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Ideas for discussion with your gardening service.

1. Gardening service companies can be opportunistic by responding to evolving consumer sensitivities to health and environmental issues and by transitioning proactively into sustainable, safe, electric land care equipment.
2. Companies will save money in the long run from reduced maintenance and fuel costs.
3. Landscape crews have front line exposure to the fumes and noise of gas powered equipment. Cleaner, quieter electric lawn and garden equipment is better for their health and well-being.
4. Property owners could assist contractors in their transition to clean power by offering to charge their equipment batteries as needed while they are working at their properties.



COUNCILLORS ASK FOR REPORT ON BANNING GAS-POWERED LEAF BLOWERS IN TORONTO

By [Francine Kopun](#) City Hall Bureau
Fri., Sept. 18, 2020

It's time to look at whether using leaf blowers in Toronto should be banned.

"I think it's about time we looked at some of these dated technologies and took them out of use," said Coun. Mike Layton, speaking in support of the motion by Coun. Shelley Carroll (Ward 17 Don Valley North). Layton (Ward 11 University-Rosedale) was referring to the two-stroke engines that typically power leaf blowers. They run on a mix of oil and gas that produces aerosolized pollutants, disrupts soil biology and destroys insect habitats that help sustain a healthy ecosystem, according to published research.

"Forty per cent of insect species are undergoing major declines around the world. Our local bee populations are facing similar threats," according to the summary in support of the motion. "This rapid decline is largely attributed to habitat loss and fragmentation, with gas-powered garden equipment as a major contributing factor due to its heavily polluting nature."

Carroll's motion, seconded by Coun. James Pasternak (Ward 6 York Centre), requests that the city manager consult with the medical officer of health and report back in early 2021 on the environmental and associated health impacts of the engines, including the feasibility of a year-round ban or a ban from May to September.

Critics say leaf blowers are increasingly being used throughout the summer months for tasks like removing grass clippings, and that in neighbourhoods where landscaping services are in high demand, the noise is literally deafening — contributing to long-term hearing loss.

The committee heard that there are new, cleaner technologies to replace leaf-blowers, including electric leaf blowers.

Carroll attempted to introduce the matter as a member motion at a council meeting in July. She was unable to get the required two-third of votes needed to allow it to be debated without first going to committee. The motion now returns to council for consideration on Sept. 30.

Her motion was opposed on Thursday by Coun. Denzil Minnan-Wong (Ward 16 Don Valley East).

“The nanny state is alive and well in the city of Toronto,” Minnan-Wong said.

He added that council’s decision to ban pesticides in Toronto led to the “total destruction” of parks, which have been taken over by weeds.

“Here we are again trying to over-regulate and tell people what to do. We should leave this alone,” he said.

Leaf blowers have been banned or restricted in numerous cities in North America, including in Vancouver, Portland and Beaconsfield, Que.

The motion was supported by the Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA), and several residents’ associations.

“Leaf blowers generate wind speeds of over 200 kilometres an hour, propelling into the air potentially hazardous substances such as dirt, mould, pollen, animal feces and pesticides,” according to TEA.

“Exposure to these dust clouds, which takes hours to settle, damages people’s respiratory systems and may cause irritation, allergies and disease.”

The committee also heard that recent research from Harvard University found long-term exposure to air pollution increased mortality in COVID-19 patients in the United States.

Tony DiGiovanni, executive director of Landscape Ontario, representing the horticultural trades, said that while leaf blowers are noisy, they comply with Toronto’s noise bylaw.

Nonetheless, his organization encourages members to consider using newer battery-powered units.

“From a manufacturing perspective, leaf blowers have improve immensely over the years. The new versions are much quieter and cleaner. I predict that this issue will go away over time as new technology becomes more commonplace.”

He said that homeowners may email Landscape Ontario directly if they are being subjected to irresponsible use of leaf blowers.

“If the company is a member of Landscape Ontario, we will contact them. Most of the time we are able to resolve individual complaints.”

Why do we put up with the ear-splitting obnoxiousness of leaf blowers?

The Sunday Magazine



CBC Radio · Posted: May 03, 2019

There are about 2.5 million leaf blowers in use in Canada, and more than 130 million in the U.S. (Brady Lane/Marshfield News-Herald/Associated Press)

Lawn maintenance and landscaping companies swear by leaf blowers as the most efficient way to clean up yards. Others swear at them.

Sales of the leaf blower — dubbed "the devil's blow dryer" by some — have been steadily climbing since these machines first were introduced as a gardening tool, replacing the low-tech rake and broom. According to the most recent statistics, there are about 2.5 million in use in Canada and more than 130 million in the U.S.

For retired chemical engineer Monty McDonald, even one is too many. He has been campaigning for a leaf blower ban for years because they cause both noise and air pollution.

McDonald worked with potential carcinogens in a chemical plant, where the safety of the workers was a top priority.

"We got the levels in that plant down to 10 parts per million in the workplace, which was the OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] standard at that time and oil, and many of them are carcinogens," he said in conversation with [The Sunday Edition's](#) host Michael Enright,



Anti-leaf-blower activist Monty McDonald rakes leaves in his Toronto backyard. (MaryAnne McDonald)

"Now you stand near a leaf blower and your probably getting 10,000 parts per million exposure to hydrocarbons that are in gasoline and oil, and many of them are carcinogens."

His concern is about the effects of the two-stroke engine, which is also used in some lawn mowers.

"Thirty percent of fuel is unburned and goes out into the atmosphere as an aerosol," McDonald said.

"If you're smelling it, you're ingesting it."

Lawn maintenance workers usually blow grass clippings down the street, then a competitor might come along and blow them back. This adds to McDonald's concern because of the fine particles that are also sent into the air, such as dust, pet excrement and carbon black from the road.

"I leave my grass clippings on the lawn as mulch and all gardeners recommend doing that," he said. "Just leave them there. They're 90 percent water and in a few days they'll all dry up, so you'll hardly see it."

The noise is also harmful, he explains, because it's at a low frequency and easily penetrates the walls and windows of peoples' homes.

Many people are ambivalent about a ban on the use of the leaf blower and McDonald believes this is because of the view that "since the government is allowing it, it must be okay."

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/sunday/the-sunday-edition-for-may-5-2019-1.5121509/why-do-we-put-up-with-the-ear-splitting-obnoxiousness-of-leaf-blowers-1.5121531>