



Buying Renewable Electricity: *Leading the Green Power Movement by Example*

Requirement:

You must be in a state that permits businesses to select their own energy provider, although those in states without competitive energy markets can still support green power in other ways, as discussed below.

Why Do It:

Because built environments are among the most significant uses of energy, CO2 emissions from building energy use are a major catalyst for ongoing climate change, so when shifting to a more sustainable operational protocol, it makes sense to start with buildings and energy.

[As the EPA notes](#), “conventional electricity can be a significant source of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Switching to green power can help improve the environmental profile of your electricity use, while also providing other valuable benefits. Using green power helps to support renewable energy development, reduce the carbon footprint associated with your purchased electricity, and hedge against future electricity price increases and volatility.”

Investing in green energy works best when coupled with a strategic plan to reduce energy use in existing buildings and a pledge to execute all future constructions to the standards of the Living Building Challenge, but is especially useful for its ease of execution and for the fact that it can meet your needs at any point in your green journey.

How It Works:

In states like Pennsylvania where customers can select their energy providers, the switch is as simple as contracting with a provider. Priorities in terms of power generation and purchase can be ranked according to environmental efficacy as follows:

- **On-site generation** (ideal) — typically accomplished by investing in photovoltaic arrays or wind turbines
- [Physical power purchase agreement \(PPA\)](#) — purchasing green power directly from a generator of that power, and receiving physical delivery of the electricity direct from the seller
- [Financial power purchase agreement \(PPA\)](#) — purchasing green power through an electricity product vendor who provides profit to a renewable energy generator; in this scenario, clean electricity is not received directly by the customer
- [RECs and credits](#) — Buying credits to counterbalance the use of conventional power.

Phipps has partnered with several providers over the years and is currently purchasing from [Community Energy, Inc.](#)

[The US EPA's Green Power Partnership has resources available](#) to help with procurement, indices of providers, and alternatives for those in non-competitive markets, like buying [green credits or renewable energy certificates \(RECs\)](#). Note however, that offset credits are not an equivalent substitute for any of the other options noted above — [learn more from the National Resources Defense Council](#).

Why It Works:

In order to influence large-scale change, gardens must lead by example; by adopting green energy on site and making this choice a part of your marketing and communications materials and your on-site interpretation plan, you can influence your guests from an authoritative position, which aligns especially well with an on-site energy conversion campaign like the [Green Power Drive](#) at Phipps.

Messaging:

You know your garden cares about the natural world, but behind the scenes, we're also doing our part to protect the environment by investing in clean, renewable energy — and you can join us!

Obstacles:

Your state regulations regarding the power market will determine your garden's ability to make an impact on this issue. Consider the bullet points on page 1 as a waterfall of options and find the combination that works best for you!

Historic Media Release:

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Phipps Conservatory Recognized with 2017 Green Power Leadership Award at Renewable Energy Markets Conference

Revolutionary "Make the Switch at Phipps! Green Power Drive" program garners national recognition.

Pittsburgh, Pa. — Nonprofit Center for Resource Solutions (CRS) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have announced the 17th annual Green Power Leadership Awards winners, recognizing [Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens](#) for Leadership in Green Power Education. The U.S. EPA Green Power Partnership awards honor outstanding organizations and

individuals for their roles in promoting and expanding the use of clean, renewable energy, presented this week at the Renewable Energy Markets conference in New York, NY.

This year's award recipients were selected for their commitment to increasing green power use based on many criteria, including the size and scale of their green power use, leadership and innovation in purchasing green power, internal and external communications efforts, as well as organizational strategy for investing in green power. The Leadership in Green Power Education award features organizations that are championing green power education, teaching others about the environmental benefits of green power and renewable energy.

"This year's winners are true leaders in helping expand access to renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said CRS Executive Director Jennifer Martin.

Phipps was honored as a result of many high impact educational initiatives including Make the Switch at Phipps! Green Power Drive program, showing guests that everyone can make a measurable difference. In partnership with Green Mountain Energy, when guests switch their home electricity source to renewable, fossil-free energy during their Conservatory visit, they receive a free year-long family membership to Phipps. Year to date, over 1,600 guests have made the switch. Powering the average Pennsylvania home emits nearly 8 tons of carbon dioxide annually. As a result, at the end of each year, these guests will have prevented 12,640 tons of carbon dioxide emissions which is equivalent to preventing 26,548 barrels of oil from being burned.

Phipps' dedicated adult and youth educational programs on sustainability, in addition to the Conservatory's continued commitment in helping visitors recognize the vital connections between environmental and human health, were also recognized with this award.

Among organizations registered with the EPA's Green Power Partnership, Phipps is one of only six institutions in the Museums, Parks and Zoos category and the only public garden that uses 100% renewable energy.

For more information on Phipps' sustainability leadership and commitment, visit phipps.conservatory.org/green-innovation.

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About Phipps: Founded in 1893, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Pittsburgh, Pa. is a green leader among public gardens with a mission to inspire and educate all with the beauty and importance of plants; to advance sustainability and promote human and environmental well-being through action and research; and to celebrate its historic glasshouse. Learn more: phipps.conservatory.org.

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