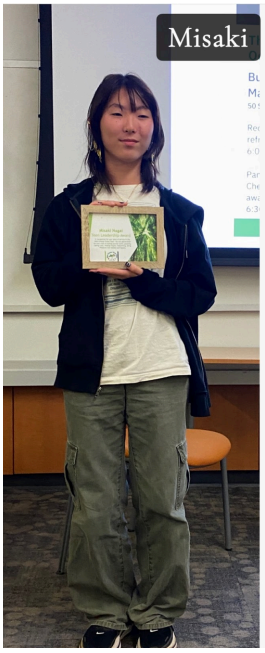
Plastics and Health: Panel discussion, October 22

by Dawn Mazzone

Plastics are Everywhere! Micro, Macro and Nano – not just the plastics we see, but also the plastics we do not see except in scientific investigation.

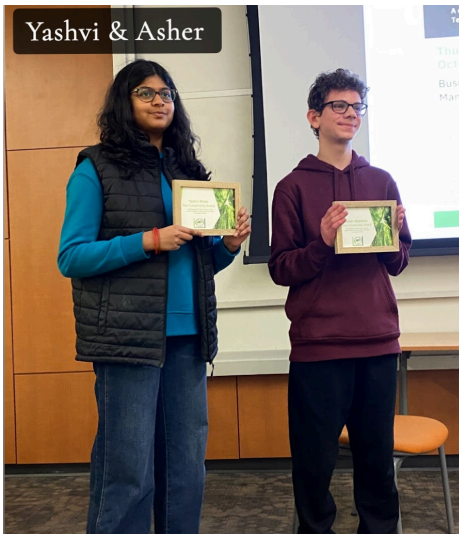


On October 22, the West Chester University Office of Sustainability and the West Chester Green Team hosted two panelists to discuss their scientific findings, at an event introduced by Bradley Flamm, Director of that Office, and moderated by Cheryl Wanko, professor of English and Sustainability. It was not good news.



Elliott Arnold, professor of Earth and Space Sciences, and Megan Fork, professor of Biology, shared how the microscopic fibers of polyester, a plastic that makes up so much of our clothing, is pervasive in our local waterways, in the soil beneath us and in the air. Microplastic dust coats objects, even the outside of petri dishes, in their labs; and studies across the country and the world show the plastic particles everywhere, even in the most pristine streams.

The audience questions centered around a hope for solutions. Efforts from the young people were the most hopeful. Their tabling at the event to educate us on alternatives to plastic waste and their initiative in writing to companies urging them to install filters to capture polyester strands from the exhaust of dryers point to areas that can reduce the proliferation of further damage in the future. Three teens received the West Chester Green Team's first Teen Leadership Awards at the event: Misaki Nagai, Yashvi Kiran, and Asher Mazzone.



The WCGT Environmental Leadership Award was awarded to Rachael Griffith, Sustainability Director at the Chester County Planning Commission, for building a local network of environmental groups and her strong support for the community's environmental needs. Her inspiring acceptance speech emphasized the essential role of the public sector, including the County, in promoting open space and sustainability.

Leading on Plastics -- Help Wanted!

Since its founding, the WC Green Team has had a Plastics Committee, known as Plastic-Free Please! It has proven difficult for that group, known as PFP for short, to find a leader with the time to invigorate its activities, such as cleanups, educational events, and a social media presence.

Is there one of our readers and supporters who would like to take on that leadership role? They would be joining a group of enthusiasts, mainly youths, and a committee with a history of activism in the Borough.

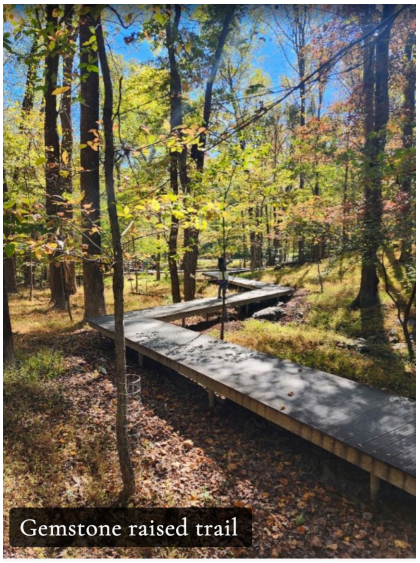
PFP was a prime mover in securing the ban on plastic bags and straws in the Borough, only the second municipality in the state to promulgate this ban!

Is it time to reinforce this initiative and move on to get rid of styrofoam? Or other projects to defend human and environmental health? If this is your issue, please contact WC Green Team.

A Green Trip with the Artists

by Green Team Interim President Chris Pugliese

On a gorgeous October day, I recently accompanied the Chester County Art Association (CCAA) on a bus trip to Maryland to visit Glenstone—an art museum featuring a 1,300- piece post-WWII indoor artworks collection as well as major works of sculpture situated throughout the 230-acre property.


Gemstone raised trail

Glenstone opened 20 years ago as a private museum designed to unite the energy of architecture, the power of art, and the restorative qualities of nature.

Pavilion Buildings

The Pavilion buildings form the core of the property and house the indoor galleries. Their austere, minimalist architecture blends seamlessly with the surrounding native meadows.

Water Garden

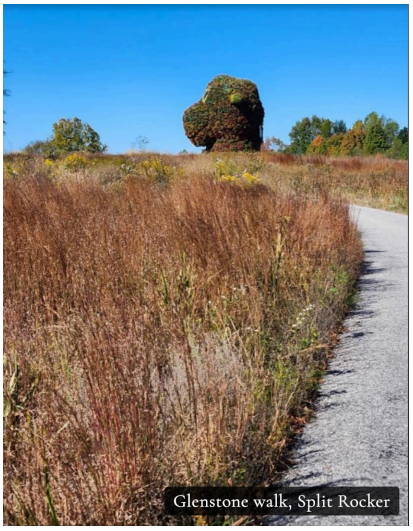
A large water garden at the heart of the buildings creates a contemplative setting.

The landscape acts as a seamless extension of the indoor galleries, featuring a two-mile walking trail that weaves through restored meadows, pristine wetlands, and mature forests. Monumental outdoor art installations are integrated directly into the environment,

The initial landscape work included relocating 200 existing trees, planting 8,000 new ones, converting lawns into expansive meadows, and restoring streams flowing through the campus.

Major sculptural works include:

- **"Split-Rocker" by Jeff Koons:** A colossal, 37-foot-tall architectural live-plant sculpture covered in thousands of vibrant flowering plants.
- Towering, site-specific installations by legendary artists like **Richard Serra**, **Ellsworth Kelly**, and **Andy Goldsworthy**.


Glenstone walk, Split Rocker


Gemstone outside

The Green Team auction starts Nov. 25!

By Margaret Hudgings

Our 2027 West Chester Green Team auction will take place entirely online, from your phone or computer, beginning at 8pm November 25 and finishing at 8pm on December 5.



During the auction's last 3 hours, 5-8pm on Dec. 5, please also join us for dinner and continue bidding at Holy Trinity Church, 212 S. High St., West Chester. You can park in the large lot opposite the church across the 00 block of West Union St.

Go here and, under "Overview," click "Donate & Tickets" to buy tickets for the dinner and/or click "Auction" and then "Register to Bid" to register for the auction. Then sign in if you already have an account from last year (be sure to update your credit card if it has changed) or sign up for a new account. There is no hurry but you will need an account before bidding.

A catered dinner by Mistral French & Fast includes vegetarian options; former restaurant owner Kim Stack will prepare vegetarian minestrone and a pasta main course; the dessert buffet offers a lemon wedding cake from The Master's Baker, key lime pie, apple strudel and Dubai chocolate cake. Bid from home till 8pm or join us for dinner (adults $25, children $10) and view all the baskets in person.

What items are up for bid? Learn to play Frisbee golf, savor a Bulgarian or Indian dinner or Syrian mezzi (appetizers for 20), cash in a gift certificate from Uptown!, enjoy a food basket topped with chocolate from the WC Co-op and, speaking of chocolate, shop at Eclat with a $50 gift certificate. Would you like to travel to an island in the Gulf with sugar sand beaches,

stay a week in the sophistication of Hilton Head or retreat to a rustic hideaway in the French Alps? We offer budget-priced vacation stays.



The WCGT auction is a perfect way to do your holiday shopping and enjoy yourself in the process.

Pictured are two auction items: the village in the French Alps that is the location of a weeklong stay, and a basket of pottery and textiles by local artist Nancy Salamon.

This auction is the Green Team's chief means of raising funds for our many initiatives during the year to come, such as:

- Helping create and maintain native flower gardens to beautify downtown areas
- Raising awareness on all aspects of sustainable living, such as renewable energy, plastics reduction, counteracting night light pollution, etc.
- Panels and lectures on environment and sustainability
- Educating children about the native people who lived on this land; about art, history and nature through activities like Adventure Bunnies at Porchfest, a train ride from West Chester to Glen Mills, plastic trash pickups, and canoeing on Westtown Lake
- Funding interns to help with our green initiatives
- Supporting West Chester Porchfest, an annual community gathering around music

Meet Senator Carolyn Comitta and Bid for Her Donation to Our Auction

Long time Green Team friend, State Senator Carolyn Comitta has made a donation to our annual fund raising auction: She is giving a coffee table style book of the mural art of the Pennsylvania state capitol and a tour, conducted by Carolyn or someone from her office. If you have always wanted to learn how state government works or have a child who sees public service in their future, this is the holiday gift for your family.

Want to meet Carolyn before you bid? Come join her at our performance, sponsored with the West Chester University Office of Sustainability, of "The Promise of America: Our Roots and Branches" at the outdoor classroom near Anderson Hall (725 S. Church St. on the campus of WCU; rain location: Philips Autograph Library, 700 S. High St.). Date: Friday, November 13. Time: 3:30 pm.

Meet Carolyn and actors portraying local luminaries such as Mary Cassatt, the Impressionist painter who lived for some time on S High St.; the "Fighting Quaker" Smedley Darlington Butler, who disrupted a plot to take power away from FDR; and Bayard Rustin, who worked with Martin Luther King, Jr. in planning the March on Washington and has a local high school named for him.
All welcome. Refreshments will follow.

The Return of the Fireflies

If you love the magic of fireflies twinkling in the summer's night sky, thank State Senator Carolyn Comitta for their return to our Borough neighborhoods. Carolyn looked out her window onto Everhart Park a few summers back and saw very, very few of the charming insects. So she contacted the WC Green Team, and we were in touch with our night sky expert Prof Marc Gagné, professor of Astronomy at WCU. Marc assembled a large and active committee that began working on many fronts: in the Borough, in a public information campaign, and through friends of our local parks.

As long-term Green Team member Cara Corridoni stated in her weekly newsletter "Hello West Chester" back in summer '24,

"This week the area around Everhart Park is getting 30 percent darker. It's an attempt by West Chester Borough and State Senator Carolyn Comitta to encourage the park's fireflies to mate again. According to an article on the subject from the Yale School of the Environment, the transition to LED lights has been quietly killing off nature's twinkle lights by messing with their ability to signal a mate.

"West Chester Public Works Director Don Edwards adjusted three lights, one in front of Hemlock Alley, one in front of Barnard St, and one in the park where the meadow is. They will now watch and see if the fireflies return."

And they did return. The residents around Everhart Park noticed a dramatic improvement in numbers and the Friends of the Park held a celebration, complete with a special drink for the occasion served up with a flashing ice cube in it as a salute to lightning bugs.

The West Chester Green Team's Dark Skies Committee under the leadership of Prof. Tim Lawlor of Penn State Brandywine, assisted Rep. Chris Pielli in drafting dark sky legislation for the state. We're hoping it will pass when the new legislature takes office in January of '27.

The West Chester Green Team honored Carolyn with an Environmental Leadership Award and she included in the honor her hands-on helper in getting it done: Bernie Flynn, Borough Council Member for Ward 6.

And that is the story of how one person, looked out her window, identified a problem, gathered allies and took steps to fix it. Bravo, Carolyn Comitta! And as Margaret Mead told us, *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

(For more on the Dark Skies issue, see Prof. Lawlor's article in our October newsletter here.)

Don't fall behind – plant a native tree now!

By Cheryl Wanko, Professor of English and Sustainability, WCU

In the fall, most of us think of leaves falling *down*, but it's also a great time to help more leaves go up! Use the fall to plant some trees native to our region.

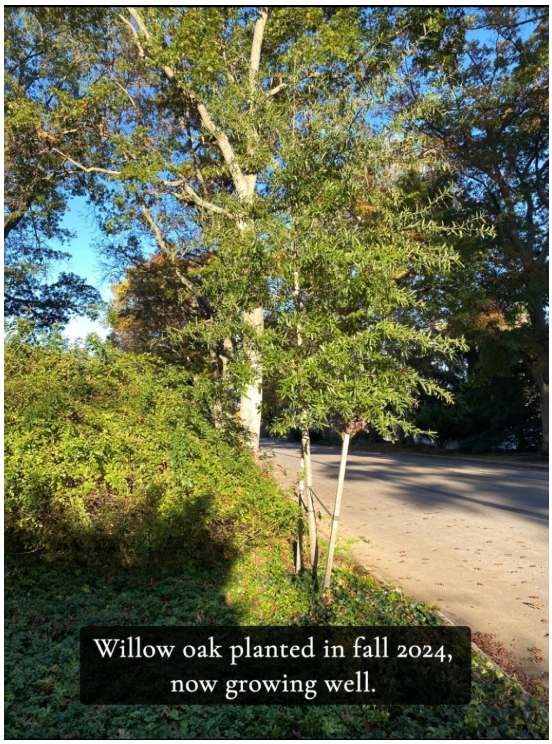
Why plant in fall?

While most plants appreciate summer's warm weather, those just starting out need time to adjust to high temperatures – especially trees, which establish themselves and grow more slowly than annuals or perennials. Trees also go dormant in the cold, so a tree planted in the fall will be prepared enough to get through the winter, and then it will have a head start once sunnier spring days begin.

Why plant native trees?

Native trees support the life local birds need to survive: most bird species feed their young *only* insects and caterpillars in the spring! In addition to protecting biodiversity, native trees also:

- Reduce erosion and promote clean water
- Require less maintenance than non-natives
- Help clean our air and reduce heat
- Help combat climate change


Willow oak planted in fall 2024, now growing well.

What are some native trees?

- White oak and northern red oak
- Hickory
- River birch
- Ironwood
- American linden / Basswood
- Serviceberry / Juneberry

The above information is from the Arbor Day Foundation, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Lancaster Planning Department.

Finally: you might think November is a bit late to be planting trees. Not at all! The organization Homegrown National Park, founded in Chester County, explains for our area: "Southeast and Mid-Atlantic: Plant from leaf drop through March. Cool, moist soil favors root growth before summer heat." Yes, those smart little roots actually gain a grip in the soil of their new surroundings while above ground they look like they are asleep.

(Photo: willow oak street tree, planted fall 2024 and doing well, replacing a pin oak like the one behind it, West Chester.)

The West Chester Co-op, part II: Interview

By Nathaniel Smith

The Co-op, at 204 W. Market St., West Chester, welcomes everyone. The Green Team's October 2026 newsletter (p. 8) contained part I of this write-up, focusing on the Co-op's commitment to Sustainability and Community. Please refer back to that article if useful.



Now, here is more from my September 29 interview with Judy Carrino, president of the Co-op's board, and Sue Patterson, longtime volunteer, former member of the board and a frequent presence at Green Team events.

Judy, do your friends call you Judy or Foodie? When and why did you acquire the nickname?

"Judy." I became "Judy Foodie" as a kid because my family ran a deli in New York. Not "Foodie" by itself!

How long have you both been working on the Co-op idea?

Sue: since the very beginning, in March 2015, at the first public meeting at Sprout. In 2016 I joined the board and became an officer.

Judy: I joined the Co-op in 2019 and the board in 2020, and I managed the Co-op's temporary pop-up and Go-Box store at 142 E. Market St. from 2020-22.

Why? This is a big personal commitment....

Sue*:* I was looking to create a community-based, not corporate, model. Five or six companies own almost all the grocery stores in the US; we need economic change and local control.

Judy: Our store energizes people to do what they can for their neighbors, to create together. It's friendly and crisp, nice to be in. One customer said "stunning,"

The Co-op is a "full-service grocery store"; what does that mean?

Judy: we have soup to nuts and everything in between: home goods, vitamins, yogurt, other dairy, frozen and fresh foods, prepared foods like vegan wraps, noodle bowls and heatable prepared food, beverages, dry goods, bulk items (bring your own containers, cut down on packaging), paper goods, pots and pans....

What is a "community-owned grocery store"?

We have 878 [updated to Oct. 29] Member-Owners, and are aiming for 1,000 by the end of 2026. We own the store together, cooperatively. Capital from Member-Owners allowed us to open the store. We will have special discount days for them. They can attend our annual meetings, have a say in our decisions and run for the board. Later on, when the store is profitable, they will receive a percentage credit toward their future purchases.

Are you still trying to add owner-members?

Yes, always. Just go to our web site. You can buy a $400 equity share in one payment, or make payments of $25 a month. The number of people joining picked up after we opened; some people waited to see it actually happening before making the decision to join.

You have contributed greatly to Green Team events, especially with your very popular strawberry shortcake, going back several years?

Yes, starting with a strawberry fest in the gazebo at Everhart Park. And at Porchfests. And more.



Did those events bring you new owner-members?

Yes, events are a great opportunity for outreach; and some new Member-Owners are part of the Green Team.

How many paid employees do you have? Volunteers?

We have 2 full-time and 7 part-time employees; the board consists of 9 volunteer members.

Do you carry local and/or organic products when you can?

Yes, that's a priority for us, also cutting down on plastic and food waste.... (See part I.)

How are you trying to reach a diverse community, such as college students and people for whom cost may be the top factor in shopping for food?

We do have some reduced pricing. We will be getting the ability to use SNAP and Rams Bucks cards. We are reaching out to WCU by, e.g., going to WCU Sustainability Council meetings. We have done some fairs at the University; many students want healthy and local food.

Any concluding notes?

Judy: we are the first co-op in Chester County. It has been amazing! We get to know our repeat shoppers and welcome our first-timers. Many say: "Wow, West Chester has needed this for a long time!"

Sue: there is already a community vibe in the store. People talk to each other and bump into neighbors—just the kind of connections we wanted to create!

(Photo: Green Team Treasurer David Wickard at the Co-op's table at the Green Team's Sept. 20 annual meeting.)

Microplastics and Clothing

By Cheryl Wanko, Professor of English and Sustainability, WCU

If your clothes have any stretch, they contain plastic, and that plastic leaches out when you wash and dry them. These small plastic particles are called "microplastics," or the smaller

“nanoplastics,” and they have been found throughout the human body – in muscle tissue, the gut, the brain, and the placenta, where it is transferred to unborn babies. We take in these tiny particles through water, food, and breathing. Currently, we have little idea of the health effects of these plastics, since they have not been in our systems long enough for scientists to study, and because of research funds being cut.



Recent fieldwork by West Chester University professor Elliott Arnold and his students found that, of the plastic in southeastern Pennsylvania waterways, most was from fabrics, most notably polyester. None of the water tested was plastic-free. Wastewater treatment plants can remove these particles, but they exist in such huge numbers that they cannot be removed entirely.

To help stop this microscopic pollution, buy fewer clothes, and especially avoid cheap fast fashion items; when you must buy, look for natural fabrics such as cotton, bamboo, and linen. Those of us who need a bit of give to some of our clothing (ahem!) can buy from thrift stores.

Many washer owners don’t know that their machine has a filter, which they should change or clean regularly to reduce the plastic fibers that empty into the drain. Check your owner’s manual or online to learn where your filter is and how to optimize it for fiber removal. If the used water empties into a basin, you can easily install and clean a filter as in the illustration (shown after one load of wash!)

Clean your dryer filter after every load, to reduce microplastics escaping to the outside air. Or even better, dry clothes on a clothesline, which makes them last longer and eliminates the particles blown out of dryer vents.

While we can’t eliminate washing our clothes, we can re-wear items and reduce how frequently we wash and dry.

Everything we do – even our fashion picks – has an impact on our surroundings, so make wise choices!



Answers and some further info

Review the choice of 4 answers per question in the October newsletter, pp. 16-17

1. What's the problem with drinking water out of a plastic bottle?

2. When do we see fireflies here?

3. What is West Chester Porchfest?

4. What is a Transition Town, like West Chester and Media?

5. How do solar panels work if it's cloudy?

6. How many plastic bags end up in the Atlantic Ocean per year?

7. What % of Chester County is protected open space?

8. How does outdoor lighting affect birds?

9. Where does precipitation that falls in West Chester flow into the ocean?

10. How much food does the US throw away every year per person in homes, stores, farms….

Answers:

1. c. You swallow microplastics

   These particles come from the breakdown of the bottle itself, especially when it's opened, closed, squeezed, or exposed to heat and sunlight.

2. b. Late May into July, just after sunset, especially in warm humid weather

   Also called "lightning bugs" or "glowworms," they are bio-luminescent beetles that hibernate underground as larvae until the spring. They face threats from light pollution, pesticide use and habitat degradation.

3. c. Free music performed in May in front of people's homes

   Building community for a greener community, WCGT organizes music on the porches & lawns in SW WC, with a wide variety of music, activities and food trucks to celebrate spring.

4. a. A municipality getting ready for a post-fossil fuel economy

   The international Transition movement, founded in 2005, encourages communities to address global challenges locally by organizing environmental, social, and economic initiatives. West Chester became an official Transition Community in 2020 through the West Chester Green Team's initiatives on local solutions for climate, energy, plastics, and community resilience.

5. b. They run on light scattered in the sky

   Solar PV panels generate electricity with direct and indirect sunlight, allowing them to function even when clouds diffuse light. The decrease in solar power output on cloudy days depends on factors such as panel efficiency, placement, and the extent of cloud cover. Efficiency is about 50% in light cloud cover.

6. d. About 300,000,000 a year

That's almost one for each American. Learn how to make that zero for yourself at GreenCitizen. In the United States, about 13% of the total area was protected open space in 2022. But of course, we hope the Chesco figure will keep rising to defend against the pressures of development and sprawl.

7. c. About 30%

   As of the end of 2025: 32.2%. That's very good in such a populated and highly developed county!

8. a. It makes them lose their way when migrating

   Most North American birds migrate, and most of those do so at night. Lights lure them off course and many birds crash into lit windows. See more on light pollution on our web site here.

9. b. Via the Delaware River

   The Brandywine Creek flows into the Christina River at Wilmington DE and their combined flow goes into the Delaware River and then into the Atlantic at Cape May Pt NJ and Lewes DE. Most of Chester County drains via the Delaware but the SW part of Chester County drains via the Susquehanna River into Chesapeake Bay.

10. d. About 325 pounds per person

    According to rts.com. And there are higher estimates. Part of the problem is confusing food labels, which some states are trying to clarify. But there are many reasons, such as overbuying food for home and over buying in restaurants.

Regular meetings in our area

(Please check online before attending, especially on or near a holiday)

1st Wednesday of every month: West Chester Tree Commission, 6pm, Borough Hall, 401 E. Gay St.

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.