

There is One Undisputed Winner in 2020: NATURE

The Great Outdoors has been re-discovered – including OLC Preserves, which have gotten more use than ever before. But maintaining a natural healthy habitat requires constant observation, expert consultation, funding, planning and execution . . .

The last two weekends in October saw the culmination of multi-year initiatives to add native diversity to the Conservancy's Nature Preserves with the planting of 400 native trees and shrubs – here is the story behind that effort.

The Landscape is Always Changing . . . But Sometimes Not For the Better

Over the years, OLC's Preserves have become home to many things that do not meet our Mission to foster a diverse and strong native habitat.

INVASIVE PLANTS AND SPECIES



Conservancy volunteers have been working to clear three types in particular: *Ailanthus*, Tree of Heaven, has been practically eliminated from Cedar Hollow and George Lorimer Preserves. Grape and Bittersweet vines have been reduced dramatically by the Vine Day efforts. And finally, those working on Vine Days and other volunteers have also begun the long effort to reduce the invasive honeysuckle and olive shrubs, with one focus area around the small meadow in Cedar Hollow, another just past the entrance trail in Cool Valley.



MANMADE ALTERATIONS



Most members have never known the Airdrie Forest Preserve without the scout cabin. This was built in the 1950's and used, with decreasing frequency, by Troop Paoli 181. That use was brought to a sudden end in 2017 when a large overhanging oak limb fell and damaged a large section of the roof and adjacent wall. The scouts decided to abandon their lease, and the Conservancy invested to demolish the building in 2018 which left barren gaps in the woods.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT ISSUES

While working with Tredyffrin Township, OLC helped provide appropriate drainage system in Airdrie Preserve – however the construction work cleared much of the surrounding vegetation and created space for more invasive species, like Japanese stiltgrass, to become established.



NATURE ITSELF



2020 brought many things, including, for many of us, a new meteorological phenomenon: the "derecho". Wikipedia defines this as "A widespread, long-lived, straight-line wind storm that is associated with a fast-moving group of severe thunderstorms known as a mesoscale convective system and potentially rivaling hurricanic and tornadic forces". Those who have seen the 90 foot healthy oaks in the Airdrie Preserve felled by the June derecho can agree with the "tornadic" adjective. The effects were most pronounced in Airdrie, but all Preserves suffered loss of tree canopy.

PLANNING FOR RESTORATION

Even before the summer storms, the Conservancy Board had agreed that 2020 would be a year to invest in restoration. We applied for grants, one of which was awarded, and when combined with the generosity of the members towards the clean-up efforts, we were able to design plans for revitalizing some of the severely impacted areas. This included the specification and purchasing of all plants, designing systems for keeping wildlife and stormwater from damaging the plants. And of course we worked hard to keep all costs to a minimum!

PREPARING THE SITES



Although our planting sites had been opened up, we still had to make them easily accessible for the planting.

In Airdrie where the scout cabin used to be, this meant removing the huge fallen trees and building a new fence to protect the new plantings. Appropriately, the new fence was constructed as an Eagle Scout project by Jack Undercofler, of Troop Paoli 181, along with fellow Scouts and troop leaders. At the Airdrie stormwater site, sturdy wire cages were erected to protect the new plantings from deer.



In the Valley Preserves, weeds were treated, and mowers and brush-hogs were used for the heavy-duty work. Donated fence material and re-used tubes were secured to protect the plantings.



THE PLANTING ITSELF



In Airdrie, a mix of 80 new native plants were added to the Preserve, in honor of its founding 80 years ago. Volunteers from the Rotary Club of the Upper Main Line, Valley Forge Trout Unlimited, and Temple University joined Airdrie neighbors and Conservancy members in the planting process. It was truly a community effort, with everyone wearing facemasks and observing social distancing for safety.



In the Valley Preserves, over thirty volunteers in two teams delivered, planted and protected 320 trees and shrubs in Cedar Hollow, Cool Valley, Valley Creek and George Lorimer Preserves.



THE RESULT

The Preserves will continue to remain beautiful places to visit, and provide all the healing, soothing restorative benefits that nature provides. It will be very exciting to watch the coming years as nature takes over our hard work! Open Land Conservancy would not be able to undertake these types of projects without support of its members, and your Board is truly grateful.



PROJECT VOLUNTEERS

Multiple days

Sincere apologies to anyone omitted!
Not including Eagle Scout project members

☆ Carol Armstrong	☆ John Harrington	☆ Richard Linder	☆ Molly Reynolds
☆ James Blachly	☆ Pete Goodman*	☆ Tim Magee*	☆ Dave Rogers*
☆ Rebecca Blachly	☆ Bob Grill*	☆ Lindsay Martin-Carlson*	☆ Tim Ross*
☆ Art Blumenthal*	☆ Gary Horan	☆ Jeff McGroarty	☆ Amy Saylor
☆ Tim Caban	☆ Peter Hughes*	☆ Quinn McGroarty	☆ Mark Saylor*
☆ Ray Clarke*	☆ Patrick Hwang	☆ Ross McKinney	☆ Steve Schock
☆ Annelise Couderc	☆ Jay Janson	☆ John Meyers	☆ Bob Schuster*
☆ Catherine Galanes*	☆ Lea Kang	☆ Dennis Nackord	☆ Greg Sprissler*
☆ Skip Galanes*	☆ Bill Kennedy	☆ Rebecca Nash	☆ Aditi Suresh
☆ Joe Gallagher	☆ Randi Kline	☆ Jeff Newton	☆ Fred Verhage
☆ Chantal Goldberg	☆ Stella Kline	☆ Sarah Newton	☆ Dana Waldman*
☆ Dave Goldberg	☆ Lydia Goldberg	☆ Bianca Nitica	☆ Mac Wilson
☆ Jocelyn Goldberg	☆ Tim Lander*	☆ Joe Piernock	☆ Brian Winter
☆ Ellen Gross	☆ Kurt Leininger	☆ Sheila Piernock	

Member Survey

Instead of the Annual Meeting in the midst of the initial COVID-19 surge in late April, we asked members to vote on business matters and to provide feedback on what they liked about the Conservancy and on possible directions for the organization to take. A summary of the survey results and a link to the tabulated survey data are available on the “OLC Blog” page under “News” on the website. (Also: check out the Blog periodically for occasional tidbits about the Conservancy!).

We’re not going to repeat the summary here, but the Board would like to thank everyone that responded. We hope that this member baseline can be at least one good outcome from the pandemic (more awareness and use of the Preserves is another), and will give us the opportunity to track progress into the future.



Holiday Greetings to All!

*Please consider a year-end
donation that will help
keep our Treasures Secure!*

*And thanks to those who
have already donated!*

Practice Safety In the Preserves

Our community is extremely fortunate to have access to open space so close by. However, it is critical to use the Preserves safely—follow all government guidelines. In addition,

when in the Preserves:

- High traffic makes it especially important to keep dogs on leashes
- Don't go in the woods when it's windy: many large and healthy trees with saturated roots may be vulnerable to wind gusts
- If the parking lot is busy come back (note that we've opened up extra space in Cedar Hollow Preserve south of the main lot.)

Connect With Us



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Check out our Twitter and Facebook feeds for photos from OLC Preserves as an important and beautiful reminder that Nature is still open. #MyHappyPlace