

HOMEOWNER NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2024 | VOLUME 04



SPRING MAINTENANCE REMINDERS

- Check for loose shingles, siding, and flashing
- Clear gutters and downspouts, extend downspouts away from foundation
- Deck care: secure loose deck boards and repaint/seal if necessary
- Clean exhaust vents, particularly dryer vent
- Clean window screens, repair tears
- Service AC units and clean filters before use
- Check attic for signs of roof leaks and pest damage
- Test shut-off valves for interior and exterior plumbing connections
- Test smoke detectors and fire extinguishers
- Keep extinguisher handy for grill/fire pit

Visit the '[Homeowner Resources](#)' tab on our website for the full seasonal maintenance checklist

NATIVE PLANTS IN YOUR GARDEN

More info here:
www.PAnativeplantsociety.org

According to the *PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources*, there are around 2,100 plants that are considered native to PA, meaning that they grew in our area prior to colonization. Native plants are well-adapted to our soil and climate and are beneficial to insects, birds, and other animal populations in our geographic region.

When choosing native plants, you will often see them categorized by site type. Some will thrive in moist, shady areas, while others need full sun or dryer conditions. Once the plant is established, it is fairly low-maintenance and typically requires less water and soil amendments compared to other non-natives.

Does this mean you shouldn't plant other non-natives in your yard this spring? Not necessarily, but do your research first! For example, anise hyssop, zinnias, and many herbs are not native to the eastern US but have benefits for pollinators and as companion plants in your veggie gardens. But avoid invasive species (such as the butterfly bush, English ivy, orange day lily, and barberry) that can spread quickly and push out natives.

Join Us!

We're joining forces! Our Maintenance and Homeowner Committees are combining to create a new **Stewardship Committee**, which will focus on our Strategic Plan efforts to expand resources, encourage home maintenance, and bolster communication with our homeowners. It's the same work we have been doing, but YOUR participation will help direct our efforts to events and information most useful to you.

All homeowners are welcome! Join the committee for the long term, or pop in to meetings when you are able. We hope all homeowners will join us at special events that the committee organizes!

Email Lorie@scclandtrust.org if you are interested in getting involved.

SPOTLIGHT: HEAT PUMPS

HOW DO THEY WORK?

Heat pumps are two-in-one systems that can be used to both heat and cool your home. Ducted systems can easily replace older gas/oil forced air furnaces, while Ductless (“Mini Split”) systems can be used for multi-zone heating/cooling where ducting does not exist (individual room units share an outdoor condenser).

In the past, heat pumps often needed backup systems for colder climates. However, modern generations of heat pumps are extremely efficient and can be used as standalone units. In the winter, air-to-air heat pumps work by extracting heat from the outside to heat refrigerant, which in turn heats the inside air. The system works in reverse in the summer to pull heat from the inside to cool and dehumidify.

ENERGY SAVINGS

Energy usage and utility savings will depend on your existing heating system. You could see anywhere from \$30-85 in savings per month. Heat pumps are 2-3x more efficient than fossil fuel systems and can significantly reduce carbon emissions from your home (even when your electricity comes from non-renewable sources). Units are most efficient when you “set it and forget it” and keep the units at a steady temperature throughout the day.

WHEN TO UPGRADE?

If you have a newer/functional HVAC system and your utility costs are manageable, you don't need to rush to make the upgrade now. However, tax credits and IRA rebates (once available) might incentivize making the upgrade sooner rather than later. In the short-term, prioritize improvements to insulation and air sealing that will benefit your day-to-day comfort and also your utility bills.

NEW!

EMERGENCY REPAIR FUND

Water heater go kaput? Sudden sewer emergency? Rainy weather causing moisture issues?

A new SCCLT-funded loan is available to assist homeowners with home emergency repairs. We understand that problems can arise unexpectedly and sometimes require quick action to prevent further concern or damage.

This 0% interest loan will provide funding of up to \$2,500 to assist with emergency-type repairs. Homeowners are responsible for finding a contractor. Homeowners are expected to make regular payments to SCCLT as part of the loan agreement; repayment plan will be discussed as part of two mandatory budget counseling sessions with HUD-certified housing counselors.

This loan is not intended to fund preventative maintenance or other long-term needs of your home (*for example, the loan would help with a roof leak, but it is not intended to replace an entire roof at the end of its life cycle*). For larger home projects, SCCLT can share other resources and funding opportunities.



INFLATION REDUCTION ACT (IRA) REBATES

If you've been curious about the long-awaited IRA rebates, unfortunately there is not much new info to share yet! States are expected to roll out their own rebate programs, but this likely will not happen until late 2024 or into 2025. The good news is that once rebates are available, low- and moderate-income households (up to 150% AMI) stand to benefit the most. So if you've been saving for energy efficiency updates in your home, continue to do so! If an update can't wait, there are various West Penn Power rebates and tax credits that you can take advantage of now.