

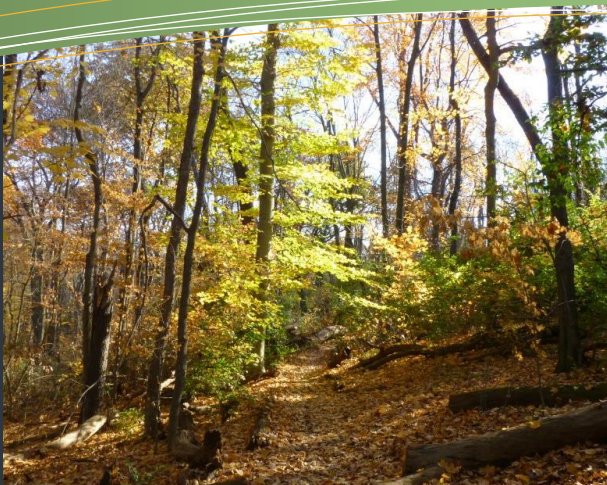
# Mt Lebanon Nature Conservancy

Annual  
Newsletter  
Fall 2023

PROTECT. RESPECT. ENJOY.

## Looking behind, planning ahead

As fall advances, a rainbow of leaves confetti the woodland floor, persimmon ripen offering nourishment to woodland fauna, asters give foraging opportunities to bees with their speckles of little flowers, spicebush provide sustenance to migratory birds, yellow goldenrod blooms offer haven to pollinators - then begin to fade, enriching the woodland soil for next year's growth. While the woods transition towards dormancy, we are given time to pause and reflect on our past year. Much like the woods, we advanced in our mission - devoting time, energy and resources to the betterment of our local trails, woodland and community. Like the woods, we saw flourishing advancement and we felt loss. While nature settles into dormancy in the advancing winter months, we will avail of the opportunity to spend time planning for the year ahead.



## Of Note

*Green Spaces & Health Outcomes*

*The Riparian Project*

*Protecting Parks from Invasive Plants*

*Why do we Leave the Leaves?*

*Remembering a Friend*

*A Year at a Glance*

*Annual Meeting*

## Green Spaces and Health Outcomes -From the President

In my work doing research and interventions on lifestyle behaviors that influence chronic disease, I came across an article that asked what societal factors reduce diabetes. It looked at worldwide access to healthcare, access to healthy foods, walkability, rural vs urban settings, and access to green and blue spaces. To my surprise, access to the natural world in the forms of green and blue spaces, was one of the most protective factors in preventing diabetes, more so than access to healthcare or healthy food.

Subsequent searches found a treasure trove on the benefits of natural spaces on many chronic diseases including heart disease, all-cause mortality, infant health and stress reduction. In learning this, I felt like all my passions aligned!

The work we do with the Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy has been given new meaning. In addition to creating healthy green spaces, we

are helping create healthy people. For those among us who want to 'see the data', here is a representative article ([Twohig-Bennett. The health benefits of the great outdoors: A systematic review and meta-analysis of greenspace exposure and health outcomes. Environmental Research. 2018](#)).

We'll keep working on making the green spaces an engaging and fun place to be through restoration work as well as some of the new and longstanding programs we offer, like Maple Syruping, Bird Watching, and of course, School in the Park.

In order for the benefits of the greenspaces to be realized, you do need to set foot in them. So please call up that friend, dust off those boots, grab the dog leash, do whatever you need to propel yourself to the park to soak up a little green and improve your health! Enjoy!



## Riparian Project

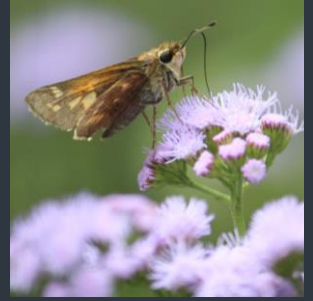
In a breathtaking achievement, Conservancy volunteers tackled one of the “worst” areas in Bird Park during the past year – the stream headwaters between Youngwood Drive and the soccer field.

The area was thick with invasive shrubs and vines that vigorously took hold after emerald ash borers killed the previous ash tree canopy layer. Now this riparian zone is a picture of promise.

358 volunteers contributed 1,033 hours of effort to clear invasive plants, install native trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses and ferns, put up deer enclosure fencing and repair trails.

The work was supported by in-kind help from the Municipality of Mt. Lebanon and a \$16,217 grant from the American Water Co. Charitable Foundation.

Learn more at [www.lebonature.org](http://www.lebonature.org)



## Our 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*

## Native Plant Sale

Thanks to all who helped improve our local ecology by purchasing and planting native plants via our 2023 sale.

Here’s a recap of the 2023 Plant Sale by the Numbers:

- Number of plant species offered: 17
- Number of plants sold: 2,084
- Profit: \$4,357.54 (to be plowed into next year’s sale)
- Plants donated to Unitarian Church: 50
- Consecutive years it rained on sale day: 2







## Volunteers

*are critical to our mission!*

*Each and every helping hand at every workday or event aids the Conservancy in creating beautiful spaces for our community.*

*Without their help, we could not do the work that we continue to do in our parks.*

*Thank you to our reliable team of volunteers for their time and efforts to help restore the community parks in Mt. Lebanon.*

[Reach out to join in the effort!](#)



# Protecting our Parks from Invasive Plants

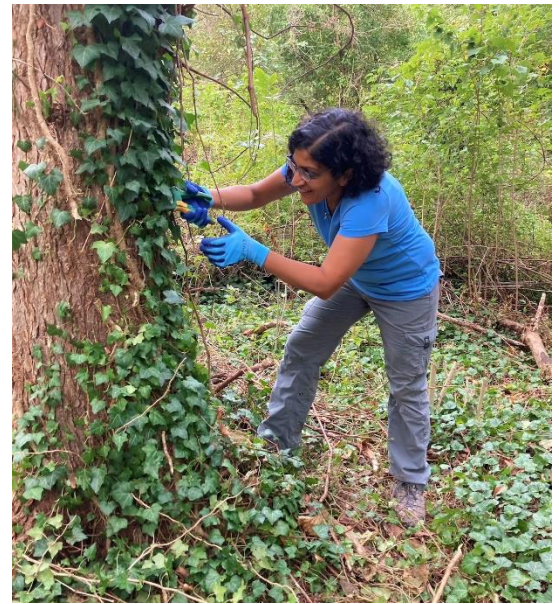
Did you know one of the most popular plants for ground cover and garden decoration is actually invasive in Pennsylvania?

That plant is English ivy, known for its climbing tendrils of star-shaped leaves.

English ivy is one of several species of invasive plants the Mt Lebanon Nature Conservancy has been working hard to remove from our parks this year. Our Riparian Project included extensive removal of invasives, including English ivy that covered entire stream banks.



Invasives are an issue that impacts our whole community because of their far-reaching effect on the local ecosystem. Many species of invasive plants have dense, aggressive root systems that crowd out native plants and siphon off resources like light and water.



A lack of plant diversity can limit food supplies for native wildlife, degrade soil quality, increase erosion, and even increase the threat to endangered species of plants and animals.

How do these invasive plants get into our parks? Invasives often grow large quantities of seeds which spread very easily. They can get carried into the parks on the wind, by birds, in the fur of dogs or even sticking to our clothes. Once an invasive takes root, it becomes exponentially easier for it to spread, even in soil where native plants are already growing. We can limit the spread of invasive plants and their harmful impact on our parks by choosing to grow only native plants at home. Many popular invasive garden plants have native alternatives that are much healthier for our parks and community.

For example, if you want to use vines for ground cover, go for wild ginger instead of English ivy. The heart-shaped leaves will look just as good in your garden and won't disturb the local ecosystem. The MLNC has a free list of native alternatives to popular invasive plants, so make sure to check it out when selecting plants for your yard, garden or landscaping this year.



## Why do we leave the leaves?

I remember when we bought our first house almost 25 years ago – we were so excited and proud to own our own home. One of the first things we did was buy a lawn mower – this was July, and our front and back yards were nothing but turf grass. We busily cut, weed whacked, and fertilized our lawn – a well-maintained yard was a sign that we were good and conscientious homeowners. Then, in the fall, leaves from the mature trees all around us came cascading down, and we fastidiously removed them from our lawn, bagged the leaves up, and

left them on the curb for the borough to haul away. The next spring, we took out the old privet hedge out front to create a perennial bed and we mulched it with inches of bark mulch that we had delivered to our house. Then the leaves came down again, we removed them again, sent them on their way again, and spread more bark mulch the following spring.

It never occurred to us that we were removing all the natural mulch from our garden and yard and then purchasing shredded wood to replace it. After almost 25 years of home ownership, last year I finally realized that we have a plentiful, free source of soil nutrients and habitat for birds, fireflies, butterflies, and bees, and we spend lots of time and money to remove it, then use fossil fuels to truck it away.

### Why leave the leaves?

- *Most butterflies and moths overwinter in the landscape as an egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, or adult, and many of them use leaf litter for winter cover. Some pollinators, like the luna moth and the swallowtail butterfly, disguise their cocoons and chrysalises to look like dried leaves. When you send the leaves away you are also killing these creatures.*
- *Bumble bee queens burrow an inch or two beneath the earth to hibernate for winter – a layer of leaves protects them from the weather. Chipmunks, birds, and turtles eat the insects that live in the leaves.*
- *Fireflies live 95% of their lives in leaf litter. When we remove the leaves we lose the fireflies.*
- *Free mulch!*

Does this mean we have to have “messy” yards? Of course not! Here are some ways to use your leaves:

- *Rake a light layer into garden beds*
- *Pile around trees to make new beds*
- *Mulch around shrubs and perennials*
- *Use in your compost bin*
- *Designate a corner of your yard as the “wild” section and leave fallen branches and piles of leaves there*
- *Leave them where they fall*
- *Make a pile and jump in it!*



## Volunteer Service Hours

*this past year:*

**609 hours** at Bird Park, Twin Hills Park, and Robb Hollow

*Park. \*Some of these hours impacted the Bird Park Riparian Project.*

**100+ hours** at Bird Park tending plant pods for the Bird Park Riparian Project

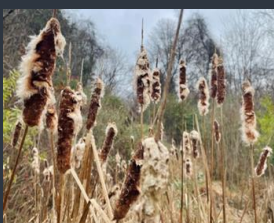
**214 hours** at MLNC board meetings

**500 hours** at School in the Park

**100+ hours** for the annual Native Plant Sale

**50+ hours** at events including, the Arboretum Event, Earth Day, Maple Sugaring Event, and Birding Event.





# Remembering a Friend Trish Beckjord

**November 15, 1947 - April 29, 2023**

Together, we remember our dear friend and board member, Trish Beckjord. Trish was a registered landscape architect with a master's in landscape architecture from the University of Michigan. Her work focused on conservation, restoration, integration and promotion of native plants in designed landscapes. She had extensive knowledge of native plants and ecosystems and loved teaching others about the critical importance of our connections to the natural world. After moving back to Pittsburgh, Trish joined the MLNC to continue her interest and give back to her new community. Her knowledge and passion was inspiring to us all, as was the grace and strength with which she handled her illness. Trish created space for others and fostered their learning by graciously sharing her time, talents and extensive knowledge, to the betterment of her friends and community. Our native plant sale was Trish's concept, she remained an integral part of its planning up until her passing. She will be fondly remembered - in gardens, wildflowers, wildlife and the poetry that she loved.



## Fall Song By Mary Oliver

Another year gone, leaving everywhere  
its rich spiced residues: vines, leaves,  
the uneaten fruits crumbling damply  
in the shadows, unmaterring  
back from the particular island  
of this summer, this NOW, that now is nowhere  
except underfoot, moldering  
in that black subterranean castle  
of unobservable mysteries - roots and sealed  
seeds  
and the wanderings of water. This  
I try to remember when time's measure  
painfully chafes, for instance when autumn  
flares out at the last, boisterous and like us  
longing  
to stay - how everything lives, shifting  
from one bright vision to another, forever  
in these momentary pastures.





# A Year at a Glance

## Community Programs and Park Projects

- 11/05 – Annual Meeting & Presentation - upcoming
- 10/21 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park - upcoming
- 10/15 – Arboretum Event
- 09/23 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park
- 09/09 – Park Improvement Project in Robb Hollow
- 08/12 – Park Improvement Project in Twin Hills
- 08/05 – Walking Meditation in Bird Park
- 07/22 – Student Board Member Eagle Scout Project
- 07/08 – Sound Bath Meditation
- 07/08 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park
- 06/24 – Park Improvement Project in Robb Hollow
- 06/10 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park
- 06/09 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park
- 06/03 – Yoga Flow in Bird Park
- 05/27 – Park Improvement Project in Twin Hills
- 05/15-05/26 – School in the Park
- 05/21 – Birding Walk in Bird Park
- 05/20 – Native Plant Sale
- 05/13 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park
- 04/30 – Earth Day Event
- 04/29 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park
- 04/15 – YMCA Princesses Park Improvement in Bird Park
- 04/15 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park
- 04/01 – Park Improvement Project in Twin Hills
- 03/30 – Gardening with Natives Online Presentation
- 03/29 – Gardening with Natives in Person Presentation
- 03/18 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park
- 03/11 – Maple Sugaring Program in Bird Park
- 02/06/23 – Global Climate Change Presentation
- 12/18/22 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park
- 12/10/22 – Park Improvement Project in Bird Park





# MLNC Annual Meeting and Lecture – Sustainable Food Systems

Sunday, November 5, 1:30-3:30 PM

Mt. Lebanon Public Library

Presenter Corey Flynn

[Register at www.lebonature.org](http://www.lebonature.org)



[Online](#)

[Membership](#)

What would a sustainable and resilient food system look like? Our food comes from a multifaceted network of interconnected systems and relationships that can be vulnerable to change. Climate change and increasing natural disasters increase the strain on our food system at a greater rate. During the pandemic we saw some of these systems break down. However, there are alternatives that can allow each of us to have more control.

Corey Flynn teaches Introduction to Sustainable Food Systems in the Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation (MCSI) as a part of the University of Pittsburgh's Sustainability Certificate. **Register** to join us for our annual meeting and lecture by Ms. Flynn and learn how we can make a difference in our own backyard, improving our health and the health of our planet.

You can become a one-time member or sustaining member quickly and easily on [lebonature.org](http://lebonature.org) or by scanning this QR code:

## Membership Renewal

Your support is vital to our efforts & much appreciated

The Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy is a 501c 3 non-profit organization.

All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy 2024 Membership Form

Enclosed is my membership form and tax-deductible contribution.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Level:

\_\_\_\_ Youth (to 18): \$1    \_\_\_\_ Family: \$15    \_\_\_\_ Contributor: \$50

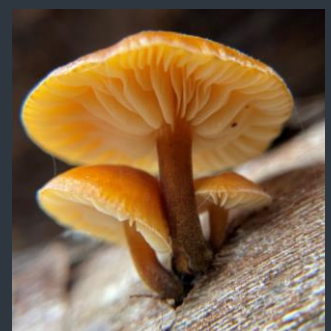
\_\_\_\_ Individual: \$10    \_\_\_\_ Donor: \$25    \_\_\_\_ Sustainer: \$100

\_\_\_\_ Patron: \$250    \_\_\_\_ Fellow: \$500

Mail to: P.O. Box 14901, Pittsburgh, PA 15234



Follow us on Facebook and on Instagram





## Get Involved

*If you have been considering getting involved in some way, we would love to have you join us, there are many opportunities!*

Visit

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

*to see our upcoming events and sign up!*

Or sign up here

[Volunteer — Mount Lebanon Nature Conservancy \(lebonature.org\)](#)

**Reach out today** to join in the effort!

## MLNC 2023 Budget

Operating Income	As of October 8, 2023
+ Membership & Donations	\$3,169
+ Native Plant Sale	\$9,648
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,817</b>
Operating Expenses	Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2023
- School in the Park Materials	\$2,529
- Speakers / Programming	\$600
- Insurance	\$1,353
- Website	\$800
- Native Plant Sale	\$4,908
- General Park Planting & Project Materials	\$2,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,190</b>
Restricted Grants	As of October 8, 2023
Parker - Adler Memorial Fund - Native Plants	\$2,389
Trish Beckjord Memorial Fund	\$1,189

## Lebanon Nature Conservancy Board Members

ANGIE PHARES - PRESIDENT

SANDY MOORHEAD

BETHANY MCGEE - TREASURER

STEVE POSTI

SARADA SANGAMESWARAN – VP PROGRAMS

JENNIFER RICK

RON BLOCK – VP PROJECTS

JOHN ROMBOLD

ALEXIS SMITH – SECRETARY

TOM SCHEVTCHUK

MOIRA AULBACH

BRITTANY TERZIGNI

LAURA FLANNERY

NATALIE DROZDA

BERNADETTE HURST

ARUL SANTOSHI – STUDENT

ELAINE KRAMER

BROOKE MURAWSKI – STUDENT

AMANDA CHIRUMBOLO MILLER

[MEET THE BOARD](#)