

May 1, 2021

**TO: Mayor Stephen H. Hagerty  
Evanston, Illinois**

**Copy: Aldermen:**  
Judy Fiske  
Peter Braithwaite  
Melissa A. Wynne  
Donald N. Wilson  
Robin Rue Simmons  
Thomas M. Suffredin  
Eleanor Revelle  
Ann Rainey  
Cicely L. Fleming

**From: [Larry Will](#)**



Reference:  
<https://evanstonroundtable.com/2021/04/27/112773/>

Dear Mayor Hagerty:

I see from the referenced Internet article that leaf blowers are once again at issue in Evanston. I know the leaf blower has been a hot button for some people for a long time, but I must say you are being misled. There is no legitimate reason for banning gasoline-powered leaf blowers, **except for noise**, because everything else you have been told is either false, misrepresented, or unsubstantiated. I know you don't want to believe this

because you have heard otherwise for a long time, from people you think know the facts. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

I also know that in 10 days, the proposed changes to the existing leaf blower ordinance are likely to be adopted because the momentum for this revision is no doubt unstoppable. Limiting the time of use for leaf blowers is likely reasonable and perhaps even appropriate. But the overall goal of eliminating the use of all gasoline powered lawn care and construction equipment is unwarranted. At the very least, it is seriously premature. Battery power has not yet reached the performance of gasoline-powered equipment. I feel compelled to comment further on this, so you are not blindsided in the future as certain so-called facts you have been given are shown to be false.

By now, you are wondering who I am to be telling you all this. I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered handheld lawn care products. I am not a stakeholder in your community's leaf blower issue, nor am I trying to interfere with any decision you deem necessary. But I am a source of facts about the design and use of cordless and gasoline powered leaf blowers that will be enlightening to you. I would like to start by providing you with my [qualifications and credentials](#).

The bottom line is that noise is the problem and there is a way that noise from gasoline-powered leaf blowers can be mitigated, without banning all gasoline-powered blowers. I will expand on this truth later in this informational document.

But first, I would like to tell you the reason why leaf blowers, and now other gasoline-powered equipment, is being touted as hazardous to your health. You may not know this, but there is a group of people, from outside your community, working hard to have gasoline-powered leaf blowers banned throughout the country. The initial reason was, and still is for that matter, primarily because some of them are noisy and therefore irritating. The concept of citing health hazards as the reason for a ban is contrived. It was initiated by Peter and Susan Kendall of Orinda, California. You can read all about them in the [New Yorker, October 25, 2010 issue](#). Because sound was not a compelling enough reason for banning leaf blowers in their hometown, Ms. Kendall said, "I would (in the future) try to get the law classified not under noise but under health and safety..." So, the Kendall's and many others have searched the Internet for statements and enlisted dignitaries that would support their mission, regardless of the truth. I'm sure you know from your experience with the media that if something is said often enough, by many different people, or put in print by many sources, regardless of the facts, people will tend to believe it as being true. They then will proceed to confidently restate these unproven hypotheses emphatically.

One example of this in Evanston is the claim made by Nina Krauss, a Professor at Northwestern University, wherein she accuses the leaf-blower of having biologic effects on the brain, the related cognitive abilities, and the cardiovascular system. I'm sure she is a master in her professional field, but her field does not include leaf blowers. Where does she get her facts? I doubt she has any test results to substantiate her claim.

I venture to say, the people that have convinced you that leaf blowers are bad are well meaning, conscientious, and dedicated to improving the environment, but they are not professionals. What I mean by not being professional is that none of them are in any way professionally involved in the use, development, or accreditation of the leaf blower. These people can only quote claims made by others. They have no way of knowing if what they present before you is actually true. Have they cited qualified tests as justification, or is what they say simply inuendo or opinion? Some of the background material they show is true in concept, but it is not true as it relates to the leaf blower.

One such claim deals with emission from the burning of fossil-fuel. At one time hydrocarbon emission, or unburned fuel in the exhaust, was considered the evil source of environmental catastrophe. Admittedly, automobile manufacturers have done a lot over the years to reduce this constituent in exhaust gasses. But the leaf blower engine has also been improved. Mandated by the EPA, hydrocarbon emission has been reduced by as much as 90%, effective January 2005. See "[Certified Emission Levels](#)". Evanston can mandate cleaner engines by disallowing blowers built prior to 2005. See [emission label](#) for manufacturing date.

Mr. Jensen told you that gasoline-powered leaf blowers harm the soil, dust is created and there is environmental harm caused by blowing debris. If you believe this, then you had better ban lawnmowers, string trimmers, edgers and electric leaf blowers. Fortunately, Mr. Jensen's claim is not true.

According to the EPA, the particulate matter that is potentially harmful to someone's health is known as PM10 and PM2.5. Nitrous oxide, which is a pollutant from diesel engines not gasoline, is the source of [particulate matter](#). Since leaf blowers cannot generate PM10 and PM2.5, there is no justification for banning them for this reason. As for their ability to lift PM particles from the ground and suspend them indefinitely, that is not possible. PM10 and PM2.5 particles are already in the air. Because they are so small and lightweight, the wind keeps these particles suspended. The brown haze you see over a city is comprised of these particles. Should it settle to the ground, it will immediately attach itself to a larger particle which when disturbed by a leaf blower, will return to the ground within a few feet of being raised. You can see from the above "Particulate Matter" link, even PM2.5 is not a viable argument for banning the leaf blower.

Alexandria Elliott, a Third Ward resident of Evanston, thinks blowers are harmful to insects. I don't see the correlation. Where is the confirmation that leaf blowers have anything to do with the alleged demise of an insect population? Recent figures indicate that there are more than [200 million insects](#) for each human on the planet. An article in [The New York Times](#) claims that the world holds 300 pounds of insects for every pound of humans. Even if it were true that leaf blowers had some small impact on insects, which I doubt, perhaps we can afford to lose a few.

Once again, the underlying issue, and the only issue with the gasoline powered leaf blower, is [noise](#). The industry learned of this more than 20 years ago and deliberately addressed this issue in response to complaints. Much has been done to reduce the noise from gasoline powered leaf blowers.

In order to understand how sound reduction is quantified, note that for every six dB(A) reduction in sound magnitude (from any starting point on the measurement scale), the actual volume is reduced by 50%.

This much sound reduction is hard to accept as being true for the average person because we cannot comprehend from experience what a 50% reduction sounds like. The best thing to do is to witness an actual leaf blower sound comparison, but I know that it is not easy to arrange this. An alternative is to check out the [video](#) of an actual demonstration developed for the comparison of leaf blowers on my website.

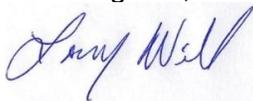
In the case of a gasoline powered leaf blower, sound level is measured at 50 feet per the industry Standard ([ANSI B175.2](#)). A "Quiet" leaf blower is 65 dB(A) or less, measured per the above Standard. This is at least a seventy-five percent reduction in sound or 12 dB(A), from a typical noisy leaf blower at 77 dB(A). Quiet leaf blowers are only 85 dB(A) at the ear of the operator. Hearing protection is not required according to OSHA.

Quiet leaf blowers have been available for a long time, however, not all leaf blowers are quiet. Therefore, I encourage you to learn more about these quiet blowers before summarily banning them along with the noisy ones.

Fortunately, because of the industry's foresight, any city that wants to limit the sound emanating from a gas-powered leaf blower can easily determine sound magnitude in the field without testing. The consumer can also determine compliance with local sound limitations at the point of purchase via the attached [label](#). This decal has been on all gasoline powered leaf blowers manufactured in the United States for at least the past fifteen years. If there is no label on a unit, it would not comply.

The leaf blower issue can become quite complex. If you are being told about other negative traits attributed to the blower, such as emissions or particulate matter, read the [appendix](#), with links to references, to learn the facts about the leaf blower and its use.

Best Regards,



Larry Will. BSME, Leaf Blower Information Specialist, ECHO Inc.  
Vice President Engineering (retired)

Phone: 479-256-0282,

Email: [info@leafblownoise.com](mailto:info@leafblownoise.com) Website: <https://www.leafblownoise.com/>

Click: [APPENDIX](#) for details and [links](#) to references