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The First Thing We Do, Let's Kill All the Leaf Blowers?

You can find this statement in an article published by the New York Times, October 25, 2001, in a Guest Essay by Margaret Renld. What a bold statement this is, based on incorrect and misleading information she has cherry picked from the Internet.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/opinion/leaf-blowers-california-emissions.html?smid=em-share>

Although her comment is an original metaphor, the basis for her distain is not! She quotes from articles that are one sided in support of her position. But why not? She loves plants and insects, and she hates noise, well at least she hates leaf blower noise.

I, on the other hand, hate insects, like the infestation of [Joro Spiders](#) taking over the South. I hate the ground dwelling bees that fly around me on my deck. I live in a two-acre woods and have to use a leaf blower all year round. But I don't see any negative impact on these pests; Fire Ants, Yellow Jackets, Wasps, Carpenter Bees, Termites, Cockroaches, Granddaddy Long Legs, and the imported and the beautiful Joro, or Golden Orb Spiders enclosing my house with high tensile webs.

The article talks about the 10-year-old and inaccurate Edmonds test comparing exhaust emission from a Ford Raptor pickup truck to a back pack leaf blower, saying the leaf blower is worse. Really?? A 411 horsepower engine against a 2.4 horsepower engine? A 6.2 cubic liter engine against a 50.8 cubic centimeter engine? Where is the logic in that? Driving a Raptor 3900 miles will use at least 354 gallons of fuel at the published 11 miles per gallon. The leaf blower, in a half hour, will burn about 35 ounces of fuel. By the way, a gallon is 128 ounces. As of January 2005, hydrocarbon exhaust emission on gas blowers has been [reduced](#) by as much as 90%, depending on engine size.

Okay, now what about **noise**? Well, the industry took notice of leaf blower noise more than 25 years ago and deliberately addressed this issue in response to complaints. Much has been done to reduce the noise from all gasoline powered leaf blowers, spending millions of dollars to make an alternative to noisy blowers available to the consumer.

In the case of a gasoline-powered leaf blower, sound level is measured at 50 feet to replicate what a bystander will experience. The published values are obtained

per the industry Standard ([ANSI B175.2](#)). A “Quiet” leaf blower is 65 dB(A) or less, measured per this Standard.

Now just think about what that equates to for a minute. Sixty-five dB(A) is the same sound level as that inside a [typical office environment](#). Is it silent? No! But this is at least a seventy-five percent reduction in sound. At the ear of the operator, quiet leaf blowers are only 85 dB(A) and do not require hearing protection [according to OSHA](#). Check out the [video](#) of an actual demonstration developed for the comparison of leaf blower sound on my website. Note that battery-powered blowers are not as quiet as one might think. If noise is the true issue as I maintain, ban the noise, not all gasoline powered leaf blowers.

Here are some real facts:

The initial reason for attacking leaf blowers always was, and still is for that matter, that some of them are noisy and therefore irritating. The concept of citing health hazards as the reason for doing something about blowers 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](#). This couple wanted leaf blowers banned. 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...”*

Many anti-leaf blower advocates have created websites that dedicate themselves to demeaning the leaf blower. So, the Kendall’s and others, no doubt including Ms. Renld, have searched the Internet for the names of dignitaries and organizations that provide statements supporting their mission, regardless of the truth. Local people that are strongly against the leaf blower are eager to believe what they read, using these falsehoods to justify their cause. Some of the statements you hear even defy logic. I am 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. Ms. Renld is among the most emphatic writers I have ever encountered. She is most likely factual in her feelings about the leaf blower, but, unfortunately, not in the justification for her feelings. If you want more facts, read the following:

- <https://www.leafblownoise.com/Response%20to%20Fiona%20Mitchell%20Presentation%2005-13-2021.pdf>
- <https://www.leafblownoise.com/edmonds%20test%20response2.pdf>
- <https://www.leafblownoise.com/people%20and%20their%20LB%20issues.pdf>