

# Whispers in the Forest

The newsletter of the Newtown Forest Association, Inc.

*Connecticut's Oldest Private Land Trust*



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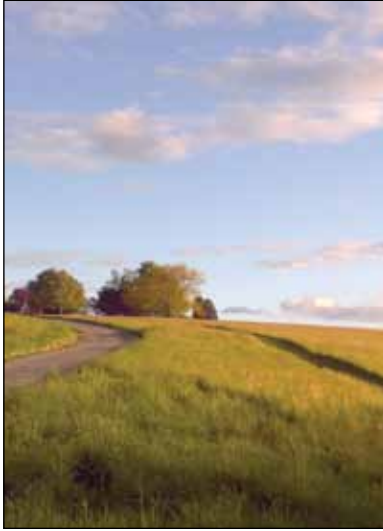
**DECEMBER 2012**



**Whispers in the Forest**  
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Editor: Tim Gagne, NFA Board of Directors  
tim.gagne@NewtownForestAssociation.org

**ON THE COVER:**



A look towards the top of the hill at Holcombe Hill Preserve on a beautiful summer 2012 evening as the sun just begins to set. PHOTO: Bart Smith

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**Contact Information:**

NewtownForestAssociation.org  
NFAtreasurer@yahoo.com  
203-270-3650

P.O.Box 213  
Newtown, CT 06470

# A Letter from the NFA President



F all in Newtown is always an interesting time to be in the woods. With the storms we experienced

land trust properties in Bethel and Brookfield.

It was my pleasure to have worked with The NFA Board members, volunteers and scouts to create more trails, bridges, signage, informative kiosks, and guided trail walks this past year.

Our deepest respect goes out to a founding member who left us this past year. Thank you to the family of Tom Cheney for sharing him with us. His spirit and contributions to the NFA have helped shape us into the organization we have become.

We welcome you to share in these efforts and look forward to meeting you soon. Join us and share your expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm as we work to maintain some of the wildest places here in Newtown.

See you in the woods!

Bob Eckenrode

President, Newtown Forest Assoc.

this year, the NFA has made a concerted effort to maintain the character and beauty of our properties. Clearing trails, offering trail hikes and reclaiming properties overgrown with invasive plants are just some of the efforts we pursue as stewards of our lands.

Reclaiming meadows on our Bloom Preserve this year has shown us the way to maintain other properties that share these same issues. Similar efforts are under way at the Knapp Preserve on Rt. 34 in Sandy Hook.

The acreage of conserved land around the Brunot and Bloom Preserves were also essentially doubled this year by teaming up with abutting

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### Preserve Blooms Again

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Watching for invaders. Learn what the NFA is doing about the Emerald Ash Borer, a dangerous insect.



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### Scout Service Projects

Getting by with a little help from our friends in the Boy Scouts (and other local kids).



# Give To The NFA

## Your Support Is Critical

The Newtown Forest Association is the oldest private land trust organization in Connecticut. It has been dedicated for over eighty years to securing for the residents of Newtown and their posterity the benefits derived from open space lands. The non-profit Newtown Forest Association relies heavily on membership dues and other contributions from our neighbors, like *you*. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today and/or becoming a member to help the NFA continue its mission to preserve Newtown's forests.



### Give Online

please visit [NetworkForGood.org](http://NetworkForGood.org) and enter "Newtown Forest Association" as your charity. Follow the simply prompts to make your secure, online gift.

**PLEASE CUT OUT AND RETURN THIS FORM TODAY**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

If paying by check, please make your check payable to "The Newtown Forest Association" or "N.F.A."

NFA Individual Membership (\$15)    NFA Family Membership (\$20)    Additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

We can accept donations of real property, securities or bonds. If interested, please contact Guy Peterson, NFA Treasurer, at 203-733-2030.

MAIL COMPLETED FORM AND CHECK TO: NFA, P.O. BOX 213, NEWTOWN, CT 06470



## NFA Notes

### Farewell Tom

It is with great sadness that we say farewell to former NFA Board Member Tom Cheney who recently passed away at the age of 95. Tom was actively involved with the NFA for over 32 years having served on its Board of Directors from 1961 to 1993. Tom continued to follow the NFA into recent years by attending certain meetings to protect NFA's interests. Tom was instrumental in making the NFA into the vibrant institution it has become. Thank you Tom!

### Princely Elms

Several young Princeton Elms were planted earlier this year at the NFA's Blackman Preserve along Mt. Pleasant Road at Blackman Road. This native tree was once very common in Connecticut, but many were wiped out in the 1930s by a devastating outbreak of Dutch Elm disease. The "Princeton" variety of the American Elm is more disease resistant. The NFA would like to thank the Newtown Lions Club in helping to secure and plant these trees.

Princeton Elms at the Blackman Preserve



# Preserve Blooms Again

## Bloom Restoration Tops 2012 Stewardship Work

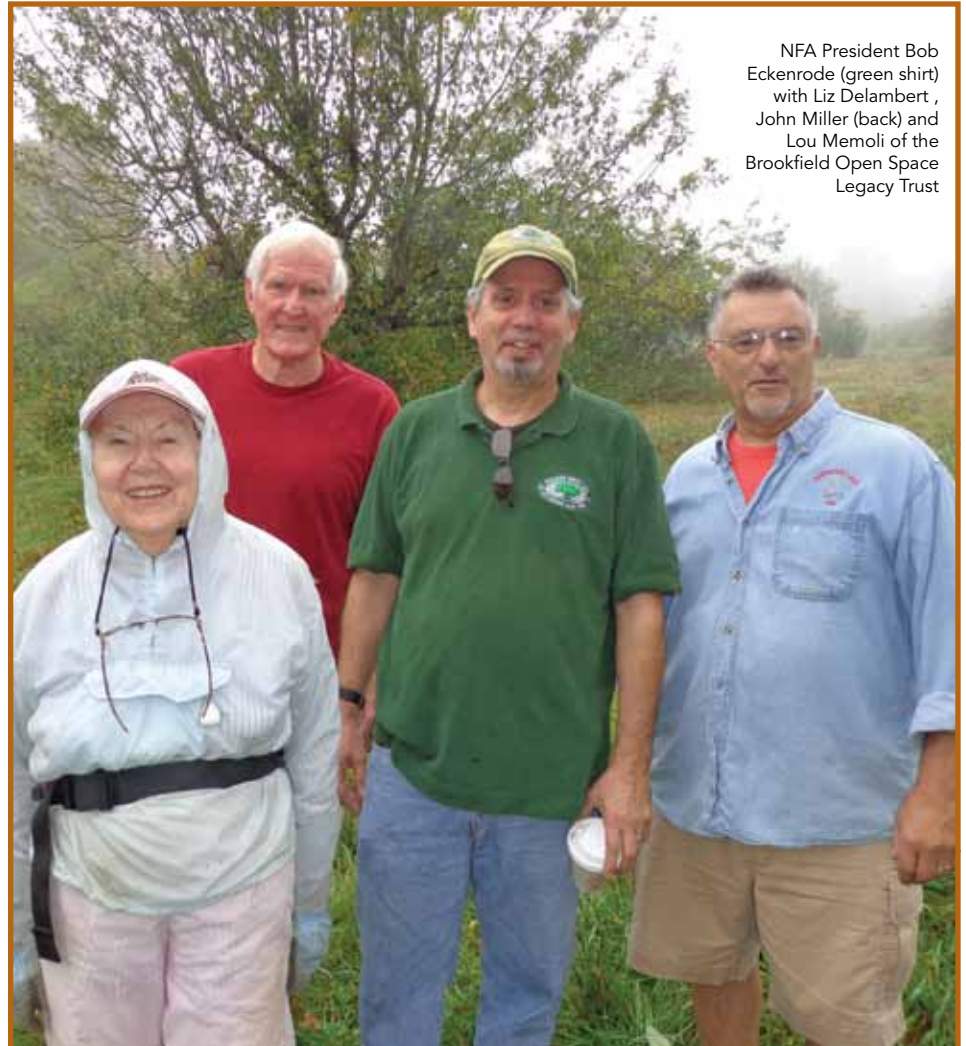
Many of the 1,100 acres in the NFA's care don't require regular intensive maintenance. Keeping some properties safe from development and allowing nature to do what it does best is often the best course of action. However, even lesser used properties do occasionally need a makeover. This year, the NFA's Bloom Preserve received some much needed TLC.

Due to a lack of access to the interior of the Bloom Preserve, what was once open meadow became impassable with

invasive plants. A lichen-covered rock wall and many trees frame the view from the top of the property, which offers magnificent panoramic vistas

Following site visits in the past several years, some held in conjunction with the Brookfield Open Space Legacy Trust (which owns an 18-acre property abutting the Bloom Preserve), the NFA formed a management plan for the property. The short-term goal was to remove invasive plants and return the property to its natural meadow state. In

the long term, the property will be managed to preserve native plant species while still allowing for passive recreation and seasonal mowing of the meadow. Wild, natural open space meadows—critical habitats for native song birds and butterflies—are disappearing at alarming rates due to development and reforestation. Future plans include the possible development of hiking trails to enhance access to the different areas of the property and connect to the Brookfield Open Space property. □



NFA President Bob Eckenrode (green shirt) with Liz Delambert, John Miller (back) and Lou Memoli of the Brookfield Open Space Legacy Trust

# Trees And Thank You

## Sponsors Help Us Give 4,000 Trees This Year

The Newtown Forest Association (NFA) was fortunate to be able to distribute nearly 4,000 evergreen trees at a number of community events in Newtown this year, including the Earth Day Festival, Duck Race, and Labor Day Parade. A small tag with planting instructions was attached to each tree.

### Trees

The tree distribution was possible due to a generous grant from the Iroquois Community Grant Program, an effort of the Iroquois Gas Transmission Systems to provide unique funding opportunities which empowers communities to take steps to preserve their environmental heritage and increase passive recreational opportunities. Additional funds from the Newtown Tree Project endowment were also used to supplement the total cost.

In addition to the greater environmental benefits that come from trees, the NFA's goal in distributing tree saplings is to help foster a personal connection between Newtown residents and our forests through planting and caring for a new tree.

### ...And Thank You

The NFA would like to thank the Iroquois Community Grant Program and the Newtown Tree Project for their ongoing support of the NFA's mission and its tree sapling outreach programs. □



TOP: Having a ducky day at the 2012 Duck Race (and handing out trees) are NFA Board members Tim Gagne, Anne Mazur and Coke Cramer.



MIDDLE: Nearly 4,000 of these tiny seedlings, also known as "plugs" were distributed by the NFA throughout 2012 at community events in town.

BOTTOM: Gathering at the NFA float before the 2012 Newtown Labor Day Parade are NFA Treasurer Guy Peterson, Board member Martha Wright and her husband, NFA President Bob Eckenrode, NFA Caretaker Ray Ormsbee, Board member Dr. Aaron Coopersmith, and Bill Watts Jr.



# An Invasion of Newtown?

## Invasive Emerald Ash Borer Spotted in CT

Is Newtown about to be invaded? Now that the Emerald Ash Borer, a non-native and destructive invasive insect, has been found in Connecticut, the NFA is keeping a watchful eye out for these invasive bugs on the over 1,100 acres under its stewardship.

The NFA has identified protection of White Ash trees, the only source of food of the Emerald Ash Borer, as an issue of importance for a variety of reasons.

**White Ash** can be identified by its compound leaves with clusters of five to nine leaflets (each about 6 inches long) and branchlets which sprout from a main branch directly opposite each other.



David Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org

This native tree has no resistance and is therefore particularly at risk. In addition, the Emerald Ash Borer can be very difficult to find and spreads quickly on its own, as well as through human distribution of Ash wood, making early detection particularly important in slowing or curtailing an infestation.

### Identifying Ash Trees and the EAB

White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*) can be identified by its compound leaves with clusters of five to nine leaflets (each about 6 inches long) and branchlets which sprout from a main branch directly opposite each other. Another distinctive feature of the White Ash are samaras, clusters of dangling oar-shaped seed pods which look similar to Maple “helicopter” seed pods.

The Emerald Ash Borer possesses an unusually bright metallic green and iridescent body. This beetle is most

easily distinguished by its reddish belly. And, since woodpeckers like Emerald Ash Borer larvae, heavy woodpecker damage on ash trees may be a sign of infestation, as are “witches’ brooms (clusters of branchlets projecting from the trunk of the tree).

If you suspect the presence of Emerald Ash Borer on your own property, contact a licensed arborist or the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station at [CAES.StateEntomologist@ct.gov](mailto:CAES.StateEntomologist@ct.gov) or 203-974-8474. If you suspect its presence on NFA property please call the NFA @ 203-270-3650 or e-mail [admin@NewtownForestAssociation.org](mailto:admin@NewtownForestAssociation.org) with your contact information for us to follow up. □

More information can be found at the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection web site at [www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.a=2697&q=464598&depNav\\_GID=1631](http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.a=2697&q=464598&depNav_GID=1631).

## Property Tales

This summer the NFA hired several interns. Most worked on property maintenance. However, Mara Scallon was tasked with scouring through the NFA’s property files to write the story about how certain properties were obtained, ecological features, use restrictions and maintenance history.

Putting this in one document provides a quick reference for details about each property, helps orient new board members and volunteers and will help us update the web site. The Board prioritized which properties Mara was to investigate, and report upon, based upon those properties where the current board was reevaluating property specific stewardship(maintenance) practices, managing current encroachment issues and clarifying its understanding of deed restrictions, if any, when evaluating property-specific public access and use limitations.



# Scout Service Projects

## Eagle Candidates Improve NFA Properties

**T**wo young men working to earn the rank of Eagle Scout, Mason Page (Troop 570) and Brandon Unger (Troop 370), each completed an approved community service project at a Newtown Forest Association (NFA) property as a requirement for achieving Eagle Scout, the highest rank in Scouting.

Mason's project added a trail to the NFA's Jay Preserve on Glen Road. He also added a section of post and rail fence to provide a barrier with the adjacent property to preserve the privacy of our neighbors.

Brandon's project enhanced the Nettleton Preserve (between Castle Hill Road and West Street) by planting a border garden of native plants to define our property line with one of our neighbors and building a new trail to extend from the meadow and existing trails on the property out to West Street.

Both Mason's and Brandon's projects demonstrated their leadership capabilities by planning, executing and completing these community service projects. These scouts both have a passion for the outdoors and for community service and took on their respective projects with great enthusiasm. The NFA is grateful to Mason and Brandon and to all of their respective volunteers for having these projects completed that will leave a lasting impact and benefit all future visitors.

For information on helping the Newtown Forest Association as part of your Eagle Project, visit [www.NewtownForestAssociation.org](http://www.NewtownForestAssociation.org) or e-mail us at [admin@NewtownForestAssociation.org](mailto:admin@NewtownForestAssociation.org). □



TOP: Brandon Unger, in yellow shirt, and his crew pose in front of the border garden of native plants they installed at the Nettleton Preserve.  
LEFT: Hand digging dozens of holes in the new Nettleton Preserve garden.

### Middle School Students Perform Knapp Preserve Cleanup

As part of a community service project organized by Newtown Middle School student Ben Mason, Ben and friends Justin Dunn, Jillian Pieretti, Lexi Barra, Scott Bauer, Hannah Luby, Ryan Brello, and Amanda Solomon spent an October Saturday at the NFA's Knapp Preserve along Route 34 near the Misty Vale Deli removing trash and clearing brush.





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P.O. Box 213  
Newtown, CT 06470

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# Support The NFA

Because the Newtown Forest Association is a private non-profit organization not affiliated with the Town, we rely heavily on membership dues and other contributions from our neighbors, like *you*. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today and/or becoming a member to help the NFA continue its mission to preserve Newtown's forests.

Please see the reply envelope inside.

Thank you!