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FIELD NOTES

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

Hug Our Trees

Why We Love Our Trees:

A Message from GBLC's President

Welcome to the spring edition of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy Newsletter, a celebration of trees! In this issue we hope to educate and inspire you with the stories of many varieties of trees that we have stewarded over our 30 years as your local hometown land conservancy.

At GBLC, we proudly call ourselves “Tree Huggers”, joining the ranks of those throughout history who have put the preservation of their local trees above other interests that would cut them down. The first historical reference to the term Tree Hugger is found in 18th century India where villagers hugged local trees to prevent deforestation for farmland. The trees were burned as charcoal fuel of the lime kilns.



Hug a tree! Photo credit: Wesley Fleming of his wife Rebecca Hartka hugging an old growth oak.



The Big Heart of a Sugar Maple by Arianna Alexandra Collins

The term persists throughout history and has been applied derisively to those who have literally hugged trees to prevent the destruction of animal habitats.

We are tree huggers in other ways. We help to preserve natural areas through conservation restrictions and by preserving the trees in our special places. We hope you will also be a tree hugger by helping to preserve the trees on your property, planting trees that will benefit the environment, and promoting reforestation.

Janice Kabel, President

Why We Treasure Trees

by Arianna Alexandra Collins

Flora and fauna share breath. We animals breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide, while trees and plants breathe in carbon dioxide and breathe out oxygen. So it is not a far stretch to state that we need trees to survive. In addition to providing oxygen, trees also provide shade, shelter, food, and building materials. They store carbon as they grow— an activity that keeps at least one greenhouse gas out of the atmosphere.

2 We encourage everyone to plant trees. This simple act helps our environment today and into the future. Preserve and protect the trees that you have. Older trees are powerful beings that help store carbon and thereby combat climate change. Remove invasive flora species that harm our trees.

Visit our special GBLC places to see healthy local trees. See Page 7 for more information.

Below are some online resources for selecting and planting trees.

Considerations before you plant: grownativemass.org/Know-Your-Landscape/beginners

What to plant where database: grownativemass.org/Great-Resources/databases

Guidelines for planting trees: ag.umass.edu/landscape/fact-sheets/guidelines-for-planting-trees-shrubs

MA Tree identification: inaturalist.org/guides

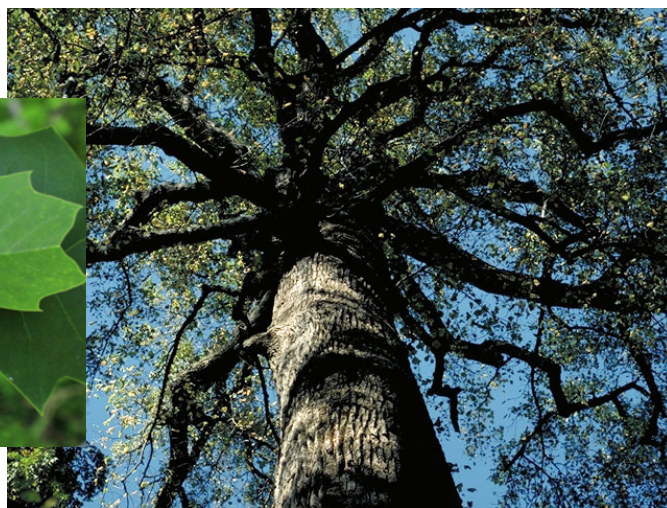
Planting trees to help mitigate climate change: arborday.org/trees/climatechange/

How trees communicate: yale.edu/features/exploringhowandwhytreestalktoeachother

How trees communicate: smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-whispering-trees



Volunteer Sharon Siter planting eastern hemlock seedling.



Tulip Tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, one of the tallest eastern hardwoods. Photo credit: Christine Ward

"Ancient trees are precious. There is little else on Earth that plays host to such a rich community of life within a single living organism." ~ Sir David Attenborough

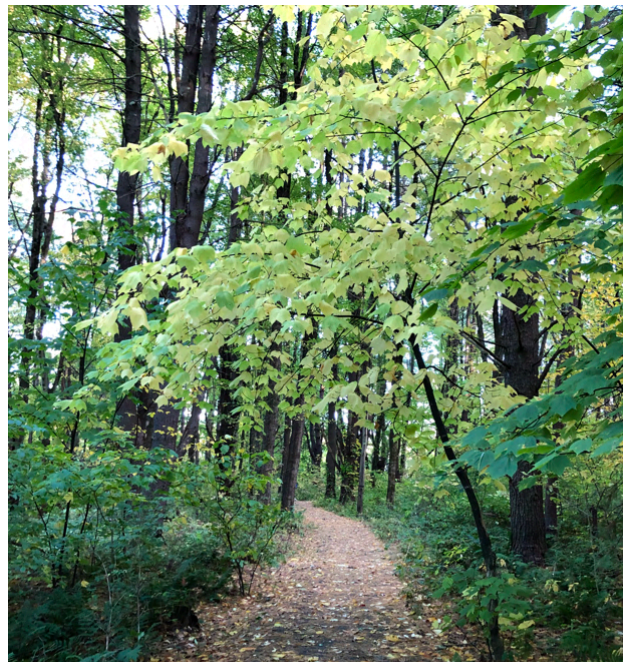
Goosefoot Maple: Capturing Light in the Understory

By Christine Ward

In the spring and summer deep green shade and dancing speckled light beckons us as we slip along the trails of the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest. The majestic canopy of white pine and oak envelops us, creating a hushed shelter and sanctuary. But are you familiar with the trees that are uniquely suited to thrive within the serene understory?

Goosefoot maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*, with its leaves that are reminiscent of webbed prints left in sand or snow, is found in many places along the main trail. Its slender trunk and branches support leaves that can be up to 7 inches at the base and are especially adapted to capture the lower light that filters through the dense canopy. Also known as striped maple, this diminutively elegant tree can be easily identified by conspicuous vertical white stripes on greenish-brown bark. The chlorophyll that gives the bark its green color allows for photosynthesis even in the winter.

The goosefoot maple is key to the forest ecosystem. Its slender leafy branches provide shelter and secrecy for forest birds, such as the black-throated green warbler



Goosefoot Maple, Lake Mansfield forest trails by Christine Ward

and American redstart. As you ramble further through the trails, look for scarring along the tree trunks— they are territorial marks made by deer rubbing their antlers on the smooth bark. “Black bears and porcupines feed on tender leaf buds. The tree’s seeds are sought after by ruffed grouse, squirrels and chipmunks.”

In April and May, goosefoot maples are embellished by yellow chains of bell-like flowers. Recently I discovered that this tree “can have both male and female flowers on the same tree (monoecious) or separate trees with single-sex flowers (dioecious).” To make matters even more complex, individual trees can change flower type from year to year in response to environmental stress. This allows more seeds to be produced by trees under adverse conditions.

Perhaps, like me, this spring you will pause and take a closer look at the flowers of our Lake Mansfield goosefoot maples. I can’t wait to investigate further!

Sources:

<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/story/life/2015/05/30/species-spotlight-stripped-maple/28050903/>

<https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/species/acer/pensylvanicum/>

<https://wildseedproject.net/2015/01/stripped-maple/>

Go to www.GBLand.org to stay informed of 2022 Lake Mansfield volunteer days, special programs, and improvement planning.



Goosefoot Maple Flowers by Christine Ward

Ode to the Eastern Hemlock

By Devan Arnold

4 Nestled amongst the quiet neighborhood setting of occasional residential lots and woodland pockets along Great Barrington's Long Pond Road, the Pfeiffer Arboretum stands as one of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy's most ecologically rich, charming, and perhaps little-known properties. Established in 1997 with a generous 38 acre donation of land from the Pfeiffer family, the Pfeiffer is a place where nature is allowed to show off her richest splendors in her own fashion through a diverse range of habitat types including upland forest, wetland, and shoreline communities. For the last 20 years the Land Conservancy has maintained a ¾-mile loop trail that leads visitors on a delightful saunter through an assortment of different habitat types, each teeming with botanical treasures to please the eye and bring joy to the soul.

Even in cold winter months, the Pfeiffer still offers fantastic opportunities to encounter and admire some of our most marvelous local tree and shrub species. One of the clear standout stars of the winter landscape is the Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*). Easily recognizable by its short, flat, evergreen needles with their tell-tale pair of stripes on its underside, and cute grape-sized cones, hemlock trees are a pivotal part of the local landscape helping to support the scores of different critters and creatures (including people) that call this area home.

These slow-growing, shade tolerant evergreens can reach heights of 150 feet and live more than 800 years. They have often been called the Redwoods of the Northeast. However, much of our current population is relatively young and small compared to their western brethren because most of the colossal hemlocks were cut down for early agriculture or industrial needs. These great pillars of the woodland community are considered a "foundation species", meaning that once established they will actively change the conditions of light, soil, and even the air temperature of their immediate environment to be better suited to their liking. Hemlocks slow, filter, and cool the air around themselves with their evergreen boughs while their fibrous, shallow-laying roots filter water as it travels through the soil. Chemicals excreted by the roots gradually change the soil chemistry and microbe populations.

These gentle juggernauts of the woods also support a tremendous diversity of local wildlife by either providing shelter amongst its branches or nourishment from its



Eastern Hemlock needles by Devan Arnold

leaves, twigs, or cones. Among those species found to frequent these fabulous forest friends are 96 different species of birds (including boreal chickadees, white-winged crossbills, and Blackburnian warblers which are considered obligate species and will prefer hemlock to all other trees present), and 47 species of mammals (including deer mice, red squirrels, red fox, martens, black bears, and even the occasional moose). For porcupines, the twigs of the hemlocks are an especially delectable winter treat, to which end those plump, quill-covered beasts will climb into the trees and shimmy out to the end of branches to find the youngest and most tender leaves. The leaves of hemlocks are superbly rich in vitamin C and can be brewed into a wonderful winter tea or nibbled and chewed as a trail snack (Eastern Hemlock trees *Tsuga canadensis* are non-toxic and bare no relation to the poisonous common hemlock plant *Conium maculatum* that famously killed the philosopher Socrates).

The Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) is only one of many fascinating and incredible trees waiting to be discovered along the winding loop-trail of the Pfeiffer Arboretum. In sun and rain, and heat and snow, there are always new plants, birds, or other woodland friends to notice, to enjoy, and to grow curious about.



Enter Into the Home of Eastern Hemlocks by Devan Arnold

Saying Goodbye to Our Treasured Silver Maple

By Christine Ward

For years Housatonic River Walk visitors have enjoyed getting up-close to a large silver maple adjacent to our Main Street stairway. Silver maples (*Acer saccharinum*) “most commonly grow in river floodplains, and although the trees are not necessarily tall, the trunks can get very large in diameter. The undersides of the deeply toothed leaves are silvery, in contrast to the shiny green upper surfaces.” River Walk’s iconic tree, with its exceptional swirled bark, has been a key feature in our guided tree walks.

In recent years we have observed the formation of a large Dryad’s Saddle mushroom that has appeared annually on the trunk. In Greek mythology a dryad is a spirit that protects trees. The Dryad’s Saddle mushroom reminds us to consider the magical spirit of our silver maple. Like a dryad, the majority of the fungus, it’s thread-like mycelia, is unseen. The fruiting body is what we see above ground, which allows the mushroom to spread its spores.

But this fungus can result in white-rot of the tree’s heartwood which leads to the decline of the tree. This has, unfortunately, come true for our beloved silver maple— last year a large leader broke off from the main trunk. The time has come to remove the majority of the tree to ensure the safety of visitors and to prevent trail damage.

Working with a local licensed arborist, the top portion of the tree will be cut down, keeping a 3-foot trunk section in place and laying the other trunk sections within the bank area. While we will miss our old friend, it is important to remember that each tree, whether it is a living and thriving tree or a decaying and dying tree, is essential to a healthy forest. “Seemingly dead trees are teeming with life, they play a vital role in the lifecycles of hundreds of species



of wildlife, providing a place to nest, rest, eat and grow.” They also provide protection for seedlings and a tasty meal of bugs for a passing woodpecker.



River Walk’s Silver Maple bark & leaves by Christine Ward

In addition, decaying trees, also called snags, are essential to the health of our riverside habitat because they enrich the soil around them. The mycelium of the Dryad’s Saddle will assist in breaking down the tough wood and returning nutrients to the forest floor. Fallen trees also provide a new abundance of sunlight to the surrounding trees. By removing the crown of our silver maple, a nearby sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) that was planted years ago as a part of our ongoing habitat restoration will grow quickly to fill the empty space in the canopy.

So although we will be saying goodbye to an old friend, River Walk’s silver maple will live on, supporting the entire forest ecosystem for years to come.

Sources:

<https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/species/acer/saccharinum>

<https://fpdcc.com/did-you-know-dead-trees-play-an-important-role/>

<https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/dryads-saddle>

https://www.ted.com/speakers/suzanne_simard

Go to www.gbriverwalk.org to find out more about Housatonic River Walk and our upcoming volunteer days and special programs.

Welcome to the Tree Walk on the Riverfront Trail

On April 30, 2022, GBLC will unveil the Tree Walk with a guided tour of the tree species along the Riverfront Trail.

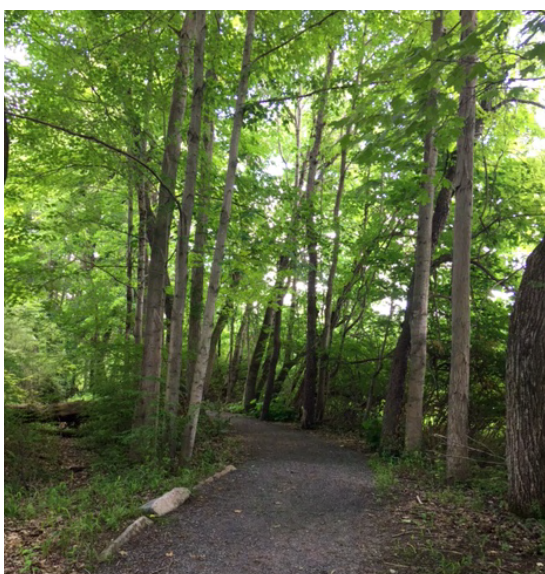
When project leaders Janice Kabel and Dale Abrams first walked the proposed trail pathway, the corridor along the river was a dense tangle of bittersweet, privet, honeysuckle, knotweed, and winged euonymus. But as the invasives were cut, an unusual diversity of tree species emerged.

6 Dale, an experienced naturalist, noted: “I would have guessed that we’d find 12—15 species and we found more than two dozen, many representing our native tree diversity (basswood, silver, red and sugar maple, white ash, and eastern hemlock) and a few highlighting the use of trees from around the world as landscape features in the 19th and 20th Centuries (katsura, European beech, horse chestnut, and Norway maple).

“We were also delighted to find hackberry and black cherry, boxelder maple and American bladdernut,” Janice added.

Since the Riverfront Trail opened in September 2020, a substantial mass of the invasive plants have been cut, improving the health of the trees and enabling visitors to view them.

Handsome tree signs have been designed by the team to be placed on selected tree specimens. This tree walk was inspired by Janice's walks through the Arnold Arboretum in Boston and Central Park in NYC.



Riverfront Trail by Janice Kabel



Each tree’s leaves and fruit are shown on its sign, along with information about its native habitat and range. GBLC especially thanks Joyce and Richard Brousseau for underwriting the production of the signs.

The signs will be placed on both sections of the Riverfront Trail, Bridge Street, and Brookside Road.

We hope the signs will delight and educate the community. Please join GBLC for the opening of the Tree Walk on Saturday, April 30, 2022, immediately following the Annual meeting at 1:00pm. Please enter either from Bridge Street or Olympian Meadows and meet in the field behind Searles Castle.

American Sycamore

(*Platanus occidentalis*)

Sycamore Family/
Platanaceae

Native Range: Eastern US

Habitat: Floodplain forests, swamps
shores of rivers or lakes



The American sycamore is an eco-indicator of floodplains and bottomland forests along rivers.

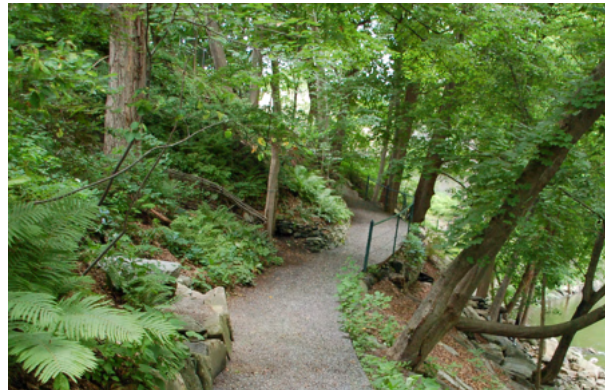
“Time spent amongst trees is never wasted time.”

~ Katrina Mayer

Explore GBLC Trails!

Housatonic River Walk

A downtown riverside trail connecting you to Housatonic River ecology and our cultural history. Two ¼-mile crushed stone trail sections with seating and interpretive signage. Access at 179 Main Street, Dresser Avenue, or Bridge Street.



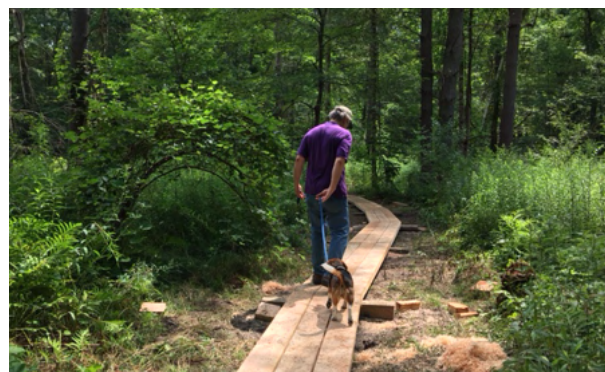
Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trail

A ½ mile of shady trail nestled in a 29-acre woodland. Features diverse native plants, birds, and mammals. Look for a bridge boardwalk and for the glacial erratic, a boulder moved by ice thousands of years ago. Access Lake Mansfield Road off Christian Hill Road at the beach area parking lot.



Pfeiffer Arboretum

A 0.7-mile woodland loop trail with a branch that overlooks Long Pond Reservoir. Features a variety of native trees and plants with 3 boardwalk sections. Park at 249 Long Pond Road, off Division Street.



Riverfront Trail

Two sections of accessible crushed stone pathway that follow the river's edge and offer woodland and open field views just steps from town. Tree Walk signage. Steps from Bridge Street. Park at Olympian Meadows or Brookside Road.



Visit GBLC Trails!

As the leaves of trees are said to absorb all noxious qualities of the air, and to breathe forth a purer atmosphere, so it seems to me as if they drew from us all sordid and angry passions and breathed forth peace and philanthropy. There is a severe and settled majesty in woodland scenery that enters into the soul, and dilates and elevates it, and fills it with noble inclinations.

~ Washington Irving

Town Committee's Recommended Tree List

Did you know that Great Barrington has its very own Tree Committee?

This committee, formed by the Board of Selectmen in 2011, works closely with the Town to review the existing public tree inventory and to recommend plans for public tree maintenance and planting. The Tree Committee has openings for membership and invites interested citizens to join by calling Tree Warden Michael Peretti at 413-329-2057.

The Tree Committee has recommended tree species for planting by local homeowners. You may notice several that are not native to the northeast but are more southern species. The Tree Committee made a decision that, due to global climate change, it has become important to introduce mid-atlantic trees that do well in a warmer climate. Please continue to plant native New England trees as well. For more information go to: www.townofgb.org/tree-committee

Please consider this list when adding new trees to your property:

Large Trees:

American Beech *Fagus grandifolia*
American Linden *Tilia americana*
American Sycamore *Platanus occidentalis*
Black Gum *Nyssa sylvatica*
Bald Cypress *Taxodium distichum*
Eastern White Pine *Pinus strobus*
Kentucky Coffee Tree *Gymnocladus dioica*
Northern Red Oak *Quercus rubra*
Pin Oak *Quercus palustris*
Red Maple *Acer rubrum*
Saw Tooth Oak *Quercus acutissima*
Scarlet Oak *Quercus coccinea*
Shagbark Hickory *Carya ovata*
Sugar Maple *Acer saccharum*
Tulip Tree *Liriodendron tulipifera*
White Oak *Quercus alba*
Yellow Buckeye *Aesculus flava*

Medium Trees:

American Yellowwood *Cladrastis kentukea*
Common Pawpaw *Asimina triloba*
Eastern Hornbeam *Ostrya virginiana*
Fringe Tree *Chionanthus virginicus*
River Birch *Betula nigra*
Sargent Cherry *Prunus sargentii*
Sassafras *Sassafras albidum*
Snow Goose Cherry *Prunus serrulata*
Sourwood *Oxydendrum arboreum*

Small Trees:

American Holly *Ilex opaca*
Common Witch Hazel *Hamamelis virginiana*
Crabapples *Malus spp*
Eastern Redbud *Cercis canadensis*
Flowering Dogwood *Cornus florida*
Red Buckeye *Aesculus pavia*



Plant a sugar maple now so we have maples to tap a generation from now.
Photo credit: Ariana Alexandra Collins



Sassafras is a small understory tree that does well in shade and provides beautiful fall color.
Photo credit: Rebecca Hartka



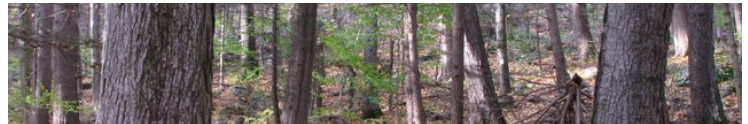
Witch hazel blooming. These trees bloom in late fall and early spring.
Photo credit: Ariana Alexandra Collins

Come Learn with GBLC - Seasonal Programs with Naturalist Michael Wojtech



Michael is the author of *Bark: A Field Guide to Trees of the Northeast* and co-author of *Drawing Leaves and Trees: Observing and Sketching the Natural World*.

As a freelance naturalist, writer, photographer, illustrator, and educator, Michael Wojtech strives to share the science and beauty of natural history in an accessible and compelling fashion through presentations, participatory activities, and outdoor exploration. He writes and teaches about the structure, growth processes, and ecology of trees—including their bark, buds, leaves, roots, and wood—for audiences at all levels of experience, and explores how knowing the natural history of the places we live and love fosters connection and the feeling of home. Michael earned his masters degree in Conservation Biology from Antioch University New England in Keene, NH.



- Learn tree species identification
- Understand the growth and ecological processes of trees and forests
- Connect with the places they live in
- Appreciate the dynamic beauty of trees

Spring, along the Housatonic River

Bark: Get to Know Your Trees

Sunday May 22, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Indoor workshop for adults (limited to 50 participants)

Outdoor guided tree walk along the Housatonic River (limited to 25 participants)

Summer, at the Lake Mansfield Park and Forest

Bark: Kids! Get to Know Your Trees!

July date and time to be determined

Outdoor program geared toward families with kids (limited to 25 participants)

Fall, in the forest of the Pfeiffer Auditorium

The Growth of Trees: A Journey Through Time

Saturday Sept 10th

A two-part workshop beginning with an indoor presentation and outdoor guided tree walk

(limited to 25 people)

Plan for 3.5 – 4 hours

Registration required.

Email: info@gbland.org

Some group sizes are limited.



Paper birch bark by Michael Wojtech

Local Businesses make our work possible!



Thank you to our generous

Run For The Hills

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Transplanting sassafras with the "help" of a puppy by Rebecca Hartka.



Enjoying the apple blossoms beneath the tree you planted years ago by Arianna Aleksandra Collins



Child loving tree by Arianna Aleksandra Collins

Many thanks to this newsletter's underwriters!



"Trees are key players in moderating the global climate. They reduce surface temperature by capturing the energy in sunlight and converting it to growth of biomass rather than heat. Trees remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in their woody tissue and in return give us oxygen to breath. They capture rainwater and help it absorb into the soil, reducing flooding. Native trees are biodiversity magnets because they host a variety of fauna in their canopy, bark and roots." ~ Heather McCargo, "IN THE SHADE: Gardening with Native Plants from the Woodland Understory", Wild See Project blog post 3/2016



Have you enjoyed this newsletter?

Let Ward's Nursery know in an email to info@wardsnursery.com, subject 'Hug Our Trees,' and you'll earn 5 Garden Reward Points.

Support your Land Conservancy Sign up to volunteer!

Take action! You can make a difference when you share your talents and energies with your community. email us at info@GBLand.org and let's talk about the right job for you.

SAVE THE DATES! Volunteer Opportunities

April 9: Rotary Club of GB Day of Service
 April 30: Lake Mansfield Forest Work Day
 May 14: Lake Mansfield Clean-up Day
 TBD: River Walk Community Work Day
 October 9: Run for the Hills 5k & 10k

Like us on Facebook:

Receive reminders of these and many other GBLC events!

<https://www.facebook.com/GreatBarringtonLandConservancy>



Thank you GBLC Volunteers!

This year volunteers taught yoga, co-led hikes, helped at clean-up days, took photos, loaned equipment, attended important town meetings, organized for events, helped with Run for the Hills... and we all had a great time. Join us!



Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership contribution to GBLC to support efforts to preserve and enhance the community's natural resources and special places.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Guardian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Steward |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Sustaining |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Supporter | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Conserver | |

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

GBLC Membership

In addition to my membership, I would also like to support my favorite projects:

- \$ _____ *Housatonic River Walk*
- \$ _____ *Friends of Pfeiffer Arboretum*
- \$ _____ *Lake Mansfield*
- \$ _____ *Great Barrington Trails and Greenway*
- \$ _____ *Riverfront Trail*
- \$ _____ *The Land Conservation Fund*

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GBLand.org

Design & layout by Arianna Alexandra Collins
GBLC logo courtesy of Michael McCurdy

GBLC is dedicated to conservation and stewardship of our community's natural resources and special places.

We work to protect open space for ecological, recreational, agricultural, and scenic purposes. We organize community volunteers on behalf of land conservation and stewardship. We partner with local, regional, and national land trust organizations. We support sustainable agriculture as a means of preserving our farming heritage. We support neighborhood initiatives that align with our mission.



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