



**CANTON LAND  
CONSERVATION TRUST  
INC.  
Fall 2007  
Newsletter**

Your Land Trust has had significant success in its efforts to preserve Canton's landscape. We now have well over 1,500 acres not only protected from development but also open to the public for hiking and other forms of passive recreation. With this ownership comes responsibility. We have been entrusted by the people who formerly owned and loved this land to care for it for the public's benefit. Much of this acreage is woodland, and management does not need to be intensive. However, to preserve it and make it usable, a certain amount of stewardship activity is required.

Over the years we have built and maintained hiking trails in the larger preserves. We have also built and repaired bridges and removed downed or dangerous trees. On other properties, we have maintained open fields by mowing. Recently, we have been working to combat erosion on Sweetheart Mountain. The Smith Tree Farm requires constant work to keep the Christmas tree operation viable. While the boundaries of some of our properties are clearly marked, other boundaries must be accurately identified and marked, and all these boundary markers must be maintained. A few years ago, we contracted to harvest a stand of trees which had been wind damaged, thereby generating funds for land acquisition and maintenance. This also started the process of growing a new, healthy forest, providing varied and needed habitat in the process.

All of our land stewardship and maintenance activities have been conducted by volunteers (except for the tree harvesting mentioned above). Some of our activities involve dedicated work parties; at other times, individuals work on specific projects at their convenience. We do need additional stewards to do the important work associated with property maintenance, and to identify work which needs to be done in the future.

Please consider becoming a property steward. If there is a particular Land Trust property that you enjoy, please lend your energies to its care. If you would like to help on various projects from time to time, please consider enrolling on our list of volunteers. Please contact me at 693-3988 (or email at [deweesecc@aol.com](mailto:deweesecc@aol.com)), or contact any Land Trust director.

Sincerely,

Charlie DeWeese  
Co-President

# HARVEST FOR THE SENSES

by David Leff

Autumn conjures cornucopia images of brightly colored fruits and vegetables. It's a season often remembered for tart lip-puckering apples or the year's last garden tomatoes sweet with weeks of concentrated sunshine. But fall's abundance is not merely measured by overflowing baskets of produce. It's also a harvest for the senses.

While the soil's bounty is best gathered from a backyard garden or local farm, nothing provides a greater yield for our senses of smell, hearing, taste, sight, and touch than a walk in the woods. The crisp air is fragrant with composting humus; birds whistle and chipmunks rustle dry leaves; a few last raspberries beckon from thorny vines; trees are inflamed in a dizzying kaleidoscope of colors; and the textures of ledges, bark, and leaves are a delight to hands that help pull the feet up steep, rugged trails.

Land trust properties ensure we will always have places to harvest these sensual pleasures of autumn. Enticed by the possibilities, I spent a late September afternoon wandering the 85 acre Swan Preserve with my companion Pamela.

Entering from Case Street, we walked between ancient stone walls on a path once busy with cattle marching from barn to pasture, and descended to Sawmill Brook. Just a trickle this time of year, the water twists through a deep, tree shaded ravine where leaves and patches of sky are mirrored in its dark surface. Scoured by the freshets of spring, the banks reveal mossy boulders grasped tightly by tree roots.

From the brook, we ascended a gradual slope thick with yellow and black birch; red, white, and chestnut oak; white pine; hemlock; hickory; sugar maple; and a small tree with white striped green bark known as moosewood. It's an accidental arboretum of native trees ranging from tall columnar red oaks that were too large to wrap our arms around to sapling sized chestnut trees that have been persistently sprouting from the roots of forest giants felled by a fungal blight over three generations ago.

With an understory well browsed by deer, most of the woods were park-like. Ferns often grew thickly among the trunks and dappled sunlight played on the fronds in flickering patterns. Dense clumps of laurel were a deep green oasis among the gray trunks and fallen leaves, and tantalized us with the promise of June flowers that would reward a return trip. Their vivid color was complemented by widespread clusters of Christmas fern ensuring the woods would remain virid even after a snowfall.

Save some whorled and wood asters, we found few blooms so late in the year. But in the thick stands of witch hazel on the property's south side, golden star-like flowers were about to burst among the dense tangle of twigs. This tree-like shrub, which is distilled into a namesake extract used as an astringent and remedy for cuts and bruises, comes into full bloom even as the trees around it are dropping colored leaves like confetti and frosts have desiccated the herbaceous growth of summer. Like the biblical rainbow, witch hazel is a covenant of hope for nature's spring revival even as forest life is shutting down.

While the autumn woods delight our senses, such pleasures best serve as an enticement to visit and revisit in all seasons and weather over many years. By doing so we tie our personal lives to the natural world and feel our interior landscape joined to what we can smell, taste, see, hear and touch. Pam has achieved this nexus, having grown up across the street from the Swan property. She recalls tramping through the brook with fellow brownie girl scouts, and collecting bracket fungus and princess pine for craft projects. She romped here with neighborhood kids and sought solitary solace at the base of big trees following childhood disappointments and tragedies. Landscape and memory are one.

By such connections to the land we mark the progress of years and the texture of our lives. We may start by marveling at a property's beauty, grow to appreciate its ecological functions, and, if we work to know it well, ultimately find in it the measure of our lives. Such is the truest value of our land trust properties – that they won't ever become housing tracts or strip malls, but will remain here for us and our children to grow with and grow into.

# ALIENS IN THE FOREST

by Jay Kaplan

Now don't get too excited. I am not talking about beings from another galaxy roaming our woodlands. Rather, the aliens I refer to are plants originally native to Asia. This relatively small group of alien plants is ravaging our forests. According to the New England Wildflower Society, these "invasives" are causing profound environmental and economic damage by crowding out native plants, eliminating food for certain wildlife species and decreasing biodiversity. Some of these plants were originally planted by farmers, who had no idea these plants would become problems. In fact, some of these plants were touted as excellent choices for wind breaks, groundcover or wildlife attractants. Other invasives are still planted today by unknowing homeowners. Many of these plants can be found deep within wooded areas, including Land Trust properties. In an effort to educate Land Trust members, listed below are perhaps the most widespread of our forest invaders.

Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) – This fast growing shrub was often planted along the medians and shoulders of our interstate highways. One cannot help but smell the aroma of its white blossoms while driving along Interstate 84 in June. The shrub's abundant small red berries are spread far and wide by birds, particularly along field edges. The shrub reaches up and with its thorns "grabs" at the lower limbs of trees, shading and eventually choking a tree much as does the strangler fig of tropical America.

Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculata*) – A prolific vine, its bright orange berries have been used for dried arrangements and door wreaths, helping to spread the vine from the front door to surrounding forest tracts. It can be abundant in our woodlands, where it can reach to the upper branches of large trees.

Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) – Often planted as a hedgerow, this thorny shrub produces a thick stand that is impenetrable to larger animals and, as such, can provide successful nest sites for birds and small mammals. The bright red berries are eaten by wild turkeys and other birds. In certain situations, I have seen this plant cover much of a forest floor, shading out almost all wildflowers, ferns and other low growing plants.

Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) – A native of east Asia, at one time this shrub was sold by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection as part of a packet of plants that would attract wildlife to one's yard. The speckled red berries were used to make jelly. A close relative, Russian Olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) is also known as Oleaster. Watch out for long, sharp thorns on the branches. Birds eat the berries in autumn and spread the seeds. The shrub is abundant under roadside power lines.

Winged Euonymus (*Euonymus alata*) – More commonly known as "Burning Bush," this shrub continues to be sold by garden centers and nurseries for the brilliant crimson of its leaves in fall. Look for dense stands of this shrub in many Canton woodlands.

In order to address concerns about these and other invasive plants, The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group, a consortium of individuals, organizations and State agencies concerned with invasive species issues, was formed in 1997. Additional plants on its list include Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), and Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*). All of these plants are very easy to find in Canton and our surrounding towns.

Many common plants that grow prolifically in our yards or along the roadsides are not native to the northeast. Flowers including dandelions, most daisies, and lilies were brought from other parts of North America or from other lands. The crops we grow in our vegetable gardens were, for the most part,

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unknown to the Native Americans who tilled plots of corn, beans and squash well before the arrival of the colonists. Most of us have heard of the legend of Johnny Appleseed, but few may know that apples, domesticated in Europe for centuries, likely originated in central Asia. At one time, many of Canton's farms included apple orchards. The fact is that many common grasses, wildflowers, shrubs, even trees are not native to New England, but rather, were brought here by the European colonists. Dandelions on your lawn being the exception, most of these exotic plants present few problems for us today.

The invasive plants described earlier in this article, however, are of great concern to homeowners, scientists and forest managers for a number of reasons: (1) these plants establish themselves easily, often in soil conditions that other plants find difficult; (2) invasives grow and proliferate easily, producing abundant seeds that are dispersed over a wide area; (3) these plants persist without any assistance from people; and, perhaps most importantly, (4) they threaten biological diversity by eliminating other plants and animals around them. Curtailing invasives, once they have become established, can be an extremely difficult, not to mention expensive undertaking. A key to curtailing the spread of invasives is to prevent them from becoming established in the first place. Unfortunately, a number of these plants are still widely available in catalogues and nurseries. For a list of substitute plants as well as suggestions for removing invasive plants contact the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group at [www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg/](http://www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg/) or the New England Wild Flower Society at [www.newenglandwildflower.org](http://www.newenglandwildflower.org).

## NEW IRA PROVISIONS CAN BENEFIT LAND TRUST

If you or someone you know is 70 1/2 or older, a new law permits you to make direct contributions from your individual retirement account to a charitable organization of your choice—up to \$100,00 per year in 2006 and 2007. These charitable contributions can satisfy your IRA's required yearly minimum distribution and will be excluded from your federal taxable income.

One essential detail: your plan administrator must issue the check directly to the charity. Because your contribution is not taxable income, you cannot claim an additional tax deduction. However, examples show that gifting funds directly from your IRA is one of the most tax beneficial means of charitable giving.

Consult your tax advisor for more information about this provision of the Pension Act of 2006. We hope you will take advantage of this special opportunity. Your gift will greatly impact the protection of the natural places that we need and love.

## NEW TRAIL GUIDE UNDERWAY!

With all the new and improved trails on Land Trust properties, it is time to update and expand our Trail Guidebook. CLCT Directors Sarah Faulkner and Jay Kaplan are coordinating the effort to update our trail maps, descriptions of trails, and natural history commentary for all the Land Trust's properties. We're planning on producing the new guide in both printed and on-line form. Look for a new edition sometime next year. If you'd like to assist with this effort, please contact Sarah at [sffaulkner@comcast.net](mailto:sffaulkner@comcast.net) or 693-8540. We especially would appreciate people willing to hike the trails and double-check



*Emma and Luke Knisley having fun at  
Capture the Flag*

## VOTE FOR THE LAND TRUST AT FLATBREAD PIZZA

The Land Trust will be sponsoring  
a fundraising event on  
Tuesday, November 6 at Flatbread Pizza.

Flatbread Pizza is located in  
The Shoppes of Farmington Valley,  
Route 44, Canton.

For every pizza sold, whether eat-in or take out, Flatbread will donate a portion of that sale to the Land Trust. Tuesday, November 6 also happens to be Election Day, which makes for a perfect combination. You can cast your vote in support of the Land Trust by stopping by for a pizza. The event takes place from 5:00-9:00 pm. This promises to be a fun-filled evening, and we look forward to seeing you there.

## JOIN IN THE FUN WITH TRAILBLAZER ACTIVITIES

If your children are interested in nature and love outdoor activities, the Trailblazers, the Land Trust's children's group, may be for them. Trailblazers participate in many interesting and fun outings, most of which are conducted right on Land Trust properties. This group is a wonderful way for children to experience and explore nature and the beauty that Canton has to offer. If your child is interested in joining, please contact Mary Ellen Mullins ([maryellenmullins@comcast.net](mailto:maryellenmullins@comcast.net)) for further information. Cost is \$5.00 per child and includes participation in all Trailblazer activities.

## CLCT WORK PARTIES—WE NEED YOU!

The volunteers of the CLCT continue to do their part! This past summer work crews enthusiastically got together, focusing their efforts on the Sweetheart Mountain property and the Swan Preserve.

A work party on August 25 at the Swan Preserve made good progress on clearing some of the major blockages in the stream bed. The large stump from under the bridge was also removed.

On September 22, time was spent working at Sweetheart Mountain. Current activities include filling the major erosion on the former lifeline, as well as bringing in rock for the parking lot.

By popular demand, work crews will now be taking place on the third Saturday of each month. Meeting place is the Canton Center General Store at 9:00am. Work parties generally aim for three hours, from 9:00-12:00, but any time that you can give is most gratefully appreciated. Be sure to wear work clothes, and bring along loppers, shovels, saws, pry bars, pick axes, gloves and a thirst for some hard work—see you there!



P.O. Box 41  
Canton Center, CT 06020

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

[cantonlandtrust.org](http://cantonlandtrust.org)



Please renew your membership or join the Canton Land Conservation Trust.  
We are a public, town-wide organization and we need your help!

## FALL 2007 CALENDAR

### NOVEMBER

- |               |            |  |
|---------------|------------|--|
| 18 - Sunday   | 1:00 PM    | Trailblazers Hay Ride                            |
| 25 - Saturday | 9:00-12:00 | Work Party - Meet at Canton Center General Store |

### DECEMBER

- |               |            |  |
|---------------|------------|--|
| 8 - Saturday  | 9:00-12:00 | Christmas Tree Sale - Smith Tree Farm on Doyle Road<br>Trailblazers' Holiday Event |
| 15 - Saturday | 9:00-12:00 | Work Party   |

### JANUARY

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|---------------|------------|------------|
| 19 - Saturday | 9:00-12:00 | Work Party |
|---------------|------------|------------|

### FEBRUARY

- |               |            |            |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| 16 - Saturday | 9:00-12:00 | Work Party |
|---------------|------------|------------|

### MARCH

- |               |            |  |
|---------------|------------|--|
| 15 - Saturday | 9:00-12:00 | Work Party                               |
| 25 - Saturday | 6:30 PM    | Land Trust Members' Dinner - LaTrattoria |