

Mayor's Column

May 9, 2016

Now that we can declare (I think?!) that spring is officially here, my thoughts turn to the efforts of our vibrant Village Green Committee. Just like the cycle of the seasons, the Green Committee generates ideas during the dormant winter months, bringing them to fruition with the arrival of spring.

The Village Committee, chaired by Mary Liz Mulligan who was recently honored by our Rotary Club for her volunteer efforts, has put Bronxville on the map through environmental initiatives, including the promotion of organic lawn care, mulching in place, recycling and reuse.

First on their spring schedule is the reprise of our very successful "Take Back Day" on Saturday, May 28th. So if spring cleaning is on your agenda, come to Palumbo Place behind Village Hall from 10am to 1pm on the 28th. Each person may bring up to four boxes of private documents to shred via the Westchester County Mobile Shredder; drop off electronic waste for its proper disposal, including computers, monitors, keyboards, televisions, cell phones, printers, scanners and faxes; donate any used blankets, sheets and towels for donation to area pet shelters.

Green committee volunteers and Department of Public Works staffers will be on hand so you need not even get out of the car. It is drive-thru recycling! As the weather and with it the ground warms, next on the agenda is the development of the long planned Community Garden on a corner of the Maltby Field Park – first proposed by our Girl Scout Cabin Committee chaired by our beloved Mayor Sheila Stein.

After the cabin structure burnt down, the committee wrestled with what to do with the property in the future. The final vision was to maintain it as a passive open park which included walking paths, an open lawn and community garden.

So named the "Giving Garden" it will debut modestly with eight plots, two solely dedicated to growing crops for area soup kitchens and food pantries and the others for use by school children and community families on a first come basis.

In addition to the Green Committee, the garden is being supported by our Bronxville Rotary Club, long a friend of the Village's environmental efforts including recycling in our Business Districts.

In addition, Bronxville resident and expert gardener, Dave Phillips, has committed to oversee the garden for five full years of roll out.

Following in the footsteps of many of our forward-thinking neighbors, including Bedford, Nyack and Pleasantville, our garden will serve multiple purposes: giving those with no residential outdoor space a place to garden, an educational and family activity, and an opportunity to connect with our neighbors by donating healthy farm to table food for those in need.

The two upcoming projects follow in a long line of Green Committee initiatives that have enhanced the Village immeasurably in the last eight years.

Thanks to the Green Committee:

- The Village and School committed to caring for all of our trees and open spaces free of chemicals and pesticides and mulching all of our leaves in place.
- Residents are following recommendations of the Committee and disposing of rigid waste in biodegradable bags at curbside. The result is more frequent pick-ups and the elimination of the odors that emanate from summer piles of grass and most importantly our sewage system is not clogged with yard waste after rain storms.
- Individuals understand the contaminant effects for effects of throwing pet waste into our sewers. It results in dangerous bacteria entering our water ways.
- The Village consistently now ranks in the top three communities out of the 45 in Westchester County in the percentage of trash we recycle both in our homes and in the business districts.
- The Village is in the process of an energy audit to ensure that we are conserving whenever possible in our municipal buildings.
- Energy Saving LED lights will replace the incandescent bulbs throughout the Village streetscape with an initial roll out in the business district.

In a very interesting sidebar, Morristown New Jersey's Green Committee, one of the nation's oldest, has a very far reaching visionary approach to environmental stewardship. Their mission statement emphasizes the balance of economic development, environmental protection and community inclusion leading to a sustainable municipality.

Their initial approach included a ten step pledge which they asked all residents to sign committing them to environmental initiatives. Number one on their list was to ask residents to buy something locally that they would normally buy at the mall or a big box store. Their rationale was being that keeping purchasing local keeps money local, saves on fuel and ancillary transportation costs, encourages a walking environment, fosters a human connection between customer and merchant, increases home values and supports those who directly support their community.

Green initiatives unlike other Village undertakings are very labor intensive. Our DPW staff is particularly supportive of all of the municipal property initiatives but more resident volunteers are needed and most welcome. As example, Bedford's acclaimed Bedford 2020 environmental committee has dozens of volunteers.

We are justifiably proud of the Village's environmental record, but there is still much more that we can do. I thank all who have volunteered to help so far and encourage all of you to join us in keeping the Village at the forefront of environmental stewardship. Call me at 337-6500 to join The Green Team.