



## Conservancy Field Notes: March 2020

*Updates from the Resident Board of Trustees*

The mission of the Conservancy is simple as it focuses on the **“viable, long-term use of the land, integrating farming, recreation, conservation and education to enhance the quality of life for the residents of Willowsford...”**

Willowsford Neighbors,

Greetings again! For those who may have missed our inaugural January note, our names are Greg, Claudette and Chase. We’re serving as the three resident members of the [Conservancy’s Board of Trustees](#) this year. From time to time we’ll send updates to you, resident-to-resident.

We recognize we’re living through an unusual time right now. When we drafted this note last week, schools were open. Work/life schedules were packed. Life was seemingly “normal.” That’s changed as spring blooms around us and anxiety may now be present.

As we adjust to this “temporary normal,” we have our community to count on. Our four villages are full of opportunities to discover spring blossoming amid our own changing mindsets.

- With gyms and yoga studios closed, Conservancy trails and open space offer perfect settings for outdoor exercise and recreation, connection with nature, tranquility and peace of mind. Running, walking, biking, quiet contemplation and observation in nature – alone or as a family activity. Conservancy staff are working to assure the trails are cleared, safe and ready for resident use. If you haven’t already, download the mobile trail app from the [Conservancy website](#). The app provides maps along with information for family time outdoors. Need assistance

logging in to the Conservancy website? Simply e-mail [info@willowsfordconservancy.org](mailto:info@willowsfordconservancy.org) and a Conservancy employee will reach out to assist.

- Fresh, local food -the Willowsford Farm team is busy preparing for the Spring CSA season and is providing special online purchase options for extra produce, eggs and meat. 150 households took advantage of this week's special offering.
- Outdoor education: The trails, woodlands, and amphibian hot spots like Spring Peeper Pond and the Grange Wet Meadow are excellent opportunities for outdoor learning and observation of nature.
- There always is a need for basic trail upkeep. Children needing volunteer hours for school can simply walk the trails and assist with cleanup of debris along trails and open space. Families can e-mail completed volunteer hours to [info@willowsfordconservancy.org](mailto:info@willowsfordconservancy.org) along with any school forms that need completion. Adults wanting to assist with trail maintenance or wildlife monitoring should contact staff -- there are plenty of things people can do on their own or with their families (farm opportunities are limited as they'd require working with the staff).

If you're taking advantage of our trails and other amenities (within CDC-prescribed safe social distancing protocols), we invite you to find serenity amid Willowsford's natural surroundings. Notice which plants are sprouting and blossoming to a new season despite what's happening around us. Listen to peeper frogs chirp to welcome spring. Take your children on a nature scavenger hunt to all our different trails in the coming weeks.

We'll leave the rest of the note below as we drafted it last week, but we wanted to open our message acknowledging what we're all experiencing these days and encourage all of us to find time outside in the natural surroundings of Willowsford.

#### **Our original message:**

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Thank you to those residents who attended the Conservancy's two open house-style information sessions in February. We thought we'd take time in this note to walk through a few new items/perspectives offered at those meetings for those who could not attend.

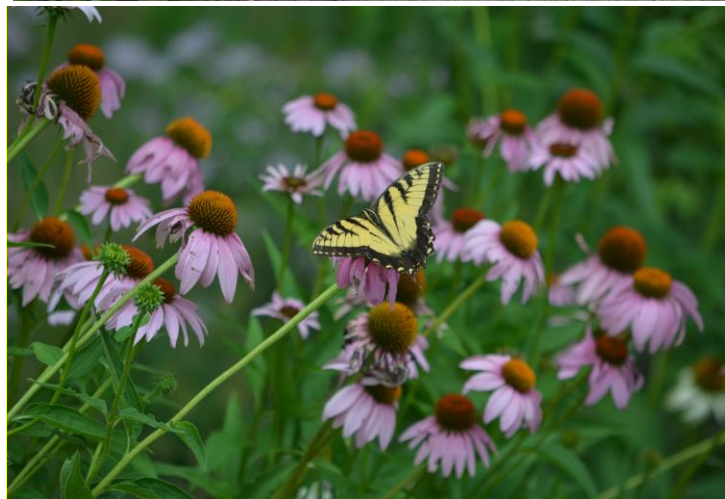
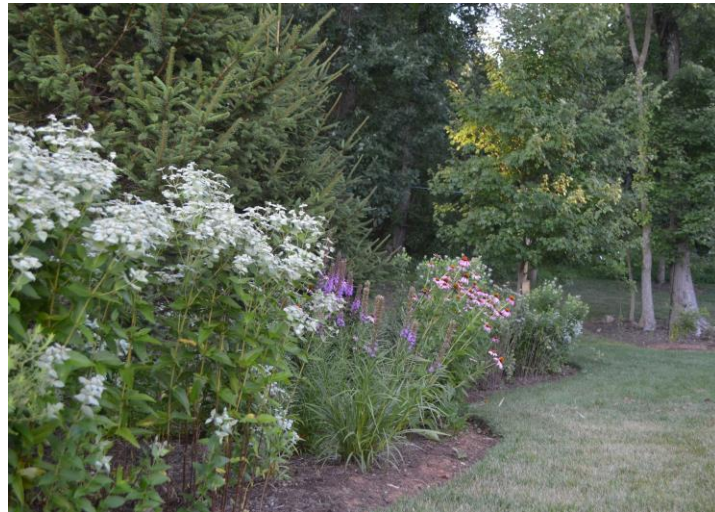


#### **NATIVE PLANTS**

First, what was on your mind? Several residents asked about native plants at the meetings. Thank you for those questions! It's planting season (after our miserly two inches of snow this winter), so the timing couldn't be better to talk about native plants.

The Conservancy plays an important role in education about all things nature in our community. We have so many unique natural habitats and features on 2,200 acres of Conservancy land, as well as 1,800 acres of HOA common area and resident yards. Your home can play an important role if you choose to plant natives. They provide food, habitat and natural corridors for birds, butterflies and other pollinators. And, an extra benefit, since natives are naturally adapted to our soil and climate conditions, they often require less maintenance (like water and fertilizer) and grow faster than non-native plants.

One of the best sources to help you get started with native plants is [Plant NOVA Natives](#). Browse the website, download its guide and access the resources provided. What does a native garden look like? Take a look at these pictures from Claudette's home:





Of course, as you plan for native plants around your home, be sure to consult the Willowsford Design Standards and complete any necessary applications.

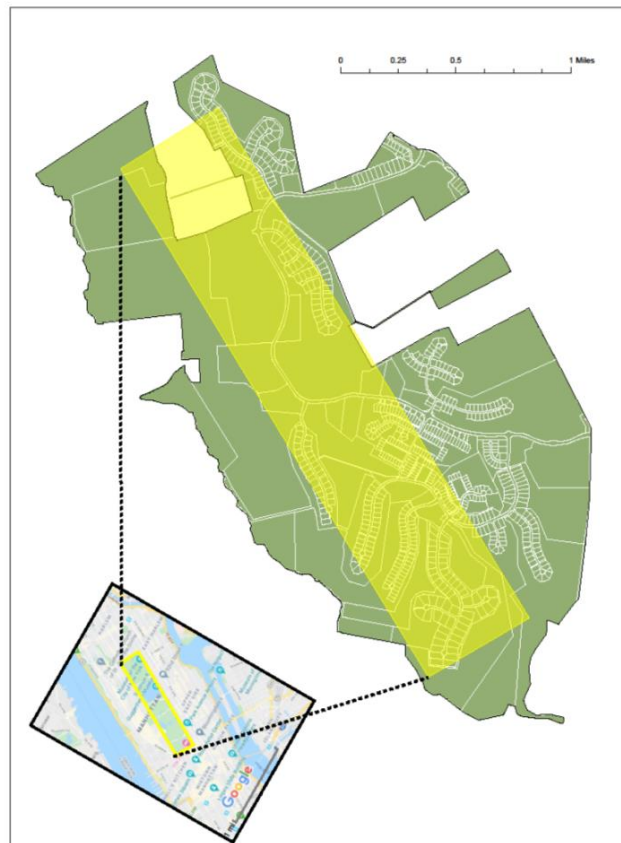


## HOW LARGE IS CONSERVANCY LAND?

One basic idea we're trying to explain better is the size of the Conservancy's land. It's rather large! But, how do we best convey that in ways we can all relate to? During the community meetings, we offered some new ways to think about the amount of land that's part of the Conservancy (land that must be maintained, managed and cared for!).

We maintain 2,200 acres for all of us (and our natural neighbors) to enjoy. **That's equal to 1,167 football fields** (but with much more diverse forests, streams, habitats, etc.).

Another comparison is Central Park in New York City, which many of us have likely visited. **It's only 840 acres.** Take a look at this image to see Central Park overlaid onto The Greens village:



We hope these comparisons are helpful to further appreciate the Conservancy's role in caring for our natural surroundings. Remember, Conservancy land is protected and will never be developed into homes.



## HOW MANY MILES OF TRAILS?

Another area we're trying to convey and contrast is the total length of all the trails available to just residents. The Conservancy manages 40+ miles of trails for about 2,000 homes. By comparison, Loudoun County manages 87 miles of trails for the whole county of 400,000+ people. If all Willowsford trails were connected in a straight line, those approximately 40 miles of trails would run from Sycamore House to the Smithsonian Castle in D.C.



## TRAIL MAINTENANCE

As the weather turns warmer and daylight hours become longer, more of us will hit the trails. Know that Conservancy staff is to inventory and maintain every bridge, culvert, crossing and sign on all our trails so we have a comprehensive catalog of trail infrastructure. For example, here are the trails in The Grange that have been inventoried:



As you can see, there are dozens of infrastructure items that help make our trails safe and usable. If you encounter any issues on the trails this spring, just email [info@willowsfordconservancy.org](mailto:info@willowsfordconservancy.org).



## FARM SHARES

The Willowsford Farm team presented an overview of its operations, which many of you have likely heard before at various gatherings. Of note were the 2019 community supported agriculture (CSA) stats:

- 369 CSA members
  - 63% from Willowsford
  - 37% from outside Willowsford

CSA memberships are important because the upfront investment you make helps the team know what and how much of a certain crop to plant in the upcoming year. The 2020 goal is 450 CSA members. If you're considering joining our own CSA, now's the time to sign up and make the agrihood experience a reality! Click [HERE](#) for more information, including the many size shares and delivery/pickup locations in 2020.



## ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

Finally, one of the last points presented at the community meetings focused on all of the natural challenges we face from climate extremes to invasive species to pests to deer management. We can't control nature, so as a Conservancy, staff will adapt to whatever conditions are presented. For example, one resident asked the farm team about crop resiliency in light of climate extremes. Some crops may fail, as they do on any farm due to differing weather or pest conditions. However, our farm team grows a wide variety of options that, while you may miss crop X, there are still plenty of other options for CSA and farm stand purchase.



## HOA ELECTIONS

As we all know as residents, there's currently a HOA election underway for our first-ever all resident board. We wish all candidates the best of luck and we look forward to working closely with the new HOA board on shared areas and priorities of our Willowsford community.

Our regards,

Greg Licamele  
Claudette Papathanasopoulos  
Chase Rowan