

SUSTAINABLE MERCHANTVILLE

SPRING 2024

Welcome to Sustainable Merchantville - A Small Community with a Big Commitment

This is the second issue of Sustainable Merchantville, a publication highlighting efforts by our town – its Council, organizations, and residents – to make Merchantville a sustainable community. Sustainability means meeting the environmental, social, and economic needs of our community today in a way that considers the impact on future generations. Because of all the good work happening in our beautiful little borough, Merchantville continues to be recognized as a certified and bronze-awarded Sustainable Jersey community. (Learn more about Sustainable Jersey at www.sustainablejersey.com.)

As Merchantville celebrates its 150th anniversary this year with exciting activities that commemorate our past, we are also looking to the future. Our community is taking action to live more sustainably and protect our shared environment, not only for ourselves, but also for future generations. Work is being done everywhere around us, every day, to plant the seeds for a sustainable future.

Delve into this publication to read about residents who are buying electric vehicles, planting vegetable gardens, raising chickens, buying second-hand, composting, and installing solar panels. The children at Merchantville School are learning about gardening, composting, and repurposing plastic caps that aren't easily recycled into artwork. Businesses like The Station offer sustainable, locally produced goods and an amazing group of volunteers have *(Continued on page 2)*



“The Merchantville Mile” - A Small But Key Segment of the Circuit Trails Network

At a little more than a mile, many of you have strolled, jogged, or ridden your bikes along this paved trail, which is laid over railroad tracks that was once the Camden & Burlington Railroad. But did you know that the Merchantville Mile is part of a much larger network of trails that, when complete, will encompass some 800 miles across five counties in Pennsylvania and four in New Jersey? This regional, off-road trail network will provide Merchantville residents of all ages access to jobs, communities, parks, and other recreational opportunities in Camden and Burlington counties, as well as Philadelphia and beyond.

Merchantville's piece of the action began in 2000, when the borough received a \$118,000 grant from the NJ Transportation Trust Fund's Local Aid Program for a bicycle path along the Chestnut Avenue railroad bed, which was completed in 2002. In 2013, the Merchantville Trail was included in an official Camden County Bicycling & Multi-Use Trails Master Plan, designating a 10-mile trail as the Burlington-Camden Trail within the Circuit Trails Network. As one of America's largest trail networks, the Burlington-Camden Trail has been named a priority project by the Circuit Trails Coalition and Camden County. *(Continued on page 2)*

Merchantville Students Nurture Gardens for a Sustainable Merchantville

The Merchantville School's Garden Club has been making remarkable strides towards fostering environmental stewardship and education within our community. The group, led by fifth grade teacher Jennifer Smith, has engaged in several hands-on and educational activities.

- The Garden Club plants and maintains a beautiful garden plot at the Community Garden, working closely with the Merchantville Green Team and Incredible Edible organizations.
- Look for vibrant spring blooms in town – the result of the Garden Club's planting of bulbs! These colorful additions not only enhance the beauty of our community but also contribute to the local ecosystem,



MES Garden Club's vertical tower assembled and ready to plant, thanks to IE Merchantville.

- providing essential resources for pollinators and fostering biodiversity.
- Last year, the Garden Club set up and planted a vertical container garden with cherry tomatoes, which was purchased by Incredible Edible (IE) Merchantville. IE believes that reviving *(Continued on page 2)*

Beautify Merchantville While Saving Costs: Create a Meadow

When was the last time you passed by a meadow filled with flowers and plants in their natural habitat? You may soon experience such a sight at the Merchantville Community Center.

The Green Team is seeking approval from the Town Council to dedicate a section of lawn at the Community Center as a meadow, returning it to its natural state. It would become Merchantville's first meadow created in a public space. The idea is to replace a previously mowed and managed lawn area into a native habitat that attracts pollinators, adds visual interest, and creates a more sustainable environment. This takes the concept of “No Mow May” (a trend started in the U.K. in 2019 to leave lawns un-mowed during the month of May as habitat and food source for early-season pollinators) to the next level. According to Kerry Mentzer, a member of both the Green Team and the Garden Club, “the difference is that un-mowed lawns can look unmaintained whereas a meadow looks intentional and still fulfills the goal of reduced fuel use and reduced labor hours from mowing.”

Indeed, research has shown that consistently mowed lawns can diminish biodiversity as they don't provide vital food for pollinators. The benefits of the proposed meadow are *(Continued on page 4)*

Considering an Electric Car? Hear What Experienced EV Owners in Merchantville Have to Say

Electric vehicles, typically referred to as EVs, are making inroads into the automotive market, making up about 7.6% of current new car sales in the U.S. Merchantville resident Kerry Miller is an EV owner. In this article, she shares her experience as well as those of her neighbors who also drive EVs.

I have been a contented electric car owner since 2012. Twelve years without going to a gas station! No oil changes or tune-ups. No greenhouse gas emissions. No engine noise. Dependable. Fun to drive. For me, switching to an EV was a long-awaited thrill, something that addressed my interest in both efficiency and environmental protection. But the decision to make the switch on a personal level is still a question mark for many people.

In my Merchantville neighborhood, there are at least five plug-in electric cars within a one-block radius. I spoke with four EV owners/drivers for this article. The vehicles they drive are an assortment of brands and ages – Volkswagen, Tesla, Subaru, and Hyundai. Mine is a Nissan. Their EVs span in age from one year to six, with EPA-rated driving ranges of between 170 and 300 miles. Three are leased, mine and one other are owned.

The number one concern about entering the world of EV driving is RANGE. How far can I go? How often and where will I charge? Will I be stranded? Interestingly, range is an issue that drivers of combustion vehicles also face (that's why cars have gas gauges) but they are so accustomed to it that they don't perceive it as an impediment.

All the drivers I spoke with find that they do not get the full EPA-rated range from their vehicle; it tends to be roughly 10-20% *(Continued on page 2)*

Welcome to Sustainable Merchantville

(continued from page 1)

revitalized our local outdoor market, Market Off Centre.

There are so many opportunities to support and contribute to Merchantville’s ongoing success as a sustainable community: shop locally at our second-hand stores downtown, pick up

free tree saplings at The Station on April 27th, plant native pollinators, reduce trash by composting food waste, and get involved with one of the many sustainable organizations you’ll find listed in this publication. Stay tuned for more action as the town explores opportunities like planting tiny forests, installing charging stations, evaluating community solar, establishing native meadows, and focusing on energy savings.

Creating a Tiny Forest in Merchantville Improves Town’s Tree Cover

Existing urban and community areas are losing tree cover at a rate equivalent to approximately 36 million trees annually across the United States, according to The Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Closer to home, Merchantville continues to lose trees at an alarming rate due to flooding, drought, pests, cut roots, as well as intentional removal.

Efforts to replace lost trees range from investing in our town’s Shade Tree budget to planting seedlings distributed by The Shade Tree Federation to residents investing their own funds. Despite these efforts, Merchantville’s tree loss continues to surpass its tree gain.

Tiny forests are a creative option to replace our lost tree canopy utilizing a small area of land. These densely planted plots provide much of the environmental benefits that larger forests provide, helping to mitigate the problems that arise from a reduced tree canopy such as loss of habitat, shade, and water absorption.

The Miyawaki Method, devised by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, is a technique for reforestation whereby a small space is densely planted with native trees and understory (underlying layer of vegetation in a forest or wooded area), and the soil supplemented to feed the newly establishing planting. The first couple of years require some care, including the removal of any invasive weeds and non-natives and regular watering. But once established, the tiny forest will sustain itself.

The Shade Tree Commission, in partnership with the Green Team, is planning a tiny forest along the bike path in a relatively barren stretch of land, west of Browning Road. Fulfillment of the project is subject to funding and approval by local officials. If the project moves forward, soils will be amended in the first year. The plan would be finalized during that time and in the second and third years, the establishment of a tiny forest would take place, resulting in many years going forward of beauty and bounty for Merchantville.

“Merchantville Mile”

(continued from page 1)

In the fall of 2023, work was completed to extend the trail into Pennsauken, via the Merchantville-Pennsauken Multi-Use Trail Project. The trail begins at the eastern end of the Merchantville Bike Path at Cove Road and extends approximately a third of a mile into Pennsauken, terminating just

before an existing abandoned railroad trestle bridge over the NJ Transit Atlantic City Line. Future plans have the trail continuing from this point into Maple Shade.

Next up, however, is to connect the western side of the trail to Camden, beginning at Euclid Ave in Pennsauken, crossing Route 130 over an existing train trestle, and continuing into Camden where it will connect to an already completed section that leads to the Delaware River. The design for this segment is currently being finalized by the City of Camden. An Open House was scheduled to be held on Saturday, March 30th to inform residents about the Burlington-Camden Trail, answer questions, and get feedback from the community. Groundbreaking is expected to begin in the latter part of this year.

Although one of the smallest segments of the Circuit, the Merchantville Mile is a well-loved and well-used route that will continue to serve the residents of Merchantville as well as ensure greater equity in trail access across the region. Visit <https://circuittrails.org> to learn more.

Merchantville Students

(continued from page 1)

our hands-on knowledge of food – how to grow, cook, and preserve – is essential to a sustainable future. The Garden Club is considering moving the vertical garden to the kindergarten playground so that younger students can be involved in its care.

- A hands-on educational journey exploring the diverse world of herbs took place last fall. Students gained not only practical gardening skills, but also developed a deeper appreciation for the natural world and importance of sustainable practices.
- Students have learned the importance of composting and participated in a hands-on workshop led by environmental scientist Ron Smith.
- IE Merchantville founder Joan Brennan plans to join the club at their April 25th meeting to share the story of the “Anywhere Farm” book by Phyllis Root and IE Merchantville’s award winning Innovative Action video presented by Sustainable Jersey in 2021.

Merchantville School is happy to announce that, with the help of the Merchantville Green Team, it has officially registered with the Sustainable Jersey for Schools organization. This significant step underscores the school’s commitment to sustainability and sets the stage for further collaborative efforts to promote environmental awareness and action within our schools and beyond.

Looking ahead, the school is preparing to write its first grant proposal to support its first sustainable project. This marks a pivotal moment in the school’s journey towards creating a greener, more sustainable future for Merchantville. With the support of our community and the dedication of its students, Merchantville School is confident that it can make a meaningful impact and inspire positive change!

Considering an Electric Car?

(continued from page 1)

less. The EPA range figure is a controlled average, weighted toward city driving. This does not reflect real-life driving, which is highly variable. The range of an EV is affected by the type of driving (city vs highway), ambient temperature, and the use of heat and air conditioning. Electric vehicles

get less range at higher speeds and at low temperatures, more range at lower speeds and stop-and-go driving.

Like knowing when it’s time to “gas up” a conventional car, an EV driver quickly learns when to charge. The neighborhood drivers I spoke with were uniformly not stressed by their range in everyday use because they have established a pattern of charging that doesn’t generally bring them close to low. EVs sold today tell drivers where charging stations are and how many, if any, cars are ahead of them. This is very useful for long-distance travel. One driver I spoke with took a trip to upstate New York, planning on one fast charge stop but needed two and did encounter some congestion at one of the public charging stations.

Of the drivers I interviewed, only one uses public charging stations exclusively. She has incorporated the ones she uses into her routine, and charges twice a week or so. She also enjoys socializing with EV drivers while she charges! The other drivers generally charge at home. Three plug in to a regular household outlet (120 volts), (Continued on page 3)

free saplings - seed/plant swap

Saturday, April 27th, 9:30AM-12:00PM

@THE STATION COFFEE

Merchantville GREEN TEAM

Considering an Electric Car?

(continued from page 2)

using the charger cord that came with their vehicle. Overnight does it for them. The Tesla driver has a 240-volt outlet (like what one uses for an electric dryer) installed on the house, which, with the Tesla charging cord, provides a faster (Level 2) charge.

The Tesla driver has the greatest range and Tesla has the largest network of public chargers. That owner has taken long-distance trips along the east coast with no problem, getting partial charges in the time it takes to get a cup of coffee and use the facilities at a rest stop. The other drivers with smaller ranges are comfortable staying with day trips. My nine-year-old Leaf, the dinosaur of the group, is strictly for local driving, but most days that's enough. My 50-mile daily round trip to work was a perfect match, with a comfortable range left for errands and detours. In my experience, a lot of day-to-day driving to work, school and errands is predictable and habitual, so the trick is to select a car and a charging routine that fits your usage.

All but one of the drivers I interviewed are two-car families, including mine. This is a big caveat, as the other gas-powered car is available for long trips if there is a concern that charging on the road would be a problem. All of the drivers also have driveways. People without driveway access will need to use public charging stations, which may or may not be as convenient, or as inexpensive (though still much cheaper than gasoline). The charging network is a prime target of current government funding programs and the number of charging stations should increase substantially in 2024-25.

For those interested in an EV but apprehensive, leasing is a good way to test the waters. My first Nissan Leaf was a lease, and it gave me an opportunity to confirm that EV ownership was for me. Leasing may also offer tax incentive/rebate reductions, which are taken off the top before the lease price is calculated. One EV driver I spoke with noted that, in her experience, not all salespeople at auto dealerships are highly knowledgeable (or enthusiastic) about electric vehicles. She recommends YouTube videos from users and EV nerds as a good source of information.

An Ingenious Recycle-to-Art Project

This year, the Merchantville School's Green Team is collaborating with the school's Art Club to create an environmentally conscious art project. The team's dedicated members have been hard at work collecting thousands of plastic bottle caps brought into each homeroom. The idea is simple: instead of allowing these bottle caps to contribute to environmental pollution, the students are repurposing them into beautiful works of art.

The response from the school community has been overwhelming. Students, teachers, parents, and staff rallied behind the initiative, bringing bags filled to the brim with bottle caps of all shapes and colors. It was inspiring to witness everyone coming together for a common cause – to promote sustainability and creativity within our school.

These thousands of bottle caps diligently collected will now find a new life as they become integral components in the Art Club's upcoming art project. This project will serve as a powerful symbol of the community's commitment to sustainability. Each bottle cap tells a story of responsible consumption and recycling, reminding us of the importance of reducing our environmental footprint.

The Merchantville School's Green Team and Art Club extend their heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to this initiative. Together, the students are demonstrating that small actions can lead to big positive changes for our planet. Going forward, they plan to continue to seek out opportunities to make a positive impact on the environment and inspire others to do the same. Every bottle cap collected, every artwork created, brings us one step closer to a greener, more sustainable future.

MODELS WANTED!

The **PRIDE** *at* **peak** *Fashion Show*



MERCHANTVILLE, NJ
SATURDAY, JUNE 1ST
ALL AGES, NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

SCAN TO SIGN UP OR EMAIL
peaksecondhand@gmail.com



Does an EV save money? The big savings is related to maintenance. The cost of tune-ups and oil changes over the life of a gas-powered car really adds up, and EVs need none of that. Additionally, the cost of electricity is also much less than gassing up, by half or more if you charge at home. For the EV drivers I spoke with, the change in their electric bills was not eye-popping, or even very noticeable. I select renewably generated electricity through PSE&G's green power choice; even with a premium of 4 cents per kilowatt-hour, powering my car adds only an estimated \$25-\$30 per month to my bill. An electric motor is energy-efficient, getting over 100 miles per gallon equivalent (MPGe) from the electricity it uses.

Electric cars are extremely dependable, need no 'warm up' to start, and are quite peppy off the line. I am a relaxed driver for the most part, but sometimes merging into traffic requires one to put the hammer down, and an electric motor provides instant torque when you want it. The drivers I spoke with all agreed that driving an EV is just fun! I concur.

The Merchantville Home Tour Committee is Pleased to Present a Porch & Garden Tour
Saturday, August 24 from 10:00am to 4:00pm

Explore some of Merchantville's Loveliest Gardens, Beautiful Porches, Enjoy Live Demonstrations throughout the Borough, and so much more...



TICKETS ON SALE SOON!

\$20 Per Ticket - Purchases Will Be Online Only

All Proceeds to Benefit the Beautification of Downtown Merchantville and the Garden Club

Merchantville Events 2024

February
9: S'more to Love
29: Merchantville History Night

March
20: Community Round Up
23: Egg Hunt, Merchantville Community Center

April
20: MBPA Mutt Strut
27: Green Team Seed/Plant Swap

May
3: Market Off Centre
10: Art Walk, Hosted by Eilandarts
18: 150th Anniversary Parade and Downtown Dinner Party
19: 150th Anniversary Celebration, Wellwood Park
27: Memorial Day ceremony, Wellwood Park

June
4: Merchantville & Peak's Pride Day
7: Market Off Centre/Merchantville
19: Juneteenth, Wellwood Park

July
5: Market Off Centre


August
2: Market Off Centre
6: National Night Out, Merchantville Community Center
24: Porch & Garden Home Tour

September
6: Market Off Centre
14: Town Wide Yard Sale
21: Music Fest

October
Fridays: Spooky Story Time at the Witch's house
4: Market Off Centre
12: Monster Mash Bash, Merchantville Community Center
26: Zombie Run

November
30: Small Business Saturday

December
6: Holiday Parade
7: Holiday Home Tour
14: Breakfast with Santa Visits with Santa



MerchantvilleNJ.gov

Create a Meadow

(continued from page 1)

financial as well as aesthetic: it will reduce maintenance costs for the town by decreasing the area mowed by the Department of Public Works, it means fewer pollutants from the gas-powered lawn mowers seeping into the land and produce at the Community Garden, and it will provide a low-maintenance way to efficiently absorb the standing water that tends to pool in that area.

Over the past few years, the Green Team has created several pollinator gardens along the bike path. Where there was once flat grass that required regular mowing, there are now areas of plants and flowering shrubs that attract birds and butterflies. In addition, the Green Team has worked with the Garden Club to create a pollinator garden at the Community Center. That project was born out of the need to redirect substantial rainstorm runoff coming from the direction of the golf course into a space that can absorb the water. The result is a mini ecosystem that allows native plants to protect the area from severe weather while attracting pollinators that, in turn, boost the growth of the herbs, flowering plants, and vegetables in the nearby community.

The Green Team wants to follow these successes with the creation of a community meadow in an area that is now mowed lawn. The area identified for this project (see "Area for proposed meadow" photo) was selected because it receives lots of natural sunlight while the ground tends to be soggy. The native plants envisioned for the meadow will provide a natural and effective drainage system while adding beauty and interest. This undertaking requires some patience as meadows don't reach full bloom overnight. The area may simply develop on its own or it may require some additional seeding - either way, it will be closely monitored by the Green Team. Mentzer envisions a path going through the meadow (see "Proposed Meadow" photo) to allow residents to walk through and enjoy the beauty of the natural habitat as it unfolds.

The Green Team will present the official proposal to the Town Council at an upcoming public meeting. If approved, steps will begin this spring to turn what is now an unattractive and wet grassy area into a striking jumble of native plants and flowers that attract pollinators, creating both an aesthetic and financial benefit to the community.



Area for proposed meadow at Community Center



Conceptual rendering of proposed meadow

The Merchantville Co-op is Leading the Charge Toward Local Sustainability

In a world where environmental concerns loom large, the most effective way to achieve sustainability is right here within our local communities.

The Merchantville Co-op strives to do just that. This volunteer-led group is planning for a hometown grocery store with modern conveniences and organic options for Merchantville and its neighboring towns. The Co-op envisions a space where all are welcome to stop by and shop for organic produce, homemade treats, and other goodies, all sourced from local farmers and suppliers.

A Co-op, short for Cooperative, is an organization that is owned and operated by its members. These members could be customers, employees, producers, or a combination! Co-ops are inherently sustainable – they source from local producers, minimize waste, engage the community, and govern democratically, ensuring all decisions are made collectively by its members.

The Merchantville Co-op is gearing up for its first volunteer meeting, set for Sunday, April 28 from 4-5 p.m. at the Community Room of the Pennsauken Public Library, located at 5606 N Crescent Blvd, Pennsauken, NJ 08110. All are welcome and encouraged to stop by and join the conversation about the Co-op's priorities and volunteer needs.

If you or someone you know is interested in lending a hand to or joining the Co-op, please reach out to Brigid at 08109coop@gmail.com.

It's All About the Right Tree in the Right Space!

Ensuring that the right tree is in the right place is one of the many important duties of the Merchantville Shade Tree Commission. The Commission is a volunteer organization that plants and maintains all trees in Merchantville that are between the curb and sidewalk or within the borough right of way areas without sidewalks as well as public trees in parks or on municipal property. It also reviews all resident applications for work on borough trees including planting, trimming, and removal and administers the Memorial Tree Program.

Decisions about Merchantville's tree population stem from guidelines and ongoing education provided by the New Jersey Shade Tree Federation, whose mission is to educate municipalities, professionals in the tree industry, and the public on the care and maintenance of shade trees. The Commission also uses data in its decisions that was collected five years ago during a comprehensive inventory of Merchantville's trees.

Armed with this information, the commissioners have recently developed planting guidelines for new trees, making a strong effort to plant only natives or nativars, and for removing older, compromised trees. Native trees are ones that originate within a specific region. Nativars are cultivated from a straight species/wildtype native plant to enhance a particular characteristic. An example would be a native plant that has been cultivated to enhance color or size or other features. In the past two years, the Commission has planted upwards of 25 young trees, including the generous donation of three pawpaw trees planted at the Community Center and another 22 trees along curb strips, which include native dogwoods, redbuds, and sourwoods.

The Merchantville Shade Tree Commission has been in existence (Continued on page 7)

**MERCHANTVILLE'S
150TH ANNIVERSARY
WEEKEND
MAY 18-19, 2024**

BOROUGH BEAUTIFUL PARADE
May 18, 10am
MAPLE AND PARK AVE

DINNER EN BLUE
May 18, 6:30PM
E. CHESTNUT AVE

150TH BIRTHDAY IN THE PARK
May 19, 12PM-4PM
WELLWOOD PARK

Scan for more information:

Info@Merchantvillenj.gov
MerchantvilleNJ.gov
@MerchantvilleNJ



Shepherding Merchantville’s Future Through the Power of Food: Incredible Edible Celebrates Five Years

Incredible Edible Merchantville marks its 5th anniversary this year as it continues on its mission to advance individual land stewardship actions that support food security, promote good health, foster sustainable living and harness the power and potential of residents.

It all began in February 2019, when a core group of “green-friendly” residents developed a ten-year plan, modeled after Incredible Edible UK, aimed at curbing the environmental and socioeconomic factors that pose long-term risks to community wellness and sustainability. Several local organizations and businesses supported the effort, including Merchantville’s Green Team, Garden Club, Shade Tree Commission, Merchantville School’s Garden and Naturalist’s Clubs, Eclipse Brewing, The Station Coffee, Tri-County Sustainability Alliance, SJ Seed Circle Library and Master Gardeners of Camden County. With the Borough’s blessing, this experiment in food activism and community resilience took off.

Over the past five years, Incredible Edible Merchantville has had a long list of accomplishments, some of which include the establishment and care of pollinator, sunflower, vegetable, and herb gardens throughout town, understory pawpaw plantings in Wellwood Park, seed and plant exchanges, clean-up days, produce sharing at monthly farmers’ markets, and collecting and distributing produce donations to community food pantries and restaurants.

Most recently, the organization held a Knit-a-Thon at Eclipse Brewing, where on a Saturday in March, a team of Merchantville knitters and crocheters pored over yarns for 10 hours to raise funds for Feeding America, World Central Kitchen, No Kid Hungry, and Meals on Wheels.

Upcoming plans and events in 2024 include:

- Building an interactive walk-along story and student presentation to engage, educate and train our youth about food security.
- Completing a digital site map to plot the Borough’s sustainable landscapes. This will also include all of the Borough’s past and current sustainable partner actions and projects in a digital format for the municipality to share with community and use for future planning.
- Seeking grant funds to obtain monies for the Stockton Maple Project and the Healing Garden at Wellwood Park.
- Collaborating with the Green Team and Shade Tree Commission on plans for a “tiny forest.”
- Co-hosting a plant/seed/sapling sharing day in April, Wellwood Park clean-up in May, and a Sustainability Social in June.

Incredible Edible Merchantville holds monthly meetings and can be found on Facebook for those wishing to follow and participate in its activities. New members are welcomed! Contact Joan Brennan at 609-221-2365 or email incredibleediblemerchantville@gmail.com.

Where Neighbors Meet & Shop

The Merchantville Market Off Centre is back this spring for another wonderful season on The Mile! With opening day quickly approaching, the team of community volunteers has been hard at work behind the scenes, getting things ready for the 2024 season!

For those new in town, Market Off Centre takes place on the first Friday of the month, May to October, from 5-8pm. It is located downtown on the bike path between Eclipse Brewery and The Station. This year there is a special pop-up holiday market happening on Friday, November 15th.

Marketgoers enjoy live music provided by The Station, food trucks like Red’s Rolling Restaurant, kids crafts and other activities and, of course, a wide variety of handmade products from local vendors, which can include items like soap, candles, plants, jewelry, crystals, art, specialty baked goods,

fresh produce, crafts and more!

Merchantville’s own Green Team

and Incredible Edible organizations are always on hand with the latest information on sustainability activities and often have local products available. The Market Off Centre team is always eager to recruit additional local farms with fresh produce and vendors. Please feel free to forward any local farm contacts or interested vendors to the team via email at marketoffcentre@gmail.com.

Mark your calendar for this year’s opening night on Friday, May 3rd at 5pm. The market is a great opportunity to meet up with neighbors and get to know other Merchantville residents. Strolling and shopping in the market every month supports our participating local businesses and helps this very special community event to thrive.

2024 Market dates & entertainment line-up can be found in the adjacent ad.

Special thanks to this year’s committed market volunteer team: Janeen Hovnanian, Carolyn Busa, Katherine Carpenter, Jaimee Solar, Diana Funk, and Amanda Falkiewicz - all are local Merchantville residents and/or business owners.

MERCHANTVILLE MARKET OFF CENTRE

2024 MARKET SEASON

MAY - OCTOBER

Email Us!
marketoffcentre@gmail.com

**N. CENTRE ST.
+ CHESTNUT AVE,
MERCHANTVILLE, NJ**

SPONSORED BY

ENTERTAINMENT LINE-UP

MAY 3RD - TOM GUGGINO
JUNE 7TH - SWEET SPOT
JULY 5TH - TOM GUGGINO
AUGUST 2ND - HEART AND SOUL
SEPTEMBER 6TH - BRIAN KMETZ
OCTOBER 4TH - LOST IN BRUNSWICK
NOVEMBER 15TH - HEART AND SOUL

Events and Support

150th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, May 18
10am: Borough Beautiful Parade, Maple Ave to Park and Centre Ave. Celebrate the Borough Beautiful’s rich history with a sesquicentennial parade through town. Marching bands, floats, mummers, dance troupes and more lead the caravan through Merchantville’s downtown to mark the momentous occasion.

7pm: Founders’ Night, Centre St. A soiree fit for the founders takes center stage in the downtown. Dine on specialty meal packages from Merchantville eateries and dance under the stars at this once in a sesquicentennial affair. Tickets required, 21 and over.

Sunday, May 19
1pm-4pm: Wellwood Park. Bring the family for an old-fashioned Merchantville birthday party! Enjoy a picnic in the park, relay races, pie eating contests and other fun games. Don’t miss your chance to sink the Mayor in the dunk tank!

Give Your Support

Sponsorship Levels:	Conductor \$500-	Steam Engine \$200	Caboose \$100
Recognition on plaque included with the 150th Anniversary commemoration gift	★	★	★
Complimentary tickets and choice of meal package to the Downtown Dinner Party	2 Tickets	1 Ticket	
Complimentary copy of the Merchantville Cookbook	★	★	★

Your generous gift preserves Merchantville’s history for generations to come. Through sesquicentennial projects, efforts to maintain the Borough Beautiful’s character including historical preservation and streetscaping can be brought to fruition.

Volunteers wanted!
Please email info@merchantvillenj.gov for information on how YOU can help bring Merchantville’s Sesquicentennial Celebration to life!

Sustainable Merchantville Organizations...

committed to sustainability, resilience and community

The Borough of Merchantville

Contact: Denise Brouse, Borough Clerk
 Email: denisebrouse1@merchantvillenj.gov
 Facebook: boroughofmerchantville
 Website: https://www.merchantvillenj.gov

The Borough, mayor, council and support staff are all committed to a more sustainable Merchantville and are proud to be a Sustainable Jersey bronze certified community. We support the many residents and volunteers who promote and model sustainable action in our community.

The Merchantville Green Team

Leader: Dorothy Foley
 Email: sustainablemerchantville@gmail.com
 Facebook: merchantvillegreenteam

Working towards a more sustainable and resilient Merchantville, we are powered by committed volunteers, supported by our local government, and partners with neighboring communities and Sustainable Jersey to build a better future. Meetings: every 2nd Tuesday, 7pm, at Eclipse Brewing.

Incredible Edible Merchantville

Leader: Joan Brennan
 Email: incredibleediblemerchantville@gmail.com
 Website: merchantville.com/eco/stewardship
 Facebook: imerchantville
 Instagram: ie_merchantville
 Twitter: imerchantville

Nurturing environmental land stewardship in Merchantville through small actions that connect our community through the creation of edible landscapes that promote and support a culture of healthy living, food security and a sustainable future. "Creating a kind, confident and connected community through the power of food." (quote by Pam Warhurst, founder of Incredible Edible movement)

Merchantville Garden Club

Contact: Kerry Mentzer
 Email: kmentzer@me.com
 Contact: Kerry Miller
 Email: millerhuddell@yahoo.com

Garden Club members plant, water, and maintain public garden spaces throughout the borough including along the walking path, in Morrissey and Wellwood Parks, and hanging baskets and streetside planters in commercial areas. Hosts spring Plant Swap. Meetings: as needed ad hoc in spring for planning.

The Merchantville Shade Tree Commission

Commission members: Alice Diamond, Lynn Geddes, Alexis Degan, John Feldan, Pearson Barlow
 Email: shadetree@merchantvillenj.gov

The Commission is a volunteer organization that plants and maintains all trees in Merchantville that are between the curb and sidewalk or within the borough right of way areas without sidewalks as well as public trees in parks or on municipal property. It also reviews all resident applications for work on borough trees including planting, trimming, and removal and administers the Memorial Tree Program.

Merchantville Organic Community Garden

Contacts: Kerry Mentzer / Dorothy Foley
 Email: merchantvillecommunitygarden@gmail.com
 Facebook: merchantvilleorganiccommunitygarden

A community garden on the grounds of the Merchantville Community Center, providing plots to residents and the Merchantville Elementary School for organic gardening. The area includes a three-bin composting system, native pollinator habitat, and native pawpaw fruit trees. We donate excess produce to local food pantries.

Merchantville Backyard Chickens

Leader: Jaclyn Ricci
 Email: jricci505@gmail.com
 Facebook: groups/MerchantvilleBackyardChickens

Local residents of Merchantville and Pennsauken learn about the joys of backyard chickens, exchanging tips on feed, housing, fresh eggs, insect control, garden benefits and more.

Market Off Centre

Contacts: Janeen Hovnanian, Carolyn Busa, Katherine Carpenter, Jaimee Solar, Diana Funk, Amanda Falkiewicz
 Email: marketoffcentre@gmail.com

Merchantville Market Off Centre is a volunteer-based and community-run monthly market supporting and promoting local farmers, crafters, artists, and more. The season runs every first Friday, May - October from 5pm - 8pm, with a new special holiday market happening in mid-November. The market takes place on The Mile, between Eclipse Brewery and The Station.

Diversity Committee

Leader: Ruby Delarosa
 Email: ruby.gonzalez0713@gmail.com

Merchantville Diversity Committee (MDC) is a quasi-governmental body dedicated to connecting and supporting neighbors, businesses, and institutions to shape Merchantville into a community of greater diversity, equity, and inclusion. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 7pm, Borough Hall, 1st floor conference room.

Junior Green Team

Leader: Sherry Ianucci, Merchantville Elementary School (MES)
 Email: siannucci@merchantville.k12.nj.us

Focus is on educating and engaging the school community on actions that teach and inspire change in all areas of environmental sustainability. Students meet to discuss the importance of being environmentally responsible and work on projects that foster a closer connection to nature and each other.

Junior Garden Club

Leader: Jennifer Smith, Merchantville Elementary School
 Email: smith@merchantville.k12.nj.us

Student gardeners take care of their own garden plot at the Merchantville Community Garden. They learn how to weed, plant cover crops, vegetables, and flowers and the importance of pollinators and soil health for a healthy garden.

Scouts

Scoutmaster: Shawn Waldron
 Email: Troop119Merchantville@gmail.com
 Website: https://sites.google.com/view/troop119nj

The boys and girls troops meet separately and are open to all kids ages 11-18. The troops participate in an active outdoor program where the goal is to have one activity a month whether it be camping, community service, or just a day trip. The scouts learn leadership, citizenship, and organizational skills while having a great time with friends. The troops are chartered by the American Legion Post 68. Girls troop meets Tuesday nights, 7:15-9pm; Boys troop meets Thursday nights, 7:15 -9 pm; both troops meet at Trinity United Methodist.

Merchantville Business Association

Leader: Carolyn Busa
 Email: shopmerchantville@gmail.com

The Merchantville Business and Professional Association (MBPA) aims to promote, advocate for, and empower local downtown businesses.

Public Events Committee

Contact: Sean Fitzgerald
 Email: sfitzgerald@merchantvillenj.gov

The Merchantville Public Events Committee strives to create engaging events for the community. Comprised of residents, the committee operates in tandem with Borough officials to offer a robust calendar of events for residents and visitors including the annual Holiday Parade, Easter Egg Hunt, Town Wide Yard Sale, and Merchantville's famous "Monsterville" events in October. Reach out to Sean if you are interested in volunteering.

Love in Motion Youth Group

Leaders: Christina Aman / Kristin Fitzgerald
 Email: loveinmotionyouthgroup@gmail.com
 Facebook: loveinmotionyouthgroup
 Instagram: loveinmotionyouthgroup

Love in Motion is a secular youth volunteer group that brings young people together to give back and be a part of something bigger than themselves. We create opportunities for kids to do charitable work and address community needs. All kids are welcome to be part of a diverse and open-minded group with the intention of learning about one another and being the change we hope to see in the world. We have at least one volunteer opportunity a month.

MERCHANTVILLE MUTT STRUTT

All pets welcome to strut their stuff on the runway!

**SATURDAY
APRIL
20th**
RAIN OR SHINE

**CATEGORIES:
-Best Costume
-Smallest -Largest**

HOSTED BY MERCHANTVILLE BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION
#SHOPMERCHANTVILLE

Right Tree in the Right Space

(continued from page 4)

for many years. Given its past and recent efforts, it is not surprising that Merchantville earned the title of "Tree City USA for 40 Years" in 2018, a recognition by the State of New Jersey Forest Service.

When planting curb side trees, the commissioners take into consideration the mature height of the species and its impact on power and cable lines. In general, they avoid planting under power lines as there is a certainty that the new trees will grow into them harming both the tree and the lines. They water and mulch new plantings to ensure a healthy start. They also identify and visually inspect trees that may need to be removed, taking into consideration how much of the tree is dead ($\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$) and again, its encroachment on power lines.

Do you have a question or concern about a tree on or near your property, or need information on trees and trimming specifically for your property? You can reach out to the tree commission via email: shadetree@merchantvillenj.gov. Describe your question, concern, or information need and the specific address. No need to include a photo as a commissioner will always visit the site for a detailed inspection. The Commission is glad to supply you with printed information on how to trim your trees, how to choose a tree for your property, and how to plant it. It also has lists of native trees that do well in smaller spaces and recommends you shop at local nurseries which specialize in native plants.

The Commission also welcomes new members as there is an ongoing need for residents who want to help trim young trees. Experience is nice but not necessary as commissioners will hold training sessions that provide information on procedures and techniques. To join in, reach out to the email cited above.

The current commissioners are Alice Diamond, Lynn Geddes, John Feldman, Alexis Degan, and Pearson Barlow. Ray Woods is the Borough Council liaison.

Composting is Nature's Way of Recycling and A Way to Reduce Garbage

It was a spring evening and we had just finished dinner. Excited about the warmer air that would bring more garden opportunities in the coming days, our conversations moved from spring plantings to tools needed for soil preparation. Speaking of soil, I remembered that I needed to take the food waste from the last couple of days out to our compost bin. The sun had set and I made my way across the garden to the back corner of our yard. I opened the gate, stepped forward and tossed the contents of our stainless-steel bucket onto a heap on the side of our compost station that held the raw ingredients. ~Merchantville resident Ron Smith

The benefits derived from composting are many. Efficient composting leads to a considerable reduction of the weight in the rubbish bins put out weekly. Consider the makeup of a typical trash bin. Given that food waste is heavier by comparison than many of the other things that end up in the trash, one estimate is that between 50% and 75% of the contents (by weight) are often able to be composted. The rich, earthy soil generated by composting will not only serve as a nutrient boost in your garden but will also serve to improve the overall health of your soil - adding moisture holding capacity, providing nourishment for invertebrates and microbes, and setting the stage for a more balanced backyard ecosystem.

A common concern of those who consider composting is a bad smell. If you follow a few simple rules, this will not be an issue and your compost will smell like the rich, earthy soil that it is destined to become.

- Add combinations of dry and wet materials. Leaf litter, cardboard (check for any chemical treatments that may have been applied - avoid using if so) and straw can serve as the dry carbon materials while wet materials are largely produced from your daily food prep. Veggie and fruit scraps, eggs shells, coffee grinds can all be added to the mix.
- If you are lucky enough to have backyard chickens, the pine shavings and chicken poo make a wonderful addition to your compost heap as well.
- Do not add cat or dog waste or meat products and minimize oily materials like butter and vegetable oil.

Mix your compost regularly. You may choose to have two or three adjacent bins as part of your compost station so that you can move the compost from one stage to the next easily. Make this part of your weekly garden chores - it only takes ten minutes to do. If you happen to have backyard chickens, let them explore the compost as they will assist with the core of turnover. As you become a composting pro, you will find come spring and again in the fall, that you will have lovely, healthy, dark, nutrient-laden soil that will make you and your garden happy. And you will be helping the planet as well!

Chicken Adventure

*excerpt from **Adventures in a Backyard Garden** - coming in 2025 from Schiffer Publishing by Merchantville Residents Ron and Lisa Smith*

It was a beautiful early spring morning. A mild overnight temperature allowed us to keep our windows open to enjoy the fresh air and the promise of the approaching garden season. I took a deep breath as the rays of sunlight entered the kitchen. The air was fresh, cool and moist as it filled my lungs. Right on cue another sensory experience brought an immediate smile to my face. Cackles, clucks and squawks from the garden signaled the start to the day. I find it amusing that we are not allowed to keep roosters in our town because of the noise they make around daybreak. Apparently no one told my small flock of hens that a noisy morning was not allowed.

The chickens were celebrating the new day just as I was, albeit in a slightly more raucous fashion. I couldn't help but to let out a chuckle of my own as I knew the neighbors must also be taking in the sounds of our small backyard farm and, for some, may not have been enjoying the wake-up call as much as I was. For the most part our small, quiet street was enhanced by our chickens - many neighbors thrilled to receive the occasional delivery of surplus eggs.

Several years ago when our town passed an ordinance to allow small backyard chicken flocks (I was an active promoter of this movement), I rushed up to the town hall to make sure that I would secure one of the 25 permits that were to be issued for our backyard chicken pilot program. My family teased me when I insisted we hasten up to the borough office to obtain one of the permits for the program. We ended up with permit #6 and only about half of

the available permits were claimed by families in town. Still, I was thrilled to be one of the pioneers and I signed up for the training and made arrangements to pick up our new residents for our garden.

I had done quite a bit of reading on keeping backyard chickens and spoke at length with the farm staff where we would purchase our birds. After the construction of our coop and nesting box, we were ready to pick up our flock. We drove to Far Wind Farm and picked up our young hens.

After a period of several days of keeping the chickens in their new coop so they would connect with their home roost, we gradually allowed them to explore the garden. Everyone in our family was knowledgeable about the care of our chickens and the working of the coop. We had much to learn. In the early days of caring for the flock I became a bit too confident in their daily patterns. One evening I waited too long to confirm their return to the coop and found two of the chickens roosted in the walnut tree above our house. Unable to retrieve them, I woke up early the next morning to offer them a special treat of melon which they immediately descended from their overnight perch to enjoy. I have since become vigilant about the timing of closing the run and coop.

We were also overly optimistic about the chickens meeting our two dogs. Both canines were elderly gentlemen, but we found out that nothing brings out the vim and vigor of an older dog like a tempting flock of hens. Though there was an initial close call (let's just say one of our dogs got a mouthful of feathers), the chickens were all fine after an initial emotional scare. We also found the chickens most ambitious when it came to exploring the gardens. We have had to balance the location of our plants, both flowers and veggies, with the range of our chickens when they are roaming free.

The learning process continues and our family immensely enjoys having the flock enhance our garden. We have shared our egg bounty and chicken experiences with family, friends and neighbors. Membership in the community backyard chicken guild has increased and we often share stories and tips on care and maintenance. Despite the enthusiasm of receiving fresh eggs from our backyard birds, to my knowledge we have not recruited any new backyard chicken practitioners among our family. But we are now life-long backyard chicken owners!

**REGISTRATION
10-10:45AM
STRUT @ 11AM**

**\$5 ENTRY FEE
*PROCEEDS DONATED
TO VOORHEES ANIMAL ORPHANAGE***

**N. CENTRE ST. + CHESTNUT AVE, MERCHANTVILLE, NJ
* SHOPMERCHANTVILLE@GMAIL.COM ***

Home (On Wheels) is Where the Heart Is

Merchantville resident and entrepreneur Patrick Coar, 27, has turned his passion for living simply and his talent for design into a career converting all sorts of vans, and even a bus, into tiny homes on wheels. He has created a booming business doing what he loves and believes in. Best of all, he makes it a routine to spend time living on the road between every conversion. Consequently, in just seven years, he has visited 48 states and explored the entire length of the Baja peninsula, logging at least 125,000 miles visiting some of the most beautiful places in the country. But what he values most about these experiences are the people he meets along the way: he finds they broaden his perspective and teach him that “we are all the same - just humans trying to make it through life based on different circumstances.”

Patrick’s journey into “van life” began when he moved back to Merchantville after attending college and playing rugby in Texas. Inspired by his dream of creating a home-on-wheels and traveling, he immediately started working two jobs and doing handyman work on the side to finance his new business. In his “spare” time, he began working on his first build, converting an old Dodge Caravan minivan into a home using scrap materials he found through friends and family and on Facebook marketplace. When the conversion was complete, he took his finished project for his first “van life” trip down the east coast, visiting 18 waterfalls along the way. Excited to do another conversion upon his return, he drained his bank account and purchased his first Mercedes T1N Sprinter van.

The Mercedes van was empty and sterile - ready to be transformed. Over the course of the next year, Patrick rebuilt this van several times, constantly improving and learning, through trial and error and YouTube videos. He took the finished product on what has become a routine for every build; what Patrick calls a “shakedown” trip. These trips allow him to work out any kinks in his design and, of course, enjoy the fruits of his labors. Patrick has proceeded to build and sell five TN1 Sprinter vans, one school bus that comfortably sleeps seven, as well as other smaller vans, including Mercedes E150s and Ford Transit Connects. He has multiple conversions scheduled for 2024 and receives at least three requests from potential buyers per month.

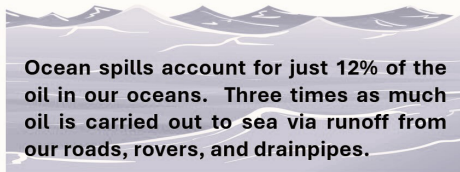
Every time he finishes a van conversion, he thinks, “I can do it better, make the next one trendier and work better for life on the road.” This ethos, along with his innate talent and lots of hard work, has resulted in vans that are works of art and engineering. They include artisan details in the woodwork, state of the art space-saving components, solar panels for off-the-grid power, storage space for bikes, snowboard/ski equipment, a kitchen with running water, stove, and refrigerator, and benches, cubbies, and a sleeping area.

Patrick is participating in an industry that has grown exponentially since he started in 2017. His talents have been recognized by the producers of the reality TV show, Guttled, being recruited to appear in a five-episode series filmed in Colorado. He found this to be a great opportunity to challenge himself as well as to share with and learn from some of the best builders in the country.


Patrick’s dream continues to evolve. Taking on van life as a business and lifestyle choice has taught him the value of living simply in community with others. Because he has found out so much about himself through the quiet time on the road and in nature, he aspires to make the same experience affordable to as many people as possible. He has started a new project which he calls “Care-A-Van.” It offers a full build on a budget. Making money is secondary for Patrick. As long as he earns enough to maintain his own sustainable lifestyle, he’s satisfied.

You can see Patrick’s amazing conversions and follow his travels on Instagram @PatchProductions “Capturing good times on camera, creating with purpose, telling good stories, treading lightly.”


10 Sustainability Fun Facts



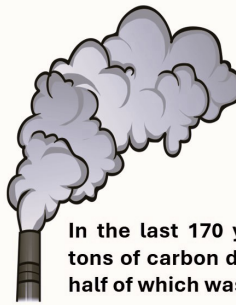
Ocean spills account for just 12% of the oil in our oceans. Three times as much oil is carried out to sea via runoff from our roads, rovers, and drainpipes.




Agricultural emissions could be reduced by as much as 70% by adopting a vegan diet and 63% by a vegetarian diet.




Every ton of recycled paper or cardboard can save 17 trees.




In the last 170 years, we added 2.4 trillion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere; half of which was added in the past 50 years.



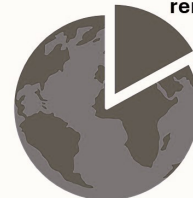
For every degree you lower your thermostat, you can save 3-5% in heating costs. Set the thermostat to 65 F and lower to 58 F when you are away.




Up to 90% of the energy used during a washing machine’s cycle goes into heating the water, so use the cold setting whenever possible.




70% of the world is covered by water, yet only 2.5% of it is fresh and only 1% of it is easily accessible for human use.



One sixth of the world’s energy today now comes from renewables and nuclear.



The average college student produces 640 pounds of solid waste each year, including 500 disposable cups and 320 pounds of paper.



Recycling one aluminum beverage can saves enough energy to run a 14-watt CFL bulb (60-watt incandescent equivalent) for 20 hours, a computer for 3 hours, or a TV for 2 hours. Aluminum is infinitely recyclable.

Maple Mews Takes Steps Toward Building an Eco-Friendly Landscape

Although a green, golf-course-worthy lawn has been a point of pride for many despite the challenges of irrigation and chemical weed prevention necessary to maintain it, today’s concerns about climate change and chemical exposure shift the focus from manicured lawns to nurtured greenways and drought-resistant native plantings.

Maple Mews, a Merchantville condominium community, is making a concerted effort toward creating a more sustainable landscape. After a year-long campaign, the board, spearheaded by resident Janice Wilson Stridick, began exploring landscape alternatives with the advice and assistance of members of the Merchantville Green Team and Incredible Edible Merchantville. Among the results:

- Planting gardens to replace empty mulched beds. These include a native pollinator garden along the parking lot and vegetable gardens.
- Removing invasive species

The community would also like to implement rain barrels and drip hoses for foundation plantings, both which conserve water and reduce water bills, and to reduce mulch volcanoes around trees to allow roots to breathe, moisture to be retained, and maintenance costs to be reduced. Under consideration is the addition of two picnic tables and benches, which invite outdoor gatherings.

Kudos to the board and residents of Maple Mews, for making the effort to build on Merchantville’s sustainability goals by finding ways to conserve water, planting native perennials and drought-tolerant groundcovers, and allowing the grass to grow an inch longer, all of which saves on maintenance costs while creating an eco-friendly landscape for all to enjoy.