



Westford Conservation Trust

- Fall 2025 Newsletter -

Westford Conservation Trust Annual Meeting 2025

This Is a Free Event - All Are Invited!

Wednesday, November 19th at 7:00 pm

Parish Center for the Arts, 10 Lincoln St., Westford MA

Members and friends are invited to join us for our Annual Trust Meeting. We will have a brief Trust business meeting followed by the presentation of our 2025 Conservation Trustee Award. The award recognizes a member of our community who dedicates their time and energy to further the cause of conservation and the protection of wildlife and natural resources. This year will highlight the role of land conservation and protection in raising awareness about good stewardship of our local and global community. Our guest speaker will round out the evening. Light refreshments will be served. We hope you can join us!



Guest Speaker Amy Meltzer Presents: Gardening for Biodiversity with Native Plants: Providing Habitat for Pollinators, Birds, and Other Essential Wildlife

Amy will focus on the current biodiversity crisis; the evolutionary history among native plants, insects, birds and fungi, and how these interdependent relationships among diverse species are necessary for their survival. She will discuss how growing native plants and using ecological landscape practices can simultaneously reverse biodiversity loss, increase resilience in our landscapes, and slow climate change - all while creating a beautiful garden! A question and answer session follows her presentation.



Westford Conservation Trust 2025 Activities

Multi - Year Pageant Field wall restoration completed in May



[Pageant Field](#) is part of the Trust-owned Prospect Hill Wildlife Sanctuary. If you drive south on Hildreth Street from the town center you will see the large green Pageant Field gate and a long stone wall. The wall had suffered from a century of traffic and snow plowing and has been restored to a stable and aesthetic structure. The Trust contracted out the repair of this historic stone wall. The reconstruction, begun in 2018, was funded by a Community Preservation grant combined with Westford Conservation Trust funds. A second contractor finished the reconstruction this year. The wall and field have historic significance. The town celebrated its 200th anniversary on Pageant Field on September 21, 1929. The pageant was reported in the *Lowell Sun* and the *Boston Globe* which described thousands of spectators viewing the pageant from the then bare slopes of Prospect Hill on the same property.

Field mowing

In October, two Trust volunteers utilized a rented tractor/brushcutter to do the yearly mowing at [Pageant Field](#) and [Hildreth Meadow](#). Field mounted bird boxes at both sites were also cleaned.

Invasives Committee

This summer volunteers hand-harvested about 80 pounds of [Mile - a - Minute](#) vine along Stony Brook near the Grayfox development, the Laughton Farms development, Randolph Circle, a site in Littleton, and Pilgrim Village. Many thanks to new 2025 volunteers - Alex G-M, Emily & Alex, and Cam.

Nashoba Tech Volunteer Day at Swedes Crossing

Tuesday Trail Crew lead Tom Jrolf and Trust Director Diane Duane coordinated a work day with Nashoba Tech. A huge thanks to Grade 9 students and staff at Nashoba Valley Tech for their day of service this past October doing trail work along a portion of the [Long Trail](#), near Swedes Crossing! The students did a wonderful job clearing a lot of brush and a few

logs that had fallen across the trail. Also, thanks to our Trust and Tuesday Trail Crew Tom Jrolf and Mike Woessner for their work and guidance during this event.



Tuesday Morning Trail Group by Tom Jrolf

The Tuesday Morning Trial Maintenance Crew are a group of 10 to 20 men and women who maintain Westford's trails on most Tuesday mornings from 9:00 am -10:30 am. We remove small downed trees and branches, trim bushes, weeds, and overhanging tree branches, and refresh the colored trail blazes (markers) that guide hikers on the trails. We maintain as many trails as possible every year. Although we work hard, we also enjoy walking the trails while socializing with fellow hikers.



On Sundays, we send out a group email describing which trail we are going to work on the following Tuesday, along with a map of the trail and where to park. If you would like to be included in the group email to participate in trail maintenance or learn which trails are being maintained, you can sign up on the Westford Conservation Trust website [here](#). You might see some trails listed that you did not even know existed!



Bill Harman and a
Bittersweet vine

This year was a great year for maintaining the trails. The winter did not have a lot of snow, so we only needed to wear snowshoes a couple of times. The summer was very dry, so there were not many ticks and we only missed a few Tuesdays due to rain. On average, our group removed 2 to 4 downed trees each week. The chainsaw crew removed approximately 57 trees in one day! The biggest challenges have been removing the bittersweet which grows up tree trunks and gets entangled in the branches and the bushes nearby. We try to cut any bittersweet on or near the trails. Sometimes the bittersweet stem is so thick that a saw is needed to cut through the stem. One of the largest bittersweet stems we cut this year is pictured with Bill Harman holding it. Also, there seem to be more multiflora rose bushes growing which are difficult to remove due to the thorns.

If you are a member of the Tuesday Morning Trail Steward Group and you know of an existing trail in Westford that needs some work, you can send me an [email](#) with the name of the trail and what needs to be done. If there are any large trees down on the trail, take a picture of the downed tree(s) and attach the pictures to your email with a description of where the tree(s) are located. I can then forward your email to another group that can go out and remove the downed trees.

Trail Stewardship

The Trust long ago had a formal Trail Steward program, where individuals committed to maintaining a trail, keeping it clear, and reporting conditions beyond their control - like downed trees. That program differed from the Tuesday Trail Stewards group who meet every Tuesday morning to clean up a different trail in town. Several volunteers have asked about trail maintenance, and the Trust has suggested re-instituting a program for volunteers to become stewards



and adopt a trail here in Westford. But there has been no coordination to date to organize the program.

What does a trail steward do? It's easy if you're already familiar with a favorite trail in town. Carry a small bag for trash. During the growing season, visit the trail every 4-6 weeks and use hand clippers to clip encroaching foliage. Other times of the year, just clear debris like small broken branches. If the trail has grass-like plants, occasionally you might need to use shears. You may want to carry loppers or a folding saw to clear downed or overhanging branches. For obstructing larger branches or trees, don't use a chain saw unless you are very comfortable with one and have a partner who can assist in the event of an accident. Report those trees [here](#) for the tree crew.

Are you already a de facto trail steward or would you like to be one? Please let us know, as we would like to reestablish our program, acknowledge your efforts, and provide more communication with the Trust. If you decide to enroll as a steward, please contact us [here](#) with your name and the trail (or parts) for which you want to take stewardship. If, in the future, you decide to unenroll as a steward (leaving Westford, no longer have time to do, etc.), please contact us. Thank you for all you do to make our trails the best they can be!

Trust sponsors three Westford Academy Capstone Seniors, Part 2

by Rich Strazdas

The Spring newsletter introduced an ambitious project to survey all 95 trail structures in town and repair those that were maintainable. Over a period of six weeks in the spring, Ben Burgess, Connor Tsui, and Matthew Tsui started by documenting all the structures and identifying the pieces that needed replacement. They purchased and cut lumber, and carried it to the work sites. With crowbars, hammers, drills, screws, and even rebar, they repaired 26 structures on 12 trails.

Westford is fortunate that so many boardwalks, bridges and stairs have been built over the years by volunteer Scouts and adults. The downside is that there is very little standardization. Planks vary not only in length, but in width and thickness. A spreadsheet was needed for the shopping list! All new screws were 10 x 3" with wedge lock head and used a T-25 drill bit. But the screws they replaced varied from Torx, Phillips and even Square bits. We quickly learned to carry a full arsenal of tools to prevent long walks back to the car. Sometimes we were surprised; the stairway from the Stone Arch Bridge to Stony Brook was secured with rebar, which required a drill extender to go through the 6x6" beam steps. Some of the students had little experience with power tools, so safety and training were paramount. By the end of their project, they could all drill pilot holes, start driving the screw slowly, and finish with a countersink like pros!

If you hike any of these trails and see unweathered planks or supports, know that local high school volunteers made your walk easier and safer: Acker, Frances Hill, Lakeside, Nashoba Brook, Peace, Sassafras, Snake Meadow Brook, Stone Arch, Long Trail, Tom Paul, Roudenbush, WA-Robinson-Crissafulli.

Here is a sampling of before and after pictures. Notice how the forest greened up in just a few weeks in the "after" pictures. Frances Hill bridge 2 was straightforward but Sassafras near Tenney Road needed serious work on the side beams. The stairs from the Stone Arch Bridge were different from any other structure.



The Lakeside Terrace Trail and the Large Oak Tree by Bill Harman



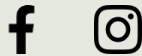
Near Nabnasset Pond is an interesting trail which ends at a large oak tree, clearly visible from the road (across from 14 Lakeside Terrace). This particular tree is notable in the sense that in the recent past it was being seriously attacked by Oriental Bittersweet vines (remnants of the dead vines are shown in the circled area), before the tree was saved by Westford residents. The people who saved this tree by sawing and cutting the vines at the tree base were in the regular Tuesday hiking group. Huge vines were snaking up the trunk of the tree. Also far out from the trunk, other vines were reaching up and attacking overhanging branches of the same tree. As shown in the accompanying map, this [trail](#) extends from Loon Way to Lakeside Terrace. Apart from the issues described in this article, this trail provides a nice hike through the woods and includes a lot of steep and interesting ups-and-downs among several eskers. For a better look at a tree under attack by Oriental Bittersweet, see the picture below. Oak trees provide many benefits for the environment. Doug Tallamy reviews those benefits in this [YouTube video](#).



Invasive plant information now available on Trust Website



The Trust has newly published a guide titled *Invasive Plants of Westford Massachusetts*. This full color booklet explains how to identify and control many of the invasive plants found in Westford. Some plants like "Burning Bush" were sold and planted by homeowners and landscapers before its sale in Massachusetts was banned. The guide suggests native plant alternatives to these invasives. A printed copy of the guide is sent to our members when they renew their support of the Trust. A downloadable version is available [here](#). Once an invasive plant has been removed it should be disposed of. A guide to invasive plant disposal is available [here](#).



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