

# Littleton Conservation Trust



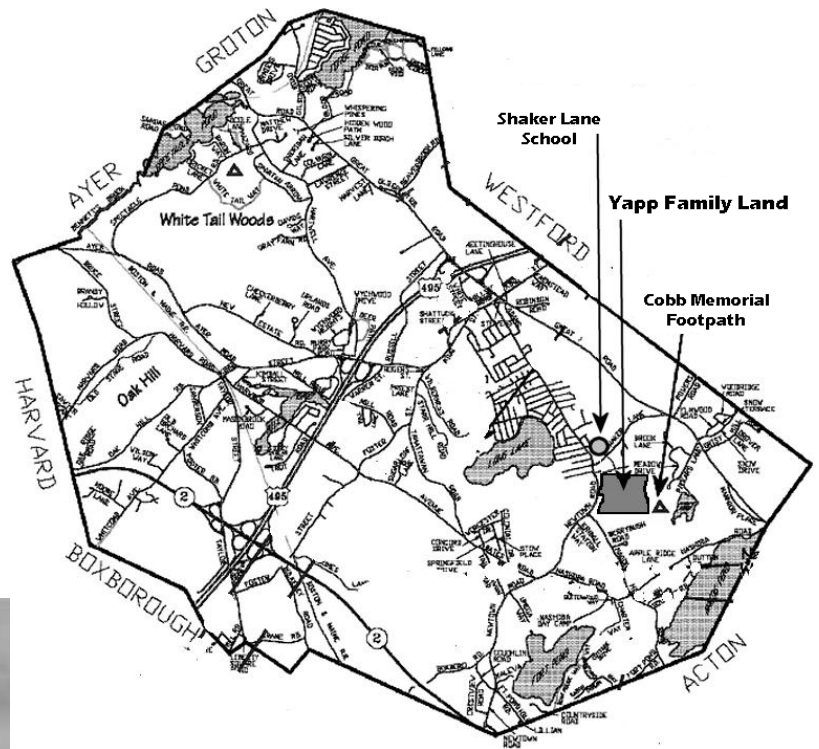
Newsletter

Fall 2008

## Save Lucy's Land

Heirs of the late George and Lucy Yapp have deferred, for two years, the disposition of 53 acres of field and forest off Newtown Road with the hope that the land can be preserved. Arguably the most beautiful land in town, it is also the first piece in the preservation of the scenic and historic Yapp Farm. The land borders two town properties and the LCT's Cobb Conservation Land. If preserved, it would secure a large area for wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation. It is close to the Shaker Lane School with potential for playing fields, and has its own trail system already connected to miles of conservation trails.

The Littleton Conservation Trust will support this project as it moves forward through the planning and implementation phases. You, too, can help by writing your Selectmen and asking them to lead the way. ■



Lucy's Land — Littleton, MA

Photo by Rick Findlay



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November 2008

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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 (all gifted from far-sighted residents) on which we manage a system of trails for public use.

## Bike Path Enthusiasts Wanted!

by Rick Findlay

The flurry of rail trail construction in each of the towns surrounding Littleton has some of us saying "Why not us?"

The LCT, with the support of the Selectmen and other Town Boards, spearheaded a grant application that would connect Goldsmith Street with Great Road on a bucolic half-mile ride through field and woodland.

We are putting together a group of interested individuals and families who would like to get involved with the planning, construction, and maintenance of bike trails in Littleton. Contact Kimberly Harriman at [kimberlyharriman@gmail.com](mailto:kimberlyharriman@gmail.com) for more information or to sign up. ■



If you'd like advance notice of Littleton Conservation Trust events emailed to you, please send your email address to:  
[dannmorse@yahoo.com](mailto:dannmorse@yahoo.com)

## Save Those Great Photos!

by Bill Brown



The LCT will sponsor a photo contest, which highlights the diversity and natural beauty of Littleton's conservation lands, agricultural lands, and other open spaces. All photographs must have been taken in the Town of Littleton. Candidate photos would include such things as: nature trails, wildlife, scenic vistas, trees, plants, and wildflowers. Contest rules will be posted on the LCT website early next year.: [www.littletonconservationtrust.org](http://www.littletonconservationtrust.org)

## Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form – 2008

New       Renewal

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_  
(Date determines year of tax deduction)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_      Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual: \$25  | <input type="checkbox"/> Family: \$40        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend: \$100   | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter: \$250    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron: \$500   | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor: \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: \$ _____   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gift to Permanent Fund: \$ _____                              |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please send me information about how to preserve my own land. |  |

*(Provide your email address if you want to receive notification of upcoming walks and conservation-related events.)*

Please cut out this form and send it to:

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



## Rainforest Animals Educate and Entertain

On Friday, November 14th, Creature Teacher Rick Roth introduced a variety of rain forest animals to the large audience at the Littleton High School auditorium. People of all ages attended and learned about all aspects of rainforests— from the layers that make up a forest to their locations around the world to the ways we can help these fragile ecosystems.

This educational program was sponsored by the Littleton Conservation Trust with support from the Littleton Public Schools. All proceeds (\$350) were donated to the Russell Street School's science program. ■



Photo by Rick Findlay



### Make Merry on December 6!

Look for the LCT booth at this year's Holiday Bazaar. We will have a variety of nature-oriented gifts available for purchase as well as conservation land guides.

The crafts are made by LCT Trustees, members of the LCT Friends group, and other community volunteers.

Back by popular demand, the LCT will raffle a pickup load of seasoned firewood.

This year's LCT Holiday Bazaar coordinators are Doreen Morse and Kathy Stevens. ■





*Littleton Conservation Trust Board Members frequently get asked why local agriculture is so important to Littleton This article provides some answers to that question.*

## Farming Heritage

Littleton, with its town seal displaying a plow above agricultural plants, has a long history as a farming community. Apples were originally cultivated in the Native American village. This village was designated in the mid 1650's as Nashoba Plantation and later included within the newly-incorporated Town of Littleton. In its heyday, Littleton was the country's major apple exporter to Europe. It became home to the Standard Vinegar Works, later renamed as the New England Apple Products Company, a prime producer of cider vinegar, applesauce, and apple juice. The current Veryfine brand is still recognized for its fruit juices.

In 1916, Cobb Pedigreed Chicks was one of the first poultry companies that successfully leveraged knowledge of genetics. It marketed its superior chickens under the dubious slogan "the chickens with the high IQ". Its operations expanded to five continents. Cobb, the world's oldest poultry breeding company, relocated and was fully acquired by Tyson Foods.

Since Littleton's 1847 census when 147 active farms operated, much has changed. Although agriculture is no longer the town's major industry, it still is much more than a mere historic relic.

## Current Challenges

Farming has declined in the Eastern states, in part, due to the consolidation of large agribusiness operations in the West. These large operations have prospered financially through the treatment of "foodstuff" as an industrially manipulated commodity. These operations are out of sight of the consumer and often are not well controlled. Such super efficient agribusiness operations, however, have precipitated many country-wide food safety recalls from tainted beef to contaminated produce, including lettuce, spinach, and green onions. Foreign foods produced under different standards, highlighted by the recent Chinese milk contamination scandal, present other food safety problems.

In addition, Midwest corn farmers—in an attempt to maximize dollars—have converted corn food crops to produce ethanol for transportation fuel use, thereby both raising the cost of corn feed and linking food crop prices to fuel prices and speculation. The situation is further exacerbated when distantly grown food needs to travel many "food miles" to reach the end consumer, further increasing costs. These are some of the conditions now favoring local agriculture production and consumption. Many of these trends are likely to continue in the near future.

## Resurgence of Interest

Proximity to population centers enables local farms to easily supply top quality restaurants in metropolitan centers, to support nearby farmers' markets, and to service other nearby communities. In many towns, residents volunteer at local community gardens to help raise food for local food pantries as a means to provide good food at low cost. Communities such as Concord, Lincoln, and Waltham have grown produce for food banks in the Boston area for some time. More recently, the Groton Local and the Congregational Church of Littleton have grown produce for our own Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry. Renewed interest in agriculture has markedly increased enrollments in agriculture schools by those raised on a farm as well as those new to farming.

Interest in farming within Littleton is similarly attractive to those within easy commuting distance. On several occasions, the farm staff from Tufts University's New Entry Sustainable Farming Project has sought out local agricultural parcels (5 to 10 acres) for possible lease to their recent graduates. In another case, an investor interested in establishing an innovative grass-fed cattle operation close to the Boston metropolitan area recently toured Littleton seeking to lease grazing land parcels upward of 50 acres.

## Reinvestment in Local Agriculture

Additional evidence in the resurgence in local agriculture is demonstrated by investments in upgrading the Great Road farm retail stands and extending their season of operations. The town's own high-quality Nagog Hill Orchards has broadened its diversity of fruits and berries, started growing organic vegetables, and sprouted new highly visible signs in direct response to renewed interest in supporting local agriculture and horticulture.

## Community Benefits

Farming in Littleton supports our rural character and provides attractive scenic roads and landscapes which, in turn, support existing property values. "Working landscapes" provide many of the same advantages of "open space," including the reduced cost of community services associated with residential development. Farms are businesses, usually associated with marginal family operations. However, they can be hugely successful, providing jobs and tax revenue. They make few demands on our town's services and infrastructure while contributing in ways that no other businesses can.

## Future Opportunities

Local agriculture sustains communities and lowers local taxes. It provides needed services to its residents in a safe and accountable manner. With renewed awareness of the advantages for consuming locally produced foods, local agriculture will provide an increasingly important role for communities close to major population centers and with good access to major roads. ■

This is the ninth in a series of articles intended to alert the Littleton community to the growing threat of invasive plants to our precious New England landscape. Plant populations that have been stable, sometimes for centuries, are now spreading uncontrollably. For additional information visit:

[http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp//invasive\\_plants/weeds/index.shtm](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp//invasive_plants/weeds/index.shtm)

Previous articles covered and posted on [www.littletonconservationtrust.org](http://www.littletonconservationtrust.org) include:

- Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)
- Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*)
- Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbicullatus*)
- Japanese and European Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii* and *vulgaris*)
- Glossy and Common Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus* and *Rhamnus cathartica*)
- Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*)
- Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)
- Shrub Honeysuckles (*Lonicera tatarica*, *morrowii*, *maakii* and the hybrid know as *L. x bella*)

This article focuses on Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellate*).

Future articles will highlight the following species:

- Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
- Black and Pale Swallow-wort (*Cynanchum louiseae* and *rossicum*)

All of these plants are alien or exotic to this region. They have few natural enemies to keep them in check, and most spread at a prodigious rate, often by birds. All can colonize to the exclusion of native flora, and some are extremely persistent and resistant to control.



*Autumn Olive leaves*

Our goal is to make readers aware of the problem and to encourage them to participate in a solution by cleaning up their own properties and helping out in their neighborhoods. Littleton has an opportunity to set back the onslaught of invasive plants by acting now to reduce seed output. If we do not, we risk losing local biodiversity and the very “nature” we take for granted.

**Autumn Olive** is a deciduous shrub blessed with silvery leaves, sweet-scented flowers, and red fleshy berries. It can grow to 20 feet and establish impenetrable thickets in once open fields. It has been in this country since 1830 but has only recently established itself as the bully that it is. It has been banned from commerce here in Massachusetts, but realistically, it is with us forever. Through our efforts, we can choose to have a little, or a lot of it.

Littleton has large ‘groves’ of Autumn Olive on the Cisco site and around the quarry near Spectacle Pond Road. Thanks to several bird species, plants are germinating freely all over the west side of town, and an abandoned lawn there can soon expect to be an olive grove.

Autumn Olives should be pulled when young or they will soon require a chain saw. Pulling small plants requires only good gloves. Mature shrubs can be grubbed out or repeatedly cut. Cut stem applications of Glyphosate (Roundup) are effective as well. Read the herbicide label carefully for precautions, timing, and concentrations.

If you have questions or need help, please call Rick Findlay at 978 486 8482. This is a project for all of us. ■



*A “grove” of Autumn Olive in Littleton*



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## The Book Corner

These and other books donated by the LCT are available at the Reuben Hoar Public Library

### *Eco-Friendly Families* by Helen Coronato

"Guide your family to greener living with activities that engage and inspire...from toddlers to teens" is the front cover caption for this book that is packed full of ideas and methods to help families live a more "green" lifestyle without feeling overwhelmed with changes. Helen Coronato is a former teacher and librarian, a radio talk show host, author, and a leader in the Holistic Moms Network. In this book, she shares her vast array of ideas on how everyone can go beyond the traditional 3 R's (reduce, reuse, recycle) to save money, time and energy while involving their whole family (yes, including incentives for your teenagers).

The book offers practical advice and many good organizational tools, room by room goals, party and gift ideas, simple homemade natural cleaning products, and even recipes for cooking with natural and organic foods. This is a great resource book for anyone who wants to begin living in a more environmentally friendly way, but isn't sure how to get started. It is also helpful to those who are seeking new ideas to increase their participation in the eco-friendly lifestyle that is so important for our health, as well as the Earth's. ■

### *Community Gardening* Edited by Ellen Kirby & Elizabeth Peters

If you think that community gardens are just shared spaces where people grow their own veggies, then this little book will open your eyes to the inspiring ways "community gardens" are bringing people together, cleaning up vacant lots and brownfields, helping rehabilitate patients, teaching youth, bringing fresh produce to inner cities, and developing a sense of cooperation among neighbors.

This is a guide book that looks at the many types of community gardens, both large and small, that are being created and tended around the country.

Numerous case studies are profiled that show the many benefits of such efforts, as well as good information that parks departments, community associations, and non-profit organizations can use to create these gardens and better the lives of people everywhere. There are also practical tips on soil health, water conservation, connecting to farmers' markets and more. ■

Reviews by Kathy Stevens