

THE CHARGING STATION

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF A²ZERO AND
THE ANN ARBOR OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATIONS



IN THIS ISSUE:

WELCOME.....	1
LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	1
TREE EQUITY.....	2
TREE WALKS.....	4
COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT.....	6
COMMUNITY RECIPE.....	7
ANNOUNCEMENTS.....	9
UPCOMING EVENTS.....	10

ABOUT THE EDITOR



Sean Reynolds (he/him) oversees sustainability work related to natural features. This includes the 10,000 Trees Initiative, which aims to grow and maintain Ann Arbor's tree canopy on private property. Interested in learning more? Reach out to Sean at sreynolds@a2gov.org.



OSI staff and volunteers stand by a tree they've just planted in the Bryant neighborhood in 2023.

WELCOME

Welcome from the City of Ann Arbor's Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI). In this issue of the Charging Station, OSI is delighted to share details about tree equity – the practice of ensuring that the benefits of urban trees are available to all. If you are interested in learning more about any of the organizations featured in this issue and how you can get involved, more detail can be found on our website: a2zero.org. As always, thank you for your interest in sustainability activities in Ann Arbor!

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Equity and justice are at the center of A²ZERO and staff in OSI are continuing to ground our work in these critical principles. In that light, we'd like to take a moment to honor the geographic and historic space we share. We acknowledge that the land the City of Ann Arbor occupies is the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabe and Wyandot peoples. We further acknowledge that our city stands, like almost all property in the United States, on lands obtained, generally in unconscionable ways, from indigenous peoples. The taking of this land was formalized by the Treaty of Detroit in 1807. Knowing where we live, work, study, and recreate does not change the past, but a thorough understanding of the ongoing consequences of this past can empower us in our work to create a future that supports human flourishing and justice for all individuals.

TREE EQUITY

GROWING COMMUNITY IN TREE TOWN

As Ann Arbor moves towards a resilient and carbon neutral future, one of our most important assets is the city's urban tree canopy. While the green expanses of our city's trees are visually striking, each of those trees also provides a wealth of unseen benefits. By shading our buildings, roads, sidewalks, and lawns and through a process known as evapotranspiration (by which plants absorb water from the soil and then evaporate it through their leaves), trees are critical to reducing urban temperatures – on average, urban forests are approximately 3°F cooler than non-green urban areas ([Reference](#)).

The shade provided by trees reduces burdens on air conditioning systems during hotter months, which helps to reduce energy usage, lower utility bills, and cut down on greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. Trees also have a direct impact on pollution by absorbing pollutants from the air, soil, and groundwater systems. And by absorbing around 25% of annual rainfall ([Reference](#)), urban trees can reduce stormwater runoff and flooding. Additionally, research has shown that trees can help to improve mental and physical health in a variety of ways ([Reference](#)). These many benefits mean that a properly managed urban tree canopy can create a safer, healthier, and more resilient future for our people and our place.



OSI staff and volunteers plant trees in the Bryant neighborhood as part of a 10,000 Trees Initiative planting event in 2023.

However, the benefits of an urban forest are not distributed equally. According to non-profit American Forests, “a map of the tree cover in America’s cities is too often a map of income and race. That’s because, due to decades of redlining and other discriminatory policies, trees are often sparse in neighborhoods with more low-income families and people of color.” In fact, historically redlined neighborhoods have been shown to have roughly half the amount of tree canopy cover as non-redlined neighborhoods ([Reference](#)). This means that the many benefits of trees are often lacking the most in the communities that are most in need of those benefits. “Tree Equity” means managing our urban forest to address these inequalities and ensure that tree canopy is equitably distributed across our community.

According to American Forests, Ann Arbor’s overall Tree Equity Score is 92 – however, there are census blocks within the City that have Tree Equity Scores as low as 77 and current canopy cover as low as 4%. By focusing on the neighborhoods within these census blocks, we can help to build tree equity in our community and establish a healthier, more connected urban forest. To learn more about Ann Arbor’s Tree Equity Score and view a map by census block, visit www.treeequityscore.org/map and search for “City of Ann Arbor, MI.”

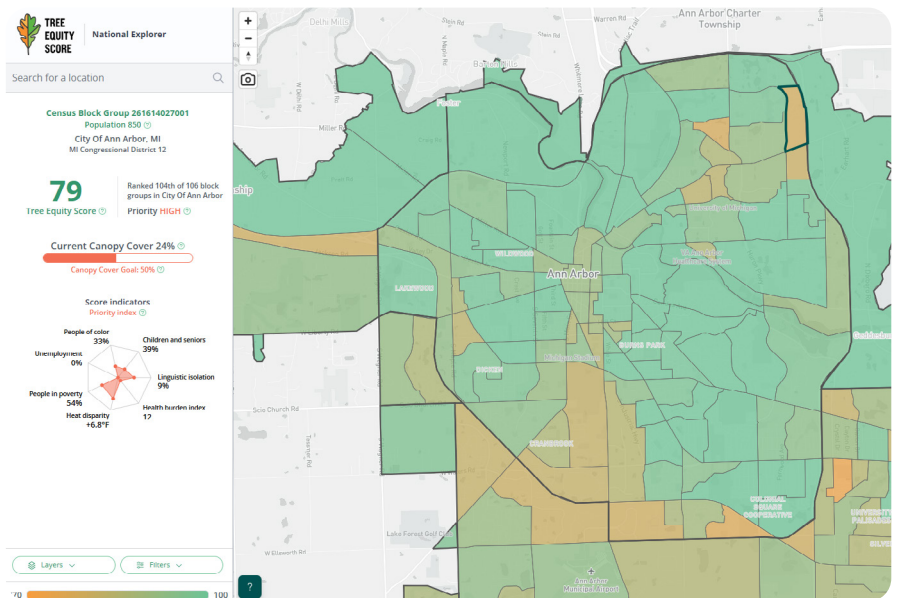
TREE EQUITY

GROWING COMMUNITY IN TREE TOWN

The Office of Sustainability and Innovations is helping to increase tree equity in Ann Arbor through the 10,000 Trees Initiative, a program focused on growing tree canopy cover on private property. Through annual giveaways of free tree seedlings and coupon codes to heavily discount trees available through the Washtenaw County Conservation District's Fall Tree & Native Plant Sales (see the Collaborator Spotlight on page 6 for more details on these coupon codes!), the 10,000 Trees Initiative is able to make tree planting widely accessible to private property owners, regardless of income level. Additionally, the City of Ann Arbor was awarded in 2024 a \$1 million grant from the United States Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program – with American Forests acting as a pass-through partner – with \$530,000 of those dollars going towards tree planting and tree maintenance programs on private property through the 10,000 Trees Initiative. Through these programs, we will be able to connect private property owners – including single-family homes, multifamily properties, houses of worship, and more – with contractors who can plant large-diameter trees, assess tree maintenance needs, prune trees for health and safety, and remove dead trees. With 100% of these funds going towards communities identified based on tree equity data, this historic investment will be a critical factor in advancing tree equity within Ann Arbor and ensuring that a healthy, diverse, and vibrant tree canopy grows throughout our entire community. These private property maintenance and planting programs are expected to launch in late 2025 or early 2026.



Sean Reynolds, OSI Senior Analyst, hands a free tree seedling to an Ann Arbor resident during the Spring 2021 FreeTree Giveaway event.



A screenshot of the Tree Equity Score mapping tool developed by American Forests, showing the score for a census block in northeast Ann Arbor.

To learn more about the 10,000 Trees Initiative and stay up-to-date on these upcoming programs, visit www.a2gov.org/10ktrees

SUMMER GAME 2025:

This A2 nickname ties in well with our tree equity work! **TREETOWN**

NEIGHBORHOOD TREE WALKS

TREE HIGHLIGHTS IN THE SUNLIGHT

To celebrate Tree Town's many amazing trees, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations is excited to announce a new series of self-guided neighborhood tree walks! Trees are a vital part of the health, resiliency, and sustainability of Ann Arbor. From reducing summer temperatures to absorbing and storing greenhouse gases to flood control, trees provide numerous benefits to our community – and we hope that these walks will help connect you with our urban trees and their place in making Tree Town more sustainable.

These new tree walks invite residents to walk through an Ann Arbor neighborhood – be it familiar or new - and learn about the interesting and unique trees in our city. The walks are easy to follow on a smart phone or tablet and will guide the viewer through the neighborhood, helping them identify each tree, while also providing fun and interesting facts. For example, did you know that some people call the Ginkgo “the tree that outlived the dinosaurs” because it dates back to before they roamed the earth? Others call it a “living fossil” because fossils of ginkgo leaves have been found dating back more than 170 million years - including right here in Michigan!

The tree walks will also showcase the numerous benefits that each tree provides to our community by calculating the value of their ecosystem services and the cost savings they provide for nearby buildings by reducing the local temperature. Each tree walk begins and ends in the same location and provides information on accessibility and estimated walking times.

At least ten of these neighborhood tree walks will be launched over the next year, all across the city – and the first three, located in Kerrytown, Downtown, and Pittsfield Village, are ready right now! The Kerrytown walk starts and ends at Ann Arbor City Hall and can be found online at osi.a2gov.org/kerrytowntreewalk. The Downtown walk starts and ends at the historic Greek Revival home on Washington Street and can be found online at osi.a2gov.org/downtowntreewalk. The Pittsfield Village walk starts and ends at Redbud Nature Area and can be found online at osi.a2gov.org/pittsfieldtreewalk.

We will also be highlighting our Kerrytown tree walk by hosting a guided version beginning at the Ann Arbor Farmers Market on August 27th at 11:00am. This guided version of the walk will be led by Sean Reynolds, OSI Senior Analyst and our in-house tree specialist. Please RSVP [here](#).



Ann Arbor Tree Walk - Kerrytown



Powered by Esri



Tulip Poplar

Liriodendron tulipifera | Native

SUMMER GAME 2025:

What do you call a perfect summer day for learning about climate action? **SUNSTAINABILITY**

NEIGHBORHOOD TREE WALKS

TREE HIGHLIGHTS IN THE SUNLIGHT



City staff attend a tree walk held by Sean Reynolds, OSI Senior Analyst.

For announcements of more self-guided tree walks being released, as well as guided versions of walks, keep an eye on OSI's social media and the 10,000 Trees Initiative webpage: www.a2gov.org/10ktrees.

As we continue to develop these neighborhood tree walks, we want to highlight all of Ann Arbor's fantastic trees – and need your help to do so! We would love to hear from you about the trees that are important in your life. If you have a story about a tree anywhere in Ann Arbor, please tell us your story by filling out this [survey](#) - and we may use it as part of a tree walk or in other engagement materials!



Playing the AADL Summer Games? Check out the Kerrytown tree walk to find a tree-themed code that will earn you some points!

SPOTTED LANTERNFLY



An adult Spotted Lanternfly on a Tree-of-Heaven branch. Photo courtesy of Lawrence Barringer, PA Department of Agriculture.

Spotted Lanternfly is an invasive insect species now found in 18 U.S. States, including Michigan. Native to parts of China and Vietnam, these insects can cause extensive damage to crops such as grapes, apples, cherries, and soybeans. Their preferred host is the Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), which is also an invasive species native to China and Taiwan; one of the most effective ways to slow the spread of Spotted Lanternfly is to remove Tree-of-Heaven. To learn how to identify Spotted Lanternfly and Tree-of-Heaven, and for a link to report sightings of the insect, please visit www.michigan.gov/spottedlanternfly.

COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT

WASHTENAW COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Washtenaw County Conservation District

This fall, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) is collaborating with the Washtenaw County Conservation District (WCCD) to provide discounts on native plants and trees to residents of Ann Arbor. WCCD holds an annual Fall Tree & Native Plant Sale to distribute native trees and shrubs, herbaceous plants, and gardening kits to the community. This year, OSI and WCCD are excited to offer coupon codes valid

for discounts on a variety of these native plants and gardening kits. To receive a coupon code valid for native trees, sign up for the 10,000 Trees Initiative mailing list [here](#). To receive a coupon code valid for native herbaceous plants and gardening kits, register as a participant in the Pollinator-Aware Yard Care program [here](#) (be sure to mark "yes" when asked if you are interested in receiving email updates). Coupon codes will be emailed out to these email lists on August 4th. WCCD sales open [online](#) starting August 4th and run through September 15th.

The Washtenaw County Conservation District (www.washtenawcd.org) is a locally controlled resource management agency that assists residents and landowners with the conservation, management, and wise use of the natural resources of the county. These goals are achieved through countywide resource assessments, conservation resource distributions, conservation education programs, and one-on-one technical assistance. The District is administered by a publicly elected five-member board of directors, which hires qualified staff to program, plan, and facilitate activities. The WCCD was organized in 1948 through the process of petition, hearing, and referendum under the leadership of local landowners who realized the importance of our soil and water resources.

The Conservation District focuses on a wide variety of resource concerns, including: land use; surface and groundwater quality; solid waste management and recycling; and protection and management of forests and woodlots.

Some programs offered by the WCCD to address these resource concerns include: the Native Plant Expo & Marketplace and annual plants sales; the MIFarmLink Program, which aims to protect future generations of Michigan agriculture by linking legacy farmers who are selling or leasing agricultural land with new farmers who need land to cultivate (learn more at mifarmlink.org); a tree planter rental program that helps residents with planting bare-root seedlings at adjustable depths, to create large-scale windbreaks, reduce field erosion, or enhance water quality (call 734.302.8713 to rent); a School and Community Habitat Grant program that supports native planting projects; and seminars offered on a wide range of conservation topics. For more information on upcoming events and program announcements, visit washtenawcd.org/events.

SUMMER GAME 2025:

The A²ZERO Plan is one way for us to build an exciting, equitable and sustainable tomorrow for the city we love. We might have to put on our shades for Ann Arbor's **BRIGHTER FUTURE**

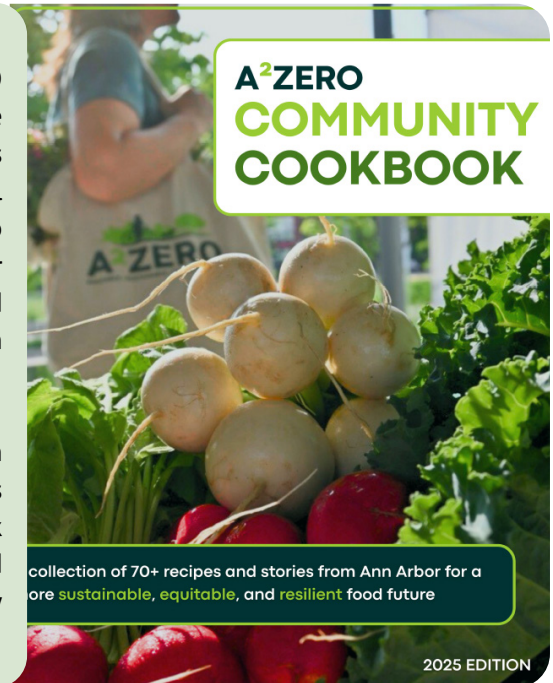
RECIPE: WATERMELON TABASCO SAUCE

A SNEAK PEAK OF THE A²ZERO COMMUNITY COOKBOOK

COMING SOON: A²ZERO COMMUNITY COOKBOOK!

We're thrilled to announce the upcoming release of the A²ZERO Community Cookbook, a free and practical resource for sustainable eating in Ann Arbor! With over 70 delicious, climate-friendly recipes contributed by Ann Arbor residents and 20 inspiring stories from local food leaders, the cookbook is a reflection of our city's commitment to sustainability and good food! Join us on August 28th at the Ann Arbor Local Food Festival for the official launch, to hear from community food leaders who participated, and for the chance to win a free copy! Learn more about the cookbook at osi.a2gov.org/cookbook.

In this edition of The Charging Station, we're delighted to share an exclusive preview of the A²ZERO Community Cookbook with this summer recipe, Watermelon Tabasco Sauce, contributed to the cookbook by Caitlin Burr, owner and founder of C'mon Betty. Turn up the heat and preserve your harvest with this delicious homemade hot sauce, and stay tuned for more recipes coming soon after the cookbook launches!



From the Kitchen of: Caitlin Burr, Owner, C'Mon Betty

Preparation Time: 30 Minutes | Fermentation Time: 4 weeks | Yield: 1 quart

This homemade sauce is a "sweeter sauce with a slight hint of heat and a nice tang of vinegar," according to Caitlin. Caitlin says that making hot sauce is one of her favorite ways to use up fruits and veggies from the garden at the end of the growing season.

Caitlin loves to grow her own food in her home garden, a hobby and skill that she started building after moving to Ann Arbor. Since she began growing her own food, food preservation has become both a personal passion and professional endeavor, with her recent launch of C'Mon Betty!

Caitlin says this recipe was her favorite of her hot sauce batches made in 2024, when she grew watermelon and pepper seeds from the Ann Arbor Seed Sampler program!

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 watermelon (642.5 grams)
- 1-2 radishes (23 grams)
- Tabasco pepper (3 grams)
- Canning salt (21.8 grams, 3% weight of other ingredients)
- 5% acidity vinegar – enough to fill the vessel with 1 inch of space from the top

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:

- Kitchen scale
- Jar (or other type of fermentation vessel)
- Compostable parchment paper
- Fermentation lid (preferred)
- Fermentation weight (preferred)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Gather and wash the watermelon, radishes, and pepper.
- Place a large bowl on a kitchen scale and make sure it reads zero.
- Cut and weigh all of the watermelon, radish, and pepper (they can be weighed separately or all combined in the bowl as long as their total weight is calculated using a consistent unit).
- From the total weight of the watermelon, radishes, and peppers, calculate 3% of that weight. This is the weight of how much salt you will need to add in the bottom of the fermentation vessel.
- Add the salt to the bottom of the fermentation vessel.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE.

RECIPE: WATERMELON TABASCO SAUCE

A SNEAK PEAK OF THE A²ZERO COMMUNITY COOKBOOK

INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED):

- Add the watermelon, radishes, and peppers to the vessel.
- Pour the vinegar over the salt, watermelon, radishes, and peppers, leaving 1 inch below the vessel rim. The vinegar should completely cover the watermelon, radishes, and pepper, with no pieces sticking out from the vinegar.
- Cut a small piece of parchment paper and place it inside the jar to ensure that fruit and vegetables don't float to the top of the jar.
- Seal the vessel using a fermentation lid (or a mason jar ring and balloon).
- Set the vessel in a cool dark place for up to 4 weeks. Check on the jar at least weekly to ensure that fruit has not gone above the vinegar and started to mold. If any mold occurs, throw away the recipe. If you are using the balloon method, "burp" the recipe daily by allowing the gas to escape and replacing the balloon and ring.
- Once the 4-week fermentation process has ended, pour the contents of the vessel into a blender, and blend it until it reaches a smooth consistency.
- Transfer the hot sauce to a bottle of choice and enjoy!

NOTES:

- This recipe is a basic fermented hot sauce recipe. As long as your salt content is 3% of the weight of your vegetables and fruit, you can substitute any fruit or vegetables you'd like to fill whatever sized jar you like.
- If your recipe comes out a little chunky after blending, you can add more vinegar and blend it again for a smoother sauce. Caitlin also recommends experimenting with flavored vinegars as long as they are 5% acidity.

WATERMELON RADISH:

Have you ever seen a watermelon radish? These vibrant pink and green radishes are slightly sweeter than other radish varieties and have an appearance similar to a watermelon!

Although any variety of radish can be used in this recipe, you can try adding watermelon radishes to complement the watermelon fruit!



Hot sauces fermenting at C'Mon Betty HQ.



Watermelon radishes.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Coupon codes available for trees and native plants:

This fall, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) is collaborating with the Washtenaw County Conservation District (WCCD) to provide discounts on native plants and trees. To receive a coupon code valid for native trees, sign up for the 10,000 Trees Initiative mailing list [here](#). To receive a coupon code valid for native herbaceous plants and gardening kits, register as a participant in the Pollinator-Aware Yard Care program [here](#) (be sure to mark "yes" when asked if you are interested in receiving email updates). Coupon codes will be emailed to these email lists on Aug. 4. WCCD sales open [online](#) Aug. 4 – Sept. 15.

New Fiscal Year, New Rebates! All Home Energy Rebate categories have been refreshed. Categories that ran out of money in the previous fiscal year are open and available to be drawn from again! Learn more and finance your home energy improvements at osi.a2gov.org/rebates.

Green Rental Housing Ordinance – Office of Sustainability and Innovations staff have been working for four years with community stakeholders to craft a new Green Rental Housing Ordinance. The Ordinance was passed by council in June 2025 and will help protect the health, safety, and well being of renters across the city. To learn the facts about the Ordinance, please visit the [Green Rental Housing Ordinance webpage](#).

Solarize Ann Arbor: Have you considered solar and/or battery storage to reduce your emissions, reduce your energy bills, move toward energy independence, or to power your new e-bike or electric vehicle? Solarize Ann Arbor has groups running now! Join fellow Ann Arbor area residents to learn about solar and for the opportunity for savings from the bulk-buy savings in Solarize. Email Connor Dailey (cdailey@a2gov.org) if you are interested in joining or hosting a group, or if you have any questions about Solar!

Play the Summer Game with A²ZERO! We'll have badges all summer long, so head over to play.aadl.org to get your clues and earn some points! Plus, there were three codes hidden in this newsletter, did you find them all?

UPCOMING EVENTS

Solarize Kick-off Meeting | August 6th | Virtual

Join Ann Arbor's solar bulk-buy program, bringing together residents, neighbors, friends, and participating local and regional installers. Learn about residential solar, ask questions, and have the opportunity for discounts on solar from the group buy. Learn more at a2gov.org/solar or by emailing Connor Dailey at cdailey@a2gov.org.

Ann Arbor Solar Stories | August 7th, 7-8 PM | Virtual

This online event is hosted by the GLREA. Hear from Ann Arborites who have gone solar and ask them all your questions! [Register in advance](#) to receive a confirmation email containing information to join the meeting.

Visit OSI at the Wednesday Farmer's Market | August 13th and 27th, 8 AM-2 PM | Ann Arbor Farmer's Market

Stop by the OSI table at the Wednesday Farmer's Market to say hi, ask questions, and learn about programs, resources, and upcoming events! We look forward to seeing you there.

TheRide Bus Meet and Greet | August 9th, 11 AM-1 PM

AAATA Operations Center, 2700 S. Industrial Hwy, Ann Arbor
Whether you're new to riding the bus or just want to get more comfortable with knowing how to ride, this event is the perfect opportunity to learn, explore, and connect with TheRide. Ride through TheRide's bus wash, win prizes, enjoy free refreshments, coloring station and contest for kids, and meet community partners and local organizations. [Learn more at TheRide's website](#).

Plant Swap + Bingo | August 14th, 5-9 PM | BYOC, 25 Jackson Industrial Dr, Suite 500, Ann Arbor

Join us from 5-7 PM for a FREE plant swap -- bring as many plants as you'd like, take as many as you desire, no registration required. Then, from 7-9 PM, we will host bingo with your chance to win plants! Registration required, more details to follow. [Learn more at BYOC's website](#).

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[JOIN OUR MAILING LIST](#) | [YOUTUBE](#) | a2zero.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

OSI Park Workday | August 15th, 3-5 PM | Olson Park

Volunteers will help spread fibar—a soft woodchip surfacing used in playgrounds—to improve safety and appearance in the play area. This hands-on effort will involve raking, shoveling, and hauling materials, as a fun and impactful way to care for public spaces. [RSVP online](#).

A²ZERO Monthly Clothing Swap | August 21st, 4-7 PM | City Hall Promenade & Council Chambers

Join the Office of Sustainability and Innovations for monthly clothing swaps on the third Thursday of each month! These are a perfect way to give your gently used clothes a new home. And you might just find an item of clothing you have been looking for, without having to buy it new. [Learn more and RSVP online](#).

Rummage Sale | August 22nd-24th | BYOC, 25 Jackson Industrial Dr, Suite 500, Ann Arbor

The last-offs, the thrown-asides, the whoopsies, the too far gones, the miscolored... Come rummage through and snag some deep discounts from various vendors! [Learn more at BYOC's website](#).

Guided Tree Walk | August 27th, 11 AM-12:30 PM | Ann Arbor Farmers Market

Join Sean Reynolds, OSI Senior Analyst, on a guided version of the Kerrytown Tree Walk. Meet at the OSI table in the Farmers Market. Bring sunscreen and water and be prepared to learn all about Kerrytown's trees! Please note that this event is active and will involve extended periods of standing and walking on paved, but occasionally uneven, surfaces. [RSVP here](#).

Local Food Festival | August 28th, 5-8 PM | Ann Arbor Farmers Market

This free public festival showcases farms, food makers, and local organizations focused on growing a strong and sustainable local food system. Festival-goers will learn about the benefits of local and sustainably grown food, eat delicious local food, participate in fun and educational activities, and enjoy music. Learn more at a2gov.org/localfoodfest. *The vendor & exhibitor deadline has been extended to August 8th! [Go online to submit your application here](#).*

DTE Energy Smart Seniors Presentation | September 12th, 10-11:30 AM | Ann Arbor Senior Center

Join [DTE Community in Action: Energy Smart Seniors Program](#) to learn easy, low cost ways to use less energy which will save you money on your energy bill. We'll also cover tips to be safe with natural gas, and additional energy efficiency and assistance programs. Participants will receive a FREE kit with contents to save money and energy in your home. Some of the contents may include LED nightlights, pipe insulation, bathroom and kitchen faucet aerators, efficient showerhead, window insulation kit, and weather-stripping. Preregistration required. Click [here](#) to register or call 734.794.6250. Free of charge.

Green Fair | September 19th, 5-8 PM | Main Street Ann Arbor

Join us for this annual event featuring 100 exhibitors advancing sustainable living with information about renewable energy, energy waste reduction, the circular economy, local food systems, environmental resources, green transportation, environmental advocacy and justice, urban forestry, and so much more! Learn more at a2gov.org/greenfair. *Vendor application coming soon, check our website and our socials for updates!*

For more information on our upcoming events, please visit www.a2gov.org/sustainability/events.