



CHANGING the LANDSCAPE

Healthy Yards = Healthy People

WINTER
2022



Image courtesy of Chris Coucill

Thank you, Changing the Landscape Project Team!

What a difference a year can make. Last February, we were voting on a name for our project and feeling our way through our first monthly Steering Committee meetings. Now, we not only have a recognizable name, but also a notable list of accomplishments and a contact file full of new colleagues, partners, residents, landscapers, and friends - all willing to work to make Princeton a healthier place by encouraging more sustainable lawn care practices.

As we close out the year-long Changing the Landscape: Healthy Yards = Healthy People project, we at Sustainable Princeton want to offer our heartfelt thanks to the project partners, Princeton residents, and the landscaping community for their collective time, insights, and passion for creating a more equitable and sustainable community. When we started this project, we could not have hoped for a higher level of engagement and commitment from all involved as we learned from one another and worked toward a common goal.

We are grateful to the following project partners: the Princeton Environmental Commission, Unidad Latina en Acción NJ, the Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Quiet Princeton, Rutgers School of Public Health, the Rutgers Environmental Stewards program, and several Municipality of Princeton departments and commissions, including Human Services, the Board of Health, and the Civil Rights Commission.

In addition to the project partners, we would like to extend a special thanks to the following people that helped us along the way:

- Richard McCoy from McCoy Horticultural for his tireless advocacy for better land care and for the landscaping profession in Princeton and across the state of New Jersey*
- Samuel Garcia, Sustainable Princeton intern, for helping us expand our reach into the landscaping community*
- The FUTURO students from LALDEF for their help with the meetings with landscapers and providing health and safety educational materials*
- The CAPERS team, including Jack Green and Khiara Berkowitz-Sklar at Princeton University and James Lomonte at Rutgers University School of Public Health, for helping research precedent policies and crunching the numbers*
- Dan Mabe, founder, American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA)*
- Jamie Banks, Executive Director of Quiet Communities*
- Sharon McCrae, Rutgers Environmental Steward, for helping to put our work into words*
- Project funders: the Partners for Places grant funded by The Funders Network, Eve Coulson and an anonymous donor*

*With gratitude to all and best wishes for a healthy and sustainable 2022,
Molly Jones, Christine Symington, Josh Perlsweig, Jenny Ludmer
Sustainable Princeton*

Reflecting on a Year's Work

The months went by quickly, but when the members of the Changing the Landscape project team look back on their accomplishments of 2021, they do so with a sense of satisfaction, even as they always wish they could do more.

The five accomplishments the team is most proud of are:

- 🌿 Contributing to the creation and adoption of the equitable and inclusive process used by the Princeton Council as it considered ordinance changes that would restrict the use of gas-powered leaf blowers and other lawn equipment
- 🌿 Building partnerships between Princeton's local government, sustainability groups, place-based foundations, and community-led frontline groups
- 🌿 Encouraging improvements to landscaper registration requirements and non-police enforcement of ordinance regulations that bear in mind the concerns of landscapers, many of whom are vulnerable community members
- 🌿 Establishing the Landscaping Equipment Transition Fund, which incentivizes the switch to electric lawn equipment by providing financial assistance to small landscaping businesses that purchase battery-powered equipment such as leaf blowers, string trimmers, hedge trimmers, and mowers
- 🌿 Raising awareness among landscapers that there is an ongoing sustainable landscaping movement in Princeton that will have a positive impact on the local environment as well as their personal health and safety

“When we embarked on this project in late 2020, we knew it was important to employ a collaborative approach,” says Molly Jones, Executive Director, Sustainable Princeton. “The Partners for Places grants are designed specifically to help communities work through the complex issues involved in municipal policy making and follow an equitable process that brings all voices to the table. Our team stepped up to that challenge.”

Along the way, the Changing the Landscape project team also raised the bar on sustainable landscaping practices in Princeton. They educated both residents and landscapers about alternative practices that were healthier for the local environment as well as the landscape workers themselves.



above Samuel Garcia, left, and Josh Perlsweig at the August 2021 AGZA Workshop for professional landscapers

What's Next?

Sustainable lawn care practices live on!

Princeton landscapers and homeowners alike have important roles to play in ensuring that progress continues toward a more sustainable Princeton.

“All residents who have a yard play an essential role in being stewards of our environment,” says Christine Symington, Program Director, Sustainable Princeton. “Anywhere they start with managing their properties in a more sustainable way is a great first step.”

“It often just requires a change in mindset, whether you’re a property owner or a landscaper,” adds Molly Jones, Executive Director, Sustainable Princeton. “Being open to considering new techniques and new equipment rather than doing things the way you’ve always done them is the start to positive change.”

Landscapers are essential to this process, and especially valued, according to Symington, with their creative ideas, considerable experience, and participation in managing the Princeton community’s yards and green spaces in a more sustainable way.

The [Sustainable Princeton website](#) is full of ideas for residents and landscapers to continue their efforts in sustainable lawn care.

Free webinar assists Spanish-speaking landscapers with new municipal requirements

Following the passage of amended municipal ordinances in October 2021, all landscapers working in Princeton must follow new requirements for registration and adhere to new restrictions on certain types of gas-powered lawn equipment.

To ensure that the many Spanish-speaking landscaping business owners who operate in Princeton can do so without interruption and in compliance with the ordinance changes, Sustainable Princeton partnered with the NJ Small Business Development Center at the College of New Jersey to host a free informational webinar, entirely in Spanish, on February 10.

The virtual event covered the details of the new regulations – reviewing the dates, days, and times of day when gas-powered equipment can and cannot be used. The webinar also guided landscape company owners through the registration process, which requires them to provide proof of workers’ compensation insurance.

In addition to the webinar, the NJSBDC is offering landscapers ongoing support that includes free one-on-one sessions with a consultant for advice on meeting municipal regulations, managing their businesses, and obtaining low-interest loans for purchasing electric equipment.

“We welcome this partnership with NJSBDC to deliver focused resources to Princeton landscapers,” says Josh Perlsweig, Program Coordinator, Sustainable Princeton. “It helps us stay engaged with the landscaping community as our grant-funded Changing the Landscape project comes to an end. We need to leverage existing educational and outreach opportunities as we continue to make the case for adopting sustainable land care practices.”

The New Jersey Small Business Development Center at the College of New Jersey (NJSBDC at TCNJ) is an accredited member of the NJSBDC-NJ network. This statewide network of 12 small business development centers provides a variety of no-cost and confidential educational and business resources to counsel and train small business owners to finance, market and manage their companies.

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>> Información Importante <<

Nueva Ordenanza Municipal de Princeton para Landscapers

Febrero 10, 2022 a las 6pm - 7pm

Para más detalles visite sbdcnj.com

El programa se presentará en español.

Grant Focuses on Municipality and Public Schools

Work continues on a separate but related grant-funded project designed to help the Municipality of Princeton and the Princeton Public Schools (PPS) develop financially viable plans to transition away from fossil fuel-powered landscaping equipment.

The municipality and school district, with assistance from Sustainable Princeton, have been working together since early 2021 to develop more environmentally friendly land management techniques that create a healthier work environment for groundskeepers. Reducing their exposure to chemicals, noise and related hazards is beneficial to them as well as the local environment.

Among other things, the \$10,000 grant from Sustainable Jersey and the Gardinier Environmental Fund supports training as well as the purchase of battery-powered equipment.

PPS students have been actively involved in the project as well, under the guidance of Jim Smirk, AP Environmental Science teacher, and Jack Green from Princeton University's CAPERS

(Climate Action Plan Emission Reduction Strategies) team. One of the students' tasks has been the analysis of landscaping equipment and usage data in order to assess the emissions impact of the proposed land management changes. This year, they will produce a cost-benefit analysis of transitioning from gas-powered to battery-powered grounds maintenance equipment for both PPS and the municipality.

"If we are going to ask Princeton residents and businesses to change their approach to landscaping, the municipality must lead by example," explains Princeton Councilwoman Eve Niedergang.

Likewise, PPS has embraced the challenge, seeing it as an opportunity for students to study a real-world challenge as they learn more about the district's sustainability priorities.



Landscaping Equipment Transition Fund Is Up and Running!

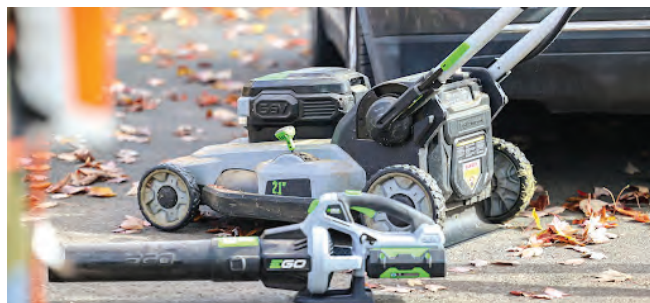
The Landscaping Equipment Transition Fund - established by Sustainable Princeton in partnership with Quiet Princeton - is designed to benefit those most impacted by the new gas-powered equipment restrictions. The fund is currently active and accepting applications from small landscaping businesses that meet some simple requirements.

Funding of \$21,500 will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis to landscapers who apply for reimbursement of up to \$500 for electric equipment (including batteries and chargers) that was purchased after October 25, 2021.

"The Transition Fund was a real team effort," says Josh Perlsweig, Program Coordinator, Sustainable Princeton. "As an organization, we

have never done something like this. We are grateful to have earned the trust of the many people who contributed to the fund, and we are excited about distributing these grants to small businesses to help them make the change to battery-powered equipment."

Landscapers are invited to review the eligibility criteria for the Transition Fund and submit an application in English or Spanish by visiting www.sustainableprinceton.org/equipmentfund



PROJECT PARTNERS



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