



Woodland Hills

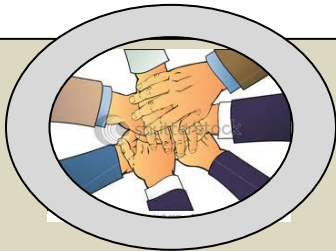
# NEWSLETTER



Fall 2011

[www.WoodlandHillsMd.com](http://www.WoodlandHillsMd.com)

Fall 2011



## A Community Working Together

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Community Associations, Inc.  
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## Fall is the time to plant trees

Woodland Hills has, since its conception, spent much time and effort caring for the trees which define it and distinguish it from other communities in the area. Developers recognized the value the trees added to our community and drafted our governing documents to require the HOA to replace dead or destroyed trees on all common areas. Our Architectural Guidelines follow through with that approach by requiring homeowners to replace any trees removed on private land.

Gaithersburg is recognized by the Arbor Day Foundation (in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters) as a "Tree City." As evidenced by the grand forest oak featured prominently in its city seal, the City takes very seriously its responsibility to foster and maintain a healthy tree population. It has been a Tree City for 22 years and is one of 38 Tree Cities in the State of Maryland. The many benefits of being a Tree City include creating a framework for action, education, a positive public image, and citizen pride. Trees provide ecological, economic and quality of life benefits – protecting air and water quality, reducing energy costs, increasing property values and beautifying neighborhoods and highways.

Governor O'Malley and the State of Maryland also recognize the value of trees in our communities and in 2009 launched the "Marylanders Plant Trees Initiative" to encourage citizens to partner with the State to plant 50,000 new trees. In just under two years, 54,000 trees have been planted. To add incentive to the program, the State offers \$25 coupons toward the purchase of native trees costing \$50 or more, redeemable at nurseries across the state. For more information, go to <http://www.trees.maryland.gov>.

The State's Department of Natural Resources also encourages tree planting through its "TreeMendous Program" which offers native trees, shrubs and plants at reduced prices. For information on this program, go to <http://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/tremendous>.

**"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago.  
The second best time is now."**

**Anonymous**

## Why do we leave the leaves?

### Leave the leaves – the environmental value

Environmental considerations for leaving the leaves include returning nutrients to the soil, retaining ground moisture during dry spells, suppressing weeds, reducing soil erosion, and protecting tree roots from heat and cold. Also, retained leaves encourage earthworm breeding which results in natural aeration of heavy soils.

### Leave the leaves – the economic value

Through the years as our tree cover matured and spread, many areas that may have sustained grass growth when the community was first established can no longer do so. To adjust to these changes, the HOA adopted the practice of not raking leaves and pine needles off barren common ground (where grass either does not grow or cannot sustain itself). This was done both for environmental and financial considerations. The financial consideration is to avoid the expense of planting grass annually or planting ground covers or covering the barren soil with purchased mulch.

However, for those who prefer a more manicured, less natural look, some areas of the community are being reclaimed for grass.

Leaves raked to the curb and collected by the City are converted to organic compost at a county facility in Dickerson, sold under the trade name “Leafgro” and marketed as a valuable additive for plants, trees and soil. Why bother going through that procedure when we can keep our leaves to compost naturally on barren common ground at no cost, no transportation, and no wait?

### Leave the leaves – for City pickup

If you have leaves that you cannot recycle into your own landscaping, the City of Gaithersburg provides fall pickup. This year’s the fall collection is scheduled from the last week in October until the final week of December. Generally, pick up is made every 5 to 7 working days, usually on regular recycling days. Finally, the City provides the following DOs and DON’Ts regarding leaves raked to the curb for pick up.

- ✓ **DO** rake your leaves to the curb.
- ✓ **DO** remove any limb, rocks, or other heavy objects from leaf piles.
- ✓ **DO** avoid putting out leaves when snow is forecast.



### Leave the leaves – for City pickup (continued)

- **DON'T** drive across leaf piles, as pets and kids may be playing in them.
- **DON'T** allow your children to play in leaves along the street.
- **DON'T** park over a leaf pile, as the vehicle's exhaust may start a fire.
- **DON'T** use plastic bags.

If you have any questions about the collection, please contact personnel with the City of Gaithersburg at 301-258-6370 or [publicworks@gaitthersburgmd.gov](mailto:publicworks@gaitthersburgmd.gov).

## Steer clear of Common Grounds violations

Recent evidence of tree vandalism was discovered in the vicinity of 332 Wye Mill Court. Common ground trees in front of the home were severely and improperly pruned. Additional common ground trees behind the home were cut down. This vandalism was reported to the police. Residents are reminded that permission must be secured from the HOA before any changes to common ground assets are undertaken. The HOA will now incur further expense to clear the brush and replace the trees.

Residents have reported an increasing volume of children’s toys, bicycles; play equipment, etc., littering the community’s yards and common grounds. ARC Guidelines, Article II. HOME RESTRICTIONS, Section B, Paragraph 6 requires that . . . “No storage of goods, such as firewood, inflatable pools, children’s toys, bikes, skateboards, trash cans, recycling bins, gardening tools, etc., will be allowed in front of the house.” Please remember to store these items properly.

## Steer clear of Common Grounds violations

*(continued)*

Dumping of leaves, landscape materials, construction materials, fencing, etc., onto common ground also is prohibited by the HOA, a violation of City Code 18-4(a) and punishable by up to a \$500.00 per day fine from the City of Gaithersburg. Properly prepared recyclables and bulk recyclables will be picked up by the City on our regularly scheduled recycling pickup days. These items can be left out for pickup no sooner than the night before the scheduled pickup.

## Conservation Landscaping making strides

The term “conservation landscaping” refers to landscaping techniques utilized to reduce pollution and improve the local environment. One of the simplest ways to begin utilizing conservation landscaping techniques is by replacing lawn areas with native trees, shrubs and plants. Native plants have deeper roots than typical lawn grasses so they are better suited to hold soil and capture rainwater. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s publication *Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping: Chesapeake Bay Watershed* is an excellent source of helpful information. This publication and further information can be found at their website: <http://www.nps.gov/plants/pubs/chesapeake/>.

The City of Gaithersburg offers rebates to single family residential property owners (our townhomes are eligible) who replace turf grass with conservation landscaping techniques utilizing native plants on their property. Residents who replace 500 square feet of turf grass (to include three-fourths native plants of total number of plants) are eligible for a financial rebate of 50% of project costs (maximum rebate of \$500). Complete eligibility requirements and design criteria are included in the rebate application. For more information, call 301-258-6310 or e-mail [environment@gaitersburgmd.gov](mailto:environment@gaitersburgmd.gov).

### ***Conservation Landscaping Benefits***

By utilizing conservation landscaping techniques at your home you will:

- ✓ Improve water quality. Conservation landscaping strategies, combined with adequate mulching, will slow the flow of storm-water runoff, increase groundwater recharge, and trap nutrients or pollutants in the soil for uptake by the plants.

### ***Conservation Landscaping Benefits*** (continued)

- ✓ Reduce the time and expense of mowing, watering, fertilizing and treating lawn and garden areas. Conventional lawn and garden care contributes to pollution of our air and water and uses up non-renewable resources such as fuel and water.
- ✓ Provide habitat for local and migratory animals. The structure, leaves, flowers, seeds, berries and other fruits of native plants provide food and shelter for a variety of birds and other wildlife.

## Use eco-friendly lawn care tips

Although America's landscapes are dominated by lawn or turf, there is little environmental value to having wide expanses of lawn.

The typical green lawn offers almost no biodiversity, is often not even native to the area nor is it a good food source. Finally, the green lawn does very little to help manage storm water.

While trees, shrubs, ground covers, flowerbeds, and naturalized meadows are better environmental choices, sometimes homeowners choose to keep a lawn. If you have a lawn, here are eco-friendly ways to maintain it.

- Use species cultivated for the Maryland piedmont (our region), such as the red and tall Fescues. This will reduce the need for fertilizer and pesticide applications and will be more resilient during dry spells.
- Do not OVER water your lawn. Lawns naturally enter a dormant phase in the heat of summer, sometimes turning brown. They will green up on their own as the weather cools.
- Properly apply fertilizers. Test soil to determine what fertilizer is needed and apply only when needed. Avoid applying when rain is forecasted within 48 hours.
- Leave the height of your grass long when mowing and leave clippings on your lawn to decompose. "Grass-cycling" provides your lawn with a great source of nitrogen and saves water and fertilizer.
- Be careful when using pesticides.

## Save your time and money (and the environment) -- USE NATIVE PLANTS

Native plants are those trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses that grow naturally in our area. They have adapted and are well-suited to our growing conditions and seasons. More importantly, native plant species are critically linked to native wildlife. Our local insects, birds and small wildlife have evolved alongside native plants. These long-standing relationships allow our ecosystem to function at its best and stay in balance.

Because native plants have adapted to the growing conditions of an area, they are better able to handle stress, often require less work to maintain, and are much more likely to survive. Also, because a native plant garden does not require mowing (remember, gas powered lawn engines contribute 5% of the nation's air pollution), they actually help to reduce air pollution. Combine this with the time and money saved on herbicides, pesticides, equipment, and new plants; it's a win-win situation.

Native plant sources include the following:

- Maryland Native Plant Society at <http://mdflora.org/>
- Bay Scapes at <http://www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/bayscapes.htm>
- Plant Conservation Alliance at <http://www.nps.gov/plants/>
- National Park Service at <http://www.nps.gov/plants/pubs/chesapeake/index.htm>

## Community supports wildlife habitat

A Woodland Hills community group has started the process of securing registration with the National Wildlife Federation and is seeking residents to participate in this effort. Registration is the first step in the process to certify Woodland Hills as a community wildlife habitat.

During the community wildlife habitat certification process, residents will learn about sustainable gardening practices, such as using native plants, reducing or eliminating chemical fertilizers and pesticides, conserving water, and removing and/or controlling invasive plants.

## Community supports wildlife habitat

(continued)

Benefits resulting from creating a community wildlife habitat include the following:

- ***Eradication of non-native invasive plants***—non-native invasive plants are bad for the environment. They displace our native plants and provide less than optimal habitat for wildlife. Some examples of non-native plants are bamboo, periwinkle, Japanese stilt grass, garlic mustard and Asiatic bittersweet.
- ***Increased use of native plants***—Native plants have evolved in this area along with the wildlife that depends on them. Native plants are generally more pest and disease resistant and require less water and fertilizer once established.
- ***Resources for wildlife***—Plants that replace turf areas provide food, cover and places for wildlife to raise their young. A simple birdbath can be added to provide water for wildlife.

If you are interested in participating as a habitat team member and helping Woodland Hills with this certification process, please contact Pam Sonnevile at 301-869-4460 or by e-mail at [pamsonnevile@verizon.net](mailto:pamsonnevile@verizon.net).



A barred owl was spotted in a tree on Wye Mill Court. Its call sounds like “who cooks for me.”

**Community supports wildlife habitat**

(continued)

Barred Owls, like most owls, are not very active during the day. They stay in their nests until night, when they come out to hunt. Barred Owls have excellent night vision and hearing to locate prey.

Barred Owls eat a large variety of prey, including: mice, voles, shrews, moles, rats, squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, opossums, bats, birds (including smaller owls), frogs, salamanders, lizards, snakes, crayfish, insects, slugs, and fish.



**Monarch caterpillar** on milkweed spotted on Wye Mill Court

Monarch caterpillars do only eat plants in the Milkweed family (*Asclepias* spp), so if we want to help them out in our wildlife gardens, we still need to add these plants to our gardens.

Monarch caterpillars do not feed on tomato plants, despite what may seem like circumstantial evidence to the contrary.

**Resident plant experts volunteer to help**

Need assistance making plant, shrub and tree choices for your garden? Woodland Hills is fortunate to have at least two resident plant experts who have volunteered their services to community residents seeking suggestions for appropriate plant choices.

**Resident plant experts volunteer to help**

(continued)

Carolyn Oakford, a 24-year Woodland Hills homeowner on High Timber Court, is a Master Gardener, certified by the University of Maryland, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension. She has always had an interest in gardening and belongs to St. John’s Garden Club (Aspen Hill). She volunteers with the Asbury Methodist Village therapeutic gardening program and works the Master Gardener’s garden at the Montgomery County Fair. She is engaged in continuing education, community outreach and hopes to pursue further education in landscape design. Contact Carolyn at 301-869-9695 or by e-mail at [caoakford210@aol.com](mailto:caoakford210@aol.com).

Pam Sonnevile, a 23-year Woodland Hills homeowner on Wye Mill Court, is a member of the Maryland Native Plant Society and Montgomery Village Garden Club. She has participated in numerous conferences at Millersville University (PA) and the US National Arboretum regarding using native plants to create a more sustainable landscape and assisted Asbury Methodist Village with their Habitat Certification project. She has Weed Warrior and Urban Tree Steward Certifications with Montgomery County Parks. Contact Pam at 301-869-4460 or by e-mail at [pamsonnevile@verizon.net](mailto:pamsonnevile@verizon.net). If you need to replace a tree, she often has lower-cost options available.



Pam Sonnevile and Carolyn Oakford

## Community Listserv now available

In order to quickly disseminate news or information on items affecting our community, we have added a community listserv program. Please subscribe to the Woodland Hills listserv by accessing [www.WoodlandHillsMD.com](http://www.WoodlandHillsMD.com) and click on the “News” button. A link is provided directly to the subscription page for the listserv.

Also new to [www.WoodlandHillsMD.com](http://www.WoodlandHillsMD.com) is automatic submission for your **Requests for Alteration to Property**. If you click on the “News” button, you will also find a direct link to the online submission. You will still need to mail, deliver or e-mail any design drawings or supporting material to the property manager, but your initial request can now be submitted online. Online submission is also available by clicking the “Agreements” button on the main page. Also available under “Agreements” is the original submission form which can now be filled out online and printed/mailed or saved as a PDF and e-mailed.

As always, approved Board of Directors meeting minutes and various contact information is also available at [www.WoodlandHillsMD.com](http://www.WoodlandHillsMD.com).

## Reduce pesticide use

One of the most important steps in developing a healthy backyard or garden is to “make peace with insects.” Because insects make up a large portion of songbird, amphibian and small mammal diets, they are vital to your garden’s healthy biodiversity.

Without a variety of these natural garden inhabitants, our gardens remain silent and non-productive. They are essentially crippled and unable to provide the environmental benefits they are capable of providing.

Too often when we spot that first aphid or other “pest,” our instinct is to grab the pesticide. The healthier approach is to allow a certain amount of the pest population to establish itself. When this is done, we are rolling out the welcome mat for their natural predators, including ladybugs and lacewings.

These beneficial insects will “naturally” exterminate the pesky insects and the need for artificial pesticides is essentially eliminated.

## Reduce pesticide use (continued)

Another problem with pesticides is that most are indiscriminate. They may exterminate your targeted pest; however, at the same time, they will also kill all of the good insects that help your garden function.

A good example of this is grub control. When a grub control pesticide is used, anywhere from 60-90% of the earthworms (and other decomposers) are killed. Exterminating earthworms and other unseen ground dwellers breaks down good soil health. For more specific information on practicing eco-friendly pest control in your garden, contact the [Montgomery County Cooperative Extension Office](#) for the services of a Master Gardener or check with one of our own resident experts.

## Why do we leave the snags?

Leaving dead or dying trees where they stand is another way to help local wildlife. Although some are concerned that these “snags” are a sign of forest ill health, this is rarely the case. Instead, snags are part of the natural forest life cycle that provides habitat for animals and then returns nutrients stored in the tree to the soil. Snags provide food, shelter, and nesting places for many birds, mammals and other animals.

The benefit of leaving snags is two-fold. Not only does it help support local wildlife, it can also save in the cost of clearing whole trees. Snags are generally left in natural, wooded stands and not in prominent locations where they may be unsafe or unsightly.

### ***Important Community Numbers***

#### ***Gaithersburg City***

Animal Control	301-258-6343
Neighborhood Services	301-258-6340
Planning & Code	301-258.6330
Police Station	301-258-6400
Police-Community Services Office	301-258-6168
Public Works	301-258-6370

#### ***Montgomery County and other services***

Montgomery County Police Gaithersburg/	
Montgomery Village	301-773-5700
PEPCO	202-872-3432