



L.I. Sierra Club News

Volume 32 No. 1

www.LISierraClub.org

Spring 2012

Environmentalist of the Year Awards Luncheon

Honoring Assemblyman Robert K. Sweeney, Assembly District 11

Saturday, March 3rd, 2012, from 12:00-3:00pm

Seatuck's Scully Estate in Islip

Please join us for our annual Environmentalist of the Year Awards Luncheon and Ceremony as we honor Assemblyman Robert Sweeney. Our honored invitees will be our guest at this luncheon. All other guest are welcomed with a suggested donation of \$15 at the door.

Assemblyman Sweeney is the recipient of many awards from notable groups such as the NY League of Conservation Voters, Audubon Society of NY, Long Island Pine Barrens Society, and Citizens Campaign for the Environment. He has been instrumental in the protection of land, air, and water. In Sept. 2011 he helped pass the Carman's River Watershed Protection Act, which will add 1,000 acres to the Central Pine Barrens area. Well done, Assemblyman!

Please RSVP: to Ann Aurelio at SmileyAnn21@Verizon.net or call 631-567-1937

DIRECTIONS TO ENVIRONMENTALIST OF THE YEAR LUNCHEON:

Seatuck Wildlife Refuge Center (Scully Estate), 550 So. Bay Ave., Islip, NY 11751, (631) 581-6908.

From Southern State Pkwy Exit 43 south, or Sunrise Hwy. Exit 45 south. Take Islip Ave. (Route 111) south to Montauk Hwy. (Main Street). Turn right at Main St/New York 27A W. Turn left at So. Bay Ave. Destination is about a mile from Main Street on the right hand side.

Presentation for members and the community:

Sustainable Landscape Maintenance

Wednesday, April 11, 2012, 7:00-8:00 pm, Sustainable Garden at Farmingdale State College

Dr. Michael Veracka, Chair of the Horticulture Program at Farmingdale State College, will speak about alternatives to chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides in the home landscape. Trained as a landscape architect, Dr. Veracka has experience as an organic grower and market gardener, stone artisan, urban garden designer, certified arborist and horticulturist. He has worked for private landscape architecture firms and city and state government agencies. His work focuses on sustainable design, edible landscaping and the adaptive reuse of urban spaces. Dr. Veracka has won numerous design awards and his work has been featured in *Garden Design* and *Organic Gardening* magazines and many other publications. *Where:* Farmingdale Sustainable Garden, behind Security Office at main entrance to college (at Smith St.), in classroom attached to greenhouse (if you stay on path, it's just past the garden). Light refreshments will be served. *Directions:* From north: Entrance is 2.1 mi. south of Northern State Parkway, on right (at Smith St.). From east: Take Southern State Pkwy. to exit 33, Rte. 109 West (Farmingdale). Take next exit (.9 mi.), Rte. 110 North (Huntington), go 1.1 mi., past Multiplex, on left (at Smith St.). From west: Take SSP to exit 32, Rte. 110 North (Huntington), go 3.5 mi., past Multiplex, on left (at Smith St.). If you enter from the south, drive around the loop to main entrance. The Security Office will be on the right just before Rte. 110. **Bring your old cellphones for recycling!**

Vote for Sierra Club Board of Directors! See back cover.



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SIERRA CLUB
LONG ISLAND GROUP
516-826-0801
www.LISierraClub.org

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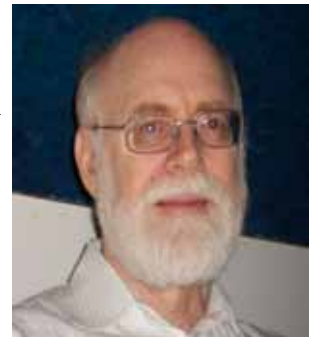
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Letter from the Chair

By Mark Kinnucan



First, a correction. In my column on fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVs) last quarter, I implied that fuel cells produce more water vapor than internal combustion engines. An astute reader, Stephen Jay of Lloyd Harbor, pointed out to me that that's actually not the case. So, I did a little more digging on the expected atmospheric impact of large-scale deployment of FCEVs, and confirmed that they don't produce more water vapor than regular cars. However, one source I read sounded a cautious note nonetheless, saying that because the water vapor from fuel cells will enter the atmosphere at a lower temperature than that produced by regular cars, we don't really know what their impact on urban areas will be.

Fuel cells may well hold promise, but I still think that the surest - and fastest - way to reduce greenhouse gases is not through better technology, but by changing our behavior. In fact, last year I achieved a stunning breakthrough that doubled the gas mileage in my car: I started carpooling with a co-worker. I have to admit that there's something quite satisfying about thinking of the great gas mileage you're getting on the days your car is sitting in the driveway.

I've always wondered why more people don't carpool to work, since it seems to me such an unalloyed good thing. Nationally, about ten percent of commuters carpool at least some of the time; about half of the carpoolers do so on a daily basis. Eighty percent always drive alone. Setting aside the other ten percent who take public transportation, ride a bicycle or walk, full-time solo drivers outnumber regular carpoolers by a factor of twenty to one.

The question of why people don't carpool has actually been posed in a number of studies of travel behavior. The answers generally fall into three broad groups. For some people, the impediment is conflict with other travel necessities, such as an irregular schedule or the need to run errands during the day. For others, it is a lack of knowledge of where to find partners. And for yet others, it is attitudinal: a preference for autonomy or for privacy.

Schedule conflicts are hard to overcome, but the other reasons seem like they afford opportunities to increase

carpooling. Take the question of finding partners. In this hyper-information age, with its devotion to all things social and all things mobile, matching carpool candidates ought to be a walk in the park. In fact, here on Long Island, the New York Department of Transportation is launching a new Web-based matching service called 511NY Rideshare (www.511nyrideshare.com).

Web-based is good, but how long before Rideshare has an app for smartphones...? Actually, yesterday:

Albany, NY (January 25, 2011) - Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that the state Department of Transportation (DOT) has upgraded its 511 New York system, including a new free mobile device application (<http://511ny.org/rideshare/ridesharesub.aspx?ContentID=283#mobileapp>)

Attitudes take time to change. That's where the Sierra Club can help. Doing what we can to raise awareness and to keep the connection between gasoline consumption and climate change foremost in our minds -- and in the minds of those around us -- will help more and more people come to the realization that there is something simple they can do to help save the environment ... and double their gas mileage at the same time.

Oh, and did I mention the delightful time I have each morning and evening chatting with my carpool partner about everything under the sun?

Congratulations to Our Winners!

Congratulations to the two winners in the L.I. Sierra Club's second annual research competition, *Going Green on Long Island Using Alternative Energy*. The first place winner is Richard Meyers for proposing a nuclear generator working in tandem with other systems to maximize efficiency. Robert is an eleventh grader at Wantagh High School. Robert was awarded \$200 for his winning proposal. Stefan Marchhart placed second and was awarded \$100 for proposing several ways of implementing solar power on Long Island. Stefan is a tenth grader from Garden City High School.

Not a Sierra Club member? What are you waiting for? Add your voice to protect the planet. Join the Sierra Club today. Visit our website at www.LISierraClub.org to join, or call 631-567-1937.

To Fertilize or Not to Fertilize?

by Diane Ives

With spring approaching, you may be thinking about running out to buy fertilizer for the lawn. This might not be a good idea for a few reasons. First, your lawn might not need it. If you're leaving the clippings when mowing and not cutting the grass shorter than 3½ inches, then you're probably giving it all the nutrients it needs from composted clippings and leaving enough of the "leaf" (the blade, in this case) for photosynthesis.

One way to find out whether fertilizer is needed is to get your soil tested at Nassau or Suffolk Cornell Cooperative Extension office, or do a home test with a kit from a reliable company like Hanna Instruments (available online from Omni Controls at omnicontrols.com). Hanna and Lamotte test kits are also carried by Grainger.

Second, if your lawn needs nutrients, Cornell Cooperative Extension says that you should only fertilize at certain times. If you apply fertilizer too early you could be stressing the plant by forcing it to grow when it's not ready. You may also be encouraging the top growth instead of establishing a root system, thereby making it less resistant to drought. Also, never buy fertilizer in combination with another product because you could be applying too much and at the wrong time. It's better to fertilize once, in the fall.

Finally, if your soil is too acidic (pH<6.1) or not acidic enough (pH>7) soil nutrients become unavailable to the plant. In other words, the plant is not able to absorb them. So it's important to test before you apply anything; you may just need lime. Long Island soil tends to be acidic (the lower the pH, the more acidic) because it's sandy. Applying too much fertilizer can also lower the pH. If you need lime, it should be applied several weeks before growing season.

If the lawn does need fertilizer, you should apply a slow release fertilizer. Slow release fertilizers are at least 30 percent water insoluble nitrogen (WIN). That means that when it rains, some fertilizer remains in the soil and isn't washed away (which doesn't do your lawn any good, and contaminates our drinking water and waterways and leads to dead oceans among other things). An easy way to know if the fertilizer is slow release is to

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Outings and Events

Note: For further details on our hikes and other events, including Executive Committee meetings, call the L.I. Group voicemail at 516-826-0801. For additions or cancellations, please check the calendar on our website, www.LISierraClub.org. For all outings that say "Information: see header," call Jane at 631-689-1568 or, within an hour of the event, call 631-682-6018.

E - educational information will be shared along the way with up to three brief hands-on stops. Most walks include some environmental information, but not all stop for viewing and hands-on.

Saturday March 10 HIKE noon

Blydenburgh Park (Stump Pond), Smithtown

This relatively flat 5½ to 6 mile hike goes around "stump" mill pond. The hike takes 2.5 hours at a moderate pace but you should allow up to 3 hours for the hike. We will be in mostly upland woods, but along the southwest side there is a boardwalk to bring us over the beautiful and interesting swamp. Beverage suggested. There are no bathroom facilities. Meet in the parking lot at the north entrance to the park at the west end of New Mill Rd. For information up to an hour before the hike, contact Jane at 631-689-1568.

Sunday March 11 - E HIKE noon

Avalon and East Farm, Stony Brook

Four-plus miles of hilly terrain. Allow 1.5 to 2 hours for the hike, which will include a few stops to identify some flora and fauna. Avalon is a hillside park with a boardwalk along the pond where you will see many water fowl both before and after the hike (binoculars are a good idea for this). From the boardwalk, climb the hill on the stone steps to a small man-made pond, a labyrinth and a rhododendron viewing platform. A gravel path to East Farm leads to a mix of fields and hilly woodlands with many varieties and ages of growth. Upland birds love the field-to-forest transition zones for shelter and food (berries and seeds). Beverage recommended. For sun, bring sun glasses too. Heavy rain, deep snow, or ice on the ground will cancel this hike. For updated information visit the calendar pages at www.lisierraclub.org. Meet in front of the gristmill on Harbor Rd at the north end of the Stony Brook mill pond.

Saturday March 24 - E HIKE noon

Birch Creek County Park exploratory, Flanders

Having walked this trail only three times before, it may take a few minutes to get oriented and onto the intend-

ed route but we will do 4 to 6 miles no matter what. The pace is moderate, with a few stops along the way to discuss the summer tick and chigger problem and the importance of this area to our Long Island wildlife, and to listen to the birds high in the trees. The terrain is slightly rolling through this mostly oak forest. We will see at least two ponds. Though it is not too likely we'll get ticks this time of year, with the warm weather, insect repellent is suggested. This is a big parkland so be prepared for peace and quiet. Directions: Park at the Spinney Rd. parking lot on the south side of County Rte. 24, east of Long Neck Rd. and west of the police station. For more information, contact Jane at 631-689-1568 up to an hour before the hike.

Saturday April 14th - E 1:00 pm
West Meadow Beach walk with the park ranger

Walk along West Meadow beach to the end of the peninsula where three tides converge, then return along a paved, traffic-free road on the wetlands side, seeing where cottages stood until very recently. Allow two hours for this two-mile interpretive walk led by Eileen Gerle, the Brookhaven Town park ranger and education director for West Meadow Beach. She will describe local wildlife (plover, crabs, raccoon, etc.), beach habitats, and beach ecology. Dress in appropriate layers and wear shoes appropriate for sand and dampness. A beverage is strongly suggested. Bathroom facilities may or may not be open. Directions – LIE to Nichols Rd (exit 62) north. At the end of Nichols, turn left onto 25A toward Stony Brook. At the first traffic light, turn right onto Quaker Path. At the stop sign just after crossing Christian Ave, stay left onto Mount Gray Rd. About ½ mile up, at a stop sign, turn left onto West Meadow Beach Rd. At the end of the road, turn right into the parking lot, then turn left and go to the south end of the lot. The Sierra leader is Jane Fasullo.

Saturday April 21st - E HIKE 2:00 pm

South Shore Nature Center, East Islip

Rain date: April 29

Enjoy this lovely park featuring freshwater, brackish wetlands, forests, and an abundance of wildlife. The hike leader, a naturalist, will discuss some of the plants and animals we encounter. There are streams and ponds on the property; we will take time to observe and identify some of the interesting aquatic creatures that reside in them. This is an easy hike, with very level terrain. There are some areas where the trail conditions can be muddy, so wear appropriate shoes for these conditions. The hike is for adults and children 12 and older (with parent or guardian). Bring your own snack and beverage. Rain cancels, drizzle will not. There is a Nature Center on site with natural history displays, and restrooms are available at this facility. Directions: Take Southern State Parkway toward Heckscher State Park and get off at exit 45 west. Head west on Route 27A (Montauk Highway) for about one mile. When you cross the intersection with Carleton Avenue/Woodland Drive, turn left at the next block (Bayview Avenue). Look for the small sign for the South Shore Nature Center. Drive 1.25 miles and turn right into the entrance. On road maps, the property is labeled as Islip Meadows County Nature Preserve. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED with Jan Porinchak, beachtowel1@verizon.net or 631 327-1268.

Sunday May 13 - E HIKE noon

Muttontown exploratory

Mainly flat terrain with some short hills. Allow two hours at a moderate pace and three if we get off the intended trail. With 550 acres of fields, woodlands, ponds and estate grounds, Muttontown is Nassau County's largest nature preserve and one of the most beautiful settings on Long Island. Although the preserve is on the grounds of an old estate, it has many natural features to discover. We will point out many of the wild plants at this site. Best suited for adults and older children. A beverage is suggested. Bathroom facilities on site at start/end of trail. Wear clothes appropriate to the weather – layers always suggested. If it's been raining, the ground will be wet and slippery in spots. Wear appropriate shoes. For further information, contact Jane at 631-689-1568. Directions: Muttontown Lane South off 25A in East Norwich west of Rte. 106. Meet at the Nature Center next to the second parking area.

Sunday May 20 - E KAYAK 10:30 am

Port Jeff & Setauket Harbors

Meet at the Setauket Harbor Canoe and Kayak store on Shore Road in Setauket. Bring lunch and/or snack, beverage, life vest with a minimum 3-hour rating, sun protection (visor or hat, long sleeve shirt, leg cover, etc.), bug spray, sun glasses and sunscreen. After a paddle from Setauket Harbor into Port Jeff Harbor, which will include some basic directions about safely dealing with boat traffic and how to read channel markers, we will beach on either the Old Field peninsula or the old mining area of Port Jeff, depending on the wind and boat traffic. Wherever we land, we'll stretch our legs with a short walk, eat and discuss the natural world around us. We will also discuss some of the natural and not-so-natural events that shaped this harbor. Allow three hours for this paddle. Distance covered will depend on the wind but will not exceed six miles. If you need help unloading/loading a kayak from your vehicle, there will be folks to help you. Setauket Canoe and Kayak (631-751-2706) rents kayaks. If you rent, you do so on your own. For info and REQUIRED registration: Jane Fasullo jfas1@optonline.net or 631-689-1568

Saturday May 26 - E HIKE noon

Bayard Cutting Arboretum, Great River

Three to four miles of flat land at an easy to moderate pace. Allow two hours. Walk to the arboretum through oaks and pines, then on the grounds, venture along the Connetquot River, through two small "naturalized" islands of shrubs and trees, and stroll through the many gardens of this old estate with its labeled specimen trees. There is an opportunity for lunch or a snack at the arboretum café. Maybe get some ideas for your spring garden in the flower garden section! Heavy rain cancels. Bring water, snack, insect repellent if you use it. Meet at the Great River RR Station on Connetquot Avenue south of Sunrise Hwy.

WANTED: Leaders for outdoor activities. Training available as needed. Contact Jane at 631-689-1568.

Turtles of Long Island

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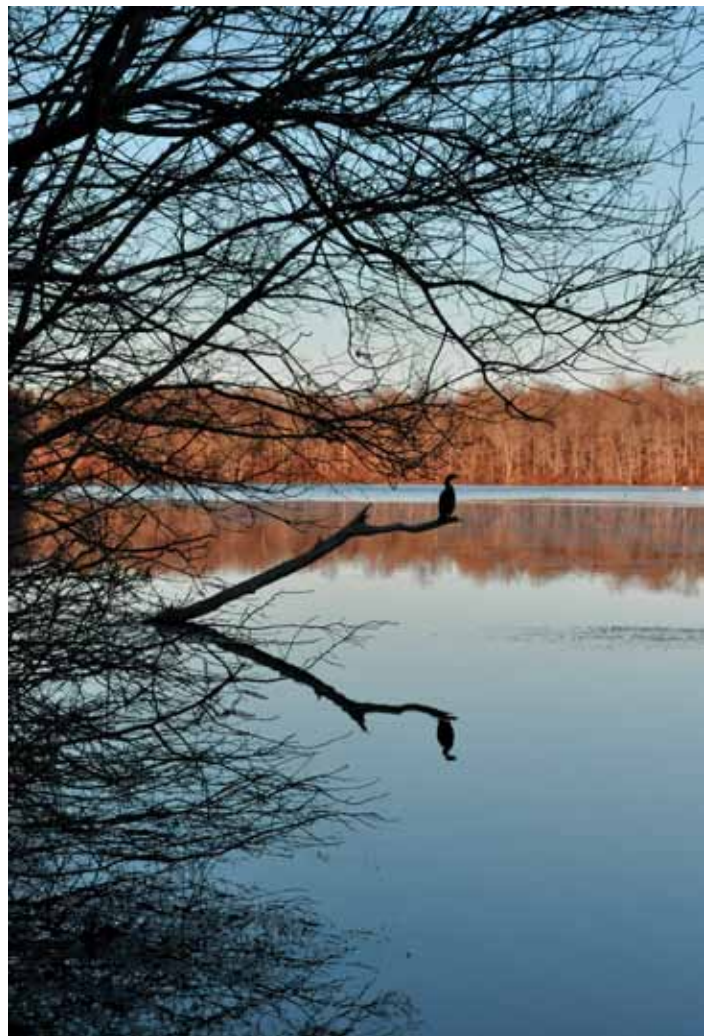
by Jan Christopher Porinchak

The lovely Spotted Turtle is similar in look to the slider turtles. Like them, the Spotted Turtle is adapted for life in water, having a low-profiled shell. The carapace of this species is black and sprinkled with bright yellow spots, while the head and legs sport flashes of orange. This is a small turtle, growing between four to five inches. It is less likely to be found in large bodies of water, instead preferring small out-of-the-way ponds, bogs, and slow-moving streams. Observing one of these handsome creatures basking itself on a sedge-covered hummock in a Long Island wetland is a real treat for any nature lover.

The Common Snapping Turtle, Eastern Mud Turtle, and Common Musk Turtle are also aquatic species but very different in habit and temperament! These turtles are secretive, and do not frequently bask. Therefore, they are less likely to be observed. The Eastern Mud Turtle is also the rarest turtle in New York State. This is a small turtle, growing to four inches. It is an olive brown to dark brown color, with a smooth, rounded carapace. It can be found in both fresh and brackish water, and may in fact require both. As this type of habitat has been degraded, in part due to “ditching” for mosquito control, the population numbers of the Eastern Mud Turtle have been impacted negatively. Very similar to the Mud Turtle is the Common Musk Turtle. It is also small, olive brown in color, with the same pointed snout as the Mud Turtle. The Musk Turtle tends to have a more ridged shell, while the Mud Turtle shell is more rounded. Both species are able to emit a malodorous scent from musk glands when threatened. This capability has earned the Musk Turtle in particular the epithet “stinkpot,” and probably some other colorful names! Both of these reptiles patrol ditches and slow moving streams for invertebrates, small fishes, tadpoles, and carrion.

The Common Snapping Turtle probably qualifies for the title of “Most Notorious” turtle. It is a big turtle, weighing up to 45 pounds. They have a nasty disposition when provoked. These characteristics have no doubt fueled exaggerated stories of canoe paddles and baseball bats being snapped in half by their jaws. Indeed, their serpentine necks can propel the turtle’s head quickly towards a threat or prey, and very sharp, powerful jaws make this turtle hazardous to handle. It can inflict injury. Most of the time these reptiles are submerged, and typically you’ll only see their heads on the water’s surface, pivoting around to take in the action at the ponds, rivers, slow moving streams, and “sumps” that they inhabit. Dark in coloration, the shell is often covered in algae. They eat a wide variety of items. I have myself seen a large snapping turtle latched on to an adult Canada Goose, which eventually escaped the turtle after about 20 minutes of loud and violent struggle. They are more likely to feed on smaller vertebrates, such as fish, frogs, small mammals, and carrion. They will eat plants. I’ve observed one specimen eating skunk cabbage leaves, for example.

(to be continued in the next issue)



Winter at Blydenburgh Park

Photograph by Amanda Signorelli

FERTILIZER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

make sure that the first number on the bag, the “nitrogen” number, is no greater than 10. There’s also a formula: $WIN/Total\ Nitrogen$ ($WIN + WSN$) $\times 100$ gives you the percent of WIN and should be 30 (30%) or more. The WIN and WSN (water soluble nitrogen) are on the back of the bag. The 3 numbers on the front of the bag are the percentages of Nitrogen-Phosphorous-Potassium per pound of fertilizer. (If you forget the order, it’s alphabetical.)

Don’t think you’re getting a bargain by buying combination fertilizers and pesticides and/or herbicides because you could be wasting your money by applying something you don’t need and causing more, unnecessary damage to drinking water and waterways.

We tend to overwater. Our climate averages 1” of rain per week which is plenty. During extended droughts, Cornell recommends letting your grass go dormant. When the rain returns your lawn will green up again. Overwatering discourages roots from growing long to reach water deeper down and can cause mold and other

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Fracking News

by Jane Fasullo

On January 23rd, 2012, some Long Island Sierra Club group members joined many other concerned citizens from around New York State to lobby in Albany for laws and actions to better protect New Yorkers from the negative effects of high volume hydraulic fracturing for natural gas.

Amongst the demands were:

- Passage of the “home rule” bill, which would allow local governments to create zoning rules that would, for all intents and purposes, supersede the right of oil and gas companies to drill. This bill would also make it impossible for the gas companies to sue the local governments for creating such zoning rules.
- Passage of a bill calling for a delay in the issuance of drilling permits until more is known about the effects of drilling operations especially on human health. This item was not addressed in the latest release of an environmental impact statement from the Department of Environmental Conservation (this past fall) and we were informed that the DEC is doing this study.
- Passage of a bill to undo the hazardous waste “loop-hole.” Currently, chemicals identified as “hazardous” before being used to fracture shale in a drilling operation are, by definition, “industrial waste” after being used.
- Passage of a bill to promote solar development and jobs.

- A study of cumulative effects of drilling on non-human life forms including aquatic and plant.

One lobby group, led by Jane Fasullo, also asked two of the representatives visited to consider repealing the compulsory integration law. This law permits taking of surface land without the owner’s permission for use in drilling. (For more information, see <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/1590.html>.)

For more information or to get on a list of people to contact for future lobbying efforts, contact Jane at jfas1@optonline.net or 631-689-1568.



Lobbying in Albany

Fertilizer (continued from previous page)

problems.

You can use many materials for mulch in vegetable gardens and flowerbeds including (untreated) grass clippings, wood chips, and seaweed. The seaweed can be taken right off the beach without any washing – it makes the roses bloom like crazy for some reason. You may be able to get free wood chips from LIPA. The mulch can be applied the end of June, after the soil has warmed up, and again in fall. It fertilizes, inhibits weeds, and protects roots from drought and cold. Peat moss has no nutritional value: it’s a soil amendment, it retains water and prevents nutrients from leaching out.

For more information, and some ideas for lawn alternatives:

James Sottilo, of Ecological Landscape Management in eastern LI, uses compost tea and mows at 3½–4½ inches. He has done sustainable landscaping for Brooklyn Bridge Park and Harvard Yard in Boston, and spoke at our meeting last June. Webpage: http://www.elmscapes.com/latest_news.

Cornell University Turfgrass program’s sustainable lawn podcasts: Topics include adjusting mower higher to control crabgrass

without herbicides and mowing less often (every 2-15 days for 3” lawn vs. 2-5 days for 1” lawn). Mowing higher encourages root growth, and healthy roots mean plants are better able to withstand some pest damage and reduce need for harmful pesticides. Follow links to Cornell Turfgrass online publication: “Lawn care without pesticides” and “Home lawn resources” page: <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/turf/> and <http://blogs.cornell.edu/lawn/>.

Citizens Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/pesticidefreelawns/resources/index.htm>.

Ruth Stout’s *No Work Garden*: An 80-year-old woman from Connecticut tells how she gardens with hay mulch she gets from her neighbors and no other soil amendments or applications. It’s out of print, but available at the library.

The Organic Lawn Care Manual, by Paul Tukey.

The Edible Front Yard, by Ivette Soler.

Front Yard Gardens: Growing More than Grass, by Liz Primeau.

Lawn Reform Coalition: <http://lawnreform.org>.

National Club Election Coming This Spring

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway. Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's website.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. This Board sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership.

Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know. Visit the Club's election website: <http://www.sierraclub.org/bod/2012election/default.aspx>.

This site provides links to additional information about candidates, and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment. You should use your own judgment by taking several minutes to read the ballot statement of each candidate. Then make your choice and cast your vote. Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, please go to the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If necessary, you will find the ballot is quite straightforward and easy to mark and mail.

Environmentalist of the Year Luncheon is March 3rd!
See first page for details

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