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Fitchburg Sustainability Plan: Seeking Final Survey Responses

<https://www.fitchburgwi.gov/142/Green-Fitchburg>

Fitchburg is continuing its comprehensive sustainability plan process, begun last year. This plan will encompass various key areas of the city's influence, including energy efficiency, waste management, transportation, land use, water conservation, and more. By addressing these various areas, Fitchburg aims to reduce its ecological footprint, promote renewable energy adoption, enhance alternate transportation, encourage sustainable development practices, and safeguard its natural resources.



The city's commitment to sustainability not only benefits the environment but also offers social and economic advantages. By implementing sustainable practices, Fitchburg will look to foster a healthier and more resilient community, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create green job opportunities. The sustainability plan may also help attract businesses and investors who prioritize environmentally and socially conscious practices, boosting the local economy and enhancing the city's reputation as a sustainable and desirable place to live, work, and visit.



We want to hear from you!

We have launched an online survey to collect input from residents and businesses, and the survey will be open through the end of January. This survey is designed to help us identify perceptions, needs, opportunities, priorities, and issues for the City to address in the Sustainability Plan. Please share the survey with your neighbors, friends, family, coworkers, and any other networks you think would be interested in participating! [Survey link here.](#)

Wisconsin Salt Awareness Week: January 22-26, 2024

<https://www.wisaltwise.com/>

The salt that we apply to streets and sidewalks each winter ends up in our freshwater. Excessive application of winter road salt damages infrastructure, harms freshwater ecosystems and threatens our drinking water.



That's why Salt Wise is hosting Winter Salt Awareness Week, January 22-26, 2024: to learn about where salt pollution comes from, how it affects our health and freshwater ecosystems, and what we can do about it.

Experts in environmental justice, road maintenance, and ecology will discuss facets of this issue that impact your community. Register online at www.wisaltwise.com and tune in daily from 12:30-1:00pm for a week-long series of YouTube livestreams.



Examples of excessive (left) and proper (right) salt use on concrete and asphalt in the winter.

Smart Winter Salting

Best Practices for Snow and Ice

from <https://www.wisaltwise.com/Take-Action/Smart-Salting>

You can keep sidewalks and driveways safe this winter while protecting our waters by following these simple steps:



1. Shovel

Clear walkways and other areas before the snow turns to ice. The more snow you remove manually, the less salt you will have to use and the more effective it will be.



2. Scatter

If you use salt, scatter it so that there is space between the grains. Believe it or not, a coffee mug of salt is enough to treat an entire 20-foot driveway or 10 sidewalk squares. If you see oversalting, follow [these simple steps](#).



3. Switch

When pavement temperatures drop below 15 degrees, salt won't work. Switch to sand for traction or a [different ice melter \(PDF\)](#) that works at lower temperatures.



4. Select a Certified Contractor

Check to see if your contractor is already certified through the [Winter Salt Certification Program](#). If not, encourage them to become certified and to follow appropriate [application rates](#).

Plant Dane Free Native Plants for School and Community Groups

<https://lwr.dane.countyofdane.com/grants-and-costshare/free-plants>

Do you know of a school or community group that is looking to start or expand a native garden or rain garden? Encourage them to apply to our Free Native Plants for School and Community Groups Program to receive free native plants.



Native plants have tremendous water quality benefits and increase habitat and food sources for pollinators. Because of this, the Dane County Land and Water Resources Department has started a native plant growing program to provide a source of free native plants to help schools and community groups in Dane County. Since the program began in 2016, more than 29,000 plants have been distributed to 160 different groups, including schools, neighborhood associations and community centers.

*Spring plants are donated from community members through the Plant Dane! plant sale and fall plants are grown by local volunteers. **Applications are due Feb. 1st** and plants are*

*distributed in May. For more information or to apply, visit:
<https://lwrp.countyofdane.com/grants-and-costshare/free-plants>.*

Interested in volunteering to help this program's ongoing impact? Anyone can volunteer for this program as long as you have some outdoor space available. Volunteers participate in a half day training in the fall to learn more about the program and how to grow native plants. The growing process takes place outside - no indoor growing lights or equipment is required. The volunteer grows and cares for the seedlings and returns them to us to distribute. We ask that the volunteer provide the potting mix if able. If you are interested in volunteering, look for fall workshop signups later this year at the same link above.

UW Arboretum Native Plant Sale

<https://arboretum.wisc.edu/get-involved/friends/native-plant-sale/>

It's not just schools and nonprofits that can already start planning their Spring plantings and prioritizing native species! If you'd like to increase the number of native plants in your own yard, local greenhouses and nurseries are often a great way to make that happen; but by planning ahead while we're still in the winter, you can take advantage of the UW Arboretum native plant sale and reserve some native species to receive and plant in May.

The native plant sale is online from January 1 to March 31, with plant pickup in May; and the UW Arboretum will also have an on-site sale May 18 from 10am-2pm.

New Year's Resolutions for the Planet

<https://drawdown.org/solutions/>

Resolutions – some love them, some hate them, but come January 1 of every year, they're at the top of mind for many as a way to refocus one's goals and priorities moving forward. If you've been looking for ways to decrease your own climate/ecological impact but maybe aren't sure where to start, here are a few suggestions for resolutions you could set for 2024 and beyond, based on some of the higher-impact categories in Project Drawdown's [table of solutions](https://drawdown.org/solutions/) for meeting the planet's climate goals.

Reduce Food Waste

As much as a third of the world's food goes to waste every year! Whether from oversized servings that end up in the trash, fresh food spoiling on our shelves or at the grocery store, crop damage from pests and weather events, or general system inefficiencies, a tremendous amount of food designed for human consumption

doesn't actually make it into anybody's mouths. Considering the land use, water requirements, and emissions of food production; hundreds of millions of people suffering globally from malnutrition; and rising costs of nearly everything we buy; this is a huge area for us to address. In fact, Project Drawdown lists food waste reduction as a top-5 solution for solving the climate crisis, due to its economic feasibility, climate impact, and chance of actually being implemented. At an individual level, reducing food waste can come through better meal planning, being less picky about avoiding "ugly" produce, storing food properly to extend its shelf life, and only cooking/ordering as much food as you actually plan to eat.

Eat more plants

Another top-5 solution from Project Drawdown, replacing more meat in our diet with plants is a great way to reduce climate impact through land use, given the vastly greater acreage-per-calorie used for meat production, particularly for grazing animals like cattle and sheep. Going fully vegetarian/vegan isn't for everyone, but experts estimate that we need a reduction in meat consumption of at least 50% by 2050 to reach the impact needed from this sector. This could come from changing the type of meat we eat (poultry and fish instead of red meat), getting more protein from plant-based sources, and reducing your food waste.

Take advantage of federal and state energy credits

Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, federal credits and rebates for saving energy and using renewables have never been higher. You can get a 30% credit for renewable energy projects, rebates on qualifying electric vehicles, and money back for various energy efficiency projects as well! Check out the full list of currently available federal credits at <https://www.energy.gov/save>. Also look into Wisconsin's Focus on Energy program (<https://focusonenergy.com/>) for rebates and instant discounts on many home products and improvements.

Shop with the planet in mind

It often takes just a little research to find out whether a product was made with sustainably managed resources, has local sourcing, or contains recycled/recyclable content. Conscientious shopping can help preserve and restore vital ecosystems; keep money in the local economy; decrease emissions related to manufacturing and shipping; reduce resource extraction; and lower unnecessary consumption, which is great for the planet and your wallet!

February Is for the Birds

<https://www.birdcount.org/>

Winter is a challenging season for all of us, but it can be particularly difficult for animals outdoors trying to make it through these bitterly cold months when shelter is vital and food more difficult to find. Feeding and watching birds is enjoyable and educational year-round, but winter is an especially great time to continue or start this hobby, and February has been recognized as National Bird-Feeding Month for nearly 30 years.

February also brings back the annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), co-sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada. Also begun in the 1990s, the GBBC is one of the world's largest citizen-science initiatives, inviting folks interested in birding and bird population health to record and upload their bird observations from February 16-19, helping ornithologists to better understand changes in population health and geographical distribution.

You can track your observations in various ways, using the eBird website on your computer or either the eBird or Merlin Bird ID app on your smartphone. See <https://www.birdcount.org/participate/> for details on how to participate and help with the various methods for counting and reporting your observations.



February Events and Observances



2024 RENEW WISCONSIN SUMMIT

Unleashing the Power of Wisconsin's Clean Energy Potential

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2024 • MADISON, WI





February 5-9, 2024



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<http://www.fitchburgwi.gov/list.aspx> > Green Fitchburg

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<http://www.fitchburgwi.gov/list.aspx>
- b. Type your email address in the box and select “Sign In”
- c. To receive text messages enter your phone number and select “Save”
- d. Click  (to subscribe/unsubscribe to emails) and/or  (to subscribe/unsubscribe) next to the lists to which you wish to subscribe / unsubscribe (e.g. “Green Fitchburg” is the mailing list for environmentally friendly suggestions or events)

Please contact Phil Grupe, Sustainability Specialist, at phil.grupe@fitchburgwi.gov or (608) 270-4259, if you have any questions, comments, and/or suggestions for future Green E-News topics.

