

# 2022 Westtown Residential Sustainability Contest Explained!

The Westtown EAC invites all Westtown residents to enter the [2022 Residential Sustainability Contest](#). There are 5 key areas in which we can all play a part: energy, transportation, waste reduction, natural resource stewardship and food. The items we will be scoring in these 5 areas were chosen for their impact on our air, water, and soil as well as on habitat and biodiversity for the rest of the commonwealth of life that surrounds us. Below you will find resources with some steps you can take and why they matter. Whether you've done most of these actions or you are just starting to explore them, we hope you'll find something you can do this year to enhance the quality of your life while protecting our shared home.

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## Learn more about the actions you can take!

In addition to the Sustainability Area resources below, you can find great resources on the West Chester Area Council of Government's [Clean Energy Future website](#). Check it out!

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## Sustainability Area 1 Household Energy Use

[PECO Home Assessments](#) Get a free or low-cost energy assessment and receive free LED light bulbs and a summary of how you can save money in your home.

**Energy Star Appliances** in home. Your appliances, especially refrigerators and freezers, use a lot of energy. Learn which have the highest efficiency ratings from Energy Star. Take a look at the [The Energy Star Home Upgrade Guide](#).

Change to [LED light bulbs](#). LED is **highly energy efficient – Less heat, more light, lower cost**. Use less electricity for the same light output - 85% less electricity when compared to conventional lighting and around 18% less electricity compared to CFL.

[Programmable Thermostat](#). ENERGY STAR estimates that **homeowners properly using programmable thermostats can save about \$180 a year**. Since nearly half of your energy bills are made up of heating and cooling costs, having a programmable thermostat in your home makes good sense.

[Replace HVAC air filter](#) twice annually. Three times a year is recommended by the Department of Energy. Changing your filter improves air quality and health results, reduces the need for repairs and assures your unit is working well.

[Sealing and insulation](#). (Updated attic insulation, Caulk / weatherstrip doors & windows, Sealed hatch door in attic, [attic ventilation](#).) Sealing air leaks around your home and adding insulation can help your home be more comfortable and energy efficient and provide up to a [10% savings on your annual energy bills](#). Simple fixes include installing weather stripping on doors and caulking around windows, while bigger jobs might include sealing leaks and adding insulation in your attic. First, use these resources to choose and prioritize your air sealing and insulation projects. Second, use the how-to instructions to do it yourself, or link to qualified professionals who can help you do the job.

**Uses powerstrips for all electronics**. They help reduce “phantom loads”. A phantom load is any device that consumes electricity when turned off but still plugged into an outlet. These electronic devices provide the modern-day conveniences we rely on, but they also waste energy and cost money. Learn about [smart power strips here](#).

**Water heating** is a large part (20%) of your energy use and bill. Learn about [heat pump](#) and [solar water heaters](#).

**Water saving devices** save water and the energy needed to heat water. Check out [WaterSense](#) to learn more. More [water conservation tips from Chester County](#).

**Produce you own electricity** with [rooftop solar panels](#). Consult with [Solarize SE PA](#) for an independent assessment of your solar potential.

**Purchase renewable electricity**. In PA, we can choose the company that generates our home’s electricity, known as your electric supplier. This means that you have the power to choose to

switch from PECO as a supplier to a competing supplier that can offer renewable electricity generation. Guidance and options can be found at [PAPOWERSWITCH](#). Consider buying renewable electricity produced in PA or our region to have the highest impact.

**Geothermal or Electric Heatpumps** [Geothermal heat pumps \(GHPs\)](#) are among the most efficient and comfortable heating and cooling technologies currently available, because they use the earth's natural heat to provide heating, cooling, and often, water heating. Consider [ducted heatpumps](#) or [ductless mini-splits](#)

[Electric Landscaping equipment](#). Conventional lawn mowers are extremely polluting. The EPA estimates that **hour-for-hour, gasoline powered lawn mowers produce 11 times as much pollution as a new car**. According to the EPA, each gas-powered lawn mower produces as much air pollution as 43 new automobiles driven 12,000 per year – lawn care produces 13 billion pounds of toxic pollutants per year.

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## Sustainability Area 2 Transportation

[By choosing to drive an EV](#), you will help lessen exhaust emissions that contribute to climate change and smog. This reduced air pollution improves public health and reduces ecological damage. And as electricity generation becomes cleaner, emissions will continue to go down over time. Learn more about improving your efficiency when you drive at [Fueleconomy.gov](#). Look specifically at [EV choices here](#) and consult more about EVs and charging stations on the [EAC webpage](#).

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## Sustainability Area 3 Waste Reduction

Composting reduces greenhouse gas emissions at landfills, promotes the uptake of carbon dioxide by vegetation, and helps make us more resilient when we use compost to grow local food. Learn more from the [Pennsylvania Horticultural Society](#).

Many types of **e-waste** contain harmful materials such as lead, cadmium, mercury, arsenic, and other toxic components. It's vital that e-waste be properly recycled to prevent these harmful materials from contaminating our air, water, and land. Locations and schedule for local government sponsored hazardous waste events are [listed here](#). Best Buy (610-873-2312) takes covered devices and other E-Waste. Staples also takes printer, phone and other related e-waste. Call for details. Home Depot recycles batteries.

[Re-usable bags for shopping](#) Here are [40 reasons](#) to use reusable bags.

Doing recycling well does matter. To produce new products from recovered materials requires fewer raw resources and less energy. That's [how recycling household, commercial, and industrial waste can cut emissions](#).

According to [Project Drawdown](#), "[Roughly a third of the world's food is never eaten, which means land and resources used and greenhouse gases emitted in producing it were unnecessary. Interventions can reduce loss and waste, as food moves from farm to fork, thereby reducing overall demand.](#)"

## Sustainability Area 4 Natural Resources Stewardship

[Lawn care](#) is a place we can all make a difference to protect our health and that of our pets, conserve water and reduce emissions. For information on the health research and practical alternatives visit [Beyond Pesticides on Lawn and Landscaping](#). You can learn more about transition your lawn to a meadow at [Green America](#) and [WeConserve PA](#). For resources on rain gardens, visit [Soak Up The Rain](#).

**Support habitat and pollinators.** There are many local and national resources to help bring birds, butterflies and pollinators into your yards. Consider applying for the National Wildlife Federation “Certified Garden” or the Audubon Society Bird-friendly Recognition Key to creating habitat to protect pollinators and biodiversity is selecting native plants. The Audubon Society has an excellent [native plants data base](#). The [Brandywine Conservancy](#) (check out their annual native plant sale) and the [Mt Cuba Center](#) have excellent resources and classes for our area. [PA DCNR has a great native plant list](#) you can download. Longwood Gardens offers programs as well. [Learn about the Home Grown National Park and local expert Doug Tallamy’s work](#).

**Environmentally safe cleaning supplies make a difference.** Cleaning products can present several health and environmental concerns. Learn more about the [EPA’s SAFER CHOICE](#) program. Find [Safe Home Cleaning Tips here \(click on Home Tips\)](#).

**Protecting our waterways and clean water.** Controlling water run-off is another important step we can all take. Learn more [about pervious options](#) for replacing pavement, paths, and patios in landscaping. Consult [the Chester County resources on storm water, rain gardens and barrels](#). Download [A Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater Management](#). The [Stroud Water Research Center](#) has excellent resources for home owners, including [their landowner guide](#) and [Downloadable species list](#) for riparian buffers.

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## Sustainability Area 5 [Food Use /Production](#)

**Grow your own Vegetable Garden.** [Penn State Extension](#) offers free and low cost programs for beginners and experienced gardeners. The [Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture](#) holds a conference every February with excellent workshops. Contact the township to ask about community garden plots.

**Eat local, eat organic and minimize processed food.** Shop at [local farmer’s markets](#). [Join a CSA](#). For over 25 years, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has become a popular way for consumers to buy local, seasonal food directly from a farmer. Join or start a food coop. Check out the [West Chester Food Coop](#).

**Support pollinating bees.** Learn more from the [Chester County Beekeepers Association](#).

**Plant fruit trees.** [PA Fruit tree article](#). [Penn State on home orchards](#). [List of PA fruits](#).