



Wilton is joining other towns and cities in educational efforts about how wasteful and unnecessary much vehicular idling really is. Besides increasing atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide which counteracts our efforts to protect our temperate New England climate, petrol-powered engines emit particulate matter that causes asthma. There are traces of other noxious chemicals released into the air enveloping your car that are actually carcinogenic. One hour's worth of idling burns nearly one gallon of gasoline, and adds needless CO2 into the atmosphere.

According to the Consumer Energy Center, "Here's the rule of thumb: If you're in a drive-through restaurant/business line or waiting for someone and you'll be parked and sitting for 10 seconds or longer, turn off your car's engine. Idling gets ZERO miles per gallon. Component wear caused by restarting the engine is estimated to add \$10 per year to the cost of driving — money that will likely be recovered several times over in fuel savings from reduced idling. The bottom line is that more than ten seconds of idling uses more fuel than restarting the engine." See <http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/myths/idling.html> for more info.

– Patrice Gillespie, *Commissioner*

Your Town officials post valuable information online for your reference and convenience. Please visit www.wiltonct.org regularly for Rt 7 construction updates, trail maps, Wilton's zoning and wetland regulations, and more.



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Wilton Conservation Commission Newsletter



ARE YOU CERTIFIABLE?

"Imagine your garden teeming with singing birds, colorful butterflies and beautiful plants and water features that attract wildlife." That is the invitation of the National Wildlife Federation and its Certified Wildlife Habitat program that is referenced in Wilton's forthcoming Plan of Conservation and Development. Suburban landscapes don't have to be the picturesque but essentially artificial sites that have been the model in the past. As ecologists learn more about the ways that gardening and property management can help or hinder biodiversity, the NWF has put these new understandings to work by setting up a "backyard wildlife habitat" program for homeowners. It's fun and can provide years of visual entertainment. But the benefits don't stop there.

These are the four backyard essentials that NWF explains on its www.nwf.org/bwh web pages:

- Food: Native plants provide nectar, seeds and berries used by an exciting variety of wildlife.
- Water: All animals need water to survive and some need it for bathing or breeding.
- Cover: Wildlife needs shelter to escape bad weather and predators.
- Places to raise young: Wildlife needs special habitat for bearing and raising young.



So much land is "managed" now in this country in ways that don't provide these essentials, or that actually poison the inhabitants and the managers themselves. In increasingly sterilized areas, commonly seen birds and butterflies are experiencing severe population decreases, as are species which are less noticed but equally important.

Personally, this birding enthusiast has learned that eschewing "botanical imports," going after invasive plants and installing native trees and shrubs that provide food sources make a big difference in what goes on right outside the kitchen window. We have scattered native milkweed seeds in a special meadowy area and are eradicating the invasive Black Swallowwort along nearby roadsides, so that female Monarch butterflies don't mistakenly lay eggs on a plant that's inedible to their "kids." We are nurturing tupelo tree seedlings for their splendid autumn foliage colors and the berries. Singing frogs and grumpy-looking insect-eating toads add to the free audio-visual diversity.

It's a good time now to plan for native Spring plantings and an organically-based revamping of your landscaping practices. Your local Conservation Commissioners encourage this, not only for the protection and sustainability of your local natural resources and drinking water, but for your family's health as well. We are happy to provide you with additional gardening tips from the Audubon Society and other sources. Meanwhile, please visit nwf.org for more details about the Backyard Wildlife Habitat program. Become Certified, and enjoy the show.

– Patrice Gillespie, *Commissioner*

WHAT'S UP WITH ALL THE SCUM ON OUR PONDS?

Most ponds in suburban landscapes wind up with “scummy” growth for at least some part of most years. Nitrogen and phosphorus are the most common nutrients with which people are familiar and these are compounds that the agricultural community uses to stimulate and enhance the growth of food crops and animals. In suburbia, these nutrients come from soil erosion, leaking septic systems, phosphorus rich bedrock, detergents, industrial effluents, fertilizer runoff, and pet waste; eventually finding their way into the waterways. Once in the waterways, these nutrients stimulate the growth of plankton and aquatic plants which provide food for fish. At natural levels, this may cause an increase in the fish population and improve the overall water quality. At higher than normal levels, the nutrients become pollutants and can destroy the health of lakes, ponds, streams or other fresh water bodies, as they promote algae in the water to grow faster than would naturally occur, turning clear ponds, streams, and rivers green and cloudy. This extra algal growth is not only unappealing to look at, but can also make the water smell bad and make it unsuitable for swimming. In the long run, the excess algal growth can have devastating impacts on the health and age of a fresh water pond or stream, causing algae and aquatic plants to grow rapidly, choke the waterway, eventually die and decay, using up large amounts of dissolved oxygen. The result may be the death of many fish and aquatic organisms due to the lowering of dissolved oxygen levels. This condition is known as eutrophication or over-fertilization of receiving waters.

Fortunately, aquatic environments are very resilient and this over-enrichment, or eutrophication, can be managed. Several steps to minimize excessive amounts of nutrients released to the environment must be taken. At the large scale, plans need to be put in place to manage the amount of fertilizers used in agriculture and the runoff of manure at animal production operations. To date, several hundred million pounds of phosphorus from wastewater treatment plants have been eliminated annually from our rivers and streams. Additionally phosphate detergent bans were enacted by many U.S. states, the European Union, Canada, and Japan to limit or ban

the use of phosphates in laundry detergents.

In addition to large scale reduction of these pollutants, attention must be given to our individual, residential actions. Recently, some governments have begun to look at regulating phosphates in automatic dishwashing detergents, which can contain anywhere from 4-8% phosphorus. The main reason dishwashing-detergent phosphates haven't changed is that the best alternatives are neither common nor inexpensive. As a result, phosphates remain in many detergents at varying levels, even though they don't need to be there. There are plenty of eco-friendly, phosphate-free alternatives that wash dishes just as well or better than phosphate-laden ones. So it is best to use one of the eco-friendly brands that is phosphate- and chlorine-free.

Reducing nitrogen is equally important to reducing phosphates. Following the application instructions on fertilizers and/or ensuring that your lawn service is using a “recipe” and schedule that specifically meets the needs of your lawn and gardens are essential and cost efficient. Pumping your septic tank every 3 years to keep your leaching field working properly will again, protect our water and save money. Lastly, cleaning up after pets will go a long way to reducing the nitrogen load running into our streams and ponds. In Wilton alone, there is an average of one ton of poop deposited every day.

Keeping our streams, ponds, and lakes healthy needs attention from our regulators to deal with the large scale contributors, but also from us in the individual decisions we make.

– Kristen Begor, *Commissioner*

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION



WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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RECYCLING QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What makes a hauler decide a bin of recyclables has been “contaminated” and needs to be thrown in the trash?

A bin is considered “contaminated” if one or more of the recyclable jars or plastic containers still contains its original contents (eg, peanut butter or barbecue sauce) OR if there are other plastic containers that are not # 1’s or # 2’s mixed in.

Who can use the Wilton Transfer Station?

Other than the commercial haulers that pick up trash and recyclables from Wilton homes, only the residents of Wilton are allowed to use the Wilton Transfer Station.

Where can I recycle my styrofoam peanuts?

Styrofoam peanuts can be recycled at the UPS Store in the Stop & Shop Plaza in Wilton.

Can my alkaline batteries be thrown in the trash or should I be recycling those?

Alkaline batteries can be thrown away in the trash but nickel-cadmium batteries must be recycled. Instead of being recycled curbside, these batteries are recycled at retailers, businesses, municipalities and other sites through a take-back program sponsored by the battery manufacturers. They can also be disposed of at any of the Hazardous Waste Days.

Why recycle?

Recycling does take a little bit of effort, but, in return,.....

1. Recycling conserves our valuable natural resources.
2. Recycling saves energy & reduces handling fees.
3. Recycling saves clean air and clean water.
4. Recycling saves landfill space.

Each ton of recycled paper can save 17 trees, 380 gallons of oil, three cubic yards of landfill space, 4,000 kilowatts of energy and 7,000 gallons of water!

Making recycled paper instead of new paper uses 64 percent less energy and uses 58 percent less water.

One tree can filter up to 60 pounds of pollutants from the air each year. More than 1/3 of all fiber used to make paper comes from recycled paper. Only 1 percent of the world’s water supply is usable; 97 percent is in the ocean and 2 percent is frozen. It takes a 15-year-old tree to produce 700 grocery bags.

Plastic containers are turned into a wide variety of products – carpeting, fleece and building materials used in place of pressure-treated lumber. New plastic is made from petroleum, so using recycled plastic products reduces our dependency on imported oil.

When you shop, make sure you look for the “recycled” symbol on items you buy. Buying recycled products saves precious natural resources; buying recycled products is good for the environment.

– Dave Hapke, *Chairman* • Kristen Begor, *Commissioner*

Preserving and enhancing our community: The Wilton Garden Club’s role

The Wilton Garden Club, organized in 1921, is a civic-minded group, actively preserving and developing “the natural beauty of the Town of Wilton and its environs.” Over the past year, many examples of the Club’s involvement can be seen – from re-landscaping the bed by Horseshoe Pond to arranging for the hanging baskets on the new lamp posts to re-planting the traffic spot at Old Ridgefield Road and Route 33 to reflect each changing season. In this emphasis on conservation and beautification, it is easy to see how much the Garden Club and the Conservation Commission have in common. Indeed, the Club’s Conservation Committee and the Commission recently worked together to implement a new focus for the Town’s environmental protection efforts: trees, trees, and more trees! As the Town’s first official Tree Committee is seated this fall (which includes Garden Club representatives), the Club excitedly looks forward to continuing its work with the Conservation Commission to preserve, enhance, and publicize the unique tree-filled character of Wilton.