

Arlington Land Stewards Newsletter

Winter 2004

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The First Year

The Arlington Land Stewards (ALS) was officially launched a year ago, although many of you have been caring for your local areas for years. Now as Spring approaches is a good time to look back on our first year and step off into the next.

We are having our second annual ALS meeting on Monday March 29 from 7-9 PM at the Arlington Senior Center (20 Academy Street). This is a chance to share our adventures and learn from the experiences of others. You may even find some new stewards for your own areas. So please come and invite your friends and neighbors.

To give you a taste of what's been happening in the first year we have included steward reports from some of the areas. Also on the reverse side of this sheet is a rogue's gallery of the most aggressive plants.

We hope to see you at the meeting on the 29th, but even if you can not make it then please keep in touch.

David White,
Arlington Conservation Commission

Some Stewardship Reports

Turkey Hill

I walked around the Hill yesterday (Jan 4th) morning (before the rain) with binoculars and plastic bags. The binoculars produced only a flock of mourning doves and a chickadee, but the bags were a great success. I picked up trash along the Washington St. trail; had to stop when I got 4 containers full. There was a great deal of nursery stuff along there: pots, plants (some living), plant trays, labels, also the usual bottles, metal frames, etc....I'm going to offer the plant trays to Busa Farms. It was warm and damp, and felt really good to be out and up the hill.

I wonder if there's any way we can get the Washington St. people involved in our efforts? We talked about doing a leafletting of the streets around the Hill. Maybe in the spring we could advertise an Earth Day cleanup and planting preparation? (It worked in 1990!)

I also saw there were a couple of what looked like abandoned cars over on the northwest side of the reservation. - G. Kaye

Meadowbrook

Meadowbrook offers both hope and frustration. Over a period of a few weekends last fall, I filled bag after bag with trash. I rolled a half-immersed plastic barrel to the Summer St. side of the fence for a new role as a trash container. My triumph was the uprooting of a streamside shopping cart. Many people continue to regard Meadowbrook as a dump and it needs regular policing to stem the tide. Late winter would be a good opportunity for a large-scale cleanup effort before foliage begins to mask what is now fairly evident.

But just when you're inclined to feel pessimistic about this struggling wetland, with its rusty stagnant water and tarps and tires, a song sparrow lands, or you follow raccoon tracks along the shore...and then you remember the family of killdeer that thrived there last summer, and the night herons roosting in the trees by the dozens, and the goldfinches and other birds bathing in the stream, and the thirty or so cedar waxwings filling a treetop...and hope is renewed.

Some recommendations: large-scale cleanup in late winter and following fall; posted No Dumping signs; more frequent trash pickups (said shopping cart and other trash stayed by/in the blue barrel for a period of weeks). It needs more definition as a wetland and more un-definition as a dump.

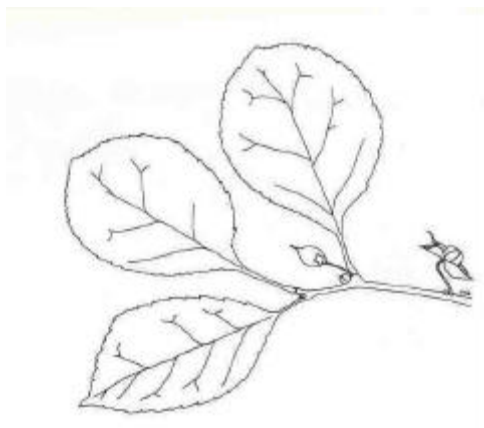
Central Street

The small wedge of land at the foot of Central Street, bound by the bike path and the shallow ravine to the mill brook is relatively free of dumping indignities--although the bike path embankments that flank it have a bounty of trash. A barrel would be very useful if a pickup could be arranged.

The Central Street site maintains its integrity as a wooded margin. Someone put up a bat box at the fence by Central Street. A few bird boxes would be a nice idea for screech owls, woodpeckers, or other guests. All in all, it seems to be doing all right through benign neglect. - H. Ober

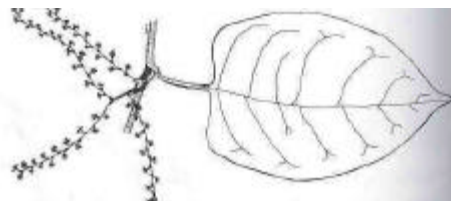
Invading Plants

Invasive and nuisance plants are plants that take over a habitat and/or affect the use of an area. What better way to spend a spring day than by removing nuisance plants from conservation land! Here to help you with your task is a handy guide to unwanted plants.



Oriental Bittersweet

A woody perennial vine that grows over and around other plants. Leaves are alternating and the fruit can be poisonous to mammals.



Japanese Knotweed

A quick growing and tenacious perennial that forms clumps in which no other vegetation can survive. Spreads by rhizomes and seeds.



Garlic Mustard

A biennial herb that prefers moist shady soil. Each plant produces hundreds of seed, dispersed on the fur of passing animals. This plant is displacing native woodland flowers.



Multiflora Rose

A prickly shrub that grows up to 9 feet tall. The plants are propagated by seeds distributed by birds and by runners.



Poison Ivy

This deciduous woody vine is a native, but one that is not very popular with hikers. The leaves grow in clusters of 3 and all parts of the plant contain a resinous compound that can cause allergic reactions in people.

The Arlington Land Stewards are a group of volunteers who care for the conservation lands and other natural open spaces in Arlington. This stewardship group is sponsored by the Arlington Conservation Commission in cooperation with other Town bodies such as the Park and Recreation Commission and the Open Space Committee. More information about the program can be found on the Town website at http://www.town.arlington.ma.us/town/concom/LS/concom_LS_01.htm You may also contact the Conservation Commission directly at the Arlington Town Hall, 730 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA 02476, or call the office at 781-316-3012, or email the Administrator CBeckwith@town.arlington.ma.us