

onservation Times

Newsletter of the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District, Inc.

January 2010

Invasive Plants in Your Yard? Control Them While You Still Can!

Though you may not know it, chances are pretty good you have invasive plants growing in your yard. This past year, the District took steps to help landowners identify and control them by publishing a guide to common backyard invasives with a grant from The Rockfall Foundation. We figured correctly that it would be a needed reference—copies are flying off the shelf, and we are already thinking about the next printing! This article contains excerpts from the guide's introduction. You can view the entire guide at www.conservect.org/ctrivercoastal, look for it at your local library, or contact our office to obtain a copy.

What are invasives anyway? These plants are aggressive exotic species introduced intentionally for their ornamental value, or accidentally by hitchhiking with people or products. They thrive in our growing conditions, and with no natural enemies, they have nothing to check their rapid growth.

The environmental costs of invasives are great. They crowd out native vegetation and reduce biological diversity, can change how whole ecosystems function, and pose a threat to endangered species.

Several organizations are hard at work in Connecticut preventing the spread of invasives, including the Invasive Plant Council, the Invasive Plant Working Group, and the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England. But as stewards of our own properties, we also need to do our part.

Why should you be concerned about invasives on your property? They can kill your favorite trees, show up in your gardens, and overrun your lawn. Because it can be costly to remove invasives, they can even lower your property value. What's more, they can escape to nearby parks, open spaces and natural areas.

What should you do if you have invasives in your yard? Remove them before the infestation worsens! Replacing invasives with native plant species is the best approach. There are many excellent native alternatives to choose from, and planting them promotes local biodiversity, provides native wildlife with sources of food and cover, and creates a beautiful green space for you to enjoy.

How can you control invasives on your property? The number one rule is DO NOT PLANT THEM in the first place! While this may seem quite obvious, some common

invasives can still be purchased at local garden centers. Second, it is critical to take action as soon as you discover them; once invasives become established, they can be extremely difficult to remove.

There are three basic approaches to controlling invasives: mechanical, chemical and biological. The best strategy depends on the type of plant and extent of the infestation.

Mechanical controls—pulling, digging, cutting, mowing and shading—should be used as a first line of defense.

They work well for small infestations, cause minimal environmental impact, and for the most part only require basic gardening tools.

Chemical control—applying herbicides to leaves, cut stumps or bark—can be very effective, but there are potential environmental and health risks, and in some cases a permit is required.

Biological control—the use of natural enemies—may be the method of choice

in the future, however for now the only viable option available is for purple loosestrife.

The guide is a great resource to get started addressing invasives in your yard. It contains detailed identification and control information, and suggestions for native alternatives for ten common invasives: burning bush, Japanese barberry, multiflora rose, autumn olive, tree of heaven, oriental bittersweet, Japanese knotweed, purple loosestrife, garlic mustard, and common reed.

And don't forget—the District's annual plant sale is coming up (*see information on back page*). Be sure to check out the many native plant offerings you can use to enhance your landscape...and replace those invasives!

Thanks to Eric Mosher, the District's former Watershed Projects Coordinator, for conceiving of the idea of the invasives guide and getting it started back in 2008, and to Wendy Goodfriend, for bringing it to fruition as a very usable and attractive resource.

Why Invasives are Invasive

- ❶ They are quick to establish, especially in disturbed areas
- ❷ They grow rapidly once established
- ❸ They are long flowering and produce many seeds and fruits
- ❹ They spread effectively to new areas
- ❺ They are aggressive competitors, free of the enemies that keep them in check in their natural range



L.J. Mehrhoff, IPANE (L);
John Amis, UGA (R)



**Plant native
highbush
blueberry in
place of the
invasive burning
bush, and enjoy
edible fruit too!**



Laurel Brook Study Provides Clues to Stream's Bacteria Sources

To follow up on very high levels of bacteria measured in Laurel Brook at Wadsworth Falls State Park in 2008 by Connecticut River Watch Program volunteers, District staff conducted an intensive stream corridor assessment this past summer. Designed to complement a pet waste management project at the park undertaken by the District in collaboration with CT DEP, the study consisted of collecting and analyzing water samples for *E. coli* bacteria, and conducting a track down survey, a stream walk focused on identifying potential sources of pollution and restoration actions. While no obvious sources of bacteria were identified through water monitoring, results suggest that the most significant and likely sources are located in the lower third of the watershed. High priority pollution reduction recommendations include three stormwater outfall improvements, a stream buffer restoration, water quality treatment for an open water pond, upgrade/maintenance of two on-site wastewater disposal systems, and five stream culvert improvements. Future assessment and restoration activities in the Laurel Brook watershed will be guided by results of the study.



Laurel Brook water monitoring results suggest bacteria sources are most likely located in the lower third of the watershed, helping to direct future studies to the downstream area. Further, much higher bacteria levels were measured during wet weather than dry, suggesting that runoff related sources are more significant than chronic sources, like failing septic systems.

Swamp Brook Track Down Survey Identifies Restoration Needs

Middletown's Swamp Brook was the eighth stream evaluated as part of the District's ongoing track down survey effort in the Mattabeset watershed. Intern Jessica Bell assisted with the field work, data management and mapping. Seven high priority areas in the stream's watershed were proposed for restoration action based on the survey. Recommended management measures include stormwater quality retrofits, culvert replacement and maintenance, bank and channel stabilization, channel protection retrofit, stream buffer planting, livestock exclusion, and watershed-wide landowner education and street sweeping and catch basin cleanout.

Funding for this project was provided by a US EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 Grant administered by CT DEP.



Intern Jessica Bell

Management Plan Developed for Old Lyme Watch Rock Preserve

In a new collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and CT Sea Grant, this past year the District developed a Habitat-based Management Plan for Old Lyme Conservation Trust's 25 acre Watch Rock Preserve. The plan follows a model designed by CT Sea Grant and UConn's NEMO



Program as a tool for land trusts and municipalities to promote stewardship and management of protected open space. Watch Rock contains a rich diversity of natural habitats: coastal deciduous forest, conifer grove, open field, vernal pool, brackish marsh and creek, and rocky shoreline. It has a long and significant cultural history dating back 4500 years, and provides coastal access and a variety of opportunities for passive recreation.

Natural, cultural and recreational resources are described in the plan, threats are identified, and management recommendations are made to protect these resources and allow for continued public enjoyment. As is the case with many of the region's open space lands, non-native invasive species pose one of the most serious threats to the preserve's natural habitats. Most affected are the coastal forest (winged euonymus, honeysuckle, Oriental bittersweet), and tidal salt marsh (common reed).

Partial funding for this project provided by a cooperative agreement from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with generous assistance from CT Sea Grant, UConn Extension System's NEMO Program, and Old Lyme Conservation Trust.

District Monitors Success of Invasives Removal at Salt Island Overlook

At first glance, the tangle of invasive plants that occupied the Town of Westbrook's Salt Island Overlook open space property looked daunting. Would it really be possible to reclaim this area overtaken by multiflora rose, Oriental bittersweet, Japanese barberry, Norway maple, and bush honeysuckle? A multi-phase project to restore the coastal upland forest at the Overlook was initiated in 2009, with the District taking the lead on monitoring the success of invasive control activities conducted by All Habitats, Inc. We are pleased to report that these efforts have made a tremendous difference; many parts of the property that were previously impassible are now accessible, making future invasive control work more feasible, and bringing the town closer to realizing its ultimate goal of opening up the property for public enjoyment.

This project is funded by a grant from the Long Island Sound License Plate Fund to the Town of Westbrook.

CRCCD's 62nd Annual Meeting Features Tour of the CT River Museum



The Annual Meeting offered a rare opportunity to take a photo of our staff and many of our Board members! From left to right: Wendy Goodfriend, Jennifer Weymouth, Jane Brawerman, Tom O'Dell, Michael Lutz, Jim Costello, Alison Guinness, Tim Myjak, Cindy Gaudino, and Barbara Davis.

Continuing a new tradition of traveling around the District begun last year, our 62nd Annual Meeting on November 7, 2009 took place at the Connecticut River Museum in Essex. After a brief business meeting, a look at highlights of our past year, a ceremony to honor our 2009 Conservation Award winners (see list below), and refreshments and conversation, participants were treated to a special guided tour of the museum led by Jennifer White-Dobbs, Director of Education (at center of photo on right). Thanks to the museum for hosting our meeting, and to Jennifer for providing an enlightening look back at the history and heritage of the Connecticut River.



Photos: J. Costello

Landowners Learn How to Create Backyard Wildlife Habitat by Example

Eleanore Milardo has been on a mission. She has both transformed her yard from a lawn-dominated 3/4 acre suburban lot into a diverse array of plants and habitats, and committed herself to helping others learn by her example. For the third time, the District helped sponsor an on-site seminar at Eleanore's home site, in partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Project Green Lawn. Now featuring 120 native species, her yard provides a real-life example of how a typical yard can be redesigned to promote a healthy diverse ecosystem and enhance wildlife value; a way for others to visualize such a makeover of their own properties.

On a beautiful Sunday in early fall, twenty people gathered to learn from Eleanore's yard. CT Department of Environmental Protection Wildlife Biologist Peter Picone gave an information-packed presentation and walking tour, highlighting the relationship between the native plants and abundant insects, birds and mammals that now share the garden. At the workshop, we were pleased to present Eleanore with an award from the District in

recognition of her efforts to transform her small lot into a haven for wildlife, and to teach and inspire others.



Congratulations 2009 Conservation Award Recipients!

Environmental Professional
Jiff Martin, CT State Director,
American Farmland Trust, and
Project Director, Working Lands Alliance



Municipal Project
East Haddam Open Space Commission &
East Haddam Land Trust

Cooperator
Joe Greenbacker, Greenbacker Farm, Durham

Teacher
Courtney Johnson, Middletown Regional
Vocational Agriculture Center

Special Merit
The "Greening Our Valley" Initiative
Saybrook Point Inn & Spa

Certificates of Appreciation
Gary Crump & Gloria Priam, Priam Vineyards
Bridget Riordan, Chamard Vineyards
David Richards, Clinton Nurseries
Mark & Mindy Yuknat, CT River Expeditions
Matthew Rubin, Old Saybrook Shopping Center
Pierre Bennerup, Sunny Border Nurseries
Rob Merritt, R2 Graphics
Sandi Rose, Rose's Berry Farm
Thomas D. Comer, CPA, Comer and Company, LLC
Wesleyan Environmental Organizers Network

District News & Events

FAREWELL TO WENDY GOODFRIEND



Wendy (l) gets congratulated by Jane and Tom after receiving her 2008 Environmental Professional award

In early January, we were sorry to say goodbye to Wendy Goodfriend and her husband John Rozum as they began their journey to California to pursue new professional opportunities and be nearer to family. Our Natural Resource Specialist for seven years, Wendy has been a tremendous asset to the District. It will be difficult to fill her shoes. Her energy, creativity, diverse skills and talents, and experience will be missed very much—by her District colleagues throughout the state, and the many partners she has worked with over the years. She leaves a great legacy, including numerous first-class educational publications she produced. We wish Wendy and John all the best in California!

CHILLY BUT LOVELY! 5TH ANNUAL RIVER CRUISE FUNDRAISER ENJOYED BY ALL

For the first time, forecasted weather postponed our annual Tree Swallow Cruise and Wine Tasting to benefit CRWP. Sadly, some weren't able to attend the rescheduled cruise. Despite the foreboding sky, and our somewhat dampened spirits, the clouds lifted and it turned out to be a beautiful evening. Most importantly, the birds—including several bald eagles—did not disappoint! Special thanks to *RiverQuest* owners Mark and Mindy Yuknat, Priam Vineyards' Gary Crump and Gloria Priam, and Bridget Riordan of Chamard Vineyards for their generous contributions. Thanks also to Darrell Gagnon, acoustic guitarist and singer, who provided live entertainment. And, of course, thanks to all of the enthusiastic attendees who made the event so much fun.



19TH ANNUAL SHRUB AND SEEDLING SALE: April 16, 17 & 18, 2010

Old Saybrook Shopping Center, Boston Post Rd. & Elm St., Old Saybrook



Looking for a good source of easy to grow native plants? Interested in adding edibles to your landscape? Look no further! In addition to our wide selection of Connecticut native shrubs, grasses, ferns, flowering perennials and tree seedlings, this year we are again offering an expanded selection of edible landscape plants, continuing a theme of promoting more utilitarian yards. For a brochure and order form go to www.conservect.org/ctrivercoastal, or phone us at (860) 346-3282.

Quantities of some selections are limited, so don't miss out—*reserve your plants by sending in your order form on or before March 26, 2010.*

READING THE LAND—A PRACTICAL WORKSHOP FOR REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS: APRIL 29, 2010, 9:00 AM-12:30 PM

deKoven House, 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

Real Estate Professionals—Earn 3 CEUs at this workshop on natural resource topics of importance to you! Learn how to use web-based soil maps, the ins and outs of septic systems, how wetlands are regulated in CT, and about Low Impact Development practices. For a copy of the brochure and registration form, go to www.conservect.org/ctrivercoastal, or phone (860) 346-3282.

January 2010

The Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District, Inc. is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the sound use and management of our natural resources through technical assistance and education.

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The District serves the towns of Berlin, Chester, Clinton, Colchester, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Hebron, Killingworth, Lyme, Madison, Marlborough, Middlefield, Middletown, New Britain, Newington, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Portland, Rocky Hill, Salem and Westbrook.

The Board of Directors holds public meetings every fourth Wednesday, 7:00 PM, at the deKoven House Community Center in Middletown. All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

Conservation Times is published by:

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Line art by Tom Kelley,
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