

**Saturday**

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## **Do not ban leaf blowers**

Here's one more viewpoint about the upcoming leaf blower summer ban Council vote on Jan. 17. I grew up in Newton, own a landscaping business and served on the committee that shaped Brookline's leaf blower regulations. Our committee researched health, noise and pollution concerns. We tested machines, invited health professionals, law enforcement, the public, landscape professionals and manufacturers to come before us. We identified "hotspots" and compiled a communication list of 300 landscape professionals. We came up with a comprehensive plan that was overwhelmingly passed in a warrant article at Town Meeting. It is a compromise plan that we all can live with and it is NOT a ban. It is a plan that will work through education, communication and fines when all else fails.

Here in Newton, we offered the Program and Services Committee many compromise solutions. Not one idea has been adopted. We use leaf blowers to clear grass clipping, walkways and terraces and driveways of tree debris that occurs all summer long. The schools and universities use the blowers to maintain their walkways and grounds. The golf courses use them to keep their greens playable. The city uses them to keep all the Village Squares clean.

The alternative to blowers is hand raking and the cost and time of that will be two to three times more. That cost will be passed onto the consumer-you, the Newton taxpayers.

I know that as a small business owner, I will be unable to find employees to hand rake. If I were even able to add staff to cover the extra hours-finding people to do the work is difficult and more employees means additional costs to operate our business-I would incur enormous increases in my insurance costs.

Those supporting the ban tell landscapers we should just add staff or charge more. That is unrealistic. We will lose clients if we have to spend time hand raking. The manpower to do the hand raking is staggering and the number of hours in the day are limited. The suggestion to charge more? Also unrealistic. We unquestionably will lose clients if we do that.

The concerns residents have about the blowers have been addressed well in Brookline and can be addressed satisfactorily in Newton, too. Think of the financial consequences for you and your neighbors, not to mention small business landscapers. I urge you to **NOT SUPPORT** the ban.

For more information on this subject, please take a look at [Newtonleaves.org](http://Newtonleaves.org). It will also show you how to contact your city councilor before the vote.

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