

The following excerpt from the Conservation Commission's section of Harvard's 2015 Annual Report summarizes the Land Stewardship Subcommittee's major activities this year.

The Land Stewardship Subcommittee (LSS) was busy and by the end of 2015 recruited a new contingent of volunteers (with chainsaws) to help keep the trails open. One downed tree of note was among the venerable sugar maples of Maple Lane. This massive tree, planted by the Shakers in 1850's, was uprooted in a late summer squall and hung up in a partner tree across the lane. The take-down was a challenging job for professionals at a cost of \$1700. DPW workers helped with one other difficult tree tangle and volunteers took care of the rest of trees down over trails. LSS organized public walks at Holy Hill in April and at Vesenska/Black Pond in November, which were both much enjoyed. Clearing and improving the trails in the beautiful, but lightly used conservation area around Black Pond became the major trail project of the year. New trails on the HCT Brown land at the end of Murray Lane were linked to those on Great Elms, and LSS thanks Alex Hill for his great help over the summer with trail maintenance at Holy Hill as part of his Bromfield senior community service project.

Mowing of the fields on Town conservation land went relatively smoothly this year and all fields were hayed or mowed by early October. Research continued on the population of Baltimore checkerspot butterflies on the Williams land and additional investigations on Eastern kingbirds and mouse foraging behavior were initiated at that site. Harvard Community Gardens flourished on the Coke land off Littleton Road; to request a plot for next year, contact hcgmembership@gmail.org.

The invasive plant control project moved into its fourth year, and with a final season of treatment of black swallowwort and woody invasives at Clapp Scorgie objectives at that site have been successfully met. Likewise, spot treatments on Powell and the field off Murray Lane concluded proposed work on these areas as well as the Williams land. These four areas will require monitoring and periodic maintenance treatments, but nothing akin to the effort made these past three years. New areas tackled in 2015 were Bare Hill Wildlife Sanctuary, where bittersweet vines were cut and treated in the woods by the Mary Abbott trail and woody invasives were cut and treated in the "tree islands" of the old orchard, and Dean's Hill where bittersweet and glossy buckthorn were the main targets. Finally, the three-year project at Hermann Orchard was started in October with the clearing of half of the southern slope of apple trees and invasives. The remainder of the southern slope will be cleared in 2016 to become open field and pasture and the northern slope will be "cleaned up" with the apple trees left in place.

We would like to thank the members of the Land Stewardship Subcommittee: Jim Adelson, Bob Benson, Pam Durrant, Joanne Ward, Phil Knoettner and Wendy Sisson and note that the LSS welcomes new members and volunteer assistance.