Attleboro Land Trust News

July 2019

By the Outreach and Education Committee and Attleboro High School

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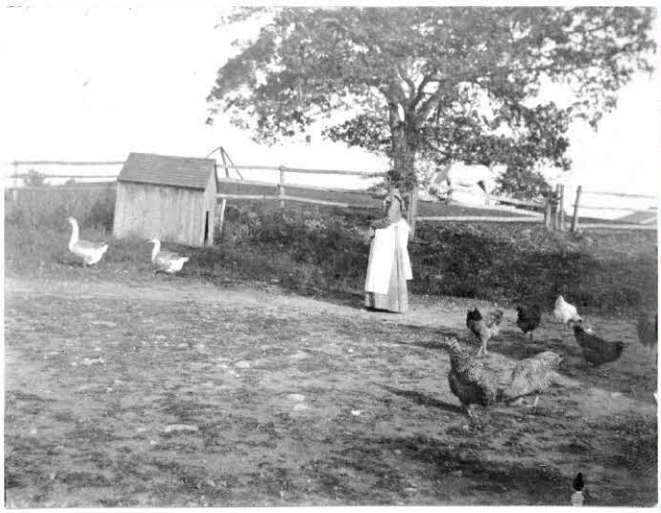
Whats Going on at the Land Trust?

Things have been busy at the Deborah and Roger Richardson Nature Preserve. Volunteers have worked for three Saturdays and some weekdays improving the area, mowing, working on the trails, cleaning brush and debris, and starting on the irrigation system for Deborah's Garden. There will be an organization using the property for "learning about nature" classes for pre-school to 8 yr olds in July and August.

Work was also done at Larson Woods and other properties after the storms of the spring. We can always use more volunteers and land stewards for our many properties. We are working on cleanup as well as removing invasive plants so the public can more enjoy the areas.

Boundary mapping was done at Shaw-Denham property with the help of Lynn Carlson from URI.



Nature Restores Herself

Nature, if given a chance, will restore itself. Notice the single tree on the clearcut hill in early 1900's. See the same tree today.

The entire Barrow's property, now the Deborah and Roger Richardson Nature Preserve was the site of sawmill and was entirely clearcut. It has restored itself just like many of the Land Trust properties.

Upcoming Events

When: July 13 9:00AM

What: Guided Walk: The History of Barrows Farm

Where: Deborah and Roger Richardson Nature Preserve

Hebronville: A slice of small-town life in Massachusetts, Part Two

BOOM! To the right and across the tracks from where the new Hebronville Community Association Hall was situated the former Thomson Chemical Plant. It exploded 12 January 1964 at 6:52 PM, killing 7 employees and injuring many others. The explosion was responsible for damaging many of the homes in the village and the Finberg Elementary School on South Main Street. Classrooms with windows overlooking the plant were significantly damaged, with glass shards imbedded several inches into the school desks. The only positive note is the explosion occurred in the evening and no kids were in school at the time; otherwise, the number of injuries would have drastically increased. Thompson Chemical produced of vinyl chloride resin.

DoubleACS.com made a documentary called "Thompson Chemical" in 2010 and received the "Best Professional Documentary Award" for that year. The documentary trailer and articles from the Archives of the New York Times and Sun Chronicle are available on the internet.

Then there was the day of the 'pink snow'... It was sometime in summer around the same year as the explosion. A bunch of us kids were playing in the Finberg School yard when, suddenly, it started to 'snow' a pink substance that looked like snowflakes. We had fun going around collecting it on our tongues like one would with real snowflakes. I vaguely remember a plastic taste to it.... It turns out that the pink snow originated from the Thompson Chemical Plant, though I am still not certain what it was. Then, that was history and life has moved on.

James Friedman and James Jones accept the Best Professional Documentary Award on behalf of DoubleACS in Tucson, AZ.

Back in the early 60's, a group of us Hebronville kids approached the town elders, leaders of the HCA, and requested that they advocate with City leaders to construct a swimming pool in town. It was to be near the Ousley ball field. The closest swimming pool to us at the time was East Side Pool in Attleboro, a two and a half-mile trek up route 152. To demonstrate how important having a pool in Hebronville was to us kids, the town elders conducted a poster contest. Kids under the age of 13 were asked to draw a poster that represented our quest for a pool. The Hebronville elders had arranged with a representative from the City to drive past all of the houses in Hebronville, check out each poster and chose the poster that was most original and creative. My poster depicted the children from the old Hi and Lois cartoon, each in swim trunks and floating tubes pleading, "We want our POOL". The kid with the most creative poster won a prize. It wasn't I, and I don't remember what the prize was....just that I didn't win it! City leaders eventually agreed to consider construction, but not without some action on the part of the Hebronville town folk to support the effort financially. I was too young at that time to know all the details of the negotiations, but I do remember standing at stoplights and major intersections selling 'tags' in order to earn money toward the project.

You can imagine our disappointment when, after all the work that we Hebronville kids did to get a pool in our town, we learned that the pool was to be constructed in Dodgeville where it remains to this day as the Twin Villages Swimming Pool!

Mike Gaudet

Do lawns really help with CO_2?

If you listen to Scotts Miracle Gro, the Lawn Institute, or the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, they all say that lawns are good at sequestering Carbon Dioxide. Yes, grass does absorb CO_2 in the daytime and turn it into Oxygen and leaves the carbon combined with water and minerals from the soil as a part of the plant. That's right; the carbon that makes up the structure of plants and trees comes from the air, not the soil. If you were to thoroughly burn a log, the remaining ash is all that came out of the soil.

But, let's look at the whole picture. In our grasslands, our "Open Space", the grass grows and dies back. The remains go into the soil and rots. Some becomes compost and peat, building up in the soil and some CO_2 is given off. However, in our lawns, we mow, water and fertilize. Not even counting the amount of CO_2 given off in manufacturing our mower, the mower gives off CO_2 when it is run, fertilizer gives off CO_2 being mined, packaged and transported, and water takes energy to bring to our lawns. The grand total of lawn care would be a neutral or negative carbon sequestration effect.

However, there are good aspects of lawns. They help purify our rain water, by transpiration, they cool our living areas, they make comfortable recreation areas, and they look nice. Can we have lawns and still minimize our "carbon footprint"?

First, we can minimize the size of our lawns by planting shrubs, flowers and groundcover that need minimum maintenance on areas not needed for recreation and use lower maintenance grass seed for the lawn.

We can mow infrequently to use less gas but also to preserve our lawns. In the warmer months, grass should be left higher, to protect the crowns and roots and prevent browning. Check the charts online for your type of grass.

Keep blades sharp, as a dull blade tears the grass resulting in greater water loss, breaking roots and browning.

Use mulching blades that put the clippings back into the soil or compost the clippings so they can be reused. That will reduce the amount of fertilizer needed.

Fertilize only twice a year with timed release fertilizer and only as much as really needed. Don't think that if you put more, that the lawn will grow better. The fertilizer companies already have the greatest amount on the tables that won't burn your grass and roots. Only use high nitrogen fertilizer on lawns and not on other plantings. Fertilizer also releases nitrous oxide which is 300 times the greenhouse gas as CO_2 and fertilizer is a pollutant for our water supply.

Only water when and as much as needed, not every day and early in the morning to prevent root rot and disease. If you have a sprinkler system, make sure it has a working rain sensor.

Therefore, when someone tells you that you need to mow the lawn, just say, **"Not today, I'm minimizing our carbon footprint."**

Bug Season is Here

Tick and mosquito season is here again. Though we do try to keep our trails clear, we can't protect against everything and some areas are kept natural for the environment, particularly near wetlands and vernal pools. Be sure to check yourself and your dogs after using our trails. Here is the Mass Gov site for tick information:
https://www.mass.gov/service-details/tick-borne-disease-information-for-the-public

Attleboro Community Garden Hosts Annual Garden Party and Open

The Attleboro Community Garden held its annual Garden Party and Open House on June 22. The Garden Party has become a near annual event since the Attleboro Community Garden's inception in 1998.

Gardeners gathered around the Garden's new potting table as Master Gardener Kathi Gariepy led a workshop on Garden Pests and Diseases. She provided an overview of the lifecycle of common bugs and diseases one might encounter in the garden. Workshop participants then walked throughout the garden observing different plots. Gariepy provided ideas and strategies on how to address problems that gardeners were facing.

The Pierini-Norton family hosted a children's activity table at the rest area in the back of the garden. Children painted rocks to be placed in their gardens. Several adults also painted rocks.

The event culminated with a potluck barbecue. As gardeners enjoyed lunch, Garden Coordinator Juliet Teixeira gathered the gardeners to thank them and friends of the garden for their efforts to improve the garden this year.

There have been several enhancements to the Garden since its opening this April including building a potting table at the back of the garden; organizing the shed and building planters by its side; placing crushed stone at the front of the Garden to aid with weed control; enhancing the border garden; installing gutters on the shed; planting herb gardens in the shed planters; creating a gardening resource library with books donated by a local resident; getting the light by the garden turned on, and creating bulletin boards at the kiosk – one providing information to gardeners and another providing community resources on food.

Juliet Teixera

NOAA UpDate: This year NOAA is predicting the "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico will be 7,800 square miles up from the average of 5,780. Bigger than Connecticut.

WOODS WALK DISCOVERY- Flowering Dogwood

The freshness of spring is gone. Our days and nights are getting longer and more pleasant. It is time for our thoughts to be centered on the outdoors and walking trails to discover the many amazing things our woods and fields have to offer.

As the season becomes energized, I still dwell on the events that get me excited each year beyond the Red Sox. My purest signals are the returning birds, the subtle flourish of wildflowers, the bursting shades of green buds and young leaves and hopefully an annual sighting of a Flowering Dogwood (Cornus florida). In our area it is not rare, it simply requires that I take the time to be in the woods when they bloom. That sighting marks "real" spring to me.

Of the five or so Dogwood species that we find in our woodlands none is more spectacular than the Flowering Dogwood. It is also the largest of our native dogwoods at 20 to 25 feet tall and a spread of about 15 feet wide in good conditions. Dogwoods are a group of under story spreading trees and shrubs that can have distinctive bark and twig coloration. Each species has a distinct flower and can present fruit of blue, red or white usually in flat clusters near the end of the season. Frequently found in moist field or woodsy borders, in slight uplands to streams and waterways with each having its own ornamental qualities even in its natural habitat.

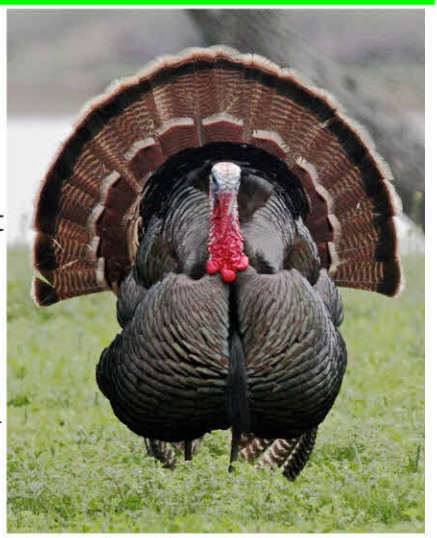
Many may recognize the tree name as a landscape plant that is found throughout the Attleboro area. As a nursery grown tree it will have a well structured canopy that can grow taller and wider and by many, is considered the aristocrat of small flowering trees. Whether as a lawn specimen or planted in a border the white or pink blooms are a very showy part of our landscapes.

As a woodland plant it may seem unrecognizable without a little experience or that distinctive bloom to help locate it. In its natural element it presents a more slender growth habit that has well spaced expanded branching reaching above most of the competing small scale trees in the under story. As a native tree, the flowers in May bloom as a yellowish-white and display scarlet red fruit in the fall. The big reason that I am excited by these small scale trees and shrubs of the dogwoods and really all species is that it suggests a healthy ecosystem where they are found. The balance of large and small is what sustains birds and wildlife in these areas. That balance is also an indicator of healthy soils and adequate water that is not being disrupted by adjacent construction or road work. When healthy and undisturbed, these habitats have the chance of having blooms from March to late September of plants big and small.

It is unnecessary for me to describe the alligator hide-like bark, the tan to green twigs or the bright scarlet fruit of the flowering dogwood if you are not an adventurous looker. They are unlikely to be situated right beside the trails on our properties. But they are out there. So grab your bug spray, binoculars and curiosity to see what you can find. Discover what makes a "real" spring, summer or fall for you.

Phil Boucher

Are Turkeys Taking Over?



More and more we see Eastern Wild Turkeys in our yards, on our streets, and in our parks. They are on most of the Land Trust properties but as more "Open Space" is taken over with development, turkeys need to forage further to find food. A particular attractant is our bird feeders. They will often make a round of the neighborhood in the early morning to the houses that have feeders and berry bushes. Since they are omnivores, it is a good time for them to find worms and insects too. They may make a last run in the evening before the predators come out to pick up more seed that the birds have scattered during the day.

Mass Audubon recommends taking down feeders in central and western MA as it can attract black bears. Otherwise, just suet feeders should be taken down, as the heat will make the suet go bad and promote disease. However, if you have a turkey or goose problem, it might be best not to feed over the summer. We have tried this and the turkeys have taken us off their daily route. Of course the fox going through the yard helps as does the scent of dogs. The birds eat mostly insects during this period and get more nutrition than from seed.

Though once extinct in MA, with the last turkey killed in 1851, the state bird population has revived to about 30,000 after 37 turkeys were brought in from NY in the 1970's to western MA. Additional birds were brought in until 1996. This is a boon for hunters, but in the suburban and urban areas where they cannot be hunted, their population flourishes. Turkeys move around in flocks. During the mating season in mixed groups, but during the rest of the year the hens and jakes will normally have their own flocks.

During particularly bad weather such as deep snow, turkeys can roost in trees, typically conifers, for up to two weeks.

If you have problems with turkeys, here is a site that can help.
https://www.mass.gov/service-details/prevent-conflicts-with-turkeys

What is happening on the Barrow's Farm in 1719?

The crops are coming up and need tending as well as the animals. In the "three sisters" fields, the squash and pumpkin are not very developed so weeding is needed to keep them from being overwhelmed. The "three sisters" fields and the kitchen garden need manure from the aged manure piles. Cow, horse, and sheep manure will have aged about a year to break it down and kill bacteria, while chicken manure, which is "hot" and might burn the plant roots, take a couple of years. A small trench will be made between the rows and the dry powdery manure will be placed in the trench, keeping it off the plants. Dirt will be placed back over it. Manure is only added to edible plants that won't be harvested for a couple of months, otherwise manure is usually added in the fall or early spring.

The rye, oats, and flax might need a little weeding too. There will be a haying this month. Haying is very labor intensive because it is done with a scythe. It takes all day just to mow the two remaining small fields with a tractor and 5 foot mower today. With a scythe, it would take much longer. Then it all has to be gathered and moved to the barn. They did not bail it back then but just loaded it on wagons. It has been growing well with the rain. The sheep and cows are being moved from field to field to prevent overgrazing. Because there are still predators around, such as bears, at night the livestock are herded to the "common barn" (continued)

President's Message

In 2018 your Land Trust held a Planning Day to map out our goals for the next five years. One of the goals chosen is to increase our Education and Outreach efforts. Our strategy includes capitalizing on social media to reach a broader and *younger* audience. And who better to help us in that effort than the students at Attleboro High School.

I'm very proud of their achievements this year in launching this ONLINE NEWSLETTER. The process is still in the development stage but has already brought many fresh ideas and engaged a corps of students who are willing to use their skills and talents to help sustain the local environment.

Thanks for joining in our cause.

Roy Belcher
President

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Thomas Jefferson Air Conditioning

In the era of Thomas Jefferson there was no air conditioning. He built on a hill to allow some breezes but he actually devised a system of passive cooling when designing Monticello. He had vents near the ceilings of his rooms and others near the floor. The ones near the floor were connected to tunnels under the house while the ones near the ceiling were connected to vents in the attic. Using simple convection, the hot air would escape from the ceiling while cool air came from the basement.

You can do it today without any modifications to your home if you have double-hung windows. Close the door to the room. Take the top sash down two thirds and the bottom sash up one third. As the day cools off a cool breeze will come in the bottom of the window as the hot air leaves the room without using any power.

(continued) or a corral, the fowl to the coops and the horses to the horse barn. In the winter, the cows are kept in the horse barn to make it easier to milk during bad weather. Everyone likes the warmer weather, particularly the children, even though there is more work. That is how they have been raised.

Barrows house from Wilmarth St.

The Attleboro Land Trust is looking for Supporters either by making a Tax-Deductible Contribution and/or as a Conservation Volunteer. Contributions or Sign-ups as a volunteer can be made securely at Attleborolandtrust.org
or by mail at
Attleboro Land Trust, P.O. Box 453, Attleboro, MA 02703
Thank you for your support.

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