**Goodbye Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers**

**Here’s Why Somerset Is Banning Them**

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*The Atlantic****“Each time I see these crews, I think to myself: ’10 years  
from now they’ll be on the path to premature deafness.’ ”****(*Dr. Robert Meyers, ENT specialist, quoted in an article by James Fallows, April 2019)

# 1. It is already a law in surrounding areas:In December 2018, the D.C. City Council unanimously voted to ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers, starting January 1, 2022. Chevy Chase Village also has this ban, which begins on the same date. And Montgomery County (MoCo) is already focused on doing the same in the next year or two. Our Town of Somerset ban begins September 1, 2022

**2.** **There are good alternatives:** Thanks to advancing technology and industry investment, battery-powered and electric leaf blowers (manufactured by EGO, Greenworks, Makita, Oregon Power and Stihl, among other companies) are lighter and more durable, and powerful enough for commercial jobs.

**3. They make a deafening noise, literally:** Leaf blowers in MoCo routinely exceed the 70-decibel limit noise ordinance and violations are rarely enforced. That level of volume can do permanent damage to the inner ear, which registers sounds and transmits them to the brain. Electric blowers are quieter.

**4. GPLB noise travels far:** Decibels don’t tell the whole story. Gas-powered leaf blowers produce an unusually grating low-frequency roar with remarkable traveling power and the capacity to penetrate walls, cement barriers and hearing-protection devices. Locked down at home by the pandemic, many of us have discovered this firsthand.

**5. They pollute like crazy:** Of all gasoline engines, the two-stroke kind used in gas-powered leaf blowers are the dirtiest as well as the least efficient. Unlike cars, their emissions are not regulated. Just how dirty? According to the California Air Resources Board, leaf blowers, lawnmowers, edge trimmers and the like collectively account for as much of that state’s pollution as all motor vehicles produce!

**6. Workers get the worst of it:** Much like farmworkers in the days before pesticide regulation, low-wage lawn-care workers, often non-English-speaking, are hurt the most.

**7. There are grave health hazards beyond deafness:** Environmental noise “is associated with an increased incidence of arterial hyper-tension, myocardial infarction, heart failure, and stroke.” That’s according to the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, 2018.

**8. Kids take it in the ear:** In a joint statement of support for a leaf blower ban, a group of New York City pediatricians noted that “the ears of infants and young children are especially vulnerable… because their auditory systems are undergoing rapid growth and development…”

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**9. Working with Minority Owner Landscapers:** In recognition of the health and financial impacts on landscapers, the Environment Committee will continue its extensive education and outreach campaign, both in English and Spanish. This fall, EC members will be distributing handouts door-to-door and answering resident questions.

**10: Your neighbors will thank you**: Over 500 of our town residents support the ban and look forward to more quiet around the neighborhood.

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**Let’s Begin the Transition:** **Helpful Hints for Residents and Landscapers**

We need to rethink how we landscape our gardens. Please have a conversation about these suggestions with your gardener.

**• Less Blowing**

Maybe once every two weeks and only where there are drains, otherwise please consider using a rake.

**• Use Only an Electric or Battery-Powered Leaf Blower**

All gas-powered blowers (including leaf, gutter, and mosquito) will be banned shortly, so you might as well begin to explore alternative machines and different ways to garden now. We also encourage you to consider financially assisting your landscaper with this transition.

**• Mow Your Leaves** (unless they are diseased)

Move leaves to your grassy areas and mow (2-3 times during the autumn season) so that the leaves are the size of a quarter. They make excellent mulch. FYI, mowers are four-stroke engines and although gas powered, emit much less dangerous fumes than GPLBs.

• **Cut Your Grass Every Two Weeks**: Longer grass is healthier and will dominate weeds more easily.

• **Warnings and Citations and Education**

After over a year of education and town forums, it is our hope that residents and their landscapers will make a smooth transition to electric and battery powered blowers without having the town having to issue warnings and citations.

Questions: Please contact the Environment Committee at: [***tos.environmentcommittee@gmail.com***](mailto:tos.environmentcommittee@gmail.com)

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