



**NEWTON  
CONSERVATORS**

SPRING ISSUE

# NEWSLETTER

Preserving open space and connecting people to nature since 1961

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## Houghton Garden: A Landscape Treasure

By Richard B. Primack and Michele Hanss



*Martha Houghton in a view of Houghton Garden at its peak of development (Friends of Houghton Garden)*

## Houghton Garden Conservation Area

City of Newton Conservation Area



GRAPHIC: COURTESY JENNIFER STEEL

The Houghton Garden is an easily overlooked landscape treasure in the midst of Chestnut Hill. The garden was once recognized as one of the most outstanding private gardens in the country. Its network of trails, groupings of evergreen plants, streams, and pond still create a magical environment in every season, unlike anywhere else publicly available in Newton.

Houghton Garden is on Suffolk Road, surrounded by a tall picket fence with several gates. To the south, T-tracks separate it from the Webster and Hammond Woods. The 10-acre property is crossed by Hammond Brook coming in from the south and the smaller Woodman Stream coming in from the north. Both streams curve west to create a small peninsula and merge to form Houghton Pond. Water spills over a dam at the pond

*Continued on page 2*

outlet and under a stone bridge before disappearing into a culvert.



PHOTO: DAN BRODY

*Flowering shrubs add color on the edge of Houghton Pond.*



PHOTO: RICHARD PRIMACK

*Umbrella pine tree growing above the rock garden*



PHOTO: RICHARD PRIMACK

*Umbrella pine closeup*

A small hill above the pond's west side, with abundant evergreen rhododendron shrubs on its slope, provides tranquil views of the pond. On the northern bank is an open area for perennial plants dominated by a large Japanese umbrella pine and other unusual evergreen trees and shrubs, including dwarf conifers.

### **Martha and Clement Houghton**

The current Houghton Garden is part of a 26-acre parcel purchased in 1901 by Martha and Clement Houghton, who lived in the Spanish-style mansion nearby. An enthusiastic gardener, Martha often traveled to England and Japan to learn about landscape design and gardening and to purchase plants.

Martha's particular passion was alpine and

rock garden plants, and she followed the ideas of Reginald Farrer, as described in his book *The English Rock Garden*.

To achieve her vision, noted landscape designer Warren Manning helped design the water features. Hammond Brook was diverted to its present course by a cement dam, and a new stream bed and pond basin were built.

The land surfaces were reshaped to create a variety of slopes, exposed rock features, and open vistas suitable for growing flowering plants and ferns.

Tall, shady trees were replaced with smaller birches and dogwoods to allow for more light. Most notably, rock garden beds were built with various combinations of soil and crushed stone to create specialized conditions for different alpine and rock garden plants, with an underlying system of pipes for watering during dry weather and draining during rainy weather. Ferns and wildflowers, especially primulas, were planted in abundance throughout the garden to create masses of blooms and a succession of flowers in each season.

All this was made possible by the Houghton family's wealth, a large crew of gardeners, the advice of leading experts, and the expertise, energy, and enthusiasm of Martha Houghton herself, one of the founding members and President of the American Rock Garden Society.



PHOTO: MARK PATTIN

*The stream varies greatly in intensity over the dam.*



PHOTO: DAN BRODY

*Azalea flowers frame the pond.*

The garden's outstanding characteristics were officially recognized by a 1929 silver medal award from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, stating, "The charm of

these delightful gardens lies in the expert use of natural plant growth and rock formations already existing on the grounds. Furthermore, one is impressed with the idea that plants are in the place intended for them." The beauty of the garden was also documented by the eminent landscape photographer Herbert Gleason.

## Acquisition by the city

At its peak, Houghton Garden was one of the most outstanding gardens in the United States. However, as the Houghtons aged and finally passed away (Clement in 1949 and Martha in 1956), the garden entered a period of decline and neglect. Without maintenance, the paths and waterways deteriorated, and the flowers gradually declined. The garden became an overgrown, inaccessible woodland full of oversized, fallen, and dead trees.



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY  
*A small bridge helps visitors cross a stream.*

the pathways accessible, rebuild the dam and bridges, clear away fallen trees, hydro-rake the streams and pond, cut back overgrown shrubs, and thin the tree canopy. The Chestnut Hill Garden Club planted numerous flowering plants in the former rock garden beds. The city also installed fencing and gates to regulate movement in and out of the garden. The total cost was over \$230,000, which came from a wide variety of sources, including the City and neighborhood organizations. Once restored, Houghton Garden was opened to the public.



PHOTO: RICHARD PRIMACK  
*A bald cypress tree stands on the edge of the pond.*

Under threat of development in 1968 as a new campus for the Massachusetts College of Art, residents and the City of Newton acted to preserve this treasure. After a prolonged legal battle, and with many allies across Newton, the city took the land by eminent domain. The city, nonprofits, and volunteers did a huge amount of work to repair and make

The Garden Club produced a trail guide in 1997, which included the results of a detailed plant survey. Although most of the perennial wildflowers had been lost, numerous woody plants survived, including notable native

plants such as sourwood, tulip tree, and sweet bay magnolia, and Asian plants such as Sawara false cypress, cork tree, and katsura tree. One of the most unusual plants in the garden is the tall bald cypress tree growing at the end of the peninsula next to the pond, with its “knee” roots poking above the ground.

## Houghton Garden today and tomorrow

Walking in Houghton Garden provides a beautiful and tranquil experience for the busy residents of Newton and students from nearby schools. Houghton Garden has a fully accessible stone dust pathway that leads from the main gate on Suffolk Road to the stone bridge over Hammond Brook.



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY  
*Hydro-raking of the pond is part of the needed maintenance.*

Maintaining the garden is an ongoing activity for the Friends of Houghton Garden and the Newton Conservation Commission. The biggest challenge is removing dead and

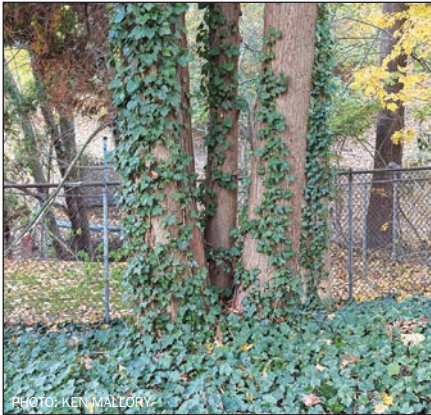
fallen trees, an increasing problem as hemlocks and other species succumb to introduced insects and other pests. The pond was recently hydro-raked to remove a century of accumulated organic material. The raked organic material was used to regrade and restore with native trees and shrubs a large corner of the garden overrun by invasive buckthorn. There are also “people problems” like dog walkers with off-leash pets, misguided artists painting graffiti on rocks, and student groups holding drinking parties. For these problems, it is the vigilance and responsibility of local neighbors that protect the garden.

In coming years, the garden will continue to improve through plantings of more native plants, particularly those selected for drought resistance. The current value of the garden is encapsulated in the 1997 trail guide: “The creation of this wild garden has proven a great legacy of the Houghtons’ lifelong passion for gardening. While the formal gardens... have all but disappeared, in the turn of a shady path and the opening of a vista, the public can still experience the Houghtons’ guiding hand and inspired composition.”

*Richard is a lifelong Newton resident and a Professor at Boston University. Michele is Head of the Friends of the Houghton Garden and the Park Steward for over 20 years. ♦*

# Groundcovers — the Good, the Bad, and the Invasive

What can we all do to help the planet in the face of setbacks all around us? One thing is to steward and restore biodiversity in what is left of public and private open spaces. The global warming-fueled rise in invasive plants degrades the local environment and



English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

contributes, along with habitat loss and pesticide use, to the march toward local (and broader) species extinction. Controlling invasive species and promoting the native plants that support insects, other pollinators, and the rest of the food chain will help forestall this destruction and preserve the quality of the planet for future generations of humans and other life.

**Problematic groundcovers.** The *Boston Globe* reported (Nov. 6) that Professor Doug Tallamy had received an award from Mass Horticulture. He exhorted us to reduce grass areas, grow oaks, and provide “soft landing” under trees using shrubs, forbs, and groundcovers. However, groundcovers are not all alike in environmental impact. Turf grass is the worst — requiring “life support” (i.e., fertilizers, weedkillers, copious water, harmful “mowing and blowing”) to look “healthy.” But other common groundcovers are also problems.

English ivy (*Hedera helix*), myrtle (*Vinca minor*), and wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*) are nonnatives commonly planted by our grandparents, and we may be so used to them



Myrtle (*Vinca minor*)

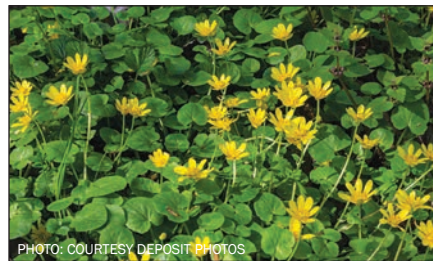
that we think they must be okay. They are still planted as carefree solutions for non-lawn areas. (I planted all of them when I moved in 30 years ago... all are gone now.) They are not rapid spreaders — instead, they steadily creep, year by year, and we tend to forget about them. However, see how they have spread across property lines into those no-man’s-lands between lots. It would be great if those who abut vacant land, a city park, or a conservation area



Wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*)

could be especially conscious of the impact of these plants spreading into unmanaged areas. These non-native groundcovers form such a dense mat of leaves, stems, and roots, often in conjunction with invasive Norway maple trees, that no other plant can germinate or grow through it, forcing out native plants and reducing biodiversity. These non-native species do not provide any ecological services for native insects, pollinators, or mammals. Furthermore, because animals do not favor them, the few remaining natives are more highly predated.

In early spring, you may also see the cheerful yellow flowers of nonnative Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna* or *Ranunculus ficaria*) in your yard.



Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*)



Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*)

It makes a fast-spreading dense mat of foliage with buttercup-like flowers, then disappears until the following spring. People can mistake it for our native marsh marigold (Lesser celandine flowers have 7-12 narrow/pointy petals while Marsh marigold has 5-9 larger rounded petals; the leaves also differ, and Marsh marigold grows as a clump, not in a mat). [There is gorgeous Marsh marigold along the brook in Webster Woods!] If you have Lesser Celandine, seek help as it is difficult to control or eradicate — and please don’t let it spread, especially to wet areas where it will take off.

**The impact in natural areas/parks.** All around the edges of Cold Spring Park, we see ivies that have invaded from abutters’ yards. The recent efforts to establish habitat restoration areas along the trail, with many new trees, shrubs, and some forbs, will now move into a removal phase for the heavy infestation of English ivy and wintercreeper all around them.

“I loved those evergreen ground covers in my yard when I moved next to the park 20 years ago,” said Alan Noguee, President of Friends of Cold Spring Park, “I only recently realized how damaging they can be. We would like to encourage and work with park neighbors to help remove them.” Jon Regosin, Newton Conservators board member and consultant to and former director of the MA Endangered Species Program, believes the ivy encroaching on Cold Spring Park’s vernal pools is a threat to that habitat and that we should tackle it as a way to be “strategic in choosing our priorities to work on, taking into



English Ivy closeup

account the location, the context, the habitat at risk, the benefits of restoration.” The old oak hillsides and vernal pools of CSP deserve our protection.

**Why aren't they banned yet?** Lesser celandine is on the MA Prohibited Plan list, but the other ivies are not yet, though they are in many of the states around us. In an interview with a state plant expert on the committee that publishes the Prohibited Plant List, I learned that the group’s process is not keeping up with the onslaught of invasive species and that these ivies should be considered invasive. We should be very reluctant to allow more of them here, however much the garden industry, with its financial incentives, begs to differ.

**A success story.** At Bracebridge Road in Newton Center (across from Mason Rice School), where the private property was turned into a conservation area with a public use path by the earlier owners and maintained by the current owners, a very large area of English ivy was removed (rolled up like a carpet) as part of the restoration effort. Bare earth was uncovered, but later, to everyone's delight, ferns and orchids submerged under the ivy popped back up, and invasives did not fill in. Beth Wilkinson, Conservators board member and former president involved in the original restoration, marvels at “the remarkable transformation of the habitat from the forest floor up to its canopy” on our annual Conservation Restriction monitoring visits there.

**Alternative plants.** Many native plants can be used in place of ivies. One strategy for Cold Spring Park is to use



Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), which is already present in many parts of the park. It's an excellent plant that supports biodiversity, and I use it in my front yard. Other plants that are tamer and more garden-like, and can tolerate some shade,

include prunella, golden ragwort (*Packera aurea*), both great for pollinators, and green and gold (*Chrysogonum*), native to a bit south of here but a good candidate for migration with climate change. In my backyard, after spending much of last summer removing the monoculture of non-native lily of the valley, I am re-establishing violets, prunella, wild strawberry, sedges, green and gold, wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) and taller perennials like *Acteas* and Golden Alexander and will see what is happy there.

**Don't forget the ferns!** Our native ferns make excellent ground covers.



Don Lubin explores ferns in a Newton park.

As Don Lubin, fern expert and Conservators’ advisor, told us in his wonderful 2020 webinar, ferns had a pivotal role in life on Earth. They were the first to evolve leaves and effective photosynthesis, leading to development of air, organic material, and soil, as well as shorelines and rivers. In the mass extinction 60 million years ago, microscopic fern spores were able to

survive and allowed this life that we are so grateful for today to be regenerated. Including ferns in our plantings can be a way to focus on the long view with hope for the future!

**Thank you** for your support of Newton Conservators and for being good stewards of our corner of the planet. ♦

🌿 Katherine Howard

# 🌿 BioBlitz Events 2025 🌿

**Editor's Intro:** These BioBlitz events are part of a larger effort by Newton Conservators to document and raise awareness about the great diversity of plants and animals that inhabit Newton's open spaces. At the beginning of the event, we will give a brief tutorial on the iNaturalist app, which we use to document species and as an identification aid.

## Vernal Pool BioBlitz: Sunday, April 6, 10-12



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

*Jon Regosin explores the vernal pool Bare Pond in Webster Woods.*

Vernal pools are small wetlands that are important habitats for a great diversity of amphibians, aquatic insects, and other invertebrates. Join us as we explore vernal pools in Webster Woods/Hammond Pond Reservation and document what we see in iNaturalist. Bring calf boots if you have them, but waterproof boots will not be needed. We may encounter frog or salamander eggs and might hear calling spring peepers or American toads. We will also look at a variety of vernal pool invertebrates under magnification.

Meet at Hammond Pond Parkway, at the trailhead just south of the MBTA tracks on the west side (parking available along the west side of the road).

Registration is optional but recommended, so we can send you scheduling changes, directions or advice (such as about trail hazards) before the event and educational resources after it. Please register at <https://newtonconservators.org/events/> For questions, email [jonathan.regosin@gmail.com](mailto:jonathan.regosin@gmail.com)

## Edmands Park Pollinator BioBlitz: ~~Sunday~~ **Saturday**, June 7, 10:30-12:30



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

*Entrance to Edmands Park*

Come explore the pollinators of Edmands Park and improve insect identification skills. Surrounded by stone walls and bordered by Boston College Law School on one side, this park contains woods, small clearings, wetlands, Edmands Brook, and a glacial esker. Its open oak forest contains beeches, locusts, maples, birches, and pines. Learn more about Edmands Park at <https://newtonconservators.org/property/edmands-park/> on Newton Conservators' website. You can check out the current iNaturalist project including previous observations for Edmands Park at <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/edmands-park-newton-ma>.

Parking is available along Blake Street. Enter at North end near the old field habitat <https://maps.app.goo.gl/KaDSRYGnynNHqbra7>.

Registration is optional but recommended so we can send you scheduling changes, directions or advice (such as about trail hazards) before the event and educational resources after it. Please register at <https://newtonconservators.org/events/> For questions, email Jonathan Regosin: [jonathan.regosin@gmail.com](mailto:jonathan.regosin@gmail.com)



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

*Water plants in winter at Edmands Park*

## Save the Date! Newton SERVES is Sunday, May 4.

We will have several activities — check our Events page or the city's Newton SERVES page for more info.

# Enjoy Nature... with Webinars from Newton Conservators

Join us for our **Spring Webinar Series** online from **March through May**.

Each online program will begin at 7 pm and last approximately one hour. You may register for the programs using the links below or by going to the event listing at [newtonconservators.org](http://newtonconservators.org). You will receive an email confirmation after you have registered.



## Thursday March 27... **The Bluebird Effect: Uncommon Bonds with Common Birds**

When you raise a wild bird when it's orphaned or help it when it's hurt, you are taken into its confidence. Julie Zickefoose will talk about those experiences and about the unexpected mental and emotional capacities of birds, especially songbirds, which we tend to underestimate and overlook. Everyone knows that crows, ravens, and parrots are intelligent, but have you thought about hummingbirds? Julie has a unique perspective, having been a mother to six hummingbirds. And chimney swifts, cedar waxwings, mourning doves, cardinals, and rose-breasted grosbeaks, to name a few. Join her for an intimate, eye-opening look at the rich mental and emotional landscape of birds.

Julie lives and works quietly on an 80-acre wildlife sanctuary in the back country of Whipple, Ohio. She is a prolific writer and painter who was an *All Things Considered* commentator for five years. Her illustrated work, *The Bluebird Effect*, was an Oprah's Book Club pick in 2012. After 37 years of contributing art and writing to *Bird Watcher's Digest*, Julie recently became Advising Editor to the new and improved BWD Magazine. Her heavily illustrated books include *Natural Gardening for Birds*, *Letters from Eden*, *The Bluebird Effect*, and *Baby Birds: An Artist Looks Into the Nest*. Her newest book is *Saving Jemima: Life and Love With a Hard-Luck Jay*, the intimate story of how an orphaned bird can save a soul. She is now writing about Carolina Wrens.

**Sign up:** <https://shorturl.at/yWwwM>



## Thursday, April 3 ... **Getting Real About Dealing with Mosquitoes**

Learn from experts Jennifer Forman-Orth and Doug Bidlack about mosquito biology, hear the real science about what you can do to avoid getting mosquito bites, and explore how state mosquito control helps prevent exposure to mosquitoes and mosquito-borne illness. They also will talk specifically about the mosquitoes and diseases within our immediate region.

Jennifer Forman Orth is an environmental biologist for the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, where her work covers entomological and botanical issues. Jennifer completed her Ph.D. at UMass Boston. She also has a master's degree from Boston University's Center for Energy and Environmental Studies. Doug Bidlack is the entomologist at East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project based in Waltham. He received his Ph.D. from Clemson University while studying black flies.

**Sign up:** <https://shorturl.at/JLhmX>



## Thursday, May 22 ... **Rediscovering and Revitalizing Cheesecake Brook**

Cheesecake Brook exemplifies the challenges facing urban streams. Today, the brook drains a watershed that is over 40% impervious. Stormwater runs off roofs, sidewalks, and roads and enters the brook leading to pollution, flooding, and degraded habitat. By investing in green stormwater infrastructure and bank restoration, we can reduce aquatic pollution, promote healthier flow patterns, and create an attractive shaded wetland corridor for the benefit of residents and wildlife. How do we get there? Join Max Rome for a discussion of the brook's history, condition, and current and future opportunities for restoration.

Max Rome is the Stormwater Program Manager at the Charles River Watershed Association. In this role, he works to advance projects and policies that reduce runoff, decrease nutrient pollution, and help green watershed communities. Max completed his Ph.D. in Civil and Environmental Engineering from Northeastern University in 2022. His dissertation "From Water Quality to River Health" focused on understanding the connection between ecological restoration and improving water quality.

**Sign up:** <https://shorturl.at/u0ebs>

# WALKS SCHEDULE SPRING 2025

[www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org)

**Please note:** Registration is optional but recommended, so we can send you scheduling changes, directions or advice (such as about trail hazards) before the event and educational resources after it. Please register at <https://newtonconservators.org/events/>

## Sunday, May 4

### NEWTONSERVES

We will have several activities — check our Events page or the city’s NewtonSERVES page for more info. <https://newtonconservators.org/events/>

## Saturday, May 10 from 10 - 12 noon

### SIGNS OF SPRING IN WEBSTER WOODS

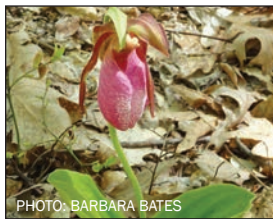


PHOTO: BARBARA BATES

Join Barbara Bates, a Newton Conservators’ director and retired Mass Audubon teacher/naturalist, for a 1.5-mile ramble through Webster Woods. We’ll see which spring ephemeral flowers are in bloom and whether the wood frogs are still calling in Bare Pond,

the vernal pool. Registration is required; meeting location and Barbara Bates’s contact information will be emailed to participants upon registration. *Rain date: Saturday, May 17, 10 am-12 noon.*

**Trip Leader: Barbara Bates (B.L.Bates@rcn.com)**

## Sunday, May 11 from 8 - 10:30 am

### MOTHER’S DAY BIRD WALK AT NAHANTON PARK: COSPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF NAHANTON PARK



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

Nahanton Park offers a mix of woodlands, wetlands, edge habitat, and meadows along the Charles River, making it one of the best birding spots in Newton for migrants as well as resident species. Join long-time birding guides Alison Leary and Haynes Miller at

the Nahanton Street entrance next to the river for a chance to see Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Northern Orioles, and a variety of wood warblers. Parking is available inside the park. Participants should bring binoculars and wear waterproof shoes if possible. Beginners and experienced birders welcome. *The walk will be canceled in the event of steady rain.*

**Trip Leaders: Alison Leary (617-821-5619) and Haynes Miller (617-413-2419)**

## Sunday, May 18 from 10 - 12 noon

### EXPLORING BEAUTIFUL HEMLOCK GORGE

Join nature enthusiast Katherine Howard of the Newton



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

Conservators and Dr. John Mordes, President of the Friends of Hemlock Gorge, on a tour of this Newton gem “hidden” at the intersection of Routes 9 and I-95. Katherine and John will visit the historic Echo Bridge, designed by Charles Eliot of the Olmsted design firm and once a popular Sunday destination for city dwellers. Walk participants will enjoy the bridge’s spectacular views while learning about its history and the geology of the surrounding 23-acre park. The walk includes some steep slopes and uneven terrain. Meet at the Hamilton Place entrance/lot off Central Ave (on the Needham side of the Charles River). *Rain date: Sunday, May 25, 10 am-12 noon.*

**Trip Leaders: Katherine Howard (617-721-2571); John Mordes, MD (617-888-4488)**

## Saturday, May 24 from 1-3 pm

### A STROLL THROUGH COLD SPRING PARK

#### COSPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF COLD SPRING PARK

Tour Cold Spring Park, a woodland haven in the heart of Newton, and explore some of its natural and unnatural wonders, mysteries, threats, and possibilities with Friends of Cold Spring Park founder and president Alan Noguee. See how its seven different habitats create a wildlife haven, why its ability to continue supporting wildlife is at risk, and what we can do about it. *Rain date: Saturday, May 31, 1-3 pm.*



PHOTO: ALAN NOGEE

**Trip Leader: Alan Noguee (617-821-1265) (friendsofcoldspringpark@gmail.com)**

## Saturday, June 14 from 10 - 12 noon

### NATURE WALK THROUGH SAWMILL BROOK CONSERVATION AREA



PHOTO: SUSAN LYON

Director Katherine Howard as she walks through Sawmill Brook’s upland woods, wetlands, rock walls, and dramatic outcroppings of our state rock, Roxbury puddingstone. Katherine will lead walk participants on a 1.2-mile exploration of the woodland area from Vine Street to Marla Circle and return along the brook

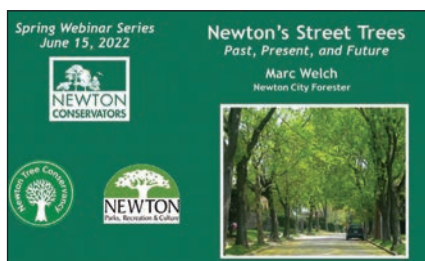
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(the walk will also cover the adjoining “new” section acquired in 2004 and blazed in recent years). In addition to discussing the history of the conservation area, Katherine will also look for the dozen ferns Don Lubin identified in previous fern walks. The woodland trail is mostly flat but uneven and rocky underfoot, and there are parts over wetlands that are traversed on wood planks called “bog bridges.” *Rain Date: Saturday, June 21, 10-noon.*

**Trip Leader: Katherine Howard (617-721-2571)**

## Did you miss the webinar on Newton’s Street Trees? You can watch it online at any time.



Every spring and fall since September 2020, Newton Conservators has presented a free webinar series on conservation topics that are important for our community. Many of our speakers have allowed us to record their presentations, and those recordings are available to watch on our YouTube page (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjTfS6jjmO6DB5gUS2Miv6w/videos?view=0&sort=dd>), or look at our home page in upper right corner and click the YouTube icon.

We plan to highlight one of these past webinar gems in future newsletters. This time, we focus on Marc Welch’s presentation on Newton’s Street Trees from June of 2022: <https://bit.ly/3CaLwte> (This webinar was co-sponsored by the Newton Tree Conservancy.)

In Marc’s detailed and informative webinar, he discusses how our street trees and their care have evolved over the years. He explains that trees growing along the roadways have been a part of the fabric of the community for over 100 years. He tells us how those trees got here, why they are important, and what we can expect in the future. He lists the incredible benefits that street trees will continue to provide to the public — if we provide thoughtful care for them. At the end of his talk, Marc answers common questions ranging from what characteristics make for a good street tree, what factors affect your choice of tree, and what that grassy strip between the sidewalk and the street is called.

Marc Welch is the City Forester and Deputy Commissioner of the Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture Department. He’s also a Massachusetts Qualified Tree Warden and Massachusetts Certified Arborist. He has managed Newton’s trees for more than twenty years.

Information about upcoming webinars can be found under the “Events” tab on Newton Conservators’ website, where you can register for them: <https://newtonconservators.org/events/>. Our webinars are free and available to all. ♦

✍️ Beth Wilkinson and Barbara Bates

### MISSION Newton Conservators, Inc.

Newton Conservators promotes the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests, and streams which are open or may be converted to open space for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters.

A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land, buildings, and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, educational, recreational, literary, and other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare of the people of our community.

*Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization 63 years ago in June 1961.*

The **Newton Conservators’ Newsletter**® is published four times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc., in June, September, December, and March. Deadlines for these issues are the second Friday of the month before the issue is published.

We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles or letters by email in MS Word or rich text format to [articles@newtonconservators.org](mailto:articles@newtonconservators.org). Digitized photographs, maps, and diagrams are also welcome.

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Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the newsletter: Barbara Bates, Michele Hanss, Katherine Howard, Susan Lyon, Richard Primack and Beth Wilkinson.

# Annual Meeting 2025



**Save The Date! Newton Conservators' Annual Meeting, Thursday May 8, 2025, 6pm.**

Marking 20 years of Newton Community Farm, the featured speaker is NCF's Greg Maslowe. He will give a talk entitled "Can Farming Save Open Spaces? A Very Old Debate." The description of his talk is as follows.

"As land prices increase throughout the United States, and agricultural lands continue to be consolidated into massive corporate holdings, the options available to young farmers to acquire land are getting squeezed. One innovative approach, found here in Newton and being explored in places like northern Colorado, is to utilize open space for community farms. This approach has some significant benefits to the land holder as someone else takes financial and physical responsibility for maintaining and managing the land. There are also potential environmental benefits as some farming techniques can reverse soil carbon loss and actually provide a net sequestering of carbon, which helps slow climate change. But it also raises the question of whether intensively managed landscapes are what we mean by "open space." Farm Manager Greg Maslowe will explore the pros and cons of farming on public lands, harkening back to a very old debate between two of the founders of the modern environmental movement."

## New Insect Pest: Spotted Lanternfly is in Newton

The MA Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) confirmed that as of December 2024, Newton has the invasive sap-feeding spotted lanternfly (SLF) found in the Upper Falls area, as far as we know. SLF arrived in the US in 2014 (PA), spread into MA in 2021, and was found in Wellesley and Weston in the past year. It is destructive to certain crops, weakens trees, and is a bothersome annoyance, spreading sticky honeydew, which gets moldy and smelly. We can help stop the spread by educating ourselves, reporting egg masses (found Sept – June on tree trunks, wood/lumber, rusty metal), the spotted nymphs when they emerge in April, and the spotted adults starting in July-December. See Newton Conservators' newsletter in fall 2022 for an article about the spotted lanternfly. Educational resources (id, lookalikes) and reporting links are on this website <https://massnrc.org/pests/pestFAQsheets/spottedlanternfly.html> ◆



*Adult lanternfly and nymph*

☙ Katherine Howard

# ..... Invasives Team Update .....



PHOTO: KATHERINE HOWARD

*Porcelain Berry Closeup*



PHOTO: KATHERINE HOWARD

*Porcelain Berry Infestation*



PHOTO: KATHERINE HOWARD

*Black Swallow-wort Seed Pod*



PHOTO: CAROLIN VAN DER LAAN

*Black Swallow-wort Flower*

**N**ewton Conservators' Invasives Team conducts invasive plant removal sessions year-round, in many of Newton's parks and conservation areas. The City of Newton and the state (Department of Conservation and Recreation) support us administratively and with debris removal.

Invasive non-native plants take over large areas quickly, displacing native species and disrupting food chains of plants, insects, birds, and other animals, harming biodiversity. Human activity caused this problem, and our intervention is needed to prevent the invasives from taking over. Our efforts make room for threatened native species, and we also add new native plantings in selected areas.

You can join our sessions or just learn to identify the plants in your own yard and favorite areas. Newton Conservators' website on invasive plants includes photos and tips for identification and management: <https://newtonconservators.org/invasive-plants/>

Our sessions will be published as Events on the website. One definite date is NewtonSERVES on Sunday, May 4, when we will have at least three sessions, removing garlic mustard, which is easy and fun. If you would like to receive notices and updates about our plans, please email [volunteers@newtonconservators.org](mailto:volunteers@newtonconservators.org). There is no obligation, and you can come to as many or as few of the sessions as you like.

Thank you! ♦

🌿 Katherine Howard



## RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR JOIN TODAY!

**Count me in!** I want to help Newton Conservators preserve open spaces and connect people to nature in Newton. Please renew/accept my tax-deductible membership at the level checked below:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Directors' Circle | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Family Membership                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Patron            | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Individual Membership                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Donor             | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student Membership                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Sustaining Member  | <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted Additional Contribution \$_____ |

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_  
 MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Memberships run for the calendar year. All new members receive *Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Conservation Lands*.

Please send checks made payable to Newton Conservators to P.O. Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459, OR renew or join online at [newtonconservators.org/membership/](https://newtonconservators.org/membership/).

### Special Contributions:

- Trails Revolving Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Land Stewardship Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_

To support other special purposes, please email us at [membership@newtonconservators.org](mailto:membership@newtonconservators.org)

By joining or renewing, you agree to receive our informational **emails**, which always include the option to unsubscribe.

Our **quarterly newsletter** will be sent by email only unless you check here:

- US mail only       US mail and email

**I would like to learn more about volunteering with Newton Conservators.**





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# NEWSLETTER

*Preserving open space and connecting people to nature since 1961*

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**Fox Sparrow**  
*photo by Haynes Miller*

**Go Green!** ...and all the other colors of the rainbow. You can view this newsletter at [newtonconservators.org/newsletters](http://newtonconservators.org/newsletters). To elect not to receive a paper copy of the newsletter, email us at [membership@newtonconservators.org](mailto:membership@newtonconservators.org).