



## ***How to Lower your Electricity Costs with Solar***

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GROW Commissioners

At this time of increasing energy costs, you may be feeling there is little you can do about it. Fortunately, through the use of solar energy, you can reduce your energy costs and environmental impact.

Our sun's light and heat can be converted to direct current using solar panels. The efficiency of the conversion is improving with time and new technologies, but the average efficiency with existing panels that are currently available ranges from 18-20 %. Although the efficiency is low, the amount of energy from the sun is very high making solar energy a feasible, cost-effective means of generating your electricity in the long run. Currently, electricity in the Westchester area of northern Illinois comes from a mixture of sources – nuclear power plants and burning of fossil fuels like natural gas, coal, etc. Burning of fossil fuels is not healthy for humans, other living creatures, and our environment. Nuclear energy, though thought to be a clean alternative, poses other risks mainly from creating radioactive waste and where to bury that waste. Solar energy is a very clean energy source. The manufacturing of solar panels, like every man-made material, impacts our environment, and has a carbon footprint, but that footprint is very small mainly because the panels are expected to be functional for 20-25 years. In contrast, the environmental impact of fossil fuels is markedly higher because it is used (burned once) and more fuel must be continuously extracted, refined, transported and burned to create energy over the same 20-25 year period.

**Please join the GROW Ecological Commission on Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup> from 12p – 1p** for a presentation on ***“Navigating Solar Options”*** by Grace Concialdi, Solar Outreach Coordinator with Citizens Utility Board, Viewing will be available at the Westchester Public Library or on Zoom and accessible thereafter on the GROW page of the Village website.

**There are three ways that Westchester residents may reduce their electricity bills and their environmental impact by making the switch to solar energy:**

**Illinois Solar for All (ISFA)** makes solar energy affordable to Illinois residents. The goal of this program is to save homeowners and renters money on their electricity bills. ISFA provides the option of rooftop solar or a solar farm subscription. Residents can save up to \$1,000 annually off their electricity costs with rooftop solar (no cost for installation) or at least 50% monthly off the energy portion of their bill, with a solar farm subscription. The maximum household income to be eligible in Cook County is as follows:

<b>1 person - \$67,150</b>	<b>2 people - \$76,750</b>	<b>3 people - \$86,350</b>	<b>4 people - \$95,900</b>
<b>5 people - \$103,600</b>	<b>6 people - \$111,250</b>	<b>7 people - \$118,950</b>	<b>8+ people - \$126,000</b>

**Rooftop Solar Purchase** – Incentives that would apply regardless of the vendor you select are:

- State Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs) – can cover around 30% of cost
- Federal Tax Credit of 30% (this credit is available on systems installed and placed into service by 12/31/25)
- Utility Net Metering credits (help you pay back your system faster)

\* **Note:** *If you choose to purchase your solar system through the **Solar Switch Group Buy Program**, there is typically an additional savings of around \$4,600.*

**Solar Farm Subscriptions** – The **Illinois Shines Program** allows you to subscribe to a large solar farm and receive cost-saving credits on your electricity bills, without installing panels. Savings are typically 10-15% off of the energy portion of your bill.

### ***Other Opportunities to Lower Your Energy Costs***

**Last call to take advantage of the Federal Energy Efficient Home Improvement Credit** of up to 30% of the cost of purchase and installation. Systems must be installed and placed into service by December 31, 2025. There are aggregate limits for this credit: \$1,200 limit for projects like a professional home energy audit; installing insulation; door, window and electrical panel upgrades; and installing a high efficiency air-conditioning unit.

**Upcoming Event – Save the Date for “Energy Efficiency”** with Tori Woolbright, Outreach Specialist with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus – attendees will learn about how to make their home more energy efficient, and will be able to sign up to receive free energy efficiency kits and home assessments. This will be held on **Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, with an inclement weather date of January 24<sup>th</sup>.**

For more information contact: [ewchase@westchester-il.gov](mailto:ewchase@westchester-il.gov)

### **Green Fact of the Month**

“The amount of solar energy that falls on the Earth in just one hour is enough to power the world for a whole year” according to the University of California, Davis.

## Recipe of the Month

This month try a little something different for breakfast. This recipe offers a sweet treat and maybe some new breakfast ingredients to consider.

### Chocolate Banana Buckwheat Porridge

makes 1 serving

#### Ingredients

⅓ cup roasted buckwheat groats

1¼ cups unsweetened soy milk (or dairy-free milk of choosing)

1 banana, mashed

1 Tbsp Dutch-process cocoa powder

1 Tbsp tahini

1 tsp maple syrup, plus more to taste (optional)

¼ tsp pure vanilla extract

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

1 pinch salt

Optional toppings:

1 Tbsp unsalted roasted walnuts, chopped

½ Tbsp mini dark chocolate chips

½ tsp toasted sesame seeds

#### Instructions

1. Add the buckwheat and milk to a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and cook covered with a lid for 15 minutes, stirring often.
2. When cooked, add the mashed banana, cocoa powder, tahini, maple syrup, vanilla, cinnamon, and salt. Stir until heated through.
3. Remove from the heat and cover with a lid. Let sit for 5 minutes. This helps to soften the grain further.
4. Serve, add toppings as desired, and enjoy!

Source: [www.pickuplimes.com](http://www.pickuplimes.com)

Have a plant-based recipe you'd like to share with the community? Send it to [GROW@westchester-il.gov](mailto:GROW@westchester-il.gov) for consideration for future newsletters.

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# NAVIGATING SOLAR OPTIONS WITH GRACE CONCIALDI

*SOLAR OUTREACH COORDINATOR,  
CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD*

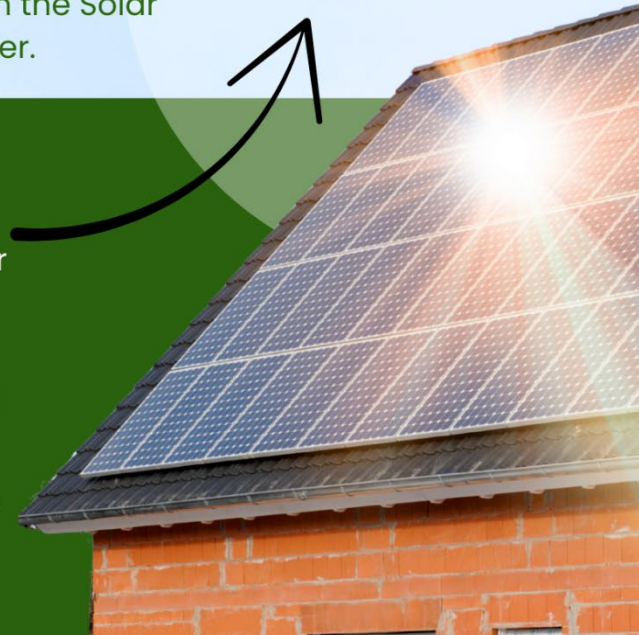
**NOVEMBER 19 – 12:00 - 1:00 PM**

Join the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) for an informative session on the benefits of clean energy and the latest solar programs. CUB expert Grace Concialdi will explain how you can take advantage of current incentives and opportunities, including updates on the Solar Group Buy Program, Switch Together.



## HOW TO JOIN:

- Watch the presentation live on Zoom – scan QR code to register
- Attend a public viewing of the Zoom presentation, hosted by GROW in the Westchester Public Library Community Room
- Can't make it? The presentation will be recorded and posted at [www.westchester-il.org/grow](http://www.westchester-il.org/grow)



## **2025 Pumpkin Smash**

Drop your pumpkins, cornstalks, and hay bundles at the following locations November 8 & 9 and keep them out of landfill! Note, the collection bin at Mayfair Recreation Center will not be accessible the morning of Sunday, November 9 due to the Veteran's Day Run and Walk.

1. Behind the Westchester Community Church: 1840 Westchester Boulevard (all day Nov 8 & 9)
2. In the back of the Mayfair Recreation Center parking lot: 10835 Wakefield Street (all day Nov 8 & after 1:30 pm Nov 9)

Can't make it to the Pumpkin Smash? Westchester residents can place pumpkins, cornstalks, and hay bundles in their yard waste bin for weekly SBC curbside collection.