



# December Newsletter

*Preserving Our Past by Protecting Our Future*

## Cozy Home for the Holidays



As cold, windy weather moves in this week and northern New England is blanketed in snow, our thoughts turn to keeping warm. But raising the temperature in our homes leads to costly energy bills and increased carbon emissions.

Recently, Sustainable Marblehead addressed this timely topic in a program co-sponsored with the Unitarian Church entitled “Save Energy, Save Money, Protect the Planet” (click [here](#) for the video of the event and visit our [homepage](#) for a copy of the slides and related documents).

Sustainable Marblehead Board member, Lynn Bryant, moderated the presentation and started by referencing the most recent draft of the US National Climate Assessment, to be released next year. The draft states that the US has warmed 68 percent faster than the Earth as a whole in the past 50 years, leading to many more extreme weather events. Only by reducing our carbon emissions can we hope to get the situation under control.

Heating our homes is the single biggest carbon producer in our lives, said Marblehead Municipal Light Commissioner Lisa Wolf, one of the presenters. Converting from an oil or gas heating system to an electric heat pump can greatly reduce your emissions.

Improving insulation and reducing drafts through home weatherization is the most cost-effective way to reduce carbon output and energy bills, according to the second presenter, Mark Adams, chair of Sustainable Marblehead’s new Green Homes and Buildings working group. Only one out of every five homes built before 1980 is properly insulated, according to Adams. And in Marblehead many homes were built before that time.

Our new Green Homes and Buildings working group is amassing resources to help Marblehead homeowners and renters improve home energy efficiency. The group has overhauled the [Take Action in Your Home](#) page of our website, where you can find information on green heating and insulation, as well as energy-efficient appliances and hot water heaters. The Green Homes and Buildings [working group](#)

[page](#) has information on rebates, energy audits, heat pump technology and rooftop solar.

We have also just launched a [blog](#), where you can find more information on climbing the stairway to your net-zero home.

A home energy audit is the first step to any home improvement project. Click [here](#) to sign up for an audit with our partner Homeworks Energy and Sustainable Marblehead will receive a \$25 donation. [Energy audits](#) are also available for Marblehead Municipal Light customers through the NextZero program.

Improving your home energy efficiency is a many-step process and Sustainable Marblehead aims to accompany you on that journey.

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## We Depend on Your Support



Thank you to all those who have already made a donation.

We're halfway to our year-end fundraising goal!

**If you haven't already done so, please consider donating to Sustainable Marblehead as part of your holiday giving** so that we can continue to bring you programs and resources like those described in this, and previous, newsletters.

Click [here](#) to donate.

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## Oaks: Our Most Essential Native Trees



On December 9, the Peabody Essex Museum hosted a talk on *The Nature of Oaks* by author and ecologist Doug Tallamy, based on his book by the same name. Pal Bickford, leader of Sustainable Marblehead's Town Trees & Urban Forestry working group, attended and prepared this summary.

Oaks can live 900 years in an optimal location with adequate food and water. West

Coast oaks can live even longer. It takes them 300 years to get established. For the next 300 they are in the prime of life. And during the final 300 years they gradually die off. Oaks do the best job of any tree species of supporting insect and caterpillar biodiversity, capturing CO<sub>2</sub>, maintaining soil stability, managing the watershed and creating moist leaf litter hospitable for various organisms.

An entomologist, Tallamy approaches trees and the environment from the perspective of bugs. We've lost about 45% of our insect population in recent years, he says, which affects other populations from birds to humans.

The PEM talk was well attended by birders and if you like birds, you have to like insects and care for the environment that supports them. This means:

- Grow Oaks. They are a keystone species, the starting point from which other animals and species derive life-sustaining support. About 950 types of caterpillars live within branches and buds of oaks and provide food for birds.
- Turn off your exterior lights at night and use yellow LED light bulbs when they are on.
- Plant multiple oaks. They do not self-pollinate.
- Start with small saplings or bare-root trees, not large container-grown trees. Starting with smaller saplings/acorns/bare root trees allows the new tree to develop with a proper root system capable of holding the tree in place. Larger transplanted trees have bound roots that will not develop, reducing their resiliency, impact and lifespan.
- Oaks grow quickly if starting with small plants. They spend the first couple of years developing a dense and broad root system and then shoot up. In photos Tallamy showed as evidence of this, a neighbor's child from the age of two to 20 stands beside a young oak. By the time the neighbor reaches the age of 10, the tree has substantially overtaken the child.

- Plant trees in groups, not as single specimens; their roots intertwine and they support each other. The grouping can be a mix of tree species. (Beware, though. Some trees – but not oaks – can kill off neighboring trees, so do your research.)
- If you are worried that an oak will eventually topple onto your house or fence, definitely start with a small tree and plant in groupings with other trees and shrubs to increase resilience. Or, every few years, trim the leader off and allow sucker branches to form a smaller oak shrub/bush.
- If you are planting in bedrock or on an old agricultural plot, beware of the compacted earth below 15 or so inches. The compacted earth or rock will keep roots from penetrating deeply and increase ultimate instability and lifespan.
- Jays (Blue and others) plant oaks by burying acorns, in the range of 4,500 acorns/year/Jay. Other birds and animals do similar work but none as well as Jays.
- Plant native oaks. Non-native oaks will be attractive and absorb CO<sub>2</sub> but they will not support life. Their native caterpillars, insects, birds and squirrels do not follow them to new locations and so they are a food wasteland.

To observe local oaks, try walking the Forest River Trails in Marblehead or the Forest River Conservation Area in Salem (trail starts at Intervale Road in Salem). Click [here](#) for the Marblehead Conservancy's map of the area. The Salem path is slippery in many places, almost entirely due to oak leaves, so wear hiking boots, not sneakers.

For a video of Tallamy's December 9 talk, click [here](#).

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## Sharing Clean Regatta Best Practices



This year, the 2022 Newport to Bermuda Race achieved Platinum-level Clean Regatta status from Sailors for the Sea, a nonprofit organization promoting ocean health. Race organizers would like to extend their reach to the wider sailing community – sharing experiences and lessons learned – including with the Boston Yacht Club and the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron as they prepare for the upcoming 2023 Marblehead to Halifax Ocean Race.

In October, Sustainable Marblehead Board member and Sailors for the Sea skipper Rob Howie organized a meeting between the leadership of the two regattas. They discussed their mutual interests in clean regatta best practices, based on the 2022 Newport to Bermuda effort, and made plans to adopt similar approaches for the 2023 Marblehead to Halifax race.

To achieve platinum status, the Green Team for the Newport to Bermuda race adopted the 20 Clean Regatta best practices identified by Sailors for the Sea, including eliminating single-use water bottles and plastic straws, providing plastic-free dinnerware and reusable bags, awarding practical items or perpetual or upcycled trophies, involving local organizations, serving local food, and ensuring

proper waste bin placement and signage to divert food waste from the landfill.

The Newport to Bermuda Race's Sustainability Report detailing these best practices can be found [here](#). As part of the effort to eliminate single-use plastic water bottles, race organizers borrowed a Water Monster. (On page 46 of the report you'll find a description of Sustainable Marblehead's Water Monster, which Howie terms a "game changer" in Marblehead, discouraging the use of throwaway plastic water bottles, and providing education, awareness and sponsorship opportunities.)

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**Work at Chandler Hovey Park**

One of the initial projects to be funded via the Marblehead Recreation & Parks Department's [Landscape Donation website](#) (developed with help from Sustainable Marblehead) is the parcel surrounding the granite sign at Chandler Hovey Park. A donation from the Hannaway Family is facilitating the continued beautification of the area.

In the most recent project update, on November 14, Marblehead town workers tilled the entire area to be planted, added 20 yards of Brick Ends Farm compost, laid out the path and removed the sickly Norway Maple tree. (The Norway Maple stump still needs to be ground down.)

Planting this late in the year, the third week of November, was deemed risky, so Larry Simpson, of Simpson Garden Design in Marblehead, who is overseeing the work, will order the plants in early spring. If all goes well, Sustainable Marblehead and other volunteers can then have a planting party and do the installation sometime in mid-April.



### **Solar Tea Light Illumination**

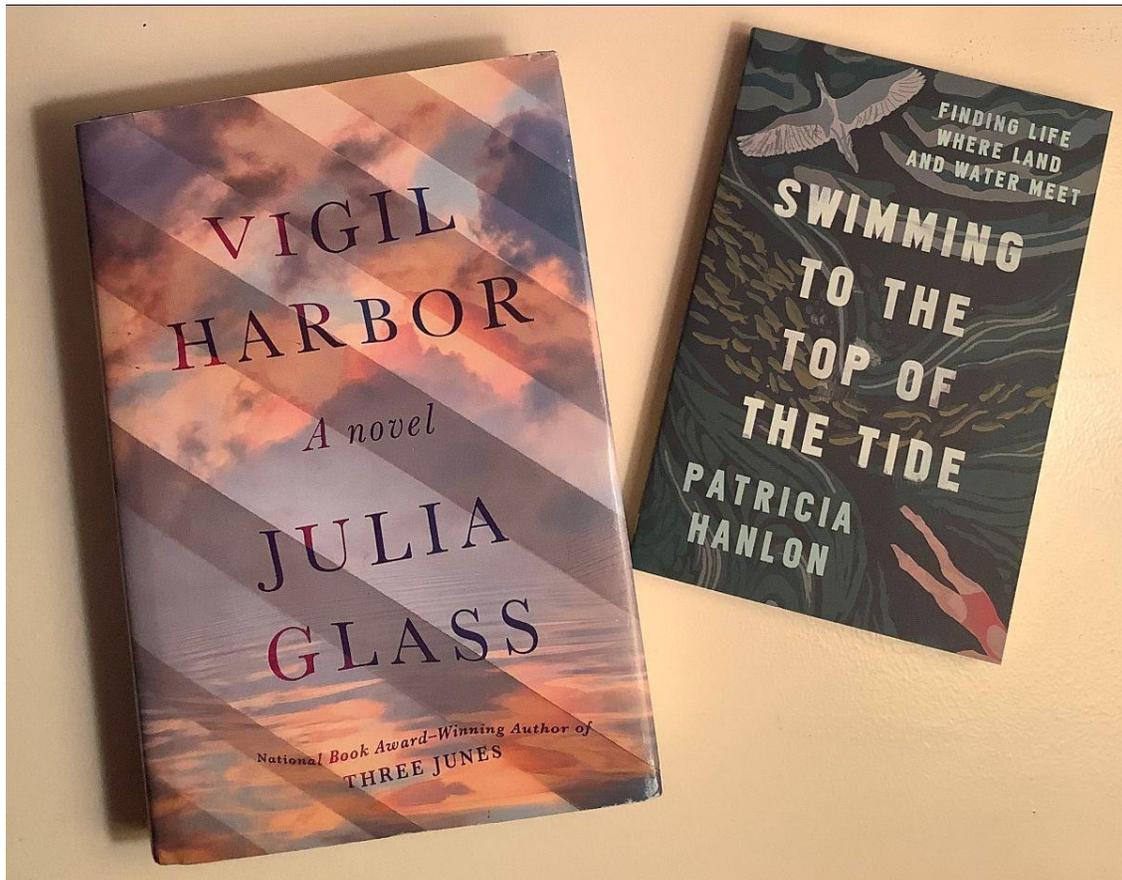
The Christmas Walk/Holiday Stroll parade was unfortunately cancelled this year, due to stormy weather, but the Tree Lighting festivities on Friday, December 2, took place as planned, with lots of Marbleheaders turning out to enjoy the show.

Sustainable Marblehead hosted a table, giving away solar-powered, mason-jar tea lights, popular with the younger set.

Click [here](#) for a Marblehead TV video of the event. Sustainable Marblehead Board member Petra Langer describes our activities at minute 8:30.

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## Upcoming Event



Book Talk with Julia Glass and Patricia Hanlon -- Save the Date!

January 26, 2023, 7:00 pm  
The Old Town House

Literature – whether fiction or memoir – can tell stories that incorporate climate change, stimulating our imagination and ultimately impelling us to take action.

To help motivate and inspire, Sustainable Marblehead will host a talk by two local

writers: Marblehead author and National Book Award winner Julia Glass, whose latest novel *Vigil Harbor* came out last spring, and Ipswich artist and author Patricia Hanlon, whose memoir *Swimming to the Top of the Tide*, chronicles her swims in the Great Marsh.

Please join us for this exciting discussion!

Click [here](#) for more information.

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### Did You Know?

Migratory monarchs were classified as endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in July. They're now just two steps away from being labeled as extinct on the group's Red List of threatened species.

Climate change has significantly impacted the migratory monarch butterfly. Drought limits the growth of milkweed and increases the frequency of catastrophic wildfires, temperature extremes trigger earlier migrations before milkweed is available, while severe weather has killed millions of butterflies.

The western population is at greatest risk of extinction, having declined by an estimated 99.9 percent between the 1980s and 2021. The larger

eastern population also shrunk by 84% from 1996 to 2014.

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### What Can You Do?

Protect this butterfly and its habitats by planting native milkweed, reducing pesticide use and supporting the protection of overwintering sites.

By creating a monarch waystation, particularly with native plants, you also create a pollinator habitat for many other species. These habitats benefit ALL pollinators: bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and all the birds that rely on caterpillars to feed their young.

The [Take a Plant, Leave a Plant Marblehead MA](#) Facebook page is a good source of milkweed seeds.

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## Support

Sustainable Marblehead is a community organization working to reduce waste and achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2040. Our work is important, and we can't do it alone. Please join us by donating today.

[Donate Today](#)

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Special thanks to our Community Champion Sponsors



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Sustainable Marblehead · P.O. Box 1320 · Marblehead, MA 01945 · USA

