



***Citizens for
Lexington
Conservation***

PO BOX 292, LEXINGTON, MA 02420-0003

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LEXINGTON MA
PERMIT NO 3314

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Kate Fricker, Editor April, 2007 Eileen Entin & Keith Ohmart, Co-Chairs

IN THIS ISSUE

Page

CLC Annual Meeting	2
CLC Spring Walks	3
Beekeeping in Lexington	4
CLC Publications	5
Western Greenway Trail Blazing	5
Middlesex Conservation Plant Sale	6
West Lexington Greenway Project	6
Rain Gardens	7
Thank you, Fall Walk Leaders	9
Photo Credits	9
Answers to Photo Quizzes	9
The Hartwell Avenue Recycling Facility	10



Citizens for Lexington Conservation is a non-profit organization that relies on dues paid by members to cover its expenses. Look at your mailing label to check your membership status. If it says "Dues paid 2007," you are up to date. If it says "Dues paid 2006" (or earlier), then it is time to renew your membership for 2007. If it says "Complimentary Copy," you are receiving a complimentary copy of our newsletter because you are a Town Meeting member or other public official in Lexington. We hope that those who receive complimentary copies will find our organization of value and will become dues-paying members. To join CLC or renew your membership, please send \$10.00 for a regular membership or \$15.00 for a sustaining membership to CLC, P.O. Box 292, Lexington, MA 02420-0003.

There is an electronic version of the CLC newsletter, sent as an attachment on an e-mail or as a link to the newsletter on our web site. This version of the newsletter has illustrations in color and live links, it arrives much sooner than the snail mail version, it saves paper, and it costs CLC about \$1 less per copy. If you would like your newsletter by e-mail, contact Kate Fricker at kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu.

CLC Annual Meeting

Thursday, April 12, 7-9 pm

Cary Memorial Library, large lecture room, lower level,

Our featured speaker will be John Maguranis, currently Belmont's Animal Control Officer, and an expert on coyotes. His presentation, illustrated with brilliant photographs, will cover coyote behavior, identification, and coexistence with humans.

John Maguranis is a retired US Army veterinary technician. He has studied, tracked, and photographed eastern coyotes for the past 5 years, and has written many articles, TV/cable, and newspaper pieces. He has given testimony at the State House regarding coyotes, and has provided information to State Officials in Rhode Island.

The annual meeting is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. A short business meeting to elect Board members will precede the presentation. Please join us.

CLC Board

Proposed Slate of Officers for 2007

Co-Chairpersons: Eileen Entin, Keith Ohmart

Secretary: Debby Green

Treasurer: Diane Carr

Associate Members:

Newsletter: Kate Fricker

Website: Open

Publicity: Nancy Nolan

Walks Coordinator: Elaine Turano

Community Outreach: Mike Tabaczynski

Legislative Issues: John Andrews, Al Levine

Citizens for Lexington Conservation: Spring Walks and Events - 2007

Saturday, April 28, 1 pm – 3 pm: Garlic Mustard Replacement Program

We will sally forth in Lincoln Park pathways to see how much of the dreaded garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) we can bag for destruction. An added good deed will be planting of native groundcovers: *Waldsteinia* (barren strawberry) and *Tiarella* (foamflower). These will be available as small plugs. Bring your gardening tools: gloves, diggers (dandelion tool is effective) and small shovels for an environmental gardening adventure. Meet at the Bikeway entrance off Worthen Road opposite the H.S. football field. Walk leaders: Nell Walker, Horace Besecker, Pam Northridge (781-862-6943)

Saturday, May 5, 9 am – 12 noon: Minuteman Bikeway Cleanup Day

Join the Friends of the Minuteman Bikeway for this morning of general clean-up and invasive plant eradication efforts. Meet one of the cleanup leaders at any of the following road crossings along the Bikeway: Fottler Avenue, Maple Street, Woburn Street, Hancock Street, Revere Street. Gardening or work gloves recommended. Contact: Stew Kennedy (781-861-7697)

Saturday, May 5, 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm: Ramble through Hayden Woods

Join us for an afternoon ramble through old Hayden Woods. Meet at the Monroe Road entrance to the conservation land. Approach by Spring St to Woodcliffe Road to the Monroe Road entrance. Walk leader: Winslow Green (781-861-8837)

Saturday, May 12, 8:30 am – 11:30 am: Explore Katahdin Woods/Tophet Swamp

Explore spring in this little known corner of Lexington. This is part two of a four season series of walks in this area that is part of the planned West Lexington Greenway. Bring binoculars for birding. Boots (some stream crossings) and long sleeves/pants are recommended. Meet at the locked gate on the north side of Wood Street where the power lines cross. Park on Holden or Wood Park Circle. Walk Leaders: Paul Knight (781-861-1013), Keith Ohmart (781-862-6216)

Sunday, May 20, 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm: Spring at the Paint Mine Conservation Area

Visit Lexington's Paint Mine and hear the local lore. Celebrate spring along trails fringed with Canada mayflower, wintergreen-flavored yellow birch, clintonia and the rather rare and orchid-like fringed polygala. Stand on the ponding platform to look for muskrats and other animals in the Muskrat Ponds. Meet in the parking lot at Estabrook School. Wear waterproof shoes. Walk Leader: Fran Ludwig (781-861-7231)

Saturday, June 16, 7:30 am – 9:30 am: Bird Walk at Dunback Meadows

June is a month when our local birds are actively nesting and feeding, so we'll be able to hear and see many birds, such as woodpeckers, flycatchers, warblers, vireos, sparrows, and chickadees, as they search for food. Perhaps, we can even locate a nest and view from a distance the parent birds feeding their young. Bring your eyes, ears, a pair of binoculars, and, if you have one, a field guide. Our walk will be at a leisurely pace with an effort to help all participants see/hear a variety of birds. All levels of birders, including beginners and children, are welcome. Meet at the Allen St. entrance to Dunback Meadows Conservation Land. Walk Leader: Bobbie Hodson (781-861-9421)

Beekeeping in Lexington

By Elaine Turano

Our backyard was described by a longtime beekeeper as one of the hardest places to keep bees. The neighbors' back yards all meet together, and they are all small. We live within sight of Massachusetts Avenue. I did ask my neighbors if they would be upset by beehives so close to their boundaries. Even though a fear of hundreds of buzzing and stinging insects is understandable, they were all agreeable and interested. Because the bees orient themselves by the sun, they fly up from the hives toward the sun and rarely linger in the yard.



There are many plants that provide pollen and nectar to our bees. The field bees which go to gather their bounty will fly in a 2 to 3 mile radius of the hive. I have seen bees in the linden trees in town, and I am sure they are "our" bees. The bike path is near by, as is the Lower Vinebrook conservation area. It is not inconceivable that the bees fly to Great Meadows. The field bees have torn and tattered wings at the end of their short lives.

Some of the important pollen and nectar sources are invasive plants. Purple loosestrife and Japanese knotweed are two of them. In March, skunk cabbage is a fair source of pollen. Dandelions are an excellent source of both nectar and pollen. Other excellent sources are clovers, black locust, raspberries, blackberries, and all ilex hollies.

All the summers that we have kept bees were fraught with challenges posed by Mother Nature. Cold springs, stretches of rainy weather, drought, diseases, and parasites are commonplace. The first summer that we kept bees was very hot and dry. The honey that year was very dark and especially flavorful. One year we got 300 pounds of honey from our 3 hives. This past year we got 75 pounds from 3 hives.

We have kept bees for about 7 years now. We are still amateurs and are learning all the time. The introduction of alien beetles and mites has wreaked havoc with

beekeeping. Integrated Pest Management is a new paradigm for controlling the spread of disease and pests. The latest problem is called Colony Collapse Disorder. The hives undergo a massive die-off for no apparent reason. This situation is disastrous for the agricultural community which depends upon bees for pollination.

There are workshops and conferences all over the world to attend. Middlesex County has a beekeepers association which meets monthly. Beekeepers love to talk about their bees, and meetings between beekeepers are always lively. I thought beekeeping was a hobby when we first set up our hives, but hobby does not seem like the right word. It can become a pleasure, an obsession, or a taxing job. Everything gets sticky when it is time for collecting the honey. Our dog will not go into the yard when we don our bee suits. However, nothing beats the pleasure of pouring your own honey on toast, yogurt, or waffles. We eat honey every day in some form or another. The honey from the supermarket bears no relation to the rich fragrant honey from our Lexington bees. 🌲

CLC Publications

Over the years CLC has encouraged members to write guides to the open spaces in Lexington. These guides have now been scanned and are available at no charge on our web site, <http://www.lexingtonma.org/clc/HomePage.htm>. You may also use the web site to contact us about conservation-related happenings or sightings of unusual birds and wildlife that we can post on our web site and in our newsletter.

The files are saved as Adobe Acrobat .pdf files, and require the free Acrobat Reader. You can obtain this reader at <http://adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html>. 🌲

Western Greenway Trail Blazing By Keith Ohmart

The long anticipated Western Greenway Trail took a step closer to reality this past December when an intrepid Friends of the Western Greenway crew representing the three Greenway communities of Waltham, Belmont and Lexington began to mark the first section of the trail with Western Greenway trail blazes.



Beginning at Mass Audubon's Habitat Sanctuary, blazes were installed along the section of the trail that traverses property that was formerly part of the McLean Hospital campus and is now Belmont Conservation land and Belmont's Rock Meadow, before entering MDC's Beaverbrook North reservation (formerly Metropolitan State Hospital). The marked trail ends for now at the new parkway leading from Concord Avenue to the Avalon Bay condominium complex that is under construction on the site of the former Metropolitan State Hospital campus.

Future plans call for a continuation of the trail beyond the parkway over to Walnut Street, then through Lot 1 of the former Middlesex County Hospital property before heading south onto Waltham conservation property behind the Our Lady church on Trapelo Road. When completed, it is hoped that the Western Greenway Trail will loop through several Waltham conservation parcels and other contiguous open space parcels in private hands before returning back to the Beaverbrook Reservation resulting in a trail of over eight miles in length.

Access to the marked section of the trail is available by parking at either Mass Audubon's Habitat Sanctuary or Belmont's Rock Meadow conservation area. Look for the trail blaze markings adjacent to either parking area and enjoy exploring the meadows and woodlands that lie along the trail in either direction.



Additional trail marking and trail clearing days will be planned for later this year. Readers interested in participating may contact Keith Ohmart (781-862-6216) for details.



Middlesex Conservation District Spring Plant Sale

Friday 4/27 (3-6 pm) and Saturday 4/28 (8am - 12noon)
4H Fairgrounds, South Chelmsford Rd, Westford, MA

The sale features tree and shrub seedlings, perennials, herbs, fruits, groundcovers, and garden supplies. All items may be ordered in advance by calling 978-692-9395 to request a brochure. All proceeds benefit our conservation programs.



West Lexington Greenway Project

By Keith Ohmart

The Community Preservation Committee will recommend to this year's Town Meeting the funding to create a Master Plan for connecting all of the town's conservation land on the west side of Route 128 with a network of hiking and biking trails. Proposed by representatives of the Conservation Stewards and the Bicycle Advisory Committee, the centerpiece of this project would be a universally accessible multi-use trail linking the Minuteman Bikeway with the Battle Road Trail in the Minuteman National Park. If approved by Town Meeting, funds would be provided to hire an engineering firm to make a Master Plan for this greenway corridor that would create an ecological and historical inventory of the area, lay out the connector trail to the Battle Road Trail, estimate probable construction costs, and identify state and federal grant sources for the actual construction costs.

The town's Recreation Department and the Conservation Commission have agreed to cosponsor this project which has also received endorsements from the Planning Board, the Capital Expenditures Committee, the Transportation Advisory Committee, and the Tourism Committee.

If approved by Town Meeting, it is estimated that the Master Planning process will take nine months or possibly longer from July 1, the date when funds would be available,. Throughout this Master Planning phase, there will be numerous opportunities for community input as the planning progresses. Future issues of the Steward's Newsletter will provide updates on this exciting project.



Rain Gardens: Beautiful Water-Saving Designs

© by Dori Smith, *Gardens for Life*

If I were to suggest one new feature to create in your garden this year – the one thing that would give you the most pleasure and contribute the most to the environment – it would be a rain garden. Your rain garden will be filled with beautiful native plants that attract birds and butterflies, utilize water that comes out of the sky instead of your faucet (and thus preserve our precious water supplies), and require little labor once established. It might just solve drainage problems such as a soggy basement, water and ice on walking surfaces, or an eroded hillside.



Many variations on the rain garden theme can add to the landscape interest. But let's start with a typical design: water from your roof flows down the downspout and enters a conduit such as a 4" pipe buried underground. The pipe conducts the water down grade away from the house foundation at least 6 feet into a basin-like structure you have prepared. Fill the basin with porous, rich garden soil. Then plant densely with a variety of plants that both love it wet *and* can handle extended periods of drought. Water flows into the garden area, spreads out, and nourishes the plants. Over time, the plants grow together and create a lush mini-environment that retains moisture and requires very little care. Flowers and fruit will ripen, and in season, you will see an amazing variety of butterflies, insects, hummingbirds, and birds visit your garden.

You need not fear mosquitoes breeding in your rain garden because rainwater quickly absorbs into the porous soil. To add interest for you and the wildlife, you can incorporate small ponds or water features in your design. The water from the downspout can flow first through a small pond or channel lined with pond liner and attractive river

stones, then overflow into your planted zone. You can also use rain barrels as part of the system, to capture even more water and add flexibility in terms of watering.

Your rain garden may also use water diverted from flowing down a driveway or over a walkway; simply install a trench drain across the drive or walk and conduct runoff into a rain garden basin. Or, you can dig swales across a sloped lawn and plant them with rain garden plants. It can be built where your sump pump or foundation drain empties out. These features save water that might otherwise flow into the street, into the storm sewer, and be wasted by flowing out to sea.



The rain garden benefits the environment by purifying runoff and infiltrating the water into the earth – some will be taken up by plants and some may reach and recharge the ground water.

Here are a few tips:

- A typical rain garden serving one roof shed and downspout can be approximately 6-8' wide and 10-12' long; size can be variable, as long as you provide a channel for any overflow in a big storm. Make the garden as level as possible so that the water reaches the plants relatively equally. If you have a significant slope, you will need to cut and fill the hillside, and then build a berm to hold the soil and water.
- Test your soil down to at least 18 inches. Amend at least the top 12 inches to be an organic sandy loam – about 1/3 sand, 1/3 good compost, and 1/3 clay/silt. If you have an impenetrable layer of clay or ledge under the area, consider a different location – or build a bog garden instead!
- The best plants for your rain garden are those adapted to your region which can also take the extremes of weather conditions. Some of my favorite rain-garden plants tested in my projects in Zone 5/6, mid-New England (western Boston suburbs) are listed below:

Favorite Rain Garden Plants

Shrubs:

Red Chokeberry
Winterberry
Red twig dogwood
Virginia sweetspire
Summersweet
Inkberry
Sheep laurel

Perennials:

Lobelias
Joe-Pye weed
Turtlehead
New England aster
Ironweed
Bee balm
Goldenrod

I hope I've given you enough ideas to get you excited – and to get started. I've provided resources, but keep in mind that most of the written material on rain gardens is for other parts of the country with different soils and different native plant communities, so please feel free to contact me with queries.

There's not a lot you can do wrong, or can't correct later, but if you run into complicated site conditions such as groundwater, you should hire a qualified hydro-geologist or site engineer.

For more information:

Dori's Web Site: www.gardensforlife.net

Rain Gardens of West Michigan: <http://www.raingardens.org/>

Brooklyn Botanical Garden:

http://www.bbg.org/gar2/topics/design/2004sp_raingardens1.html

Dori Smith, M.Ed., is a landscape designer, writer, and photographer. She also gives programs on rain gardens, wildlife habitat, and more. Her company, Gardens for Life, is based in Acton, MA., and she can be contacted at dsmith@newview.org. 🌲

Thank you, Fall Walk Leaders

Many thanks to the leaders of our fall walks, who shared with us their knowledge and their enthusiasm for conservation land in Lexington: Keith Ohmart, Gerry Paul, and Andrea Golden. 🌲

Photo Credits

Kate Fricker p. 1, 9

Elaine Turano p. 4

Roger Wrubel p. 6

Dori Smith p. 7, 8

Google p. 10

Answers to Photo Quizzes

p. 1, *Magnolia macrophylla*, in front of the DPW Garage on Bedford Street

p. 9, At the corner of Marrett Road and Bacon Street



Photo Quiz: Where in Lexington is invasive garlic mustard the dominant roadside vegetation?



A Tour of the Hartwell Avenue Recycling Facility

By Robert Beaudoin

Thanks to Google Earth we can get a bird's eye view of the Hartwell Avenue Compost Facility and take a virtual trip through it. After entering from Hartwell Ave. at the upper left of the photo one sees the leaf and yard waste drop-off area on the right. Further down the road on the left is the Minuteman Regional Household Hazardous Products Facility. It can be located by its bright white-roofed tent. For nearly a decade, paint, gasoline, oil, fluorescent bulbs, pesticides and other household materials have been collected here from many towns. These household hazardous products are shipped out to be recycled, processed or disposed of properly. Scattered on both sides of the road beyond are windrows of yard wastes in various stages of the composting process. The windrows are turned about twice each month for 6-8 months and then combined into a larger pile to stabilize. Finally, the compost is screened to produce a variety of finished compost products. The areas to the right of the road are used by the Department of Public Works for processing tree waste, wood chips, and other gravel and soil materials.

