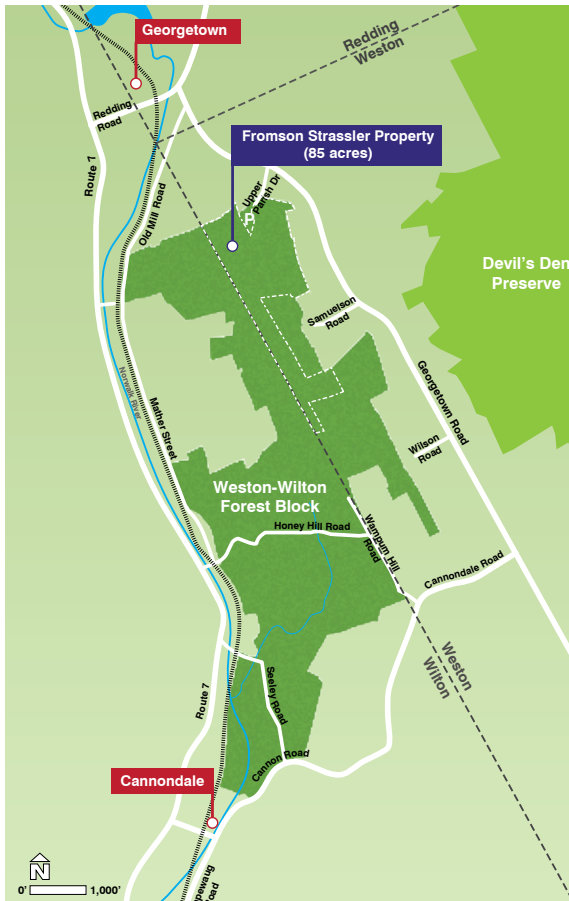


Aspetuck Land Trust

Serving Westport, Weston, Fairfield, and Easton Since 1966



A WIN FOR OPEN SPACE! Weston Voters Approve Fromson Strassler Sale to ALT



On September 18, Aspetuck Land Trust members turned out to the polls to vote YES to sell the 85-acre Fromson Strassler property to ALT for \$1,143,000.

The vote count was 680 yes votes to sell the land to ALT, and 55 opposed.

We won with 93 percent of the vote!

This is a keystone property in our Green Corridor Initiative. The land is heavily forested, with extensive wetlands, streams, boulder fields, steep slopes, ledge and rock outcrops that support a diverse array of wildlife.

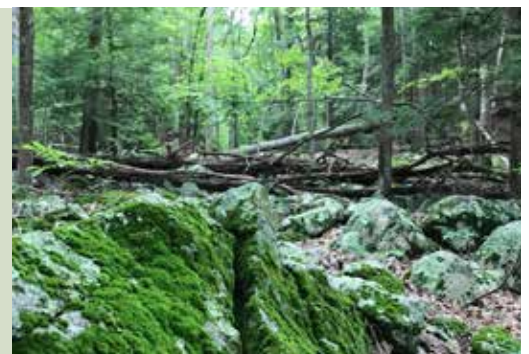
This is a once in a generation opportunity to preserve a property of this size, by Fairfield County standards, and to take a great leap forward in our efforts to create a 705-acre intact protected forest block on the Weston/Wilton border. The property connects to the Land Trust's 119-acre Honey Hill Preserve.

Land Trust members made this project possible with their votes and their continued financial support. Saving land is a long game and your ongoing support allows us to do the quiet work of working with landowners and raising the funds to protect land. Funds raised include a \$625,000 grant from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and a \$1 million gift from the Daniel E. Offutt, III Charitable Trust. The property will be known as the Daniel E. Offutt Forest Block Gateway. 🌿



Reviewing survey in field. From left: Mark Ochman, Ochman and Associates, Adam Goodman, Tom Failla, David Brant. (left)

Boulder talus wetland on the property. (right)



RESTORING SASCO BROOK STREAM CHANNEL AT BULKLEY POND DAM IN WESTPORT



In 2018 the dam failed and created an impasse for fish. Aspetuck Land Trust applied for funding from the EPA to remove the dam to create a fish passage.

On December 7, 2020, the EPA announced grants totaling \$2.8 million to local groups to improve Long Island Sound.

Aspetuck Land Trust, working with Sally Harold at Riverwork, formerly Director of River Restoration and Fish Passage at The Nature Conservancy, won a \$143,300 grant to create a fish passage at the Bulkley Pond dam in Sasco Brook in Westport located below the bridge next to Old Sasco Mill at 1869 Post Rd (US-1) and across from Michael's.

The project will create viable fish passage for Alewife and Blueback herring to swim upstream to fresh water to spawn. These "river herring" require access to freshwater and saltwater habitats to fulfill their life cycles. These fish, once absurdly abundant, are critical components of marine and freshwater food webs. They are eaten, at all life stages, by other fish, birds and mammals. Black-crowned night heron can often be seen near the Michael's store on the Westport side of Sasco Brook fishing for alewife. 🌱

THANK YOU FOR BUYING NATIVE PLANTS!

Our Fall native plant sale was a big success. One hundred and ninety biodiversity and earth loving people ordered 2,000 plants for a grand total of \$44,575 in sales!

Thank you to all of you who purchased plants. This Fall we focused on keystone trees and shrubs that do all the heavy lifting in the food web delivering the most biodiversity. Says backyard biodiversity guru Doug Tallamy: "Adding that oak to your yard is one of the best things you can do...providing food for over 500 species of moths and butterflies alone." The small actions that you take in your yard pays big dividends for our planet. 🌱

Thanks to those not pictured who also helped: Gretchen Hoffman, Misty Beyer, Lisa Palladino, Dave from Westport Rotary, Westport SLOBS: Bruno and his parents, Fairfield Key Club (Harper Treschuk, Judith Rojas, Bianca Noecker, Phoebe Tunnell, Caroline Desautels, Jess Finnerty, Haley Martinsen, Lucy Morrison, Norah Weber, Ana Cruz, Emily Chase, Sophia, Grace). ALT land management staff Lou Bacchiocchi, John Laiacone and Ranger Jim, & Michelle Fracasso and Carlos from Wells Hill Farm.



Plant sale team pictured from left: Ellen Greenberg, Donna Merrill, Joan Byrne, Mary Ellen Lemay, Brian Milmore.

BECOME A GREEN CORRIDOR PARTNER

1. Rethink Your Lawn

Be creative! Plant grass alternatives like sedges or incorporate clover into your lawn. Switch to an organic and/or zero emissions lawn care service. This reduces water usage and improves habitat for native bees and butterflies.



2. Plant Natives

Native plants attract wildlife and build biodiversity.



3. Avoid Pesticides and Herbicides

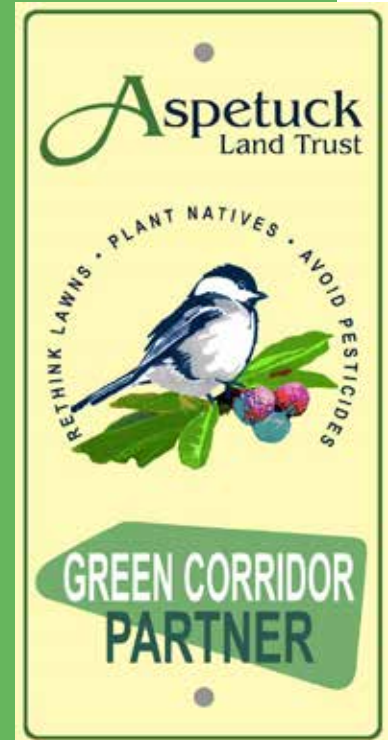
Pesticides and herbicides are dangerous to pets and children and our waterways. Avoiding them improves habitat for native bees and butterflies and creates a healthier food web for us all.



Join us to save the planet, one backyard at a time!

Visit www.Aspetuck-LandTrust.org/ homeowners to take the Green Corridor Pledge. We will send you this attractive metal mailbox sign to tell your neighbors you care about protecting the planet. And maybe they will join you!

Help us reach our goal of 1,000 Green Corridor homeowner partners by the end of 2021.



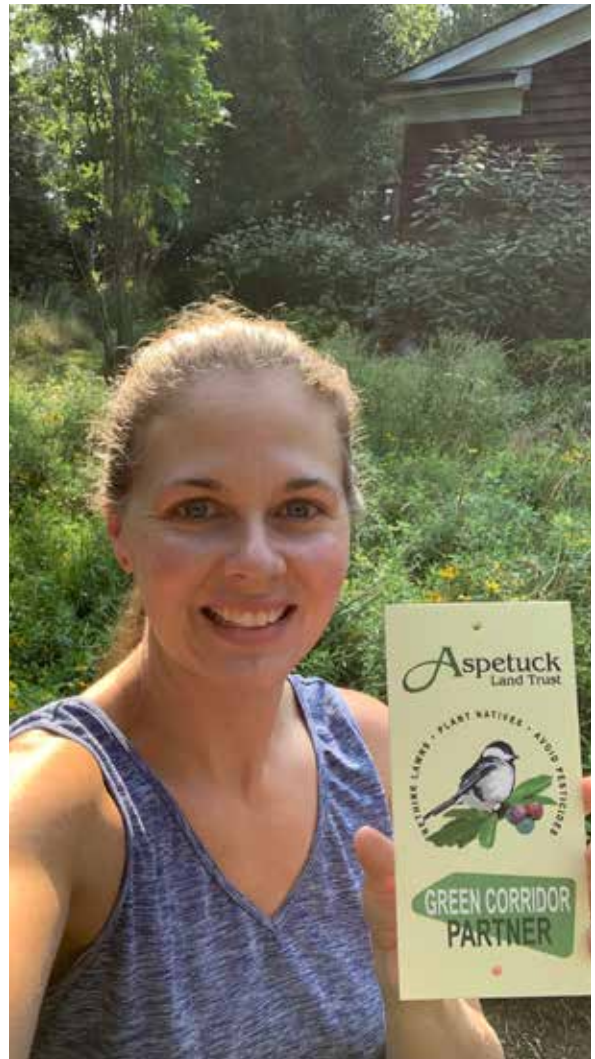
WE HAVE RESOURCES ON OUR WEBSITE TO HELP YOU MAKE THESE CHANGES TO YOUR YARD ALONG WITH A LIST OF RECOMMENDED LANDSCAPE COMPANIES AND NATIVE PLANT DESIGNERS WHO YOU CAN CALL.

ALT MEMBER TRANSFORMS HER YARD

Written by Gretchen Hoffmann, Westport

I believe that conservation really does start in our homes and yards, and therefore I try to be the best possible steward of the land I'm living on. My first step as a Green Corridor Partner was to rethink our lawn. We stopped using herbicides and pesticides, and we try (as much as possible) to "leave the leaves" in the fall and not cut back perennials until spring to provide for overwintering insects. The biggest step I've taken to date was to replace a section of our front lawn with a mini meadow full of native grasses and perennials.

Prior to becoming a Green Corridor Partner, I was already thinking about planting to support pollinators, but I was mainly focused on providing nectar sources. I did not take into consideration other important aspects, like choosing plants that are native to our region, ones that are host plants for caterpillars, or those that provide seeds and/or fruit for wildlife. Everything I've learned through the Aspetuck Land Trust and other local resources over the past few years about how vital it is to choose native plants and trees has shifted my perspective, and I now realize that some of my prior landscape choices could have been better. I'm fully committed to increasing the native plants and decreasing the lawn at my house even further in the years to come! 🌱



UN-LAWNING

WRITTEN BY DEBORAH BONO,
WESTPORT



ALT member and Green Corridor Partner Deb Bono's native landscaping co-exists with lawn.

In 2012, we moved into our current house which included a large, very formal, very traditional garden—straight-edged beds, loads of lawn, and boxwood hedges everywhere, including a pair at the front entrance in the shape of the former owner's initials.

Our sensibility was always more organic, so we eliminated the boxwood, planted various tall grasses, softened the straight lines. We were not yet educated about native versus non-native, but besides doing something about all that lawn, we were interested in three things:

- biodiverse** spaces that changed color and texture through the seasons,
- leaving** plant material in place over the winter, and
- co-existing** with wildlife.

At the 2019 Aspetuck Annual Meeting, with climate considerations clearly in the cultural consciousness, Doug Tallamy offered homeowners a straightforward upbeat to-do list. “Do three things,” he said: 1) **Reduce** lawn size, 2) **Plant** more natives, 3) **Reduce** pesticide use. Three things, I thought, I can do that. His clarity and positivity were so refreshing, even my husband, often demoralized about all there was to do in the world, was inspired.

Eventually our new planting strategy would be maintenance free, but at first it meant swapping everything out, so we had to do one section at a time. We chose the 1600 sf front lawn, a contained area that would offer the biggest and earliest bang for our efforts...grass, beds, flowering plants along the fence. We chose regionally native plant material within our aesthetic and budget considerations (at least 70%), including some keystone plants with high pollinator value, tolerant of traffic, drought, sun, and wildlife. We used a fescue mix, Wildflower Farm's Eco-Lawn, which is drought resistant, needs no chemicals, and requires little or no mowing. And once it was established, it didn't need watering either. We also achieved our objectives of enjoying the garden throughout the seasons, including the Autumn/winter forms, and providing cover for insects and wildlife.

We are so thrilled that the garden is just doing its thing now--doesn't need watering, doesn't need mowing, doesn't need pesticides. Looks great, and different, in all seasons, and makes us smile every time we come into the driveway. 🍃



GARDENS TO EDUCATE AND INSPIRE YOU

WRITTEN BY HARPER TRESCHUK, ALT INTERN FROM LUDLOW HIGH SCHOOL

We step outside our homes to experience nature at the preserves, but what if the plants we see could inspire us, in Dr. Doug Tallamy's words, to "bring nature home"? Native plant demonstration gardens, our latest initiative, deepen the connection between protected areas and homeowner properties on the Green Corridor. Aspetuck Land Trust is encouraging homeowners to view their yards and gardens as stepping-stones that provide food, shelter, and nest sites for pollinators and the larger ecosystem. Each demonstration garden provides a template for healthier yards and better stewardship of biodiversity that you can bring home. They are located Aspetuck Land Trust's Wildflower Preserve in Southport (Westway Rd. across from the Pequot Library entrance), at the Caryl and Edna Haskins Preserve in Westport (off South Compo on Green Acre Lane), and at Earthplace.

Mary Ellen Lemay, Aspetuck Land Trust's Homeowner Engagement Director, explains, "We use highly visible properties to showcase native plants, which makes people more open to the concept of biodiversity." According to naturalist Dr. Doug Tallamy, native oaks can support over 500 caterpillar species. Native flowers, such as the evening primrose or New England aster showcased at the Wildflower Preserve, require less pesticides, water, and management since they are already adapted to local



*ALT intern Harper Treschuk at the Southport Wildflower Preserve.
Photo credit Nancy Moon.*

conditions -- and ecologically connected to native bee species.

Out of landscapes with more diverse plants emerge richer interactions between plants, pollinators, and the entire food web. When visiting the Wildflower Preserve this summer, I have seen its transformation firsthand. Flowers such as false sunflower, blue-eyed grass, and tickseed have provided the preserve with constant bloom and ever-changing colors. On one occasion, I noticed seven Monarch caterpillars on the milkweed plants, good



news for a butterfly species that has plummeted 80% in the last 20 years.

While the Southport Wildflower and Earthplace gardens contain a selection of native wildflowers, shrubs, and grasses, the Haskins Preserve has been transformed one step further into a variety of native landscape types: a shaded woodland understory, a bee and butterfly lawn, a woodland edge with shrubs, a meadow, and a wetland planting. Aspetuck has partnered with local landscape architecture firms including Land Canvas, Landscape Interactions, and Petrow Gardens to design these spaces. Additionally, pollination ecologist Dr. Robert Geegar is conducting a four-year study to measure how the added plant species will impact the diversity of native bees and butterflies at Haskins. Lemay explains, “We are trying to support the idea that ‘if you plant it, they will come’:

planting native plants will target native pollinators with threatened populations across the Green Corridor.

With a philosophy of “teach, see, do,” the Land Trust is promoting community interactions through our native plant demonstration gardens. We invite you to take part in future workshops and programming, to find inspiration for your own home landscapes, and to join our “work in process” as we continue to fill in native plantings and monitor the sites. The Land Trust provides many resources including plant lists, fact sheets, and even suggested plantings for a 4’ x 4’ space so it is easy to engage! By transforming several preserves into model native landscapes, the Land Trust is changing the way that homeowners view the ecosystem on our connected Green Corridor. 🌱

SUMMER INTERNS PROFILES

Jonah Hotchkiss

My name is Jonah Hotchkiss and I’m a junior at Fairfield Warde High School. On a weekend day in the Spring of 2018, I participated in an Aspetuck Land Trust trail maintenance workshop with my mom in Trout Brook Valley. The trail we were working on had to be re-routed because of erosion. I had not known much about ALT before that day. That summer, I wanted to get involved in helping to maintain lands, so I volunteered to help reroute a trail at Jump Hill. I spent a lot of time raking and benching. It was hard work, but I was happy to know that people would be able to enjoy the trail for a long time to come. This summer and last summer, I worked for Lou at many different properties owned and maintained by ALT. I cleared fallen trees with chainsaws, cut and cleared invasive plants, mowed fields, built boardwalks on muddy trails, and did all sorts of other things that need to be done in order to maintain the ALT lands and make sure that they will be in good shape for the future. Through my work at ALT, I have learned a lot about land preservation and how important it is for a community to take care of its open spaces.

My favorite things about working at ALT have been learning about all of the native plants in Connecticut and learning from Lou how to use all sorts of tools from chain saws to brush cutters to tractors. I hope to continue working with Aspetuck and enjoying the amazing spaces!



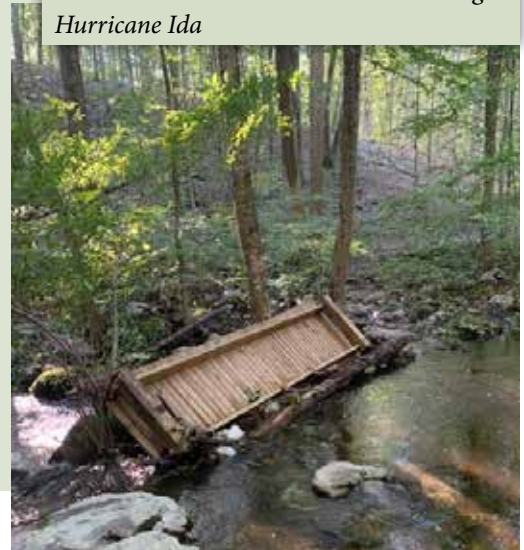
ALT Summer interns Owen Harlacker (left) and Jonah Hotchkiss (right)

SUMMER INTERNS PROFILES

Owen Harlacker

Hi, my name is Owen Harlacker and I just graduated from Fairfield Warde High School and am going into my first year of mechanical engineering at the University of Utah. My family has been members of the Aspetuck Land Trust for as long as I have been alive, and I remember trips up to the blueberry patch throughout my childhood. I always loved pointing out the 'Don't be a blueberry pig' sign because I was three and I had never seen a blueberry pig anywhere else before. Fast forward to the time I was in middle school, my mother helped me to get involved in volunteering with the pruning crew and helping Tom "The blueberry czar" Johnson. Most recently, I have spent my summers as a part of the land management and stewardship crew, working on everything from invasive plant control to tree work, to irrigation. It has really been an amazing experience learning how many projects and jobs all coexist at the Land Trust, as well as how much work is involved in each item. I think my favorite aspect of the jobs I have worked on is tree removal. I have gone from never having picked up a chainsaw to becoming competent in my ability to aim and fell trees. I can thank Lou for being such a good instructor and making sure to teach the safety aspects in addition to the techniques. Open space is such an important thing for the local environment, and I am so grateful for the experiences I've had, even if it meant getting hooked by multiflora rose multiple times. I am excited to be moving on to a new page in Utah but everything that I have learned at the Land Trust will stick with me and shape the rest of my life. 🌿

ALT summer interns help repair bridges like the one below that washed out during Hurricane Ida



This was a banner year for apples in the Trout Brook Valley apple orchard. We hope you enjoyed them!



ON THE TRAILS



Installing a new bridge on the trail.



Benching a new trail in Trout Brook Valley in orange trail reroute.



Crew leader and Trout Brook Valley Trail Steward Monika Stokes celebrating a job well done with volunteers from the New England Mountain Bike Association who christened the new trail with a mountain bike ride.



BRUCE LEPAGE CONSERVATION FUND INTERNSHIP

WRITTEN BY BRIAN MILMORE



Bruce LePage in Trout Brook Valley – land he helped save from development while at Aspetuck Land Trust.

*To make a donation visit:
aspetucklandtrust.org/bruce-lepage-conservation-fund*

My name is Brian Milmore, and I will be serving as the first Bruce LePage Conservation Fund intern at Aspetuck Land Trust. Bruce's biggest accomplishment while at Aspetuck Land Trust was the preservation of Trout Brook Valley, a property I know and love. I applied for this position through TerraCorps, an environmental nonprofit that supports AmeriCorps members and uses the AmeriCorps national service model. We help communities protect and steward their local environment for the health and well-being of people and nature. As the Community Engagement Coordinator, I'll be engaging with homeowners and connecting with landscapers to create more biodiversity in our own backyards. With new events, programs, and partnerships, we'll make transitioning to sustainable landscaping both exciting and easy. As more people join the Aspetuck Land Trust and take the Green Corridor pledge, I look forward to educating and learning from the community on bringing people and nature together.

"We are honored to have Brian serve as the Land Trust's first Bruce LePage Fund Intern to keep Bruce's legacy alive," said Aspetuck Land Trust Executive Director David Brant.

I joined the TerraCorps because I've always had a passion for the nature in my own backyard. I've been hiking the trails of the Aspetuck Land Trust for several years, particularly for its unmatched bird habitats. Recently, I've learned how important native plants are to our environment, especially at sustaining healthy populations of insects, birds, mammals, and all other critters. Aspetuck Land Trust's Green Corridor Initiative and Native Plant Sales have helped me create my own small pollinator garden, which has already fed several caterpillars, bees, and other pollinators and insects. I am excited to expand beyond my own yard by helping others create their own sustainable and ecologically beneficial landscapes. I look forward to working with the Aspetuck Land Trust and all its members as we protect and steward the local environment in our suburban landscape. 🌿



Brian Milmore



If you've done well in the market, please consider making a gift of appreciated securities. It is a great way to support Aspetuck Land Trust and provides significant tax benefits too. For more details visit: aspetucklandtrust.org/ways-to-give



LEAVE A LEGACY

Protect the places you love by making a gift to the Aspetuck Land Trust in your estate plans. By naming Aspetuck Land Trust as a beneficiary of your will, living trust, or retirement account, you can make a visionary gift that will conserve land for generations to come.

To recognize our legacy supporters, we created the Aspetuck Land Trust **Open Space Legacy Society** to recognize people like you who have made a planned gift to Aspetuck Land Trust.

Individuals who have made a planned gift, and have let us know, will become a member of the **Open Space Legacy Society**. As a member we will plant a blueberry bush in your name and you will be invited to periodic **Open Space Legacy Society** activities. Upon receipt of your bequest to Aspetuck Land Trust we will recognize you by including your name on a permanent "Legacy of Open Space" memorial in the 1,009-acre Trout Brook Valley Preserve orchard overlooking Long Island Sound.

For more information contact David Brant at dbrant@aspetucklandtrust.org or 203-331-1906 or visit ASPETUCKLANDTRUST.ORG/PLANNED-GIVING

Aspetuck Land Trust

P.O. Box 444
Westport, CT 06881-0444





ANNUAL APPEAL LETTER COMING SOON!

BECOME A MEMBER OF ASPETUCK LAND TRUST

Your tax-deductible donation is vital and makes an impact on our towns. Please use the enclosed envelope to send your gift of support to Aspetuck Land Trust or visit our secure website at aspetuck-landtrust.org to donate by credit card.

STAY CONNECTED

Follow us on  

Become a fan of Aspetuck Land Trust on Facebook. It's a great way to stay up to date on our latest happenings. Sign up on our website to receive our e-newsletter. Engage with us on Instagram.

The Green Corridor

Aspetuck Land Trust's Green Corridor circling through Westport, Wilton, Weston, Redding, Easton, and Fairfield will protect, connect and improve the ecological health of our region for all people and other living things.