

Dear Legislators,

While the excessive noise of gas powered leaf blowers is an obvious annoyance, most of us are unaware of the not so silent danger and outsized impact these machines pose to the quality of the surrounding air, the climate, and the negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of our communities, and the workers who operate them. Because of this, dozens of cities and towns across the United States have banned them altogether.

When gas and oil mix together in the two-stroke engine, about a third of it does not combust. Even more surprising is the huge volume of emissions these "tiny" engines produce. According to a study conducted by the car reviewer Edmunds, a half-hour of yardwork with a two-stroke-engine leaf blower produced the same amount of hydrocarbon emissions as a 3,887-mile drive in a Ford F-150 Raptor pickup truck. As a result, pollutants that have been linked to cancers, heart disease, asthma and other serious ailments escape into the air.

Every doctor affiliated with Mt. Sinai Children's Hospital's Environmental Health Center signed on to New York's proposed total ban, stating: "Leaf blowers pose multiple hazards to human health...Children are the most susceptible members of our population to these hazards development, and thus their lungs, ears, eyes, and other organ systems are inherently more sensitive to environmental hazards than the organs of adults."

With a heightened understanding of the unique risks of poor air quality, it is time to transition to readily available new technologies of electric powered blowers that not only eliminate the emissions, but are quieter than the current gas powered equipment. This would demonstrate real progress to improving air quality statewide.

A growing number of landscape companies across the country are now recognizing that electric is the way to go and are moving in that direction with much of their lawn equipment, proving wrong that banning gas powered leaf blowers makes leaf management arduous and prohibitively expensive. In fact, technology is changing quickly as efficient and cost-effective machinery continues to be developed, especially with the advancement of lithium-ion batteries that are lighter, run longer and charge faster.

Oregon needs to encourage moving in that same direction by enacting legislation that will transition us to a healthier environment. We understand that this cannot be accomplished overnight, but working with the Oregon Landscape Contractors Association and others, we can switch to electric as the old gas-powered equipment becomes obsolete and electric equipment continues to improve.

We urge you to consider HB3350 so that we may transition towards better health for everyone.

Sincerely,

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