A picture containing animal, bird, water, flower

Description automatically generated**Gas Leaf Blowers Pose New Threat During COVID-19 Crisis**

By Valerie Seiling Jacobs & Chet Kerr

Most of us working along the Pollinator Pathway are aware of the damage gas leaf blowers cause to pollinator habitat—first and foremost they eliminate the leaves necessary for overwintering pollinators such as the luna moth and hairstreak and they harm native ground nesting bee habitat, such as that of our native bumble bees. Gardeners know their hurricane force blasts (150-280 mile-an-hour) also compact soil and expose and desiccate root systems.

Thanks to the work of organizations like [Quiet Communities](https://www.quietcommunities.org/), we’ve known for a long time that gas leaf blowers are also associated with human health problems, including hearing loss, high blood pressure, and impaired ability among children to concentrate amid the loud noise they create—to name a few. That’s why more than 200 towns across the country have already banned or restricted their use. Recently, however, the situation became more urgent.

A close up of a sign

Description automatically generatedIn April 2020, [researchers at Harvard University reported](https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/covid-pm) a strong link between the type of pollution generated by gas leaf blowers (i.e., fine particulate matter) and a higher risk of complications and death from COVID-19. According to those researchers, even a small increase (1 microgram) in the concentration of particulate air pollution means a big increase in COVID-19 deaths. This is extremely troubling since a single commercial gas leaf blower can produce 30 million micrograms of fine particulate every hour—and the stuff hangs around at ground level for a long time.

A number of towns have already imposed bans or restrictions on gas leaf blowers for the duration of the pandemic, including Tarrytown, NY ([here](https://www.tarrytowngov.com/home/news/resolution-to-ban-the-use-of-leaf-blowers-to-prevent-the-spread-of-covid-19-coronavirus) is their resolution), Larchmont (NY), Croton-on-Hudson (NY), Sleepy Hollow (NY), Southampton (NY), and Greenwich (CT). Others have issued directives to landscapers requesting that alternative methods of leaf removal be used, such as the Village of Irvington, NY.

If your town has not yet acted on this issue, share this alert with them as well as with your landscapers, neighbors, landlords, and friends.

In a recent [report](https://www.quietcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FINAL-QC_White-Paper_GLBs-COVID_v1.2_2020.05.03.pdf) issued by [Quiet Communities](https://www.quietcommunities.org/), the use of gas leaf blowers (GLBs) during the Covid-19 crisis was tied to three specific problems that increased the risks presented by the pandemic:

(1) Air pollution from GLBs increases the risk of complications and death from Covid-19

(2) Noise from GLBs creates other health problems, which raise the risk of complications from Covid-19

(3) Landscape workers face disproportionate risks from Covid-19 due to GLBs.

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