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Newsletter

Preserving and Protecting the Historic Princeton Nursery Lands www.fpnl.org

With no centenary to celebrate 2014 was a somewhat quieter year than its predecessor, but here is a look at some of the highlights.

Our **Martin Luther King Jr. Day of service** in January attracted no fewer than 43 volunteers, despite frigid conditions! They vigorously cut back Autumn Olive in the fields, scrub trees in the greenhouse area, and bamboo around the Dawn Redwood; and, of course, there was the perennial collection of litter. A great deal was accomplished, and everyone had a good time—though there *was* a rush for the hot cider when everybody headed to the Education Building for a warm-up. A very successful event and a great start to 2014!

The **Mary Jacobs Library Exhibit** (in March): At the invitation of the library, FPNL trustees put together an eye-catching exhibit for a month-long display in the Mary Jacobs Library. The display included a collection of Princeton Nurseries tools, photos, books and other artefacts, complemented by several paintings of the Preserve (paintings featured in the 2013 Legendary Locations Exhibit, sponsored by South Brunswick Arts Commission).

The exhibit elicited a number of very positive comments, and we are very grateful to the Mary Jacobs Library for the opportunity to share it with Rocky Hill and neighboring communities.

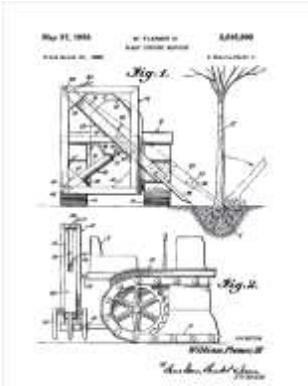


Princeton Nurseries Tractor
painting by Heather Barros



Part of the Princeton Nurseries Exhibit at
Rocky Hill Library

The NJ History Fair, for which FPNL usually coordinates on an exhibit with Kingston Greenways Association and the Kingston Historical Society, had as its 2014 theme, Liberty, Diversity and Innovation;—the FPNL portion of the exhibit, which focused on innovation at Princeton Nurseries, was most appropriate!



Tree digging machine designed by Wm Flemer, Jr.



Custom-built equipment for digging up 10 ft tall bare root trees.



Machine modified by Princeton Nurseries for shrub digging

At the 2014 Annual Meeting, our speaker was entomologist Paul Kurtz, of the NJ Department of Agriculture. He gave a fascinating, in-depth illustrated talk on *Invasive Insect Pests in New Jersey*, and we all learned a lot about these destructive but often amazing-looking insects!

That very day, the presence of emerald ash borers in New Jersey was officially confirmed--very bad news for ash trees. Since that time, damage to ash trees has been observed in Mercer, Burlington and Somerset counties.

This invasive species from Asia has devastated tens of millions of ash trees in 24 states. The emerald ash borer beetle eats the leaves of ash trees, but it is the larva that really harm the tree. They tunnel through conductive tissue under the bark, causing die-back of the canopy and death of the tree. There are no treatment options; the only solution is tree removal. For more information and steps to take if you suspect infestation, please visit <http://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu/invasive-emerald-ash-borer-detected-in-new-jersey/>



The Emerald Ash Borer

Our August Scavenger Hunt entertained ten teams in a family-oriented scavenger hunt with a nature- history-theme, using the Mapleton Preserve as the search area. A good time was had by all.

Interesting finds included a praying mantis egg case, several cicadas and a wild turkey feather. It was a great way to get to know the Preserve *and* do a lot of learning in the process!



Enjoying watermelon after the Scavenger Hunt

Notes from the fields



Students from Princeton Learning Cooperative take on autumn olive

Autumn Olive: This year, on both Martin Luther King Day and National Public Lands Day, our volunteers made good progress at reducing the amount of autumn olive in the fields of Mapleton Preserve. **We express gratitude for all those who have helped us in this task, with a special shout-out to the students from the Princeton Learning Cooperative**, who came back in June to see if our clearing efforts on Martin Luther King Day were successful and make sure that the cut stumps had not re-sprouted (they hadn't!)

For those that are not acquainted with this plant, the autumn olive is a spreading deciduous shrub that bears pale yellow fragrant flowers in spring and clusters of red juicy berries in late summer. Its leaves are covered with scales, green above and a shimmery silver below, giving rise to the alternate name of Japanese Silverberry.



Autumn olive leaves are green above and silver below



The berries also have scales that make them look flecked with silver gold. Turkeys, cedar waxwings and songbirds like the berries and a mature shrub can provide a lot of food for wildlife. The plants were widely planted for erosion control, as windbreaks and for wildlife plantings until their invasive nature became obvious. Their fruit is edible to humans, and is rich in lycopene (over ten times more than is found in tomatoes). It can be made into jam and fruit leather, or eaten as fresh berries.

Autumn olive berries are flecked with spots of silvery gold

By now, you should be thinking, they sound pretty nice - why are you trying to eradicate them?

Here is why. Autumn Olive fixes atmospheric nitrogen in its roots, so it can grow vigorously even in infertile soils. The large number of berries produced by the shrub gives rise to a robust crop of offspring nearby. Left unchecked, autumn olive would choke out the fields of Mapleton Preserve, as the shrub grows rapidly to a height of 8 to 18 feet. If you want to see how autumn olive can spread, look at the vegetation along Rt. 603, the road that runs between Kingston and Rocky Hill.

Fall membership drive: Our fall membership drive to solicit members for 2015 is underway. We urge all who love this property to join the Friends of Princeton Nurseries to help support our mission. **Since we solicit renewals and donations only once a year, we urge you to join or to renew your membership in Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands TODAY. Your donations help support all of our programs, this newsletter and restoration and interpretive projects. If you are on our mailing list, you will receive a renewal form soon. If not, please visit our website at www.fpnl.org to join or renew using either PayPal or by downloading a membership form.**

This year, our special goal remains the restoration of the Princeton Nurseries propagation building and greenhouses. Via the David Knights Memorial Fund, we continue to raise funds to augment the grant funding that has already been raised for this purpose. The discovery of asbestos in the glazing for the greenhouse windows created an urgent shortfall, and appropriate options for the remediation of this issue continue to be explored. *But we know one thing - any option will be expensive.*

AS THE FUNDING SHORTFALL IS HOLDING UP PROGRESS ON THE RESTORATION WORK, WE ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING YOUR HELP TO GET THIS DONE. p.s. Please reach out if you have constructive ideas on how to help solve this problem - we need your help!

Upcoming events: (All except the Christmas bird count start at the Main Office for the D&R Canal State Park, 145 Mapleton Road, Kingston.)

Thursday, Nov. 27th (Thanksgiving), (10 – 11:30 am) Over the river and through the woods - a Thanksgiving Day nature walk. Join FPNL president Karen Linder for a Thanksgiving Day morning exploration of the Mapleton Preserve. Come walk off some holiday calories, search for turkeys and turkey tails, and enjoy the abundance and subtle beauty of late fall. **Open to all, but preregistration IS requested. Call 609-683-0483 to reserve a spot.**

Sunday, Dec. 14th, Audubon Christmas Bird Count (BIRDERS TAKE NOTE!) Starts at 7:30 AM:

The Kingston segment of this year's Audubon Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by the Kingston Greenways Association, begins at 7:30 AM to catch the "early birds". We will bird until noon, when we take a break for lunch at Main Street Café. The group then continues with the count in the afternoon. You can join us for morning, afternoon, or both. If interested, give Karen Linder a call (609-683-0483) for more info. We would particularly appreciate the help of experienced birders, but novices are also welcome!

Thursday, Jan. 1, 2015, First Day Hike (11-12:30). Did you make a New Year's Resolution to walk more? Start the New Year off right with a loop hike in the Princeton Nursery Lands, through the fields on the other side of Mapleton Road, along the D&R Canal and back to Mapleton Preserve. We know you want to sleep in a little, so the walk begins at 11 am, whatever the weather.

Monday, Jan. 19th, 2015, (12 - 3 pm), Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. Come join us for an afternoon of service to Mapleton Preserve - we could use your help with clearing, vine removal, litter pickup and other tasks. Call 609-683-0483 to let us know you are coming.

Saturday, February 21, (2:00 - 3:30 pm), Signs of Life on A Winter's Day . We will be taking a walk through the fields of Mapleton Preserve, looking for signs of life in the winter landscape, be it plants, animals or birds, or signs of feeding, tracks or scat. It will probably be cold and it could be snowy or muddy, so dress for the weather, whatever it is. Hot chocolate will be served. **All are welcome!**