

OPEN SPACES

STAMFORD LAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." — Margaret Mead

SPRING / SUMMER 2021

WELCOME TO SPRING!



GET TO KNOW US!

Did you know we're neighbors? Stamford Land Conservation Trust's 46 preserves, comprised of 61 parcels, border over 500 properties all over Stamford. We want the community to know about us, and we want to get to know you better!

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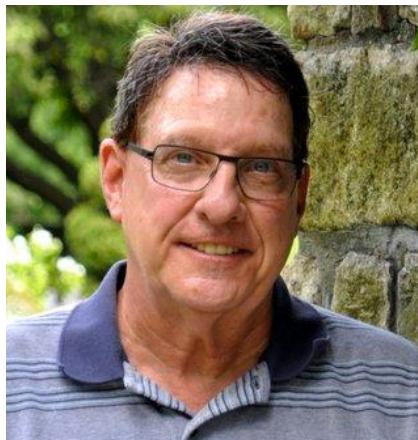
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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.” ~John Muir



Harry Day, Stamford Land
Conservation Trust President

Dear SLCT Members and Friends:
Spring is here!

Like you, I am delighted to welcome this new season, which brings with it the awakening of all the natural beauty of our preserves. This Spring is especially welcome, with our communities beginning to reopen as the weather improves and more people receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Members of the Land Trust remained busy — even during the worst of the

pandemic — managing our preserves and working to protect more open space, while many Stamford residents and visitors took advantage of our preserves to enjoy time outside while social distancing. We are looking forward to resuming in-person events during the coming months, including land steward training, nature hikes and clean-up projects in the preserves. Please check your email, our website and Facebook page for information on events as we post them.

We are also looking forward to celebrating the Stamford Land Conservation Trust's 50th anniversary in 2022! In the lead up to that big event, this newsletter includes an interview with one of the Land Trust's most important past leaders, Percy Langstaff. We can all learn from her insight into the Land Trust's challenges and accomplishments since its founding.

Please continue to visit our preserves and enjoy the season. We look forward to seeing you at one or more of our upcoming events.

Warm regards,
Harry Day



THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT RETURNS TO STAMFORD



The Stamford Land Conservation Trust is working with the American Chestnut Foundation to bring back the iconic American chestnut tree back to Stamford.

The American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*), one the Northeast's long-lost trees, used to comprise 25-40% of the trees in Connecticut's forests. The nuts provided essential nutrition to the forest's inhabitants, both animal and human, and the wood was used for constructing log cabins, railroad ties, and other vital infrastructure of the era.

Unfortunately, in the early 1900's, Japanese chestnuts, *Castanea crenata*, were imported into the country and with them came the fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica*. American chestnuts were highly susceptible to the fungus and suffered from chestnut blight, which resulted in the loss of an estimated four billion trees.

While Japanese chestnuts were able to evolve with the fungus and withstand the blight, the same was not true of the American chestnut. The blight was first noted at the New York Zoological Garden, now known as the Bronx Zoo, and spread across the northeast from there. The fungus attacks the trunk of the tree but doesn't kill the subterranean roots. As a result, the roots of American chestnuts still send up sprouts that inevitably succumb to the blight before reaching sexual maturity.

The SLCT, in partnership with the Connecticut Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation, is installing small chestnut plantings on both our Altschul and Birch Meadow preserves. The plantings will consist of approximately ten trees each and serve as an educational opportunity for visitors to both preserves.

The trees will be a mix of entirely American chestnuts and American chestnuts that have been backcrossed with Chinese chestnuts in hopes of transferring genes that convey blight resistance. Expectations of for the success of these trees are mixed and they may well succumb to blight just like the four billion American chestnuts before them. Regardless of the actual result, the planting project will also help people understand the history of the American Chestnut, how our woodlands have changed over time, and the impact humans have on our environment.

For more information, please visit the American Chestnut Foundation website, <https://acf.org>, or reach out to Chief Steward Aubrey Carter at aubcarte@gmail.com.





A CONVERSATION WITH AN OPEN SPACE WARRIOR: **PERCY LEE LANGSTAFF**

In advance of SLCT's 50th anniversary in 2022, we thought it'd be fun to speak to some of the people who have been instrumental in bringing SLCT to life and staying focused on its mission.

Percy Lee Langstaff may not have founded the Stamford Land Conservation Trust, but she was its public face for over 25 years. For those who may not know the force named Percy, not only did SLCT stewardship grow over tenfold during her tenure, but Percy also played a vital role in saving the Blake Coleman and Treetops

properties and she was one of the visionaries behind the Mill River Park and Greenway. Percy, of course always thinks big. She wanted the Greenway to extend to NY State!

Percy's mark on Stamford is undeniable and future generations will reap the benefit of her tireless work to save open space. We had an opportunity to speak with Percy recently. Following are some highlights from that conversation.

SLCT: What got you interested in conservation?

PERCY: I grew up in Farmington, CT and during WWII we all worked in the gardens to feed ourselves and others. I was always outside surrounded by nature, and all kinds of animals. I guess you could say I got addicted to open space. After getting married and living in Paris for a short while, we moved to Ingleside Drive in Stamford. I was surrounded by nature and animals again. It was a natural extension of my passion for open space to get involved with the land trust.

SLCT: What do consider your greatest accomplishment during your tenure at SLCT?

PERCY: Building a balanced and productive board was really key. It was a continuous work in progress. I recruited people. I would ask, "will you come with me". New members brought new paths and new ideas. I took advice and listened. I learned a lot about leadership and the value of having a sense of humor. And I always remembered to thank my board members. It's important to build a team and to make sure everyone feels a part of it.

SLCT: What do you consider SLCT's first significant acquisition?

PERCY: You know we made lots of little acquisitions, 2 acres is significant. While a big acquisition like the Altschul Preserve is incredibly important, the little ones make a huge difference.

SLCT: How would you get people to give land to SLCT?

PERCY: It might not work the same way today, but I wasn't afraid to knock on someone's door and say,

"look at those trees, you could save them, not pay taxes and keep them forever wild." We were lucky. Lots of people responded. I also had help staying informed about when new development was being planned and if there was an opportunity to set aside conservation land.

SLCT: Should Land Trusts play a role in public policy?

PERCY: Of course! Anything that has to do with conservation and the environment is important to speak out on and support.

SLCT: Is it important to welcome the community onto the preserves?

PERCY: Yes. How else will they learn? Walking among the trees is the best way for people to understand the importance of conservation.

SLCT: What's your wish for SLCT over its next 50 years?

PERCY: Get more PR so people know about SLCT and save all the land we can! We're not saving it fast enough.

On retirement in 2007, the SLCT Board presented Percy with plans for a stone bench inscribed in her honor on its 25-acre Birchmeadow Preserve. If you enter the preserve from Gun Club Road, and make a right at the first path, you'll find the bench, with commemorative plaque, overlooking the lake. It's a favorite place for Percy to visit. We invite you to visit it too!



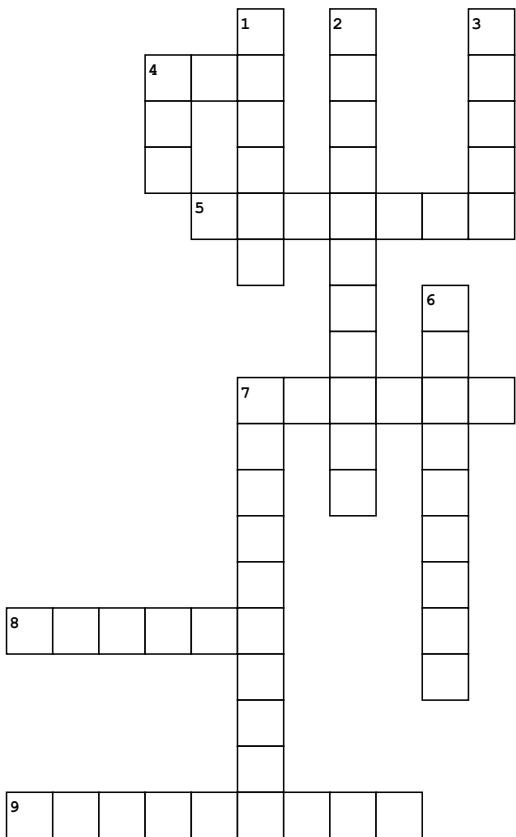
KIDS' CORNER



Pollinator Scavenger Hunt

- Bumble Bee
- Butterfly
- Hummingbird
- Blooming Tree
- Budding Flower
- Blooming Flower

POLLINATOR PUZZLE



Across

4. A busy garden insect
5. An animal's home
7. Using this spray hurts pollinators
8. Found in a flower. Sometimes makes us sneeze.
9. A very colorful and beautiful pollinator

Down

1. Sweet liquid found in flowers
2. A small bird that moves very fast
3. Yum! Many pollinated flowers turn into these.
4. This flying mammal likes cactus flowers
6. Sweet! This is a treat made possible by a pollinator
7. An animal that helps pollinate flowers

Word Bank:

bee	chocolate	fruit	poison
hummingbird	nectar	butterfly	habitat
pollen	bat	pollinator	

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SLCT FACTS AND FIGURES!

SLCT was founded in 1972 and received its 501(3)c tax exemption in the same year.

Booth Hemingway, a then member of the city's Board of Representatives and a founding member of SLCT, made our first land donation, a one-acre parcel which is now part of SLCT's 14.3-acre Rock Spring Gorge preserve on Heming Way in North Stamford.

In the 1980s, SLCT stewarded approximately 35 acres of open space land.

Long-time SLCT President Percy Lee Langstaff began her 24-year tenure in 1985. Under her leadership SLCT saw exponential growth in stewarded acreage.

SLCT completed two of its largest acquisitions in 2007 and 2010; the 25.5-acre Birchmeadow Preserve and the 164-acre Helen G. Altschul Preserve respectively.

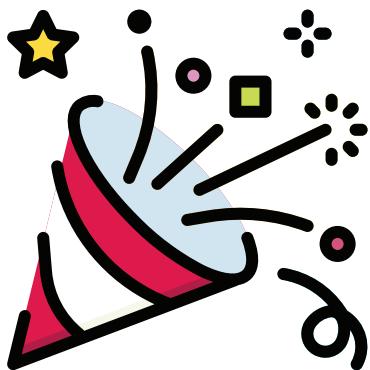
In 2018, SLCT helped the Mianus River Gorge preserve 21-acres on June Rd in Stamford in what is now known as the Taylor Preserve.

As of March 2021, SLCT's 432 stewarded acres include 61 parcels that make up 48 preserves, as well as 4 easements.

- :: Our smallest parcel, Grass Island, is .25 acres
- :: Our largest preserve is 164 acres
- :: The majority of parcels are between 1 and 5 acres
- :: Eleven preserves are made up of multiple parcels
- :: Two of our preserves have walking trails
- :: We geocache!



SLCT TURNS 50 IN 2022!!



STAMFORD LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

22 FIRST STREET, STAMFORD, CT 06905-0247



Skunk Cabbage - Shady Knoll Preseve

STAMFORD LAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

Working together, we can help make Stamford even better – with cleaner water, a better environment, less traffic, more open space and a wealth of natural beauty. That's why we're here.

We hope you will consider partnering with us; as a volunteer, a land donor and/or as a financial supporter. We want to build the future of our community together.

Stay connected with us on our website (www.stamfordland.org) and Facebook page, and join our mailing list by emailing: info@stamfordland.org.