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**Independent Walking Tours**

A new series of walking tours have been developed as part of the Genesee River Alliance's effort to introduce the 13 miles of the Genesee River that pass through the city of Rochester throughout the seasons.

Visit [www.geneseeandtrust.org/independent-walking-tours](http://www.geneseeandtrust.org/independent-walking-tours) to access tours and explore. If you go on a tour, we would love to hear your feedback and see your photos of this amazing river at the heart of Rochester.

*We invite you to sign up for our Enews on [geneseeandtrust.org](http://geneseeandtrust.org) to receive event updates as well as conservation news and stories.*



Don't forget to follow us on social media for more news!



# THE PRESERVE

A PUBLICATION OF GENESSEE LAND TRUST



FALL/WINTER 2020

TRAIL KEEPERS IN ACTION

A DREAM OF PROTECTING THEIR FARM

YOUTH DISCOVER NATURE AND LOCAL HISTORY



## TRAIL KEEPERS IN ACTION

Trail Keepers, a group of Genesee Land Trust volunteers who focus on trails and habitat improvement, have been getting work done (socially distanced) at our preserves since July (after a three-month pause). At a fall work day at Island Cottage Woods Preserve in Greece, volunteers were spread out throughout the woods removing white plastic tree tubes.

### HAPPINESS OUTDOORS

White tubes stood in every direction at Island Cottage Woods Preserve, most with the bright leaves of young trees growing out of them. Among the trees, Trail Keepers, including Sue Lucchesi, were busy at work.

"I have always volunteered for clean-up days – at parks and trails around the area," said Sue. "The first time I joined Trail Keepers, I knew it was a really great fit for me."

"I have come several times on my own. In the spring it was to pull invasive garlic mustard plants," added Sue. "The storybook trail was up then along the trails, and I saw grandparents out with young children enjoying the book and the outdoors. It was great to see."

Sue mused that so far she hasn't had luck getting friends to come join her, but she doesn't mind. "I will come back to help again. This is my happy place."



*R: Young tree sprouting from tree tube*



*L: Trail Keeper Sue Lucchesi*



## YOUTH DISCOVER NATURE AND LOCAL HISTORY

From Ontario Beach Park to the Thomas R. Frey Trail at El Camino to Full Lotus Farm and Braman Preserve, Genesee Land Trust's Environmental Ambassadors, previously known as Landscaper Apprentices, bring their skills and youth power to care for outdoor spaces that our community enjoys.

It was a typical day for the Environmental Ambassadors when they showed up to both learn and give back. Gathering at Maplewood Park, they listened to the park's rosarian (a person who is an expert in the care of roses) describe the hundreds of roses in the Rose Garden and detail the constant care they need throughout the year. After learning of some of the special names and varieties, the youth spread out among the beds to weed, mulch, and spruce up a section of the rose collection.

For some, Maplewood Park was a familiar spot and for others it was their first visit, but all of them had never looked at the roses so up close and personal. And then they discovered a part of Maplewood Park that none of them had ever explored before.



*Sariyah mulching the flower beds*

Following the trail down to the Lower Falls with Bill Self of the Lower Falls Foundation (a Genesee River Alliance member), the youth heard the history of this special spot along the Genesee River as the last stop to freedom on the Underground Railroad at Kelsey's Landing and experienced the awe-inspiring power of the Lower Falls.

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

"Lower Falls Park is very beautiful, spiritual, and calming. Knowing that we have sights like that really soothes the brain."

– Yasmine

"I learned that the Genesee River flows north, the Middle Falls are 20 feet high, and the Lower Falls are 90+ feet high."

– David

"The park history is interesting. Frederick Douglass came to this spot ... because he was trying to escape slavery by going to Canada."

– Damarion

## A SENSE OF PEACE AMIDST THE TREES

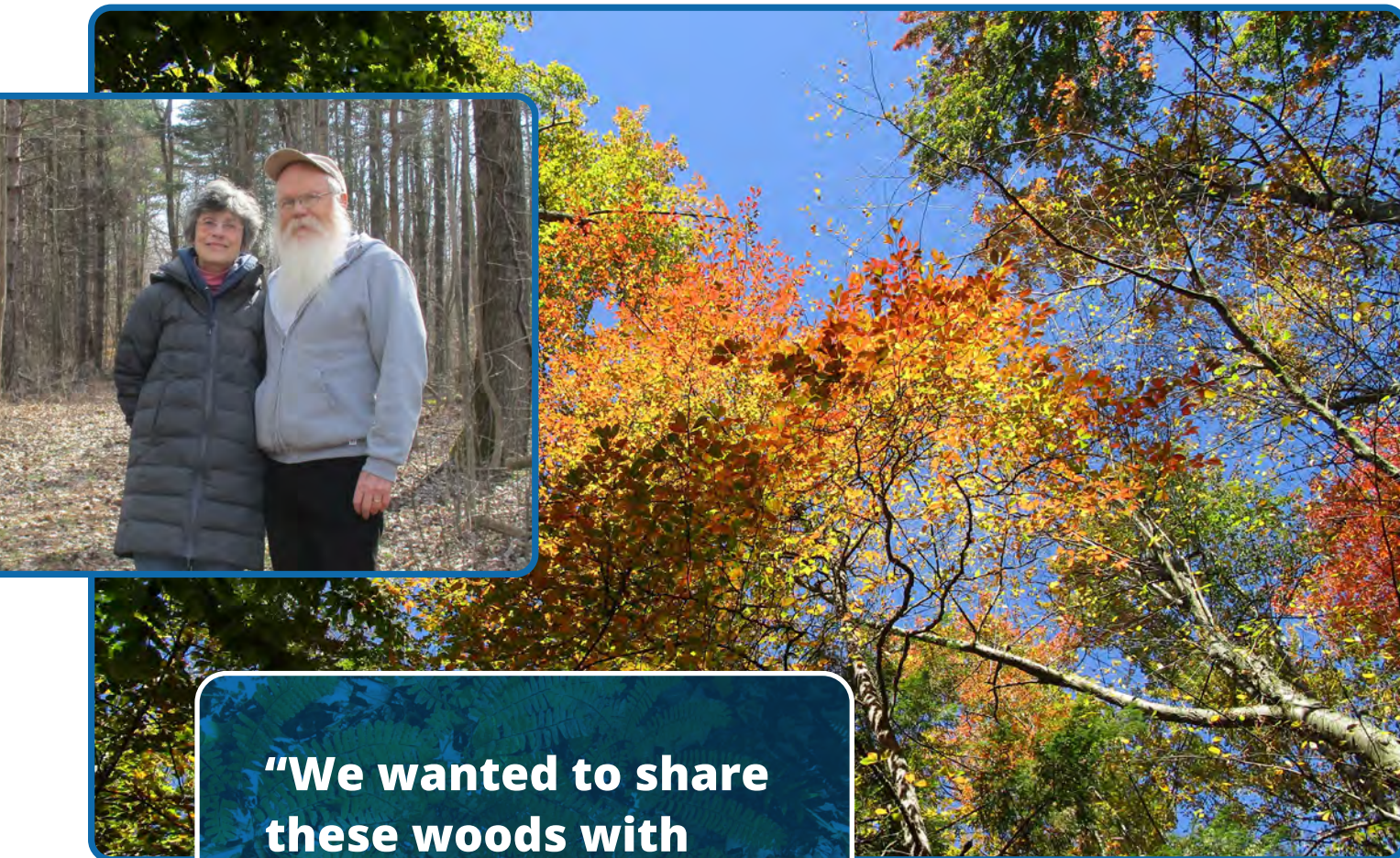
According to Martha Miller, she fell in love with the woods right away. Martha and her husband Jim walked into the woods a few miles away from their home in North Rose and immediately knew they would not be using it to harvest firewood.

"It was a very special place to both of us from the get go. The beauty and the feeling that we got stepping into the woods was so powerful," reflected Martha. "For me, I enjoy listening to the birds, watching for the first wildflowers in spring, and feeling the quiet after it snows. But what I enjoy most is the sense of peace in the woods, the ability to let go of the every day."

### PROTECTING NATURAL HABITAT FOR THE FUTURE

By protecting their 62 acres, the Millers took steps to provide a very special place for wildlife – preserving an environment that could be lost.

"We wanted to keep these woods as woods, for future generations and for wildlife," according to Martha. "With a conservation easement with Genesee Land Trust, when we leave this earth we will be sharing something special that will go on into the future, and that is a special feeling."



**"We wanted to share these woods with future generations."**

– Martha Miller, landowner

L: Martha and Jim Miller

R: The Miller Woods



L: Empty tree tubes at the preserve entrance  
R: Dead ash trees



### EMERALD ASH BORER PROJECT AT ISLAND COTTAGE WOODS

In New York State, there are nearly 900 million ash trees, one of the most common trees in woodlands all across the eastern United States. And all are threatened by a bright green insect, the ½ inch long Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), that can kill ash trees in three to five years. Originally from Asia, EAB was first seen in Detroit in 2002, found in New York in 2009, and has now spread across our region.

In 2015 and 2016, Genesee Land Trust planted over 2,500 native trees and shrubs at Island Cottage Woods. Good conditions enabled a high survival rate in the first few years, and we will cheer on the young trees as they begin to fill the gaps left by dead ash trees.

Island Cottage Woods is an important place for migratory birds. The variety of trees and shrubs that we've planted not only provides birds and other wildlife with new food sources and habitat, they create a resilient landscape better suited to deal with invasive pests, a changing climate, and other future challenges.

### HONORING FAMILY: AN OUTDOOR LEGACY

When Jeanne Beecher was updating her will last spring, she researched Genesee Land Trust because she and her husband Walter had always enjoyed the countryside around Rochester. Jeanne's lifelong love of the outdoors started as a child when her father (a doctor) used to say, "No one ever died of fresh air," when he sent Jeanne and her siblings outside.

Jeanne remembers her late husband felt strongly that "money is like manure. It's best to spread it around to help make things grow," paraphrased from the musical *Hello Dolly!* So Jeanne chose organizations that were making a difference for the future in ways that she, as well as her father and husband, cared about. *Thank you to Jeanne for becoming a Legacy Society member.*



## A DREAM OF PROTECTING THEIR FARM

In 1992, Gary and Stephanie Craft took the plunge and bought Herb Smith's 130-acre fruit farm in Walworth that had been established in the early 1800s and renamed it G and S Orchards. In the next 28 years they added 70 acres and lots of varieties of fruits and vegetables.

With the expansion of residential development all around them, "we know that our farm is in a perfect position to be successful or to become houses," said Stephanie.

The business combines hands-on experiences with high-quality fruit and vegetables for Pick Your Own customers, loyal farm stand shoppers, and seasonal CSA (community supported agriculture) members. Growing their farm into a diversified and resilient business keeps Gary and Stephanie busy every day during the season and focused on the future.

### NEVER GIVING UP

Worried about the future of their farm, the Crafts were among the first local farmers to consider the sale of development rights as a way to be sure it will continue for another 200+ years. This is a real worry; small family farms like theirs are disappearing all across the country, while at the same time, young farmers are struggling to gain access to good farmland.



## PROTECTING THEIR FARM, CONTINUED

"We know how hard it is to find a good farm and how much we had to sacrifice to buy this land and build a viable business," noted the Crafts. And, without children to pass their farm on to, the Crafts are making sure it will be easier for the next owner to get started, according to Stephanie "We know they are likely to be similar to us back in 1992 - farmers at heart but without a farm of our own."

"It's been over fifteen years since we first started thinking about working with Genesee Land Trust and Wayne County to permanently protect our farm," according to Gary. "Whenever they would hold a meeting about farmland protection grants we were in the room ready to try again."

Gary and Stephanie are getting closer to seeing their dream for their farm become a reality. In 2018, Genesee Land Trust's team secured funding for a New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets grant to protect the farm and are now finalizing the conservation easement that will ensure the farm is not subdivided for houses or other development and will always be available as a farm.

And when asked about retirement, Gary's response was, "I like it too much. Slowing down might not be a bad idea, but we'll continue to put our hearts and hard work into this farm until that day comes. Who knows - maybe we'll be doing this for another 28 years." Stephanie laughed and said, "We'll see."



Gary and Stephanie Craft

To date, Genesee Land Trust has conserved 17 family farms, totaling 3,705 acres in Monroe, Wayne, and Ontario Counties.

