

# News

and

# Views

Spring 2003  
Editor, Kathy Deschenes



## Get a Smile from Mother Earth

It's that time of year when we start thinking about planting and landscaping after Winter's long haul. But before you run out and buy those chemicals that make your lawn green and your plants miraculous, think about what those chemicals do. Sure they kill weeds and pests, but they kill plenty more. Those chemicals harm birds, wildflowers, the family pet, not to mention what they do to the water supply -- including your own well.

So since I got myself on this soapbox, I decided to do some research for an article and went to -- where else -- the web. I found so much information that I didn't even know where to begin. Since earth-friendly products are becoming hot items, I found no shortage of products that are earth- and pet-friendly. You can purchase these products on the web and locally at some nurseries and farm supply stores. There also ways to get rid of pests with simple solutions you can make in your home. Oftentimes, these solutions are cheaper than chemicals and just as easy to use. But before you do anything, make sure you identify the problem or the pest correctly. Here's just a sample of what I found:

- \* When planning your vegetable garden, plant some of the following plants and herbs with them to ward off pests: mint, marigolds, nasturtiums, sage, and rosemary. Also plant some onions, garlic, and radishes in the garden as well. And, of course, use organic fertilizers to help them grow.
- \* Did you know that the best way to get rid of slugs is to fill a bowl with stale beer, bury the bowl so that the rim is even with the ground, and just let the slugs drown in it?
- \* A strong stream of water has a lot of force and is ideal to use on trees or shrubs to flush out insects. A blast of water can wash away small colonies of pests before they infest your garden. This method can be used to control aphids on ornamentals, but to be effective it must be done repeatedly.
- \* Get some mulch going! Mulches are materials placed on top of the soil and are effective in reducing weed and insect pests. Mulches also help retain soil moisture and warmth. Materials such as landscape cloth, wood, and bark chips or plastic can be used to reduce weeds.

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\* Want a quick recipe for warding off deer, rabbits, and other animals from your garden? Here's a Hot Pepper Spray you can use to repel deer, rabbits, and other pests from your flowers and vegetables. Note, use caution with vegetables as a peppery taste may remain on the fruit.

- Put 6 hot peppers and 2 cups of water into a blender.*
- Mix at high speed for 1-2 minutes.*
- Pour into a container and set aside for up to one day.*
- Strain liquid through a cheese cloth.*
- Pour liquid into a one quart container. Fill container to top with water.*
- Apply liberally to plants. Re-apply every week to two weeks or after a rain.*

There are LOTS of way to have healthy lawns and gardens without unhealthy chemical use. Do some research on the web or at the library. You'll be just as suprised as me just how easy it is to do!

### Town of Westford Historical Commission Survey

The Town of Westford Historical Commission is in the process of developing an Historic Preservation Plan that will be published and available to the public when it is complete. We at WCT would like to help that effort along. This plan will serve as a prioritized road map for the next 5 years. In order to complete this study, they are asking for feedback from the public. If you would like to help, fill out the following survey and return by June 30th to a drop-off box at either Town Hall, Fletcher Library, PCA, Town Meeting in the Abbot School Lobby, Cameron Senior Center, or Parks & Recreation Dept.

Please circle a response to each question below which best matches your opinion:

<u>POTENTIAL PROJECTS for inclusion in the Preservation Plan:</u>		<u>Your Opinion:</u>		
1	Town-owned Buildings preservation - Library, Museum, Town Hall, Town Farm Building	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
2	Encouraging the alternate usage of our Mill buildings	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
3	Records & Archives preservation/storage	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
4	Education and awareness training	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
5	Evaluating & developing alternative solutions to the demolition of historically significant buildings	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
6	Increasing our inventory of Scenic Roads	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
7	Placing individual properties, not currently in an Historic District, on the National Historic Register	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
8	Assist owners of Historic property by developing funding opportunities, i.e. favorable bank loans, State and/or Federal Grant programs, etc.	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
9	If an historically significant property became available for purchase, I would like to see it used as:	Private Home	Affordable Housing	Town/Community Usage Other

## **SPRING WALKS!**

**Haven't you had enough of winter? Well, then let's go! Join us on our Spring walks and find what's been hiding under all that snow!**

### Bird Walk (AS3W-BWA)

Saturday, May 10, 7:30 - 9:30 AM

Join Westford's foremost birder, Dick Emmet, for a bird walk on Audubon and Town Conservation land. We should see Spring migrants as well as resident birds. Walk is mostly flat but rocky, about 2 miles. Wear appropriate footwear, trousers, and socks for poison ivy protection. Bring binoculars but not dogs! This walk is limited to a maximum of 30 people. Meet at the Audubon parking lot on Concord Road across from Banbury Drive.

### Wildflower Walk (AS3W-WFW)

Sunday, May 18, 1 - 2:30 PM

Wildflower expert, Elana Schreiber will lead us on a discovery walk where we will be hosted by landowners Dian Lauber and Jim Doherty. This beautiful land boasts a great deal of habitat diversity on its six acres. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, and socks. Meet at 15 Tenney Road.

## **Biodiversity Walks**

### Stream Critters Adventure (AS3W-SC)

Saturday, June 7, 9 - 11 AM

Join wetlands biologist, Peter Severance, on an exploration for Nashoba Brook creatures. Wear sneakers and pants that can get wet. The whole family will enjoy wading in the stream. Meet at the Audubon parking lot on Concord Road across from Banbury Drive.

### Ponding Adventure (AS3W-PA)

Sunday, June 8th, 9:30 to 11:30 AM

Wetlands biologist, Peter Severance will lead an exploration of a vernal pool where many interesting pond dwellers will be found. Fun for the whole family! Wear boots or sneakers which are okay to get wet. Meet at Emmet field across from 224 Concord Road.

### Bird Walk (AS3W-BWB)

Sunday, June 8, 7 - 9 AM

Join Westford birder, Lisa Clark, on an exploration of the Forge Pond area where we expect to see many species of nesting summer birds. Walk will be about one mile on fairly level terrain. Bring binoculars if you've got 'em but please leave the dogs at home. Meet at Forge Beach parking lot, Pleasant Street.

All walks are FREE. Please call Roudenbush to register (692-5511) and reference the corresponding code for the walk. If you want further information, call Marian Harman at 692-3907 or email her at [MarianHarman@aol.com](mailto:MarianHarman@aol.com)

**SEE YOU THERE!!!!**

## **Trust Contributes to Turtle Study**

**Marian Harman, contributor**

This Spring and Summer, WENAC, the Westford Environmental News and Action Committee will conduct a search for vernal pools and turtles in Westford. The Trust has donated \$300 towards hiring a professional biologist, Dr. Bryan Windmiller, to train participants and to oversee the reporting process.

Mass. Audubon reports that in Massachusetts, "largely as a result of development and other human activities...over half the reptiles (including 80% of the turtles) are listed as Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern." In fact, four of the seven species of turtles found in Westford are on the State's endangered species list. These four species are: Blandings Turtle, Box Turtle, Spotted Turtle, and Wood Turtle. Peter Severance, Research Director of WENAC states, "It's easy to find Painted and Snapping turtles, but everyone who remembers growing up with Box and Wood Turtles would be hard-pressed to find them these days."

Vernal pools are seasonal wetlands. They are usually wet in the Spring and Fall, but dry up during the Summer. Many rare creatures breed only in these pools. Turtles use these pools for Spring and Fall feeding. The Trust has already located and certified over seventy vernal pools in Westford. State certification confers protection for the pool and some upland habitat. It is hoped that by involving the public in finding turtles and vernal pools, more habitat can be protected for these rare animals. For more information on this program, or to report turtles or vernal pools, call Peter Severance at 978-392-8885.



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