



# ECOLOGY NEWS

ACTION CENTER

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BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL COMMUNITY AIR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

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BN-CARE

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL COMMUNITY AIR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

The Ecology Action Center is excited to announce the launch of Bloomington-Normal Community Air Research and Education (BN-CARE) project.

BN-CARE is a partnership of the Ecology Action Center, Illinois State University, Bloomington Normal NAACP, Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church, McLean County, Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District, and other partners. This project will help increase the awareness and understanding of the relationship between



local air quality and public health while building a coalition for collaborative efforts to improve air quality within our community.



Three stationary air quality monitors have been installed in areas of our community that experience disproportionate impacts of pollution, also known as environmental justice areas. These areas are in West Bloomington and North Normal and site locations include Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church, The Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District, and Fairview Park in Normal. The monitors are completely powered by solar at two of the three sites.

The air monitor at the Mt. Pisgah site on Market St in Bloomington.

The monitors will measure particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and provide real-time data accessible to the public via [bncare.org](http://bncare.org). The project will also offer portable air quality monitors to be used for short-term measuring at hot spots and for training and educational purposes with community members and students. Data collection will take place over the course of three years.

Air pollution is one of the greatest environmental risks to health. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) estimates that poor air quality is responsible for more than 100,000 premature deaths in the United States each year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, poor air quality can exacerbate health conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and heart disease.

Funding for BN-CARE has been awarded by the US Environmental Protection Agency's Air Quality Monitoring for Communities grant opportunity as part of the America's Rescue Plan (ARP) funding. Be sure to check out the new website and sign up for text alerts at [BNCARE.ORG](http://BNCARE.ORG).

# BNCARE.ORG

## **Recycling Light Bulbs: What A Bright Idea!**

By EAC Intern Grace Beyer

Light bulbs are essential in our life for providing... well light! But there will always come a time when a bulb needs to be changed. But how should we go about getting rid of old or broken light bulbs? The answer actually depends on the bulb type, so it's important to know the key differences to ensure your disposal method is both effective and beneficial to the environment.

Several different kinds of light bulbs unfortunately contain mercury, a heavy metal that is not only harmful to humans when present in the air, but can have detrimental environmental impacts. For this reason, compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), fluorescent tube lights, and mercury vapor light bulbs cannot be thrown away in the trash. This is because light bulbs are commonly broken once thrown away, causing the release of harmful mercury into the environment and air. To avoid this, recycling programs have been designed to reduce environmental impact.



Local bulb recycling locations are happy to take these off your hands. In McLean County, linear Fluorescent Tubes are accepted at Batteries Plus Bulbs and up to 5 tubes can be taken to Lowe's. Both locations and Home Depot additionally accept non-tube shaped CFLs. Mercury containing bulbs can also be recycled at a [household hazardous waste \(HHW\) collection event](#) or at a [HHW permanent facility](#).

Not all bulbs contain mercury though, so what should be done with those? Incandescent light bulbs and halogen light bulbs are technically safe to throw in the trash, but it is important to take certain precautions to ensure safety. Always place a bulb in a bag or container, broken or not, so that the glass does not harm you or anyone else during trash transport. For more information about local recycling, visit [RecycleBN.org](#) or download the Recycle Coach App.

Sources:

<https://www.epa.gov/mercury/recycling-and-disposal-cfls-and-other-bulbs-contain-mercury>

<https://www.homedepot.com/c/ab/how-to-dispose-of-light-bulbs/9ba683603be9fa5395fab901b263d806>

## Battery Bills and Recycling: What's the Big Deal?

By EAC intern Grace Beyer

Batteries have become common in our everyday lives, used in things like remotes, phones, computers, electric vehicles, medical equipment, and more. It can be easy to throw an old, used battery in with the rest of your trash, but doing so can pose a big threat to the environment. Not only are improperly disposed of batteries prone to starting fires, but lithium-ion batteries are full of harmful chemicals like mercury, lead, cadmium, and nickel which can pollute groundwater when they break down in landfills. Batteries need to be properly recycled, but this does not mean it is okay to put batteries in your home's recycling bin because they may explode or start a fire. Long story short, it's incredibly important to keep batteries out of your trash and curbside recycling and commit instead to properly recycling them!

But how does one properly dispose of old batteries lying around the house? Luckily for Illinois residents, the state General Assembly just made battery recycling easier than ever before! The passing of the Illinois Portable Battery Stewardship Act on August 9, 2024 outlines a series of procedures that will soon be put in place to ensure batteries are properly collected, recycled, and disposed of. The bill includes an extensive plan to reduce the environmental harm caused by improperly disposed of batteries.



Highlights from this legislation include:

- Battery manufacturers will need to comply with all components of the Stewardship Act and will need to **fund collection and disposal efforts**
- **Accessible collection** areas will need to be established throughout the state to ensure residents will be able to engage in proper recycling behavior
- **Informational programs** are in the works to educate people statewide about the dangers of incorrect battery disposal while also highlighting ways to correctly recycle
- **Yearly check-ins and reports** will be conducted to ensure successful progress is being made through the Stewardship Act, and making changes if needed based on this data

It likely won't be long before residents can easily and correctly recycle batteries in their neighborhoods. Luckily, for those living in or around the Bloomington-Normal area, two local recycling programs already exist. Batteries Plus Bulbs (1715 Bradford Ln.) and Interstate All Battery Center of Bloomington (1400 E. Lafayette St.) are ready to receive any residential battery waste lying around your homes. If you are interested in learning more about how to properly dispose of different types of waste visit [RecycleBN.org](https://RecycleBN.org) or download the Recycle Coach App today!

Sources:

<https://ecotreelithium.co.uk/news/lithium-batteries-uses-and-applications/>

<https://www.walt.org/local-news/2024-08-09/koehler-chung-battery-recycling-bill-becomes-illinois-law>

[https://wasterecycling.org/press\\_releases/illinois-passes-portable-battery-stewardship-act/](https://wasterecycling.org/press_releases/illinois-passes-portable-battery-stewardship-act/)

[IL SB3686](#) | 2023-2024 | 103rd General Assembly | LegiScan

## Choosing the Right Tree for Your Home



It's no secret that the EAC is a huge fan of trees. Our Tree Corps program boasts to plant 10,000 trees every year to support local health and quality of life! Want to plant one of your own? Before you get started, there are several factors to consider - starting with selecting your tree species. Not just any species will do! Here are some tips about tree species to consider for best results.

### Choose a native species

All trees have the potential to provide shade, air filtration, and carbon sequestration; but native trees provide even more benefits! Native trees support the local ecosystem much better than others by providing unique food and shelter that bugs, birds, and other animals co-evolved with and naturally rely on. For example, through research conducted by the entomologist Doug Tallamy we now know that native oak trees support over 500 species of caterpillars.<sup>1</sup> In comparison ginkgos, a commonly planted tree from Asia, host only 5 species of caterpillars.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, native species are more likely to act as slow growers with deeper roots, rather than introduced invasive species that spread quickly with shallow roots. Deeper roots help the soil absorb water and prevent erosion, which can be an important tool for flood resistance.

## Decide what you want out of your tree

Looking for a tree that's not too big and will still provide shade?

Try an **American hophornbeam** or a **chinquapin oak**!

Something with sturdy branches for your kids to climb on?

Large oak trees like **bur oak** or **red oak** live hundreds of years and grow impressive branches!

Looking for something edible?

**Pawpaw** trees grow edible tropical fruit that is native to the Midwest!

Maybe you'd spend more time outside if not for pesky mosquitoes?

**Shagbark hickories** attract bats that eat mosquitoes!



**No matter what you're looking for, there's a native tree that will suit your needs!**

## Pick something that will thrive in its environment

Finally, consider the site where you'd like to plant your tree. Things like sun exposure, moisture retention, and salt and alkaline soil conditions all affect how well different tree species will do in your yard. Many trees have preferences for sun exposure, for example smaller trees tend to tolerate more shade because they would be under larger trees in a forest environment. Does your yard ever flood during storms, or does your grass tend to die in the middle of summer from dry soil? Look for something that is flood or drought tolerant. For extra credit, you could even consider buying a soil tester kit to learn the acidity and nutrients present in your soil and plant accordingly. Ultimately, with regular watering and care most native trees should do well in your yard. Happy planting!



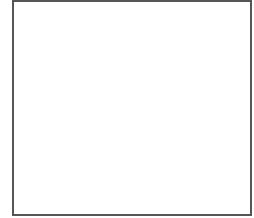
**TREE CORPS**  
TREE-CORPS.ORG

Sources:

<https://www.audubon.org/content/why-native-plants-matter>



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