



# May 2022 Newsletter

**Empowering Sustainable Communities**

## **Special Message from the Executive Director**

**Thank You.**

I wanted to thank this community, from the bottom of my heart, for the outpouring of support during this dark and terrifying time for Ukraine. It is hard to believe that this tragic war began over two months ago—over two months of fear, two months of sleepless nights and worry and trepidation. But it also has been two months of connection, of strengthening communities, near and far, two months of inspiring support from friends and neighbors but also strangers, showing that the human community is a chain link web strengthened by compassion and love.

The several events that have taken place in the local community raising funds

for the people of Ukraine have been amazing. I was touched and honored to have been invited to participate in the fundraising event at the Wayne Hotel organized by Dustin Werner-Fazio, and I enjoyed the music provided by talented locals Owen Walsh, Shawn Caden and Dan Engvaldsen, the raffle of beautiful crafts showing off the skill of those who contributed, and the



time with friends new and old. I included pictures here. The donations our group [Ukraine TrustChain](#) have received have been incredible. I am also thrilled to share that [PBS Newshour](#) recently covered our TrustChain and the important work we are doing on the ground in Ukraine. [Watch](#) Karina share her story as a volunteer throughout this war and our founder [Da Nichë](#) share



his inspiration to start Ukraine TrustChain. I also encourage you to follow their progress on [their Facebook page](#).

As I reflect on the atrocities unfolding in the country of my birth, I return often to the connections between this conflict and the global energy crisis. For a thorough analysis of this connection, and strong arguments against the fossil fuel industry's position relative to the war, [check out this blog](#) from [PennFuture](#). And while this conflict might feel geographically far away, consider the connections much closer to home, as legislation is being introduced in the Pennsylvania General Assembly to open the Delaware River Basin region to fracking. While the politics surrounding access to gas deposits buried beneath the shale of our area are complicated, the PA Legislators' reasoning for introducing [HB2450](#) and [HB2451](#) are direct: they claim that war in Ukraine urges more energy independence for the United States and Pennsylvania and the way to enact that independence is to "increase our oil and gas production here within Pennsylvania." For an informative report on this proposed legislation [read this River Reporter article](#). I am disheartened by the short sightedness of relying on fossil fuels to

free us from conflict, when renewable energy offers true independence, and the progress towards more renewable energy sources grows every day. I urge you to [reach out to your elected officials](#) if you feel strongly about this topic, and remind this community to vote-- Primary Elections are May 17th!



During these dark days, heavy with apprehension for the future, it is important to take time to focus our personal energy on the good news all around us. Scroll down to read #SEEDSGoodNews stories, including: a story about a group of students in Spain who built a prototype for a self-sustaining greenhouse; about New Jersey banning plastic bags; and about how global growth in renewable energy sources solar and wind are on track to meet targets curbing climate catastrophe.

And even better than good news is filling one's heart with gratitude—it is a good way to continue to face the challenges of tomorrow. Thank you to everyone who took a moment to help a stranger today or any day. Thank you to everyone who thought about a better tomorrow for everyone.

Thank you,

Olga Trushina

**#SEEDSGoodNews**

**New Jersey Bans Plastic Bags**

New Jersey's ban on plastic carryout bags and polystyrene foam containers took effect on May 4th, 2022. This is 18 months after Governor Murphy signed the law, a grace period intended to allow ample time for stores and retailers, as well as shoppers, to prepare for the change. New Jersey joins eight other states who have [already banned the use of plastic](#)

## GET PAST PLASTIC

[bags](#), and Hawaii, which has a “de facto ban” (they don't have any state legislation banning their use but are banned in all areas of the state through other means). What makes New

Jersey's new ban even more environmentally ambitious than its predecessors is the legislation's inclusion of paper carryout bags for certain retail establishments falling above a size threshold of 2,500 square feet—meaning that large grocery stores are only allowed to provide or sell reusable carryout bags. Straws are also only available in New Jersey upon customer request, which is part of this same ban. For all the specifics of this law check out [this informational sheet](#) put out by the state of New Jersey.

The New Jersey legislation hopes to curb the staggering number of plastic bags put into circulation in that state each year, which [according to a citation in this article](#), is 4.4 billion! To give you an idea of how big that number actually is, [it would take a person over 95 years to count to 1 billion](#), counting without ever stopping. If you wanted to count the number of plastic bags New Jersey uses a year before the ban, it would take you over 418 years.

[New York's plastic bag ban](#) officially began in March of 2020, though enforcing the ban was delayed first by a lawsuit and then by the Covid-19 pandemic. Connecticut first taxed plastic bags before banning them in 2021. Pennsylvania currently does not have any legislation regarding banning plastic bags, and unlike [18 states including Texas and](#)

[Florida](#) it does not have any [preemption laws](#) prohibiting a ban on plastic bags either.

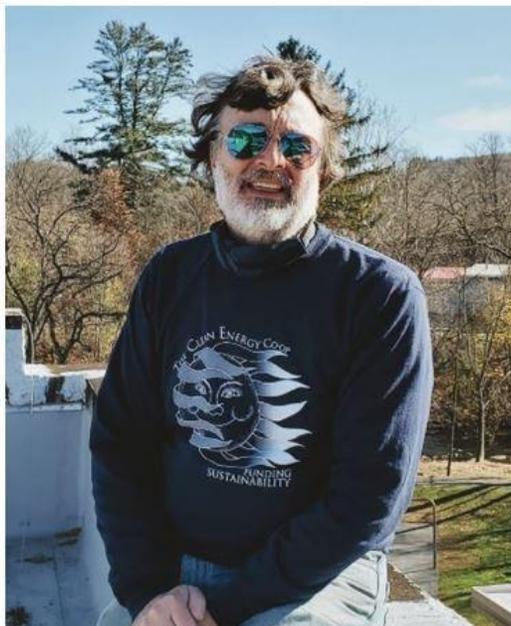
## #SolarDYK

### *Solar Did You Know with Jack Barnett* Part 4: Price Comparison

Over the years, many SEEDS members have forwarded to us various solar installation proposals they've received as they have sought to install solar panels at their homes. As a general rule, SEEDS always recommends getting quotes from multiple certified contractors before selecting one. In this series I will go over some key points to help you compare and evaluate those proposals should you receive them.

Previous months we have looked at [Array Capacity](#), the [“Who” of Your Proposal](#), and the [Production Forecast](#), all of which you can read at our website through those links. This month we are going to unpack the **Price Comparison**. There is a little math involved but it is very manageable.

The units used for price comparison in solar array installations, or the normal basis of comparison in such discussions, is



*Jack Barnett is a SEEDS Board member, the Food Circle Rep and a Director and Lead for Project Development at the Clean Energy Co-op. Applying his environmental passion and expertise as a retired engineer, Jack is an enthusiastic and involved supporter of solar energy in the Northeast PA region.*

“cost per watt.” This is found by dividing the total price of the installation by the total watts of the system. To be clear about what each of those values are: When I say the “total price of the installation,” I mean the bottom line, total number of the whole installation project, before any financing options, tax incentives or rebates, and including any sales tax, any engineering fees, town building permits or inspection fees, and the utility’s interconnection fees—the total of every last dollar this installation will cost. If any of those things are left out of the total cost the bottom line could be another 10% more or higher.

Once you have that total cost, you will divide it by the total watts of the system, or the watts of DC capacity. Note though that systems are usually described in kilowatts, which are 1,000 watts. In other words, a 5.5 kilowatt system is actually 5,500 watts.

So, for example, if your total quote is \$15,000 for a 5.5kW system, divide 15,000 by 5,500, which equals \$2.73—this is good, especially considering recent inflation, but not great for a system on the smaller side in Northeast PA. We have noticed recent prices appear to be increasing slightly, whereas since the 1970s solar prices always declined year over year. Regardless, remember that since all projects have fixed costs for the installer, bigger arrays tend to be less expensive on a per-watt basis. See this page from [energysage.com](http://energysage.com) for what recent prices are typical around the country. While full of viable information comparing costs over a wide geographical area, you should note that this site deducts the [federal solar tax credit](#) off their total quote before dividing by the watts, which we advise against—an educated consumer needs to know they’re going to write a bigger check to the contractor, and if they then save on their taxes, great, but that’s not the same as a discount or lower price.

As mentioned, we have noticed that per watt price increasing recently, especially as inflation has increased costs across the board, but we would advise that a per watt price over \$3 in the Northeastern PA area is getting unreasonable. Unfortunately, we’ve seen some out-of-state contractors’ proposals for recent residential solar projects that are more than \$4/w.

That's crazy and a possible rip-off!

Look out next month when *Solar Did You Know* series will look at reader questions emailed to us at [info@seedsgroup.net](mailto:info@seedsgroup.net). In the meantime, if you have questions relating to solar power or solar panel installation send them to us and we can include them in future installments!

### #SEEDSGoodNews

#### Greenhouse Prototype Produces 50% More Energy than it Uses

According to [this article](#) from FastCompany.com, University architecture students from the Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia in Barcelona have constructed a prototype greenhouse that produces 50% more energy than it uses. The greenhouse uses solar panels, and the design can be replicated in a variety of habitats and climates. The prototype greenhouse is located in Collserola Natural Park near Valltura Labs, a research center that is self-sufficient, but the design team aims to popularize the prototype for use in urban areas, such as on rooftops of buildings. The students were led by architects Daniel Ibáñez



[Photo: ©Adrià Goula/courtesy IAAC/Pati Nunez Agency]

and Vicente Guallart, the latter of whom wrote a [book](#) advocating for communities to maximize their own production of food and energy. The prototype, which is two floors and uses roof solar panels in a checkered pattern to power LED growing lights and an irrigation system, was finished in September 2021, but the team is working on a design ten times larger to be placed on a roof of a building in Barcelona. “Instead of giving money to buy food and paying energy companies, we should empower communities and buildings by creating new infrastructures that will make them stronger,” Guallart says. “We can invest once and manage forever.”

## Upcoming Events

### Register Now for Hempcrete Workshop, U-Pick Ramps

#### U-Pick Ramps Fundraiser

[Delaware Valley Ramps](#) in Equinunk, PA invites guests to a guided harvest of a bounty of ramps that also supports our programs at SEEDS! For more information, and to purchase tickets to benefit SEEDS, use this link: [ramps-u-](#)



[pick.eventbrite.com?discount=SEEDS](http://pick.eventbrite.com?discount=SEEDS).

Ramps are the first edible green plant of spring. Also known as wild leeks, they are related to garlic and onions and grow wild in the forests of the Upper Delaware River watershed. Participants will learn how to harvest, wash and store ramps and sustainably manage their forest for healthy resilient ramps growth. Recipes will be available to take home to cook up the ramps dug. Tools and equipment are provided on site right on the Delaware River.

### **Hempcrete**

### **Workshop**

SEEDS and Nature's Grace Health Foods & Deli have partnered to bring an extensive, hands-on workshop on hempcrete. A seminar will be hosted on Thursday, May 12 at 7pm at the Cooperage Project in Honesdale, followed by an all-day hands-on workshop on Friday, May 13 from 8am to 5pm at 168 Church St. in Prompton. The seminar will be led by hempcrete expert Cameron McIntosh, founder of [Americhanvre Home Building Solutions](#) and the hands-on workshop will continue each day through the weekend and Monday. More [information on the event and registration can be found at here.](#)



Workshop attendees will learn to build a hempcrete structure, including forming the walls and roof, mortar-mixing the hempcrete and details on finishing walls and

electrical. The concrete pad has already been placed and the building is framed out and ready for electricity. The hands-on component will continue throughout the weekend, with a goal of finishing the walls and roof by Monday. Lunch will be provided by [Nature's Grace](#).

**#SEEDSGoodNews**

## Global Trends in Renewable Energy on Track to Curb Global Warming

[According to Reuters](#), independent climate think tank [Ember](#) reported recently that if solar and wind growth continue with the last ten year average compound growth rate, the growth in renewable energy can be enough to cap global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The report showed that wind and solar energy continues to grow, and accounted for 10.3% of global electricity generation in 2020. While energy consumption across the globe has increased, and fossil fuel and coal sources continue to produce the majority of electricity, and the biggest barriers to more renewable energy growth are logistical and bureaucratic issues like permitting of facilities, according to the think tank. This means the potential for a transition to full renewable energy is there, and governments and municipalities need to see this transition as a priority for it to grow faster. The article cited the Netherlands, Australia and Vietnam as having the fastest growth rates for renewable sources of energy, “switching around 10% of their electricity demand from fossil fuels to wind and solar in the last two years.” Read the [full article here](#).

The global trends are good news indeed, but there is work to be done to get the United States higher on this list. As primary elections are fast approaching, ask [your favorite candidates](#) how they plan to fast track [community solar](#) legislation in Pennsylvania.

### #SEEDSGoodNews

Do you have any #SEEDSGoodNews stories to share with the SEEDS community? Send them to us at [info@seedsgroup.net](mailto:info@seedsgroup.net) or tag us on social media! They can be local stories from your community, or stories from around the world--anything to celebrate and spread the word about

the progress of energy efficiency, renewable energy or sustainable living wherever you hear about it!

**If you are not a member of SEEDS, please consider joining us today!**

You can use this link to share our membership page with others:

<https://seedsgroup.net/become-a-member/>



**You will continue to receive our newsletters, invitations to our educational forums and other events. Members are eligible for free solar evaluations, have voting rights at our annual meeting, and help shape our programs and initiatives. For more information visit our website at [www.seedsgroup.net](http://www.seedsgroup.net).**

---

*Copyright © 2022 SEEDS-Sustainable Energy Education and Development Support, All rights reserved.  
You are receiving this email because you signed up to be on the SEEDS mailing list.*

**Our mailing address is:**

SEEDS-Sustainable Energy Education and Development Support  
[1030 Main Street](#)  
[Honesdale, PA 18431](#)

[Add us to your address book](#)