



ECOLOGY NEWS

ACTION CENTER

Volume 19, Issue 1

Spring 2021

BN GREEN EVENTS

**Sugar Creek
Stewards Workday**
Saturday, April 17
9:00am—noon

NEW EAC INITIATIVES



**BNCOMMUNITY
COMPOSTING.ORG**



TREE CORPS
TREE-CORPS.ORG

OFFICE UPDATES

- Open by appointment only
- Check out our new online store
- New mailing address:

**Ecology Action
Center**
PO Box 97
Normal, IL 61761

Help Plant Mohr Trees!

The Ecology Action Center's **Tree Corps** is a new initiative for Bloomington-Normal and McLean County which aims to significantly increase tree-planting in our community, with a goal of at least 10,000 trees annually for the next ten years! Tree Corps is a key strategy of the EAC's upcoming BN Clean Air Plan, which will set targets for local reduction of both greenhouse gas emissions and air quality pollutants like ozone and develop strategies to reach those targets.

This is the EAC's second such large scale tree planting initiative; the first was launched decades ago when the Ecology Action Center was known as Operation Recycle and included some of what is now Comlara Park. The current Tree Corps initiative coincides with the EAC's 50th anniversary of the founding of Operation Recycle in 1971 .

The "Mohr Trees!" project is a partnership with the ParkLands Foundation, the McLean County Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Living Lands and Waters. The Ecology Action Center pledged to help ParkLands plant 4,200 small trees at the Mohr Tract near Lexington in April 2021.

The trees planted are all bareroot seedlings of native hardwood species including black oak, red oak, white oak, bur oak, pecan, and shagbark hickory. To meet the need for both donations and volunteer labor for planting, the EAC is challenging church congregations, community groups, workplace groups, families, and any other interested group to commit to

PLANT



TREE CORPS
TREE-CORPS.ORG



**ParkLands
Foundation**

MOHR TREES!

Plant Mohr Trees! (Continued)

form a Tree Corps Team. Each Team can get started by making their pledge towards 100 trees (or more!) at [Tree-Corps.org](https://www.tree-corps.org) under the "Mohr Trees" section. At \$5 per tree (which covers the cost of both a tree and related expenses) the minimum recommended group commitment is \$500, and providing a few volunteers to help with planting, if possible. To further increase the impact and leverage donations, Living Lands and Waters will match every tree donation with another tree. These matching donations will be planted at nearby ParkLands parcels including the Merwin Preserve.

To create a new Tree Team, a group simply needs a name, a Team Captain, a pledge towards a specific number of trees, and a commitment to try to meet that pledge by April 10, 2021. Tree Teams can raise the money towards their pledge amount within their groups, through family or friends, or through other means.

EAC staff will coordinate planting workdays in with Tree Team Leaders; the Mohr Tree planting is tentatively scheduled for the weekend of April 10, 2021 with possible prep work taking place before then on weekdays. Understanding that individuals have other commitments and limited flexibility, supplying volunteers for planting is desirable but not mandatory.

Planting workdays will adhere to all existing COVID-19 protocols to include at least face coverings and social distancing. In case of restrictions at the time of planting that entirely prohibit any such gathering, alternative plans will be prepared which may include planting by mechanical means to completely avoid person-to-person contact.

Learn more, donate, form a team, or volunteer at [Tree-Corps.org](https://www.tree-corps.org), and click on the "Mohr Trees!" link on the right side of the page.



Community Solar Options

Companies managing community solar arrays approved by the Illinois Power Agency in early 2019 are now actively seeking customers for community solar subscriptions. Here are few things to keep in mind if you are interested in pursuing community solar.

What is community solar?

A large solar array in your utility territory (in central Illinois that means **Ameren only** – there are no community solar options for CornBelt) that feeds the electricity it produces directly to the power grid. Customers sign up for their own shares of the array, the size of the share is based on your home electricity usage. Subscribers receive credits on their utility bill for the energy generated by their share, and they purchase those credits at a discounted rate from the company managing the community solar array.

The standard offer is a 20% savings on your electricity supply rate (not your total bill), with no sign-up fees, and no cancellation fees. Residents who meet these maximum household income levels are eligible for a 50% savings through the Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) program.

Community Solar Options (Continued)

Maximum Income for Households to be Eligible for Illinois Solar for All

	Number of people in household							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Adams County, IL	\$34,650	\$39,600	\$44,550	\$49,450	\$53,450	\$57,400	\$61,350	\$65,300
Bloomington, IL HUD Metro FMR Area (McLean county)	\$46,700	\$53,400	\$60,050	\$66,700	\$72,050	\$77,400	\$82,750	\$88,050

How does community solar work with your current electricity bill? Here is an example: you use 600kWh of electricity in a month, and your community solar subscription generated 500kWh worth of electricity. Your Ameren bill will show the 600kWh usage, with a 500kWh credit. You will pay your Ameren supply rate for the remaining 100kWh. You will pay your delivery fees and taxes to Ameren for the full 600kWh. You will receive a subsequent bill from your community solar provider for the 500kWh – but the rate you are charged for that energy is 20% lower than the Ameren supply rate charge (or 50% lower if you are participating in the ILSFA program).

Why community solar?

Community solar is a great option for:

- Homeowners who have heavy shade making on-site solar nonviable.
- Renters – as long as they are responsible for their own utility bill (and electricity is not included in their rent).
- Homeowners who might not be able to afford the upfront investment required for an onsite solar installation at their house. However – the ILSFA program also provides rooftop solar options with no upfront costs income eligible residents.

Interested in signing up?

The Ecology Action Center recently signed up for a community solar subscription for our building through Nexamp. Folks can sign up using an EAC referral code (email Larissa!) and will get a \$25 Amazon gift card (and the EAC will get one too!). Community solar providers will ask you for 12 months of your energy usage to determine what size portion of the community solar array will cover your energy needs. The community solar array won't likely start producing energy until next year. Before your community solar service begins, residents participating in Bloomington and Normal's municipal aggregation will need to opt out of service. If you are unsure whether or not you are getting your energy supply from an alternate energy retail supplier, look at the energy supply section of your Ameren bill. If you are enrolled in municipal aggregation, Homefield Energy will be listed as your supplier. To opt out of aggregation just call their number at 866-694-1262 and cancel.

If you have questions about solar (community or onsite), or think you might be eligible for the ILSFA program please contact Larissa Armstrong at larstrong@ecologyactioncenter.org or 309-454-3169 x15 for more information.

Ready for Rain!

Temperatures are warming, and the snow has melted. The yard may be brown for now, but soon it will begin to turn green – hooray! Oh, dear – if you're a dog owner, some of that brown uncovered by melting drifts might be more than just dormant vegetation. But who wants to think about cleanup on a beautiful day like today? Let's turn away from the yard for a moment, and have a look across the street. Such a colorful street it is. A little dripped fuel ... chalky traces of road salt ... perhaps a smudge of leaked oil ... Ah, but here's something more natural: a pile of leaves. What could have caused these leaves to accumulate in one spot on the road? Could there be a storm drain under all that leaf litter?



Bacteria, litter, debris and other substances that can pollute our drinking water seem to have built up over the winter. In a natural ecosystem, those items might move slowly across or into the landscape. Time and natural filters would prevent many of those pollutants from reaching our ground and surface waters. But in our built environment, impermeable roofs, sidewalks, roads, parking lots, and even our lawns are designed to get melting snow and spring rains out of our way quickly. Instead of percolating down through the soil, that water runs off, picking up all of these pollutants on its way.

Although there are myriad sources for water pollution, the final destination is easier to pinpoint. Runoff flows from impermeable surfaces into storm drains, and ultimately into our surface waters. If you follow the annual water reports, you know that both Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake have historically exceeded safe levels for some pollutants, including nitrates and phosphorus. How can we all help ensure that doesn't happen again?



1. Make sure vehicles are maintained properly, and check for leaks.
2. Ensure proper disposal of pet waste, and keep up with maintenance if you have a septic system.
3. When you use substances that can pollute water, follow label directions for mixing, application and disposal.
4. If you spill a hazardous substance such as oil or antifreeze, pesticide or fertilizer, be sure to clean it up properly (check the label or call us at 309-454-3169 to find out how).
5. Curb those leaves! Leaves can be left in place intact, or they can be mulched down to ensure they won't blow away or wash away. In addition to protecting water quality, doing this gives your yard a head-start at the beginning of the growing season. If you prefer to remove leaves, follow your municipality's guidelines for when and where to place them for pickup.
6. Finally, consider installing a rain barrel. By catching some of the rainwater that falls on your roof, rain barrels slow down that initial "storm surge" that tries to scrub up pollutants and wash them into our storm sewer system. Visit ecologyactioncenter.org to place an order –delivery is available, and curbside pickup is free!

With these "little things" in mind, we will all be well prepared for April showers, May flowers, and plenty of safe, clean drinking water this spring!

recyclecoach™



RECYCLEBN.ORG

NEW! QUICK AND EASY RECYCLING GUIDELINES

METAL



Steel & Aluminum Containers and Foil.
No spray paint cans or pesticide cans.

PAPER

Cardboard (flattened), Office Paper, Newspaper, & Magazines



GLASS



Containers: Bottles & Jars Only

NOTE: Residential & commercial customers of Area Disposal Company—glass materials are no longer accepted for recycling.

PLASTIC

Containers: Bottles, Tubs, Jugs, and Jars Only. Replace lids & caps.



YES!

Clean & Empty

HELP STOP RECYCLING CONTAMINATION. IF IT IS NOT SHOWN ABOVE AS ACCEPTABLE, THEN IT IS NOT! IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!



No Plastic Bags
No Plastic Wrap
(return bags clean to retailer)



No Big Items
(Electronics, Wood, Propane Tanks, Scrap Metal or Styrofoam—check with Ecology Action Center for other options)

NO!

No materials in bags*

put in loose



No Tangles (Hangers, Hoses, Wire, Cords, Ropes or Chains)



No Clothing, Textiles or Shoes (donate to HSHrenew.org)



No Food, Liquid, Diapers, Batteries or Needles



No Shredded Paper unless bagged (*exception)

These guidelines represent the common items accepted in most recycling programs in Illinois. To find out more detail, including recycling and reuse programs beyond the bin, visit RecycleBN.org or contact the Ecology Action Center at 309-454-3169.



7.3.2019



PO Box 97
Normal, IL 61761

ecologyactioncenter.org
309-454-3169



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