



**Sustainable Ringwood/Green Team
End of Year Report
2023
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Chairperson**

Sustainable Ringwood’s Green Team is ending the year with a full complement of members that includes 7 voting members and 3 alternate members. The team has members representing the Borough Council, the Health Department, the Environmental Commission, the Non-Profit New Weis Center and local businesses. Thus, the Green Team is able to represent a variety of local interests and coordinate its activities with a variety of businesses, local organizations, municipal commissions and departments.

The Green Team met each month during 2023, and minutes have been posted for each meeting. The team was extremely active throughout the year, and its members have volunteered to participate in a variety of events. We submitted a grant proposal in February 2023 to Sustainable Jersey and were awarded a \$10,000 grant in May, 2023. The funding, which supported projects and activities during 2023, will extend into 2024.

Earth Day and Caring for Ringwood Day



Green Team members celebrated Earth Day at the New Weis Center by offering educational activities for adults that provided information on composting, time for various materials to biodegrade and recycling options. Children enjoyed decorating reusable cloth bags which they could keep or give to their parents. Scouts from Troop 44G and Crew 44 joined Green Team members on Caring for Ringwood Day.

Backyard Composting Education Program

One of the projects supported by the 2023 grant is a program to educate residents on the nature and benefits of backyard composting as well as to provide specific information on how to compost. We started the educational program in 2020 and extended it this year in two presentations at the Ringwood Public Library. The first presentation, entitled “Composting 101 for Families”, included an activity for children and a giveaway where 3 randomly selected families received stainless steel kitchen bins and a book, and 1 randomly selected family received an outdoor kitchen bin. The second presentation entitled, “Composting for a Better World”, was part of the Ringwood Public Library’s summer STEM program. A total of 20 children and 11 adults attended the presentations. Follow-up program questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with both programs. Six 18” by 24” posters were created this year and used during the presentations. The posters were also on display in the Ringwood Public Library during the months of August and September, 2023. In addition, in July and August, 2023, a



series of posts on backyard composting were published on the Sustainable Ringwood Facebook page. It is important to note that a movie on backyard composting, which was created by the Green Team in 2020, is still available for viewing on the Ringwood Public Library's YouTube channel. As of December 12, 2023, there have been 308 views since the movie was first published in 2020.

Seed Library

The Green Team collaborated with the Ringwood Public Library in creating a Seed Library. This project was supported by our grant. Patrons are invited to take a free package of native plant or vegetable seeds to plant in their own garden. They are also invited to contribute seeds. The Seed Library is housed at the Ringwood Public Library in a binder that is located behind the circulation desk. The program has been successful and all seeds purchased through the grant have been distributed.

Pollinator Garden Project

In 2022, the Green Team initiated the Pollinator Garden Project. The garden is designed to educate residents about the need to support pollinators by planting gardens that provide food, shelter and a place to rest. The project involved creating a demonstration pollinator garden. The Borough collaborated with the team to install a garden near the library. The Green team is grateful for the Borough's assistance in selecting a suitable site, preparing the site, purchasing plants



and supplying mulch. Tina Yi, member of the Green Team and owner of Blue Cabin Gardens, designed the garden. Tina, along with Green Team members and volunteers, planted the garden, applied soil amendments and maintained the garden throughout the year. The garden was officially opened on July 26, 2023 with a grant-supported bee hive demonstration by Harbee BeeKeeping and an art activity for children. Over 20 children and 20 adults attended the event. All the plants in the garden are labelled by signs donated by a volunteer. In October 2023, a permanent granted-funded sign from Pulse Designs was installed in the garden by Gary Wogisch, a Green Team member. Throughout the months of July, August, September and October, 2023, a series of posts were published on the Sustainable Ringwood Facebook page. The posts highlighted the plants that bloomed throughout the summer and provided information on how to care for the garden in the fall and winter. The project will culminate in 2024 with a photo contest highlighting the beauty of pollinators with prizes for children and adults. The Pollinator Project was awarded the 2023 Environmental Achievement Award on October 13, 2023.

Native Plant Garden Project

A major goal of the Green Team is to educate residents on the importance of native plants in supporting the ecosystem. The program focuses on the role of native plants in increasing sustainability and supporting wildlife. The project began in 2021 with a presentation by Tina Yi entitled “Native Plants and Ecologically Friendly Garden Practices” followed by a



series of posts on the Sustainable Ringwood Facebook page which highlighted native plants that would thrive in our area. The presentation is still available for viewing on the YouTube channel of the Ringwood Public Library. The 2023 phase of the project involved planting a Native Plant Demonstration Garden. The garden, which was supported by funding from the 2023 Sustainable Jersey grant, was designed by the Green Team member, Tina Yi. The Green Team is grateful for the support from the Borough in finding a suitable site near the library and in preparing the site by grading, adding soil and placing boulders for erosion control. Tina Yi and a volunteer, Jessica O'Connor, ordered and delivered the plants to the garden. Over a period of 3 days at the end of October and early November 2023, members of the Green Team planted the garden and spread mulch donated by Bobby Wogisch. The outcome of this phase of the project is a beautiful garden providing an attractive view from inside and outside the library. A grant-funded sign has been ordered from Pulse Designs and will be installed either in December or after the ground thaws. During 2024, the Native Plant Garden project will continue with a series of presentations starting with a webinar by Doug Tallamy on February 21, followed by a presentation by Deb Ellis from the Native Plant Society of New Jersey in April, and a final presentation in June by Don Torino, President of the Bergen County Audubon Society. The project will culminate with a native plant garden contest. Residents who plant gardens meeting specific criteria will be awarded flags for their gardens. This aspect of the project will focus on how individual native plant gardens on residential properties can form a network that will result in a large area that is resilient and supports wildlife.



Winter Sowing Presentation

The Green Team is collaborating with the Library to sponsor a presentation on Winter Sowing on December 21, 2023. The audience will learn which seeds can be used in winter sowing and, through demonstration and a hands-on experience, how to prepare the containers and the plants to be seeded.

Conclusion

The Green Team has an active group of members and volunteers who are engaged in projects that increase the resilience and sustainability of our community. We have on-going educational programs and an effective outreach program. As noted in our report, we publish educational posts on a variety of topics. In addition, to the series that have been mentioned, we have published posts on maintaining healthy lakes, which complement the Borough's program on "It's a Shore Thing". We collaborate with a variety of organizations and hope that the Council members will see our committee as a resource that is willing to collaborate in building a future where the community and its residents thrive. We look forward to working together.