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# News Release

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**Date:** April 21, 2020

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## **For Immediate Release**

### **Grow Solar St. Louis Brings Affordable Renewable Energy to Residential Homes**

**(ST. LOUIS)** This Earth Day, Grow Solar St. Louis will launch the second year of its successful solar group buy program.

The program, launched last year, offers the opportunity to learn about solar energy and access more affordable pricing on solar installations. Group buy like Grow Solar St. Louis uses the power of volume purchasing to reduce the upfront costs of installing solar.

The 2020 Grow Solar St. Louis program is expanding its geographical area to include the entirety of the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County and St. Charles County. The Missouri Botanical Garden and the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA), in partnership with Washington University in St. Louis and their regional climate change efforts, are leading this bulk solar group-buy program. Promotional support for the 2020 program comes from the City of St. Louis, Brentwood, Clayton and University City.

The first year of the Grow Solar St. Louis program showed that St. Louis City and County residents are ready for their own renewable energy systems. In its inaugural year, 70 homes in the St. Louis region chose to go solar, bringing a total of 424 kilowatts of renewable energy to the St. Louis area. These arrays are calculated to reduce 821,810 pounds of carbon emissions by avoiding 407,518 pounds (two rail cars) of coal consumption in their first year alone. This is equivalent to the annual carbon sequestration of 439 acres of U.S. forests. (Source: EPA Greenhouse Gas Emissions Equivalencies Calculator).

"Approximately two-thirds of the solar installations from the 2019 Grow Solar St. Louis were on homes located in the City of St. Louis. This impressive participation rate indicates there is strong interest within the City in using solar energy," said St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson. "The Grow Solar Residential Group Buy program has proven to be an attractive option for citizens to support the use of renewable energy, and we are pleased to learn there will be a second opportunity in 2020."

Solar energy also helps lower the cost of utility bills. The installations from the 2019 Grow Solar St. Louis program will yield an average yearly utility savings of \$724 for homeowners.

"Initially, going solar seemed like it might be too economically radical and frivolous, an unsound investment for a librarian and teacher," said Kara Manley, a homeowner participant in the project. "But I heard a story on St. Louis on the Air about [the Missouri Botanical Garden's] group-buy program and went ahead and looked into it,"

While it was still an investment, the more Manley thought about it, the more she realized the real payback was much more valuable.

"It was an investment in a healthier world for my young children," Manley said. "I invest in a college savings account for them each month. Why wouldn't I invest a small amount in their environment as well? The \$30 a month we now pay for our solar array seems like a small investment, with a very large, though difficult-to-calculate, payoff."

Over the next few months, the Garden and MREA will provide several free, hour-long virtual educational sessions for members of the public. These "Solar Power Hours" will give prospective participants information about how solar energy works, the financial costs and incentives, how solar group buy programs are effective and where to get started in the solar installation process.

As more people join the program and decide to go solar, pricing becomes more affordable. On the other side of the Mississippi, a similar program, [Grow Solar Metro East](#), will contribute to the overall total for Grow Solar St. Louis, accelerating the price reductions.

This year, the Grow Solar program will also offer on-demand learning modules online as an option for the public to complete to be eligible for the program.

**To be eligible to participate in the special group-buy pricing, homeowners and businesses must attend a power hour or complete the online learning modules.**

The program's website, [GrowSolarSTL.org](http://GrowSolarSTL.org), includes a sign-up form where area residents and business owners can elect to receive an estimate or general program updates and Solar Power Hour announcements.

The Missouri Botanical Garden's EarthWays Center is a partner in this program as it supports the organization's mission to enrich lives and protect plants and the environment by working in the community to educate and connect people to practical sustainable solutions where they live, learn, work and play.

"We are excited to be part of the team leading this second year of such an effective program," said Glenda Abney, Interim Vice President of Education and Director of Sustainability and EarthWays Center at the Garden. "This solar group buy program makes community impacts in reducing energy use, which provides cleaner air, water and soil: essential building blocks to plant conservation. We really appreciate the energy efficiency focus, the discounted prices, education emphasis and overall, the advancement of renewable energy."

[Midwest Renewable Energy Association](#) has facilitated 34 programs throughout the Midwest in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois and Iowa. They have reached over 8,000 individuals resulting in solar installations on more than 1,600 properties.

"Because so many people are working from home now, lowering electricity bills is more important than ever," said Peter Murphy, Solar Program Director for MREA. "There's a huge demand for information about solar, and we're demonstrating that solar and energy efficiency can help lots of people lower their bills and improve their quality of life."

The solar installer for Grow Solar St. Louis was selected through a competitive request for proposals that were reviewed by an advisory committee looking at professional certification, experience and price. The committee chose StraightUp Solar, based in St. Louis. They have high quality solar installations, are NABCEP credentialed, emphasize customer service, are very familiar with the region and have excellent history in working in solar group buy programs.

The Grow Solar St. Louis program enables residents to effectively save resources and improve local energy security through the generation of renewable energy while simultaneously conserving energy and reducing long-term energy costs.

The free Solar Power Hour presentation schedule is as follows:

6:30-7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 22 at earthday365's [Virtual Earth Day Festival](#)

10-11 a.m. on Wednesday, May 6

2-3 p.m. on Thursday, May 14

Noon-1 p.m. on Thursday, May 21

Refer to the website for additional dates to be added: Sign up, register for a webinar, and learn more at [GrowSolarSTL.org](#).

Grow Solar St. Louis is available to residents throughout St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and St. Charles County. A parallel program, [Grow Solar Metro East](#), is available to Illinois residents. Renew Missouri will also launch a separate, similar [Commercial & Industrial Solar](#) program for the St. Louis region to allow non-residential (including businesses, municipalities, hospitals, schools and universities) to install solar at a competitive rate.

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The Missouri Botanical Garden's mission is "to discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment in order to preserve and enrich life." Today, 161 years after opening, the Missouri Botanical Garden is a National Historic Landmark and a center for science, conservation, education and horticultural display.