



SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- The Importance of Urban Forests
- MLNC Wins Important Stewardship Grant
- Rare snails in Twin Hills Park
- Native Plant Sale; Plan now for 2023
- How to join us!

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From the President...

The Importance of Urban Forests

As we come to the conclusion of another year, let's take a moment to reflect on our role as stewards to the urban forests in our community. As a nation, we are increasingly urban, with up to 80% of citizens living in urban areas. This means that more children play amongst pavement and lawns than forests and streams. Many kids are so disconnected from nature that they are more likely to recognize hundreds of corporate logos than a few native trees. Hence the vital importance of our urban canopy and parks.

Urban forests, such as Bird

Park and Twin Hills, do more for our community than meets the eye. They filter air, removing some harmful pollutants and soften noises emitted by modern life. Plants and soil



Spring-flowering Golden Ragwort planted in 2021 is thriving.

clean water and control runoff, keeping areas such as roads and homes from flooding. A forest keeps temperatures down and provides beauty and respite from a hectic world.

One of our most exciting projects for 2023 is the restoration of a stream corridor in Bird Park that serves as an exploration station for School in the Park, our beloved third-grade field trip. Thanks to a grant from the American Water Charitable Foundation's Water and the Environment program, we are able to have the resources to restore this formerly open area, by planting new native trees

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CMNH's Dr. Tim Pearce "SNAIL TALK" Nov. 6 to Speak at MLNC Annual Meeting

Tim Pearce, Ph.D., head of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History's Section of Mollusks, will present a program on the Maryland Glyph, Armed Snaggletooth and other mollusks at Mt. Lebanon Library on Nov. 6 at 1:30 PM Lower Level.

Dr. Pearce's snail talk will be the featured presentation at the Conservancy's annual meeting.

The presentation will interest a wide range of nature lovers ... and joke lovers. Dr. Pearce is certainly a super serious science guy, but he also tells hilarious snail jokes ... *when he comes out of his shell* (ba-dum bum).

Check out some of his snail jokes at www.tiktok.com/@carnegiemnh



See our Twin Hills Park news on Page 3!

“If the snail tells you he’s not home, he’s definitely lying!”

Come hear Dr. Tim Pearce, head of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History Mollusk Division
November 6!

MLNC Receives \$16,000 Water and Environment Grant!

A 2022 grant of over \$16,000 from the American Water Charitable Foundation (AWCF) will enable MLNC to improve the natural environment and stream water quality at the headwaters of Bird Park Stream. The project begins this fall and will be completed in 2023.

Grant funding will allow MLNC to purchase native trees, shrubs and ground-covering perennials as well as related supplies for a 0.6-acre area between the soccer field and Youngwood Drive where the stream forms. This low-lying area has lost over two dozen mature trees, mostly ash, in the past 10-15 years, which has enabled opportunistic undesirable plants such as poison ivy and invasive, non-native plants like English ivy, vinca, and privet to flourish.

New native plantings will improve the local ecology, better support pollinators and help protect the stream water quality.

The project, officially called the “*Bird Park Stream Riparian Initiative and Instructional Stations*” effort, begins this fall with site preparation. Our partners at the Mt. Lebanon Department of Public Works will fell the dead trees and spray poison ivy, making work by volunteers possible. MLNC will rely on volunteers to cut vines and shrubs that need to go, drag the cut debris to nearby pick-up spots, and remove invasive groundcovers and other problem plants.

Volunteer workdays will take place through the fall and in early spring 2023. The Conservancy

will order plants during the winter, for installation in the spring. Volunteers will also be needed for this spring activity.

The grant will also pay for replenished materials for some education stations in MLNC’s annual School in the Park program, and an interpretive sign about the project.

The American Water Charitable Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides a formal way to demonstrate the company’s ongoing commitment to the communities where American Water and its employees live, work and operate. For more information, visit [amwater.com/awcf](https://www.amwater.com/awcf) and follow the American Water Charitable Foundation on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/awcf).

See the proposed plan on page 5.

We Need YOU!

Sign up to Help!

This project represents a big effort for the Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy, and we will need all hands on deck!

We ask volunteers to help recruit others, such as groups from a workplace, house of worship or family.

Visit <https://www.lebonature.org/new-events>

Rare Snails in Twin Hills Park

If you visit Twin Hills Park, tread lightly, for you are in the presence of two species of rare snails.

The park is designated a site of *global significance* due to the presence of two tiny land snails, the Maryland Glyph and Armed Snaggletooth.

In 2021, the state’s Natural Heritage Inventory Program published a new Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) for Allegheny County. NHIs document what lives in a county, listing particularly the rare, threatened or endangered plants and animals. Western Pennsylvania Conservancy ecologists and biologists and research partners combed Allegheny County from 2019 to

2021 to inventory and identify these species.

They found evidence in Twin Hills of the presence of two “species of concern,” the Maryland Glyph and the Armed Snaggletooth snails. These are both tiny, burrowing snails about the size of a sesame seed or grain of rice. (See infographic page 6.) The Maryland Glyph lives in only a few places in the whole world, and one of them is Twin Hills Park. The Armed Snaggletooth is also very uncommon. Because of the Glyph, Twin Hills Park was rated in the Allegheny NHI as a site of global significance.

Timothy Pearce, Ph.D., Curator of Collections & Head, Section of Mollusks at Carnegie Museum of



Armed Snaggletooth (*Gastrocopta armifera*)

Actual size ———>



Maryland Glyph (*Glyphyalinia raderi*)

Actual size ———>

Photos: Carnegie Museum of Natural History

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The Importance of Urban Forests Cont'd.

and shrubs, and removing noxious invasive vegetation.

This project will require a monumental volunteer effort but, as an organization, we know what is at stake and are ready for the challenge. Just take a walk in Bird Park on a fall morning, and you will see a variety of wildlife, from flocks of migratory birds enjoying fall fruit to red squir-

rels busy burying their cache for the winter.

Most importantly, you will see our youngest residents exploring along the woods with boots on their feet, mud on their fingers and wonder in their eyes. It becomes clear that we are stewarding the forest, but also raising the stewards of tomorrow.

A group of our important volunteer stewards





Honeysuckle is a major invasive shrub in our parks.

Introduced species such as honeysuckle, privet, barberry and bittersweet invade our natural areas and don't provide good habitat for our birds or the pollinators that feed them.

Native Plant Sale A Rousing Success

The plight of pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, has been in the media with alarming frequency and many people are wondering what they can do to make things better. Gardeners are learning about the benefits of native plants in our yards, however, finding these plants can be difficult in conventional nurseries.

To meet this challenge, the Conservancy decided to hold its first ever annual plant sale in 2022, focused on native perennials that can thrive in our area. The process began with identifying a plant supplier who would grow plants without systemic pesticides and could supply our needs. We decided to sell plants as plugs, rather than larger pots,

as smaller plants are more cost effective and catch up in size in one planting season.

After careful consideration, we decided upon ten flowering perennials. The list included sun-loving perennials such as Black-eyed Susan, Bee Balm and Blazing Star, and those that do well in shade, such as White Wood Aster and Jacob's Ladder. We included a well-rounded array of plants that flower throughout the season. Some plants, such as Butterfly Weed, a type of milkweed, serve as "host plants" for butterflies, providing food and shelter to caterpillars. Having bought some myself, I can say that the plants are thriving!

So, how did we do? Well,

the plants flew off the online shelves like hotcakes. The process was seamless, and every plant was sold before pick-up day. A big thanks to the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills for receiving the plants and providing the location for pick up. Our dedicated Board members withstood blustery winds and icy rain, until each of the plants was claimed. With this level of success, we definitely plan to do this again in 2023. Look for a special discount for MLNC members!

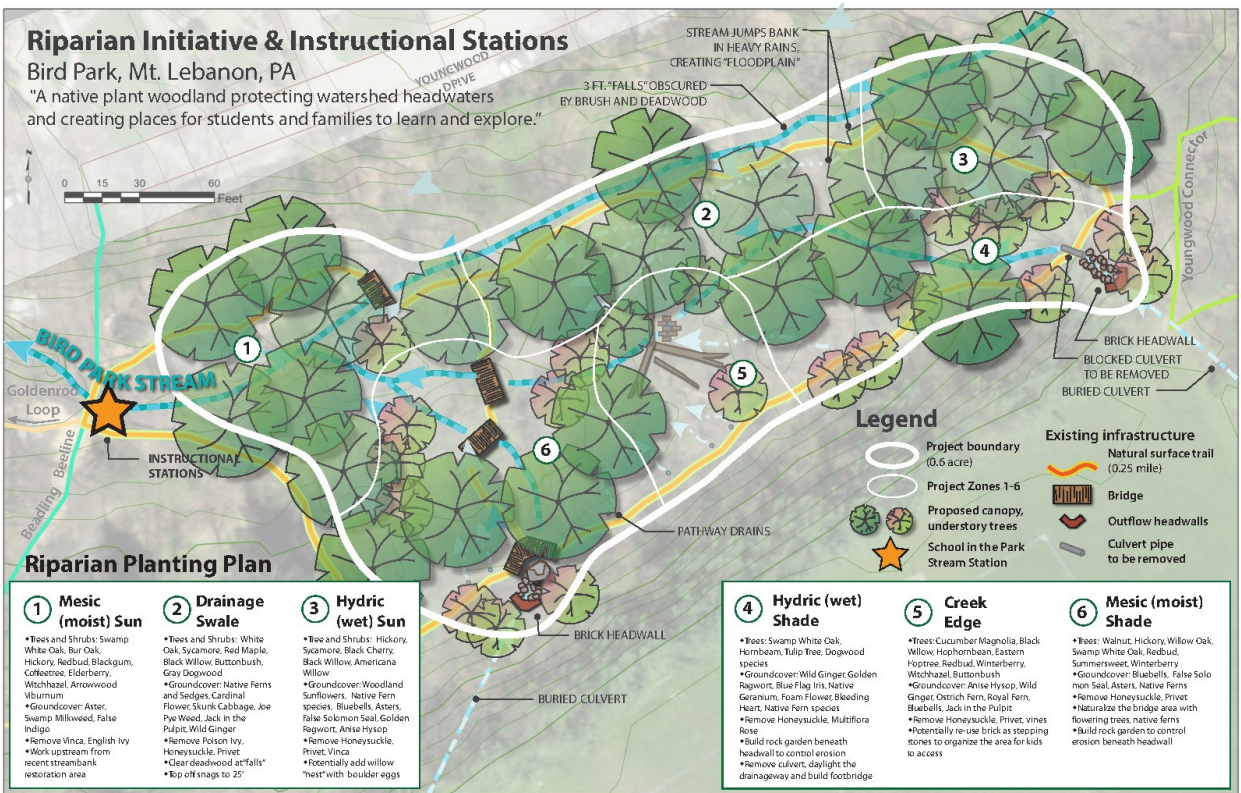
Did you buy plants from our plant sale? Please send us a photo of your blooms through the season or tag us on social media!



Wild Geranium
Geranium maculatum

MLNC 2022 Balance

Operating Income	As of October 1, 2022
+ Membership & Donations	\$1,578
+ Native Plant Sale	\$5,043
TOTAL	\$6,548.00
Operating Expenses	Jan 1 – Dec 31, 2022
- School in the Park Materials	\$1,182
- Speakers/Programming	\$600
- Insurance	\$1,217
- Website	\$800
- Native Plant Sale	\$2,441
- General Park Planting & Project Materials	\$2,000
TOTAL	\$8,240.00
Restricted Grants	As of October 1, 2022
Parker-Adler Memorial Fund - Native Plants	\$3,573
Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc. Grant - Native Plants	\$1,000
American Water Charitable Foundation Grant - Bird Park	\$16,217
TOTAL	\$20,790.00



Proposed Restoration Plan—American Water Grant

Rare Snails in Twin Hills Park cont'd

Natural History, worked with Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to identify the species and help document their significance.

Dr. Pearce said that habitat needs for the Armed Snaggletooth and the Maryland Glyph are not perfectly known, but both species are found in areas with a source of lime, for example calcium-rich ground water. "I don't know where limestone occurs around Mt. Lebanon, but the presence of these snails tells me a calcium source is somewhere nearby. One possibility could be from slag piles (from old

steel-making days). Slag contains crushed limestone, so if slag was dumped in the area a century ago, that could maintain the snails. Or calcium-rich water might flow to the surface from underground limestone deposits."

The habitat of the Maryland Glyph is somewhat mysterious, Dr. Pearce said. "It is almost never seen alive, suggesting that it might be a species that lives underground. Beyond that, we don't know whether it lives in caves, or in minute fissures in the rock, or simply in the soil under the leaf

litter."

The work of volunteers in Twin Hills Park to maintain or rehabilitate the native landscape is valuable to the snails, Dr. Pearce said, because habitat is crucial to sustaining them into the future. "Organisms don't survive long outside their habitats," he said. "Think astronauts on the moon (they're in a portable habitat). If we were to bring back dinosaurs, or even woolly mammoths, we'd also have to recreate habitats in which they could survive. Similarly for tiny snails; as long as their habitat persists, they should be fine."

More information about the **Twin Hills Park Natural Heritage Area** is available in the Allegheny County Natural Heritage Inventory (2021) by scanning this code:



Information credit:
Johnson, Anna and Christopher Tracey, editors. 2021.
Allegheny County Natural Heritage Inventory.
Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. Pittsburgh, PA

Join Us!

Please fill out this form and mail into us. Use this [link](#) to use a credit card.

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Phone: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Membership Level:

_____ \$10 _____ \$25

_____ \$50 _____ \$100

Other Amount: \$ _____ Total: _____



I am interested in becoming an MLNC volunteer (yes/no) _____



Black-eyed Susan purchased at the plant sale flowering the first season

(Your e-mail address will only be used to contact you about MLNC news and events it will never be traded or sold to other entities)



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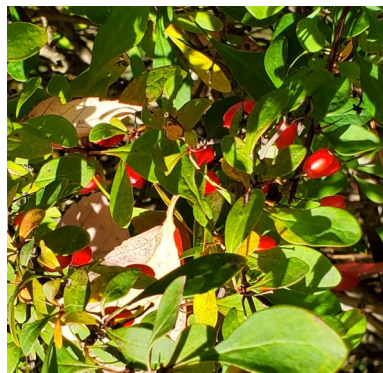
<https://www.lebonature.org/>

Follow us on Facebook!

The Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy is a 501c 3 non-profit organization.
All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law

MLNC Mission

- ◆ To promote the enhancement and careful use of passive green space in Mt. Lebanon parks
- ◆ To foster an appreciation and respect for the environment in our community and our youth
- ◆ To guard and steward these green spaces for all life by helping to restore their ecological health



Purple and green leafed forms of Barberry are found in many yards. Birds spread the fruit and it invades our parks. It does not have any ecological or pollinator value.

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