

Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

Fall 2013

Littleton Conservation Trust's Community-Wide New Year's Day Open House

(at the New England Forestry Foundation Headquarters)

Wednesday January 1, 2014, Noon—4 pm
Prouty Homestead, 32 Foster Street, Littleton, MA

Free Admission – Open to All – Light Refreshments

New Year's Day Open House

Start off the New Year right with a relaxing open house, hosted by the Littleton Conservation Trust, at New England Forestry Foundation's (NEFF) Headquarters at the Prouty Homestead, 32 Foster Street, from noon to 4pm. Parking available at the Fay Park-Fire Station Parking lot. Easy walk up Wilderness Road to NEFF Headquarters on the right.

Come and mingle with friends old and new, LCT Trustees and Land Stewards who monitor and protect the town's conservation lands, and others from the area. Enjoy the fire, hot beverages, snacks, possible games, and LCT led excursions in the surrounding 108 acre Prouty Woods Community Forest. Bring appropriate clothing and outdoor equipment for prevailing weather conditions if participating in outdoor recreation.

All are invited. This community event is free and open to everyone. Feel free to bring along any holiday goodies to share with others. ■



George Lewis Award bestowed on LCT's Rick Findlay and Don MacIver

At their 60th Anniversary Annual Meeting, Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) recognized LCT Trustees Rick Findlay and Don MacIver for their significant contributions to the preservation and protection of conservation lands. Rick and Don shared this year's George Lewis Conservation Award for their considerable community conservation efforts, both within the all volunteer Littleton Conservation Trust and beyond.

The late George Lewis, was one of SVT's original founders, a long term director, and retired Professor of Geography at Boston University. He was known for his tireless efforts and ongoing vigilance at many SVT events. The Lewis Conservation Award recognizes individuals within SVT's 36 town service area who exemplify George's spirit and enthusiasm and who "toil in our local environmental vineyards and encourage others to do the same."



Don and Rick with George Lewis Conservation Award

SVT is a professionally staffed, regional conservation land trust serving towns within the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord River Watershed. The eastern half of Littleton drains to the Assabet River. The western half of Littleton flows into a smaller subwatershed of the Merrimack River. LCT often partners with SVT for joint conservation benefit. ■



**LCT
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December 2013**

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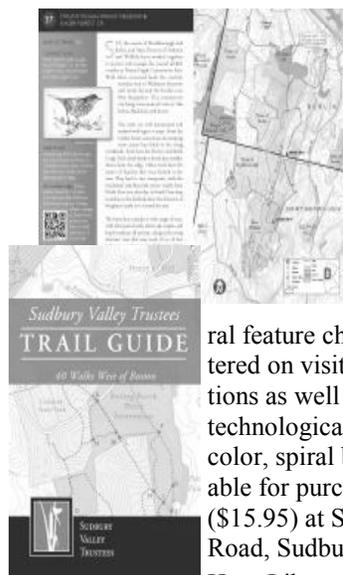
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The Littleton Conservation Trust (LCT), distinct from the Town's Conservation Commission, is a private land trust formed in 1962 to promote Littleton's rural character; to preserve its water, plant, and wildlife resources and its unique views; and to provide environmental education. The LCT is caretaker of over 300 acres of property (gifted from far-sighted residents) on which we manage a public trails system.

Littleton Conservation News compiled by Don MacIver

- ➡ The "Guide to Conservation Land in Littleton" has been updated to September 2012, and is available at the Reuben Hoar Library for \$10.
- ➡ The Trust for Public Land (TPL) just released a Massachusetts study from its economic analysis on the Commonwealth's Return on Investment (ROI) in land conservation through a variety of state funded programs and found that every \$1 invested in land conservation returned \$4 in natural goods and services to the state's economy. In addition, land conservation funded by the Commonwealth supports key industries that depend on the availability of protected land and water. Massachusetts has also been successful in leveraging support from other sources, expanding the impact of the Commonwealth's investment. For further information: 2 page summary and 52 page full report, see tpl.org/Massachusetts
- ➡ Local author, naturalist, and Mass Audubon Society *Sanctuary* Magazine editor John Hanson Mitchell published an essay "Landscape and Littleton" in the online literary journal *Wilderness House Literary Review* (volume 8 issue 3) found at: www.WHLR.com. John identifies local scenic landscapes that fit what renowned ecologist E.O. Wilson terms biophilic - an iconic natural setting long sought for by people over time. These vistas typically include views over open land or water with distant hills, forests or prominent trees. John described vistas include that from the Long Lake Beach Area, the western Great Road farmland views of "Scratch Flat" and the at-risk Great Road farmland in the town's Eastern Gateway Area. A fourth vista would be that from the town's orchard and Nagog Hill Farm barn overlooking Nagog Pond, or similarly that from hiking down the Dr. Ed Bell Trail at Sarah Doublet Forest and Nature Preserve. ■

SVT Releases New Comprehensive Regional Trail Guide



Sudbury Valley Trustees, commemorating its 60th year, just published a spiffy comprehensive Trail Guide detailing some 40 trails on conservation lands in some 36 communities within the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord River Basin. Littleton's own conservation lands surrounding the Yapp property are highlighted in the North Conservation Land Section.

The guide details trails and conservation lands, access points, landscape history, natural feature characteristics, and wildlife frequently encountered on visits. Included are traditional turn-by-turn directions as well as QR code directed GPS instructions for the technologically equipped adventurer. This 100 page, full color, spiral bound guide with laminated soft cover is available for purchase online (\$20) at svtweb.org or in person (\$15.95) at SVT Headquarters, Wolbach Farm, 18 Wolbach Road, Sudbury. LCT has donated a copy to the Reuben Hoar Library. ■

~ Time to Renew Memberships ~

Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form – 2013 / 2014

New Renewal

Date: ___/___/___
(Date determines year of tax deduction)

Name: _____

Address: _____

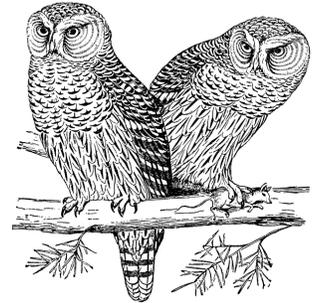
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please provide an email address to receive notification of upcoming walks and conservation-related events, including an Aggregate Industries led walking tour of the 85 acre Littleton Quarry and Mass Wildlife led talk on Bears in the Burbs.

- Fiftieth Anniversary Membership** \$50
- Individual: \$25 Family: \$40
- Friend: \$100 Supporter: \$250
- Patron: \$500 Benefactor: \$1,000
- Other: \$ _____
- Gift to Permanent Fund: \$ _____

Please cut out form and send to:

Kathy Stevens, Treasurer
Littleton Conservation Trust
PO Box 594
Littleton, MA 01460



Two New Commemorative Benches by Rick Findlay

A walk in the woods on a beautiful day can be greatly enhanced by the chance to sit and contemplate or watch the activity of one's dog or child. Thanks to the thoughtfulness and generosity of two women, we now have new benches dedicated to the memory of their recently departed husbands.



Chris Hohenemser Bench at Prouty Landing at Long Lake

At the landing in NEFF's Prouty Woods we now have a bench overlooking Long Lake in memory of Christoph Hohenemser. A debilitating disease took away Chris's ability to walk, but not to swim with the Great Blue Herons cruising overhead. Anne Hohenemser and family remember him with this bench, and we are all grateful.

Chris was involved in many local environmental issues, served as Physics Professor Emeritus at Clark University, and co-founded its Environmental Science and Policy Program.



Ray Grande Bench and commemorative Stone Cairn at the Sarah Doublet Forest and Nature Preserve

Friends and family of the late Ray Grande recently commemorated a life full of love and service with the building of a stone cairn and bench at Sarah Doublet Forest where he often volunteered. Thank you Judy Grande and all those that made it possible.

Ray Grande was a very active "super volunteer" for many community organizations including the LCT. Among his passions was collecting stones from his world travels and building with native stone.

Both benches are getting a lot of use, which makes us think that perhaps we should have many more available to hikers. We welcome suggestions for future bench locations. ■

Editor's Note: Rick Findlay handcrafted the commemorative benches using large white pine slabs milled at Littleton's Parlee Lumber Mill.

Discovering and enjoying aromatic treats in the woodlands can add another dimension to our walks in our unique trails system. Introduced to a high level of wood lore as a Boy Scout brought about my interest in the different characteristics of trees, shrubs and wild plants. Perhaps this article will encourage the reader to observe and enjoy the woodland a little more.

Black Birch (*Betula lenta*) is a common tree with the strong and pleasant odor of wintergreen in the crushed twigs, foliage and inner bark. Before the days of synthetics, oil of wintergreen was extracted from black birch. It is even possible to boil down the sap and make a sugar similar to maple sugar. Originally black birch was used as a flavoring for root beer.

Yellow Birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*) is similar to black birch in odor characteristics but somewhat milder. Years ago dried yellow birch leaves were used to make strong tea for healing sore throats.

The unusual mitten shaped leaves with one, two or three lobes can easily identify **Sassafras** (*Sassafras albidum*) leaves. Broken stems and cut bark produce a strong wintergreen odor but is somewhat different from black birch. Sassafras was popular in the South many years ago for making a strong tea by boiling roots. Dried leaves and pith have been used as a soup thickener. The US FDA has warned that sassafras, as a flavoring may be detrimental to human health. After the discovery of America, sassafras became famous for its supposed medicinal qualities. It lured fortune hunters to America. Many shiploads of sassafras went to Europe as supposed medicine. It was a huge disappointment, but it still remained popular as a tea.

As a boy, I often played “cops and robbers” in overgrown pastures and cleared land. While hiding to launch an ambush, I discovered the unique and pleasant odor of the **Sweet-fern** (*Comptonia peregrina*), a scruffy woody plant with saw tooth leaves. When broken and crushed, a strong pleasant odor is emitted and can linger on the fingers for quite a while.

A similar treat on the forest floor is **Wintergreen** (*Gaultheria procumbens*), also known as checkerberry and teaberry, which produces a small red berry between several leaves. By crushing the leaves, a pleasant wintergreen odor is evident. In the 18th century, the teaberry was reported to be a substitute for tea.

Identification of the trees and plants described above is not difficult once shown what they look like or by using a handy tree or wild plant guide. Two handy sources for tree information are the booklets entitled “Forest Tours: Edible, Medicinal, Poisonous Characteristics and Historic Uses of Selected Trees and Shrubs at Prouty Woods” and “A Self Guided Tour of the Wide Variety of Trees At Prouty Community Forest”. Free copies are available at the Reuben Hoar Library. ■

Easy Way to Identify Local Plants any Time of the Year

If you want to see what the above plants look like or identify any local plant (over 1,200 species illustrated) go to the New England Wildflower Society’s new interactive webpage at the following location: gobotany.newenglandwild.org

On October 13th, Bill Brown, LCT trustee and Oak Hill Land Steward, led a hike at Oak Hill for Littleton Pack 2. There were about 15 cub scouts and 10 adult leaders and parents who went on this hike on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. The hike parameters were 2.5 miles long, 600 feet ascent, and 2.25 hours duration.

All of the Cub Scout ranks have achievements that require hikes in order to get their Rank Badge (The Tiger Badge, The Wolf Badge, The Bear Badge). Beyond that, the Bears, are working on the Leave-No-Trace Award that has a requirement that you practice Leave-No-Trace on three separate hikes, this being one of those. Brian Doyle, Cub Scout Pack Committee Chair and Outdoor Coordinator, provided a briefing on Leave-No-Trace principles prior to our hike, and co-led the hike.

We walked along the edge of the 70 foot deep geologically significant Tophet Chasm, where glacial Lake Nashua once drained. In keeping with the Leave-No-Trace theme, a dropped water bottle was retrieved after it rolled deep into the chasm. The scouts were impressed with the three erratics (large boulders moved by the glacier) near the chasm, and by the nearly vertical dip angle of the Tadmuck Brook Schist (Oak Hill’s bedrock) on the Clinton-Newbury fault.



Five cub scouts on boulder

The group made our way up to the highest point in Littleton (508 feet) and spent some time relaxing and enjoying the wide -open vista from Lookout Rock.



Group photo at Lookout Rock vista point

Bill and Brian believe that both the scouts and adults had a great time on this hike. This hike has been offered in 2010-2012 for the cub scouts, Parker Charter School, and the public respectively. LCT plans to offer this hike again sometime in 2014. ■

Littleton Community Farm's First Educational Program: Why Protect Seed and Plant Diversity?

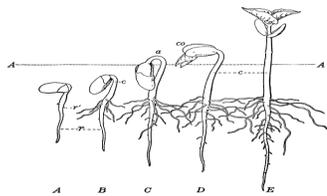
By Amy Tarlow-Lewis and Vera Cohen with contribution by Joy Reo



On October 24th the Littleton Community Farm and the Reuben Hoar Library were pleased to host Tevis Robertson-Goldberg from *Crabapple Organic Farm* in Chesterfield, MA. Tevis spoke at the Library on the importance of seed

preservation. The lecture marked the official launch of the Seed Lending Library that the Reuben Hoar Library and the Littleton Community Farm are jointly implementing for the 2014 growing season. The mission of "Seed Library Littleton" is to build community through the collecting and sharing of bio-diverse, locally-adapted seeds, provide education on seed saving techniques, and create a forum for discourse on the relevancy of local food systems to our community.

Tevis presented a 12,000 year history of the human impact on the evolution on our seed (food) supply and how it has changed our food, economy, environment, health and biodiversity. Below are some interesting tidbits we gleaned from Tevis' talk...

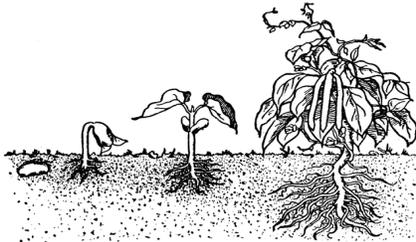


100 years ago the United States had a rich polyculture that has been replaced by a monoculture.

Today there are more acres of corn than there are acres of the world's population, making corn the most successful species. Corn is now all genetically closely related. The current risk to our food supply is that agricultural catastrophes like the Irish Potato Famine are possible.

Since 1924 the US Department of Agriculture has had a seed bank in Geneva, NY. It is similar to the Svalbard Global Seed Cave, which is a "doomsday" seed vault in Norway that is essentially the world's insurance policy for food. International and national seed banks are for commercial growers; these seed banks don't really serve small farmers. Commercial growers get the access without doing the work. Tevis considers these seed bank varieties to be "functionally extinct" because no one is growing them. Whether the USDA bank will be there in the future depends on the politics surrounding it.

In the last 100 years seeds have become commercialized; hybrids give seed companies control over seed. "X" variety always comes from a specific company. Varieties are a market commodity with built-in obsolescence. "Seed varieties are now a throw-away commodity," said Tevis. Large scale commercial breeders are growing seed commodities for industrialized farms. Most heirloom varieties are now in danger of going extinct because there are only one or two producers. Varieties are lost when companies choose one variety over another simply to make



What matters to the seed producer is whether propagation will be profitable.

Before 1900, there were thousands of named varieties of apples and hundreds of cider apple mills in New England. With the Prohibition movement (which had an axe as its symbol), many local varieties of apples, such as "Westfield Seek No Farther" disappeared. (The USDA seed bank has 1,795 varieties of apple.)

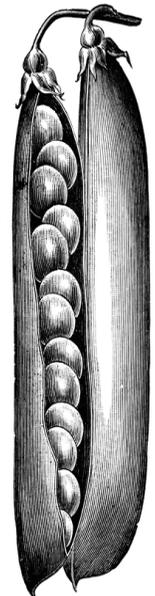
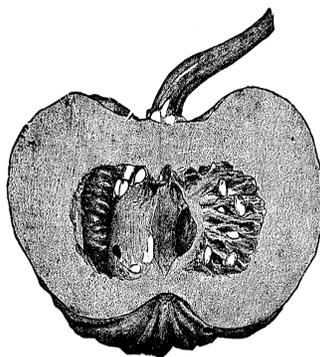
Seed saver gardeners should select heirloom seeds and other open-pollinated varieties provided they are true-by-type but not hybrid seeds. Heirloom varieties typically are genetically passed down within a closed community. Other true-by

-type open-pollinated varieties are susceptible to nature's vagaries and in return adapt to local conditions but maintain greater genetic diversity than heirlooms. Hybrids, selected and bred for displaying a desired trait, are produced by human controlled pollination of two species or varieties. Successive hybrid generations are genetically unstable, resulting in unpredictability and less vigorous plants. Over many years, hybrid plants may become stabilized and return to open-pollination through careful growing, selecting, and saving seed.

Hybrids such as delicata squash have become contaminated at times; as a result there were almost no delicata squash on the market for some years. Waltham Butternut has been very popular; the seed now comes from Texas, so is not growing as well here as it once did. As an aside, it is worth noting that most crops are grown in states such as Florida and California and sold to and eaten by those who have no real connection with the crop.

Home seed savers can more effectively select and improve plant varieties than large-scale producers. Why? Because on a small scale one can look at every plant and select for local conditions, tastes and regional culture. Tevis encouraged people to save seeds for their historical, educational and biological value, for their taste and nutrition, and of course for the sheer fun and adventure of it all.

Stay tuned for further updates on the launch of the Seed Lending Library! To join the Community Farm Group please email boardlcf@gmail.com or attend one of our meetings. Find us at www.littletoncommunityfarm.com or on Facebook. For more information on Crabapple



Farm, see crabapplefarm.org ■

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*“Preserving Our Rural Landscape”
for over 50 Years*

LCT New Year's Day Open House

Prouty Homestead

at NEFF Headquarters

32 Foster Street, Littleton

Wednesday January 1, 2014 ~ Noon - 4 pm



This newsletter is printed on recycled paper (20% post-consumer waste)

The Book Corner

These and other donated books can be found at the Reuben Hoar Public Library

Hope Beneath Our Feet: Restoring Our Place In The Natural World

Edited by Martin Keogh

Hope Beneath Our Feet is an anthology of inspiring essays written in response to a question posed by the book's editor, Martin Keogh, after the birth of his son made him question the state of the world today and worry about the future. Keogh wondered how people can move forward in the face of the daunting challenges the world faces such as pollution, climate change, deforestation and loss of species. Wanting to hear other people's ideas and feelings, he sent out a request for writings to address the question: **“If our world is looking down the barrel of an environmental catastrophe, how do I live my life right now?”**

This book is a collection of chosen responses he received from a wide variety of people, including environmentalists, artists, CEO's, religious and indigenous leaders, scientists and grassroots organizers. Essays by Barbara Kingsolver, Bill McKibben, Michael Polan, Frances Moore Lappe, and Howard Zinn are among the dozens included. The essays offer many perspectives and approaches to the question asked, from inspirational to instructional, practical to meditative. It challenges the reader to think and feel, and offers many ideas and reasons to be hopeful as we face our collective future. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it and highly recommend it .■

Small Green Roofs: Low Tech Options For Greener Living

By Nigel Dunnett,
Dusty Gedge, John Little, and Edmund C. Snodgrass

Small Green Roofs is a book about the use of rooftops of all types and sizes for gardens and green spaces to enrich our living environment. It is a how-to book, but more than that it's a compendium about the use of roofs as places to grow plants, flowers and vegetables, provide insulation, soak up excess rain water, provide habitat for wildlife and beautify our surroundings. An informative introduction explains the uses and benefits of green roofs (also called living roofs), and a wide variety of roof projects are described and shown through photographs. Next, all the information needed to create a green roof yourself is set out, as well as advice on hiring a contractor to help bring your ideas to fruition.

For the DIY reader, all the information needed to plan and execute a green roof is provided, including proper support for structural integrity, waterproofing, drainage, irrigation, edges, growing materials and more. Planting your roof is detailed with advice on plant types for various purposes (from veggie gardens to wild flower oasis for butterflies), different climate considerations, planting styles and designs, methods for establishing plants successfully and long-term maintenance. The possibilities are endless and the benefits of this worldwide trend are many. This book can spark your imagination and inspire you to look up at roof spaces with a new, green perspective.■ *Reviews by Kathy Stevens*