

SECAUCUS GREEN TIMES



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Pictured left to right: Randall Solomon, Exec. Director of SJ and Environmental Department Employees, at the League of Municipalities SJ awards luncheon

THE TOWN OF SECAUCUS RE- CERTIFIED SILVER WITH SUSTAINABLE JERSEY

This past Fall Secaucus continued to do its part to make a more sustainable New Jersey. Through the coordinated efforts of the Secaucus Environmental Department, Secaucus Green Team, and the Mayor and Council, Secaucus received Silver Certification from Sustainable Jersey. You can learn more about some of the initiatives that made the silver certification possible in the following articles, or by visiting green.secaucusnj.gov/sustainability 1

THE SPOTTED LANTERNFLY PERSISTS



If you lived in Secaucus this past summer or fall it's likely you met the Spotted Lanternfly. The Spotted Lanternfly is an invasive species from Asia that destroys crops and trees. Spotted Lanternflies feed on over 65 plant species but in Secaucus have primarily been found on the Staghorn Sumac, Black Walnut, Tree of Heaven, Red Maple and fruit trees.

In the winter season, you will not see any - living Spotted Lanternfly's, but that does not mean the crisis has been evaded. The Spotted Lanternflies lay their eggs on any flat surface like a tree branch, rock, or car tire. Each egg mass contains up to 30-50 Spotted Lantern Nymphs. The invasive nature of the Spotted Lantern Fly means that each year more egg masses will be laid.

Last year was the first year of major sightings in Secaucus, which means that this winter is our best opportunity to eradicate an issue which will only exponentially grow if we allow it to persist. If you see an egg mass somewhere within reach, try your best to scratch and scrape the mass away. The removal of a single egg mass could save an entire tree.



Spotted Lantern Fly Egg Masses at Peter Pan Bus Lines in Secaucus

RECYCLING PROGRAMS IN SECAUCUS

Although recycling has been required by State law since 1987, it can still be confusing. The Environmental Department urges all residents to take the time to familiarize themselves with current rules on what can and cannot be recycled curbside, and how materials should be placed curbside. This information can be found in several places including:

- Recycling flyer & Town Calendar (mailed out yearly)
- A free app called “Recycle Coach”



Environmental Dept employees Ava Mroz and Sean Heaney on a Trex made Bench



Scan this QR code to visit SecaucusNJ.gov/RecycleRight

Also, Secaucus offers a variety of other ways to recycle items that are not accepted in the curbside dual stream system. For example the Secaucus Environmental Department has partnered with a company called Trex to recycle plastic bags and films.



Lookout for these bins around town to recycle plastic films like your plastic shipping mailers

Over 500 pounds of plastic are recycled in just 6 months thanks to this program. Trex is able to repurpose the plastic film into decking material and even benches (some of which you may find around town). Additionally, you can recycle batteries and small electronics at a few locations throughout Secaucus. For larger electronic recycling please contact the Environmental Department to schedule a personal pickup within Secaucus.

The locations of the Trex bins and battery boxes are usually together but not always. The following locations are where you will find one or both of the bins:

- The Recreation Center (battery box and Trex)
- The library (battery box and Trex)
- The Town Hall Lobby (battery box and Trex)
- The Harmon Cove Clubhouse (battery box and Trex)
- The Senior Center (battery box and Trex)
- Exchange 5,000 building (battery box)

While both the Trex and battery recycling programs have been very successful they could always stand to grow some more. If you have any ideas about other central locations in Secaucus that you think would be a good fit for a Trex bin or battery box, please reach out to the Environmental Department and let us know. If you want to start your own Trex challenge to earn a free bench contact the Environmental Department and we can help you get started.



Battery Recycling box found around Secaucus

Ban on Single-Use Carryout Bags, Polystyrene Foam Food Service Products, and Plastic Straws By Request Only

Did you know as of November 4th 2021, new state law requires that all food service businesses can only provide a single-use straw to customers upon request. For example, this means that businesses should not have straws sitting on countertops in cups for people to take, and servers should no longer automatically place straws on customer's tables when providing drinks. This ban may seem like a minor inconvenience, but the reality is most people do not need to use a straw and otherwise would not think to take one without being provided easy access to one. It is also easy to bring and reuse your own straw! We gave out free reusable straws at restaurant night and the green fest to help promote this upcoming ban

On May 4th, 2022, two additional bans will go into effect all throughout New Jersey. The first is a polystyrene foam ban (Styrofoam) and the second is a single use bag ban.



Ava Mroz and Sean Heaney promoting the single use straw ban at restaurant night

These statewide bans will prohibit all Stores, Food Service Businesses, and Grocery Stores from selling or providing their customers with single use carryout bags and from using any form of polystyrene foam.

While Secaucus does currently have a plastic bag ban in effect, this upcoming state law will supersede the existing municipal ordinance. The new state law indicates that no single use carryout bags (plastic or paper) may be provided to patrons. The law extends to single use plastic and paper bags of any thickness.

Thankfully, residents of Secaucus have had some time to adjust to moving exclusively to canvas reusable carryout bags because starting in May that will be the new statewide norm.

Community Compost Program

Another brand-new program implemented in Secaucus this past year is our residential compost program. Partnering with The Community Compost Company, Secaucus now allows residents to drop off food scraps at the following 5 locations throughout town:

- Millridge
- Fountain Park
- Harmon Cove Towers Bus Stop
- Harmon Cove Town Houses
- Riverside Station Boulevard (Xchange)

The program has over 200 participants who together have diverted over 13,000 pounds of food scraps that otherwise would have been transported to a transfer station in Newark, and then to a landfill in Amsterdam, Ohio (425 miles from Secaucus).

As you can imagine, the financial and environmental cost of transporting all that waste to Ohio is quite significant. In addition to waste reduction, composting provides a range of environmental benefits, including improving soil health, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, recycling nutrients, and more. It also saves money for Secaucus taxpayers by cutting down on landfill fees and the volume and frequency of garbage collection.

To register for the community compost program, either visit the link or scan the QR code below.



Registration QR code



201-86-GREEN (47336)
secaucusnj.gov/compost

Community Supported Agriculture Program

Partnered with School Lunch Organic Farm and CSA in Hackettstown, New Jersey, Secaucus offers residents the opportunity to receive a weekly share of organically grown local produce. Over the course of 16 weeks from mid-June to late September residents, who bought shares from the farm, will receive a bag containing 10-15 types of produce harvested and delivered on the same day. This program is a great chance to “eat with the season” in New Jersey. School Lunch Farm grows over 200 types of vegetables, flowers, and herbs all of which are 100% certified organic and GMO free. The Community Supported Agriculture program provides residents with the chance to support a local farm while simultaneously receiving healthy produce to snack on and cook with all summer.

To gain further insight into the benefits of the program we spoke with two past participating members, Tara (pictured) and her mother Stephanie. When asked about the program Tara cut to the heart of what Secaucus and The School Lunch Farm hope to achieve in their partnership. Secaucus wants to promote a more positive healthy community and what better

way to do that than getting residents to "eat your vegetables, hydrate, and stay safe." Stephanie hammered this point home expressing how wonderful the program is and how she believes the program is such a positive treat. The positivity the CSA receives is largely thanks to the hard work and care the owner of the farm, Margaret, puts into the CSA. It is because of Margaret's dedication to the program that its participants can tell the produce they receive is not just "something you can't buy at the market." but it is also "seasonal produce that's intentional, full of love and exceptionally delicious." To learn more about how to join the CSA visit: green.secaucusnj.gov/food/CSA.



Secaucus resident, Tara, cooking squash, with her mother Stephanie, fresh from School Lunch Organic Farm

Secaucus bats: Join the initiative of being home for a low cost, natural efficient mosquito (and other insects) controller.

For many years, bats have been demonized all over the world because of their presence in horror movies, Halloween tales or myths that relate them to the undead or spiritual world. Moreover, some people also associate the COVID-19 pandemic with bats which is highly debated (visit Batcon.org to learn more). However, in reality bats are more beneficial to us than what we have always been told.

Around 70% of all bats are insectivorous and the 9 species located in New Jersey, have an insect-feeding preference. This makes them one of the most efficient and important weapons that we can have to fight the mosquito population that is currently increasing and can, in some cases, transmit viruses like the Eastern equine encephalitis.

In fact, it is known that one of the bats found in New Jersey, like the little brown bat (*Myotis-*



Bat-House

-lucifugus), can consume around 1000 mosquitos per hour! In addition to this, since bats are sensitive to perturbed and polluted areas, they are also identified as an important indicator of a healthy environment. On the other hand, bats also have an ecological importance as seed dispersers and flower pollinizers which, in turn, regenerates the ecosystem for them and other species found in the area.

Considering their beneficial services, the Secaucus Environmental Department has begun a renewed focus on the bat houses project.

Using the first four bat houses located at different strategic points in town, we plan to gather information about the presence of these mammals to continuously, throughout the year, identify possible strategies that can help increase their abundance. As a result, we aim to make environmental improvements that can create a healthy environment for bats, as well as Secaucus residents.

To be part of this initiative, you can participate in different ways. If you consider yourself ready to have a bat house on your home, you can always contact the Environmental Department for guidance. Likewise, if you are lucky to find yourself in the presence of bats around your house or in an area near you, we encourage you to also reach out to us in order to help us monitor their distribution ranges. However, if you don't feel ready to take the first step yet, you can help spread the message and let more residents know about the true importance of bats in the area.

Together we can help diminish the bad reputation that these little mammals have acquired over the years.



Article written by Carla Rojas (pictured)

Carla Rojas is a biologist with experience in environmental education programs.

