

## **MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN**

In commemoration of Earth Day, the Village partnered with other community organizations this week. We participated in a "Livable Communities" Expo and information session with the Eastchester, Tuckahoe and Bronxville Senior Citizens at Lake Isle on Friday. On Saturday, the Village of Bronxville, Chamber of Commerce and Farmer's Market worked together to bring the market to Park Place for the day. Our Green Committee, chaired by Deputy Mayor Glenn Bellitto, continues to be one of our most active and enthusiastic. They hosted a talk by Doug Wood, Associate Director of Grassroots Environmental Education, a not for profit organization with an office in Westchester. Just recently, the Village was selected as one of the five greenest communities in Westchester County. We are doing a lot but we can do more.

At the municipal level, we continue to care for all our trees and open spaces by keeping them free of chemicals and pesticides. In addition, we are focusing on ways to decrease our energy costs for the Village lighting grid. The Village is also fourth in the County in tonnage of recycled waste materials. In partnership with the County of Westchester and the Bronxville School, we are sponsoring another "E Waste Day" at the Bronxville School's Elementary School parking lot on May 15<sup>th</sup> from 9AM to 3PM. At this event, you will be able to drop off any electronic equipment including cell phones, computers and air conditioners and be assured that they will be recycled meeting all appropriate environmental standards.

As a government, we are endeavoring to lead by example and care for your property and resources in the most efficient and responsible way possible.

However, to truly make a difference – an impact, all Villagers and Village institutions need to be on-board to keep our community healthy and sustainable.

Since we are located in the Bronx River watershed, keeping the quality of our water resource clean is of paramount importance. Water runoff carries with it whatever can be dislodged from our properties including salt, soil, leaves, pesticides, fertilizer and oil and gas. As more of our permeable surfaces are covered with home additions, patios and driveways, more runoff is created. This unfiltered water enters our storm sewer system before finally entering the Bronx River. Polluted runoff, which has severe cumulative effects on fish, animals and humans, can be significantly reduced

if everyone incorporates small preventive measures into everyday life to decrease the amount and pollution of runoff from each property.

Preventive measures include:

- Taking the time when making landscaping or renovation decisions to consider alternatives to concrete or asphalt surfaces and use more porous materials such as brick or gravel.
- Directing any yard runoff from gutters or sump pumps to grassy areas and not to a road or storm sewer.
- Discontinuing the use of chemicals and pesticides on lawns. Many of the lawn chemicals used since their popularity began in the late 1960's are only now being tested for toxicity. Pesticides remain on lawns long after the little yellow flags are removed. "The working" time period on those signs is simply a legislative compromise between government and the chemical companies and is not based on any scientific study of the life of the particular chemicals.

If you do choose to use an inorganic fertilizer, use it sparingly, avoid applying before a rainstorm and purchase the slow release formula. Once fertilizers reach our water bodies, they promote a decay process in algae that exhausts the oxygen supply fish need to live.

- Making sure sprinkler systems are properly calibrated so water is not directed onto sidewalks or driveways.

Watering deeply into the soil in early morning encourages the deep root growth of grasses and plants, resulting in healthier vegetation that is more drought resistant.

- If possible, using grass clippings for composting and fertilizing. If grass is placed in mounds, avoid locating the piles in areas that will flow into the sewer system.
- Properly collecting and disposing of pet waste only in the garbage. Pet waste placed in bags and dropped in sewers is a major contaminant of our water systems due to the growth of dangerous bacteria.

- Avoiding washing cars, pets, and patio furniture on paved surfaces. The resulting soap and grit heads directly to our storm drains. Commercial car washes actually now treat and recycle all the water they use and are environmentally friendly.

Many of these suggestions seem quite small and inconsequential but a commitment to adopt them will have a positive cumulative effect on the health of our entire Village.

As Villagers, we have always taken great pride in being in the forefront of many important issues, and I believe we should once again take the lead on the environmental care of our beloved Village. We need to set the standard for the preservation of water quality and the natural maintenance of our properties, not through compulsory legislation, rather as intelligent stewards of a community that is our children's home.