

December 30, 2018

Barbara Joy Cooley
Chairwoman, Committee of the Islands
and
Reporter, Sanibel-Captiva Islander

RE: <http://sanibel-captiva-islander.com/page/content.detail/id/585949/Should-Sanibel-ban-fuel-powered-leaf-blowers-.html?nav=5011>

Dear Ms. Cooley:

Calling your attention to the referenced article found on the Internet, I see that you are seeking support for the banning of gasoline powered leaf blowers. Let me start by saying that I am not a stakeholder in this issue, but I am in a position to provide you with comprehensive and accurate information regarding the design of leaf blowers and the ramifications of legislating their use.

I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered lawn care products. Information on my qualifications and expertise can be found at the following websites:

<http://leafblownoise.com/about%20the%20author.pdf>

<http://leafblownoise.com/List%20of%20cities.htm>

Some of the information you provide in your article is incorrect. I'm not suggesting that you are deliberately making false statements, for I know the information you have gathered justifies your position on the matter. The problem is, much of what you have learned about the leaf blower is not the truth. The most glaring is your stating that battery powered blowers can run 12 hours on a charge. It's more correct to say 12 minutes for a typical battery. Even the largest optional backpack battery, manufactured by Stihl, only runs for one hour, 55 minutes.

The cost you quote, which is close to the truth, is due to the fact that many batteries are needed for the professional to complete a typical day of work. The retail price for Stihl's backpack battery is \$1000.

<https://www.stihlusa.com/products/battery-products/battery-charge-run-times/>

<http://www.gardenland.com/product/stihl-ar3000-backpack-battery/>

Battery powered leaf blowers exist because there is a market for them. To confirm this, just check out the leaf blower aisle at Lowes or Home Depot. They are popular with homeowners with small lots and with women that enjoy caring for their outdoor property. They are light in weight and easy to start. However, their performance is not there yet for practical use. Air flow and velocity are not sufficient for the professional and anyone with a large or highly landscaped yard. As for running time, well I'm sorry to say, it's dismal. From the Internet, let me paraphrase from some customer comments:

- *I agree with several previous reviews; the battery life is maybe 20 minutes tops after a full charge.*
- *Charged it out of the box. Got about 15 minutes run time.*
- *Total run time, 8 minutes 35 seconds*

The internet is crowded with false leaf blower information. Someone says something based on false logic that fits well with another person's point of view and suddenly it becomes fact. And when an actual fact comes along that does not fit an anti-leaf blower advocates conviction, it is derided and ignored. It's truly sad because some very bad decisions can be made when they are based on innuendo, exaggeration and outdated information.

As you alluded to in your article, noise is always the issue in a residential community, not only leaf blowers, but other sources as well. Almost always, when the opposition to noise is great enough, some sort of legislation is considered to solve the problem. Often it involves a ban, which is never the best solution. Like prohibition in the thirties, people will ignore a ban. And they will get away with it because a ban cannot be enforced. Even the police will ignore a ban for it is the least important task among all their serious responsibilities. As a violator, the worst he can expect is a warning.

Opposition to a ban and bad press usually comes to light after it is implemented. You probably have heard that there is a [court case in Maplewood NJ](#), contesting a recent blower ban. Like an iceberg, this issue is deeper than it appears to be on the surface. Many problems can arise from a blower ban; for the city, for homeowners and for landscapers that depend on the leaf blower.

http://leafblownoise.com/#Will_a_ban_work

<http://www.leafblownoise.com/Palo%20Alto%20suit.pdf>

If noise is in fact the issue, then ban the noise, not all gasoline powered leaf blowers. So how is this possible and how can it be enforced. Well, require the use of "Quiet" leaf blowers.

Okay, so you're thinking, right, quiet blowers! Do they really exist? Now I'm not trying to sell anything, even though the following might sound like a commercial, but I'd like to start with an explanation about how and why quiet blowers came to be.

A number of years ago my engineering department developed the first "Quiet" gasoline powered leaf blower. This was done in direct response to complaints from the field regarding leaf blower noise. ECHO Inc. now has five designs in their product line that are "Quiet". Today, several other manufacturers have joined in, investing millions of dollars in tooling, testing and new assembly lines to provide this important alternative to a blower ban. It is important because this is the only workable solution to the leaf blower noise issue.

The industry attaches a label to the blower that indicates sound level, which is measured by a third party such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL), according to a highly detailed ANSI Standard that controls all the measurement variables. This makes it easy to determine sound magnitude at the point of purchase and in the field by the enforcement officer. There is no need to catch the operator in the act nor is there a need to take any sound measurements. If the proper label is not present, there is a violation. The number to look for is 65 dB(A), measured at 50 feet. This represents a 75% reduction in sound from a typical noisy leaf blower at 77 dB(A).

<http://leafblownoise.com/Sound%20label%20mounted.jpg>

These blowers have been available for more than 20 years and still, both sides of the noise issue have been slow to embrace these products. Overwhelmingly, users do not see blower noise as an issue since all their power equipment makes noise. If they have an older blower that is still working, they are reluctant to scrap it. And when they must, they don't want to spend

thirty dollars more for a quiet blower they think is unnecessary. Some even think that quiet blowers have less power, which of course is not true. Blower haters likewise won't acknowledge this design. They just can't seem to accept that this option is viable and just might solve their problem. To them, it is not quiet enough. They want silence, so they think electric. Guess what, electric blowers are not silent. Some are even noisier than a gasoline blower.

<http://leafblownoise.com/Electric%20blower%20sound.htm>

I'm sure there are already many quiet gasoline-powered leaf blowers in your area, but the problem is, **if there is only one noisy blower being used in the neighborhood, all leaf blowers are reviled.** If you have not actually heard the difference between these two blowers (65 vs. 77 dB(A)), you really should seek out a comparative noise demonstration. These numbers may not seem significant, but keep in mind that for every 6 dB(A) reduction in sound, the sound pressure is reduced by 50%.

So now that you know there are quiet leaf blowers in existence, if you still dislike leaf blowers, you might be wondering about all the hype you read about leaf blower environmental hazards. Some people claim that gasoline-powered leaf blowers create high levels of exhaust pollution. This is way out of line with today's reality. It is true that years ago engines from leaf blowers were troublesome, emitting high levels of unburned hydrocarbons, which did contribute to air pollution. Some of these blowers may still be in service, but since January 1, 2005, new leaf blower engines have been well within acceptable limits according to the EPA. The blue smoke you once saw in the exhaust is totally gone. Due to government regulations, hydrocarbon emission has been reduced by 85 to 90%, depending on engine size.

<http://leafblownoise.com/emission%20graph.htm>

Don't give any credence to the health hazard assertion either. The insinuation that leaf blowers can be hazardous to your health is totally unfounded. There are reputable organizations that have done research to determine if there are health hazards attached to leaf blowers. The Greenwich Department of Health indicated in an incisive report that there is no health hazard attributable to leaf blowers.

http://leafblownoise.com/#Greenwich_Department_of_Health_Statement

Dr. Nancy Steele, of the California Air Resources Board (CARB), came to the same conclusion in a report to the California State Legislature. This report is over 15 years old, but the blower can only be better today, since engines are cleaner by magnitudes than they were when this report was prepared.

http://leafblownoise.com/#Dr._Nancy_Steele_of_the_California_Air_Resources_Board

Now, it is true that some leaf blower operators are inconsiderate of others. The only way to address this is to create an education program. To help with that, you will find educational materials at my website, which can be copied, paraphrased, or used in any other way that you like. Information found therein applies to all leaf blower applications, including battery powered units.

<http://leafblownoise.com/LeafBlowerTraining.pdf>

http://leafblownoise.com/OPEI%20training_videos.htm

<http://leafblownoise.com/LEAF%20BLOWER%20%20manual%2012-13-10.pdf>

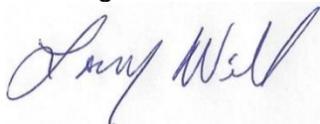
Often those that do not like leaf blowers blame the professional user for the sound issue. Keep in mind that people get upset when they must listen to blowers in the evening or early in the morning, and on Sundays or holidays. Sometimes blowers run for what seems like hours at a time. Homeowners, not professionals, are the ones that work in their yards well into the evening or very early in the morning when people may still be sleeping. They are the ones that use their blowers on Sundays and holidays. Because they buy inexpensive and therefore underpowered units, they must run them longer to get the job done, another big irritation. Most professionals limit their workday to normal business hours. They are interested in getting the job done as quickly as possible, usually less than ten minutes per residence. As with any profession, time is money. If it comes to having to write legislation, you would do well to have different requirements for homeowners versus professionals. When you solicit information from professionals, you will find that they do not understand all the issues, but they can tell you how a blower ban will impact their income or how their customers will react to a cost increase.

So, if a ban is imposed, think about what that will mean to your community. Obviously, the broom and rake are the only tools that don't make noise. These are fine if you're into sweating and hard work. Perhaps some homeowners would prefer this over an exercycle or a treadmill. It will take them at least [eight times longer using a broom](#) or a rake than it would with a leaf blower. But for the rest of us and for the professional, this is an archaic and unacceptable approach. Some unfortunately will use potable water to clean their driveways and sidewalks, something the leaf blower was designed to prevent when it was invented 50 years ago.

Leaf blowers are firmly entrenched as indispensable tools to anyone that has ever used them. The best thing to do is find a solution that everyone can support, especially the professionals. Let me say this one more time, "Ban the noise, not the blower!"

I could go into much more detail in this document, pointing out all the inaccuracies you will be expected to believe, but for the facts and to save time here, you can find more information about the leaf blower at my [website](#). Should you have any specific questions that are not adequately answered, please respond to this email or call with your inquiry.

Best regards,



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