

PLACE

Fall 2021

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance
is a non-profit membership organization
dedicated to the enhancement of open
space in Brookline by supporting citizens
in caring for their green spaces.

Greater Protection for Trees

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Friends of Billy Ward Playground
Friends of Brookline Reservoir
Friends of Carlton Street Footbridge
Friends of Coolidge Corner Library Garden
Friends of Cypress Street Playground
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Friends of Griggs Park
Friends of Hall's Pond
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Friends of Larz Anderson Park
Friends of Lawrence Park
Friends of Leverett Pond
Friends of Linden Park
Friends of Littlefield Park
Friends of Lost Pond
Friends of Minot Rose Garden
Friends of Monmouth Park
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Friends of the Old Burying Ground
Friends of the Paths and Park on Aspinwall Hill
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Friends of Soule
Friends of Waldstein Park
Garden Club of Brookline
Griggs Park Neighborhood Association
Lawton Park Community Garden
Larz Anderson Auto Museum
Linden Parks Association

Editor Marian Lazar

BGSA is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax deductible.

Cover photo: Leverett Pond

We know the value of trees to our community, the environment, our state of mind. Brookline has been trying for years to figure out how to protect significant trees and especially trees on private property; it is a challenge that many communities face. In 2018 a Tree Protection Committee recommended Town Meeting adopt a tree protection bylaw that would encourage the preservation of trees during major demolition and/or construction projects, noting that trees provide carbon sequestration, carbon dioxide absorption and storm water retention. As a first step to a tree protection bylaw, Town Meeting passed an amendment to the Storm Water and Sediment Control bylaw which adds protection for trees through a new Site Plan Review process that incorporates tree protection and preservation as a component of the review before the Town granting a building permit. The bylaw requires mitigation for trees that are removed, including replacement or paying fees into a tree fund. This is a significant step in Brookline's effort to protect our urban forest.

The new Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Plan (available at <https://www.brooklinema.gov/1758/Urban-Forest-Climate-Resiliency-Master-P>) points out that that protection is not enough if Brookline is to effectively combat the effects of climate change. Rather the goal set out in this Plan is to plant 7,000 new trees in the next 10 years. Some of the other Action Items of the Plan include increasing planting where the urban heat island effect is greatest, focusing new tree planting in North Brookline where most areas are below the Town average for tree canopy coverage, increasing staffing and funding to support annual tree planting of 350 additional trees and increasing funding for the Forestry Sector to achieve more pruning and tree care and hire a full time tree warden. This Action Plan which presents the steps necessary to protect and grow our urban forest requires commitment. The many benefits of a healthy urban forest will be worth it.

Arlene Mattison, BGSA President

The picture below is an example of how the Town is losing major trees through clear-cutting allowed despite the existing bylaw.

Photo: Deborah Rivers



A Brief History of Brookline Tree Planting

Hugh Mattison, Brookline Tree Planting Committee

Until the late 1800's, Brookline was a rural community. As it grew, its designers (including Frederick Law Olmsted who served on the Planning Board) laid out streets with wide sidewalks and front yard setbacks that allowed tree planting on the public ways.

The "Committee for Planting Trees" (Tree Planting Committee, TPC) was formed for Brookline in 1885 by a special act of the General Court (the Massachusetts legislature). Its volunteer members are appointed for 3-year terms by the Select Board.

Early members of the tree Planting Committee included some of the founders of the Town. Emma Cummings studied under Charles Sprague Sargent (first director of the Arnold Arboretum) and served on the TPC from about 1902 to 1938.

Brookline has always been proud of its reputation as having "tree-lined" streets. This was recognized in 1994 when UMass Amherst selected Brookline for one of the first street tree inventories. (see video at tinyurl.com/brookline1994treeinventory).

The Brookline Conservation Commission and Arnold Arboretum led the inventory effort which involved training 100 volunteers assembled by the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance to identify and map the location of street trees over a period of 3 weekends. This inventory has been maintained on an ongoing basis and is used to ensure species diversification, watering regimen, and periodic pruning.

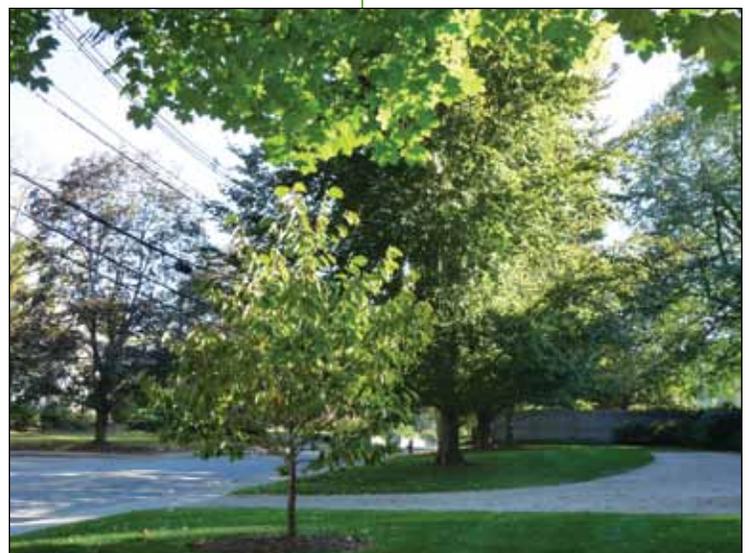
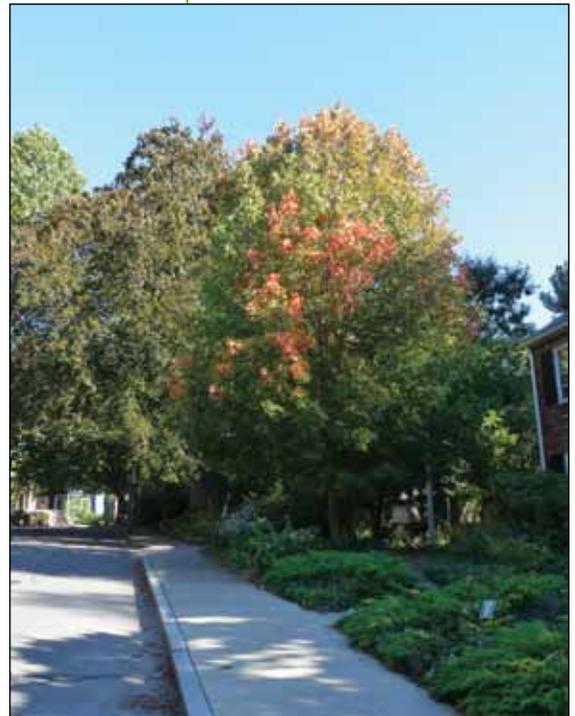
A quote from Emma Cummings' book relating to the long-standing practice of planting back-of-sidewalk trees says, "Since a tree on a narrow sidewalk when well grown becomes an obstruction to pedestrians, the planting of shade trees on private land a short distance from the sidewalk is of value in a town like Brookline, and it is so recognized by a special act permitting such planting. Where some of the old streets are narrow and would otherwise be without shade, trees have been planted in accordance with this act."

TPC often acts a liaison to home owners considering planting a Back of Sidewalk tree. The right tree has to be selected for a site. After collaboration about species, trees are planted before June 15 or after September 15.

For Brookline to meet its goal of new trees planted as presented in the newly released Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan, planting on private property will need to be part of the approach. The Back of Sidewalk Tree Program may not be for everyone. Some people would prefer planting flowers or vegetable gardens that need sunlight; a few fear that squirrels will use a tree to access a house, or want more sunlight to reach the interior of their homes; but when the environmental value of a tree is taken into account, other considerations are often overridden and siting a tree can be arranged to allow for multiple desires.

The values of an urban forest are many and Brookline's Back of Sidewalk Tree Program is a great contribution to increasing our tree canopy.

Back of the sidewalk trees on Sewall Avenue and Kent Street



Mothers Out Front Takes Action on Planting Trees

Olivia Fischer Fox, Brookline Mothers Out Front

You may know the volunteer organization Mothers Out Front as the group that raises awareness on Brookline's aging and crumbling gas infrastructure but recently the group has expanded its climate activism and is now partnering with the Town of Brookline on potential climate solutions. Among its many goals: planting more trees.

It used to be that the old Boston Gas Company, now National Grid, would do a vegetation survey, looking for dying grass, shrubbery and trees to identify a submerged gas leak. Hundreds of street trees have fallen victim to gas leaks and are also threatened by road salt, traffic and even dogs. After a long and painful lawsuit, Brookline was awarded a small amount of money from National Grid for tree damages. National Grid now uses drive-by instrumentation to identify gas leaks.

While Mothers Out Front continues to shine a light on dangerous gas leaks around town, the group has also started to advocate for tree planting on private property.

Did you know that the town has a tree planting program which will plant a tree for free on your front yard? Not many people do, and this is where Mothers Out Front comes in. The group has partnered with Brookline's Division of Parks and Open Space to advertise the program and encourage property owners to apply for a tree to be planted on their property. Once an application is submitted, the town works with the property owner on optimal species and placement and will even do the hard work of planting the tree. New trees need to stay clear of electric lines, water lines and of course, gas lines. The new tree planted by the town also needs to be planted within 20 feet of the public way, in other words, close enough to provide a benefit to the public. If you think you might have a good spot to plant a tree on your property, you can fill out an application here: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/2021/Front-Yard-Tree-Planting-Program>

Adding trees to our urban canopy will help mitigate heat islands, cool our neigh-

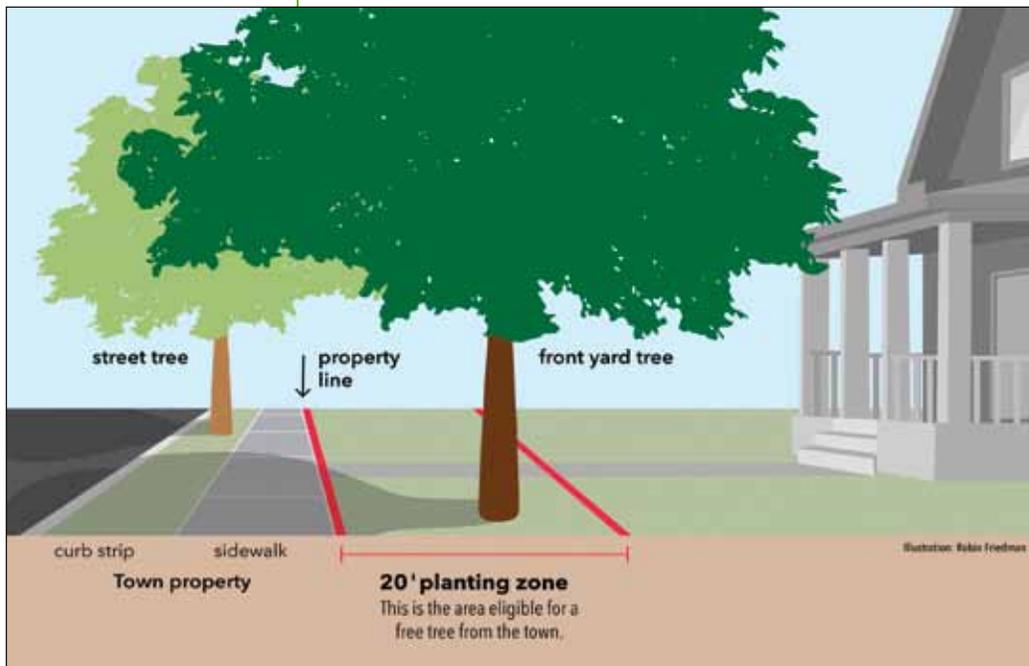


Illustration: Robin Friedman

borhoods, and act as a carbon sink in the face of climate change. Mothers Out Front will be focusing their efforts on neighborhoods of greatest need as determined by Brookline's Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan. As MOF likes to say: "Let's ensure a livable climate for all children. Let's plant more trees."

Teen Volunteers in the Parks

*Alex Cassie, Visitor Services and Code Enforcement Supervisor
Brookline Parks and Open Space Division*

The Town of Brookline is fortunate to be able to work with kids of all ages through volunteer projects in parks, playgrounds and nature sanctuaries all over Town. We've had the pleasure of working with a number of youth organizations, friends groups, school groups, camps and families and while the details of each project may differ, one aspect remains constant: hard-working kids with a desire to give back to their community and put their stamp on the legacy of their neighborhood green spaces.

Some of the 150+ volunteer projects taken on in the last decade:

- Debris removal in rivers and waterways
- Seasonal community cleanups and replantings
- Meadow re-establishment
- Trail maintenance
- Establishment of subsurface drainage barriers
- Removal of invasive plant species

Projects such as these are essential to promoting accessibility, reducing erosion, rehabilitating habitat areas, encouraging local species, and reinforcing the importance of biodiversity. They involve using hand tools, removing and hauling (literally) tons of brush and invasive vines, and getting close and personal with urban landscaping and principles of park design. Volunteers are able to learn the importance of protecting natural areas by getting their hands and knees dirty in the neighborhood parks in which they have grown up and visit every day. They are able to rebuild and invest time and energy in their community spaces, and plant the trees they may walk under with their own kids some day.

Thanks and appreciation for recent volunteer efforts to kids, families and individuals from the following organizations, to name a few:

- | | |
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| • Brookline Teen Center Service Corps | • Friends of Emerson Garden |
| • Brookline Recreation Nature Camps | • Friends of Dane Park |
| • Girl Scouts of the USA | • Friends of Putterham Woods |
| • Boy Scouts of America | • All Brookline Public Schools |
| • Friends of Hall's Pond Sanctuary | • Beaver Country Day School |
| • Friends of Lost Pond Sanctuary | • Park School |
| • Friends of Corey Hill Outlook Playground | • Babe Ruth Baseball |
| • Friends of Billy Ward Playground | • Brookline High Environmental Action Club |

For more information on being involved in volunteer efforts with Brookline Parks and Open Space, make sure to follow us on Instagram@Brooklineparks and check out upcoming volunteer projects at <https://www.brooklinema.gov/1205/Volunteer-Opportunities>.

To start or participate in a Friends group for your local park or playground, or to learn more about community events in your area, please contact acassie@brooklinema.gov and info@brooklinegreenspace.org

Teen volunteers at Fisher Hill Reservoir Park



Nature campers filling trucks with invasive material removed from Fisher Hill Reservoir Park.

Park Project Updates



Leverett Pond Restoration

The restoration of Leverett Pond in Olmsted Park is part of Phase 2 of the Muddy River Flood Reduction Project. This portion of the project includes excavation of most of the sandbar/island at the north end of the pond. Restoration of the park shoreline in the construction area will consist of planting emergent wetland plants and restoring trees and shrubs in the upland areas.

Photo: Deborah Rivers



Cypress Field Renovation

After more than 6 months of earth-moving, underground drainage, and irrigation system installation, the playing field was seeded by the end of September. The new grass will be allowed to grow for a year to establish the roots. Construction on the playground portion of the site is now underway.



Larz Anderson Park Lagoon
 Foreground: The footbridge awaits the installation of the handrails. The Causeway is mostly complete, with work now proceeding on the two curved staircases that abut the structure.
 Below: View of the Tempietto. Much of the Tempietto foundation work is complete, with work currently proceeding on the curved retaining walls that abut both sides of the structure.



Carlton Street Footbridge Renewal
 Left and right: Removal of the iron truss of the bridge. The iron section was trucked to Rhode Island for restoration and will be returned next spring.
 Below: Concrete castings the steps and ramp of the renewed bridge. Project completion is expected June 2022.





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Other Updates

Beacon Street Bridle Path

(1) Feasibility and concept-design study to clarify and flesh out Bridle Path restoration options. By Toole Design consultants and Town staff, in consultation with community members and Mass. DOT and MBTA staff. Initiated by the Select Board in October 2020, with preliminary conceptual findings presented to the Transportation Board in July, and presentation of draft full findings anticipated by the end of December 2021.

(2) Legislative action to try to secure federal funding for further work on restoring the Bridle Path, through potential appropriations in current draft US transportation reauthorization and/or budget reconciliation bills. By Congressman Auchincloss, in consultation with the Town and Boston Region MPO. Initiated in April-May 2021, passed by the full House in their draft transportation reauthorization bill in July, and presently in flux via negotiations between the House and Senate regarding both the transport reauthorization and budget reconciliation bills, which might be passed (and may or may not include the Bridle Path appropriation) by the end of 2021.

More information can be found at: https://www.emeraldnetwork.info/beacon_street_bridle_path_featuredgreenway
<http://beaconbridleway.org/>

Fenway Multiuse Path

The Fenway Multiuse Path is a proposed Green Link that would extend from the Emerald Necklace Muddy River Path to Maitland Street adjacent to the Green Line D Branch right of way.



The first phase of the path runs parallel to the green line tracks (at right).



A view of the first phase of the path at its western end, at the Fenway green line stop.



MBTA corridor below Park Drive could someday connect to the Riverway path network beyond the station platforms.