

“What are Wilton residents supposed to do with their leaves?” On-site composting is the principle means to deal with our leaves.

Wilton does not have a centralized composting facility, so homeowners are responsible for finding space on their own property. With the vast majority of residents owning at least one and more likely two acres, there should be ample room to compost on-site. If you are not inclined to work with compost piles, leaves can be blown or hauled into the woodlands that surround our lawns. Any resulting piles should be kicked apart to loosely spread and allow for decomposition. Care needs to be exercised when wetlands and watercourses exist. The wetland can still accept the leaves, but the leaves should be distributed broadly and not piled in the same location year after year. This will result in filling the wetland, which is prohibited. Leaves should never be blown or deposited in streams or other waterways. In addition to creating a nutrient overload, the leaves can also cause blockages and subsequent flooding.

Perhaps the easiest method to compost is using a mulching mower weekly throughout the fall. This option not only does away with the unnecessary chore of bagging or hauling leaves; it feeds the lawn. Over the course of the winter and spring, the bits of leaves decompose, returning valuable nutrients to the soil that sustains your lawn. On the town’s website, go into the Conservation Department page for an article touting the benefits and how to’s on mulching leaves, “Improve Your Soil By Raking Less,” or see the commission’s spring 2007 newsletter.

Lastly, some portion of your leaves can be used to winter mulch planting beds and gardens. The decomposed leaves will protect perennials and feed the garden.

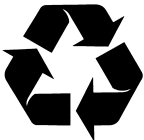
– Kristen Begor, Chairman, Wilton Conservation Commission

Please visit www.wiltonct.org regularly to access trail maps, Wilton’s zoning and wetland regulations, news about community events and more.



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Wilton Conservation Commission Newsletter



TIPPING OUR HAT TO NANCY FAESY, CHAMPION OF OPEN SPACE

If you are relatively new to town, you may be surprised to know that many of the environmental initiatives that have helped make Wilton such a beautiful place to live have been advanced by the dedication and hard work of one person. If there were honeybees pollinating your apple tree this past summer, or when you responsibly disposed of unwanted household toxics on Wilton’s designated collection date, noticed that the tree species in Bradley Park were thoughtfully identified by little signs, or felt the peace emanating from the likes of Millstone Farm, your life has probably been touched by Nancy Faesy.

Those visiting honeybees may be descendants of her bees, while many of our town’s stunning open spaces are the result Nancy’s work. Her nurturing and advisory relationships with key large land owners resulted in the preservation of no less than eleven town open space parcels totaling some 350 acres. She notably spearheaded the protection of Quarry Head, ending the Town of Wilton’s 13 year lapse in open space protection. In acknowledgement of her considerable contributions to open space protection, Nancy received the “Distinguished Citizen Award” in 1996, four years before she really kicked her preservation into gear.

Some of the organizations that will be hard-pressed to fill her shoes — now that Nancy and her husband Bob Faesy of Wilton’s renowned Faesy-Smith Architects are moving their primary residence to

Dorset, VT — include the Wilton Land Conservation Trust, Wilton Garden Club, Wilton Open Space Committee, Weir Preserve Stewardship Committee, Connecticut Fund for the Environment, and this Wilton Conservation Commission itself. From 1986 through 2001 Nancy served as a motivating force of the WCC and continued on as a member of an ad hoc open space committee until the day she moved.

As Bruce Beebe, president of the Board of the WLCT, put it, “Nancy is mindful of the concept of ‘nature deficit disorder’ which especially affects young people, often distracted by electronics, who would be well-served to walk Wilton’s open space trails and learn how nature ‘works.’” But even to people who essentially grew up outdoors, as this commissioner did, Nancy is a fountain of useful information to fill the knowledge gaps that they didn’t realize they had.

The Faesys called Wilton home for 49 years and it is more than apparent Nancy’s mark has been made here in perpetuity. Thank you, Nancy, for your myriad contributions to the quality of life in this town.

–Patrice Gillespie, Commissioner



WHO IS THAT RUNNING AROUND IN MY ATTIC?

Night after night this summer I would listen to the pitter-patter of an animal or animals running around on the floor above me. In the quiet of the night or early morning I even heard some very faint squeaking noises. A call to the wildlife control officer confirmed my greatest fear... I had squirrels in the attic! A visit to the attic and an inspection of the eaves of the house by the wildlife control team found evidence of red squirrels and possibly flying squirrels. Two traps were set and the tiniest of openings in the eaves reinforced. Within 24 hours two very healthy red squirrels were caught and things got a lot quieter in the attic from that point forward!

After the wildlife control officer explained to me that there had been an “explosion” in the squirrel population this year, I decided to do a little research. My research revealed several interesting squirrel facts that I thought I would share. Frigid winters typically kill off up to 80% of the squirrel population due to low temperatures and low food supplies. That didn’t happen this past year due to the abnormally warm winter. An urban ecologist in Chicago estimates adult squirrel populations are 3-4% above normal this year, and that the next generation of baby squirrels will have to compete with many older, stronger and more experienced squirrels that survived.

Squirrels are, in many ways, a keystone species. They distribute seeds, carefully planting them in storage caches where uneaten seeds germinate far from the parent tree. They have a high mortality rate during their first year, but their potential life span is about 6 years in the wild (15 years in captivity). Squirrels are a primary food source for hawk, lynx, bobcat, weasel, goshawk, martin and fisher. Other predators include housecats, dogs, raccoons, opossum, coyotes, fox, large snakes, owls, and eagles. There are an estimated 278 or more species, or different kinds of squirrels. Flying squirrels make up 44 of those species. The rest are made up of ground squirrels and tree squirrels.

Flying squirrels are the oldest line of squirrels around with modern squirrels having evolved from them. They fly by stretching out their loosely folded skin and gliding between trees, and are able to change direction and propel themselves well beyond 100 feet. They only move around at night as they are not adept in escaping birds of prey that hunt during daylight. Ground squirrels are mainly found in areas west of the Rocky Mountains. New England tree squirrels can cause significant damage by digging up newly-planted seeds, bulbs and sometimes entire plants or stripping the leaves/bark off trees and shrubs. Active day and night, they are omnivorous, with their food sources including anything from the fruits, berries, bark, roots and nuts (particularly acorns) of trees/shrubs to garden vegetables to the birdseed in your feeders. They eat the new buds of tree species, effectively pruning the trees and promoting branching which leads to long term increases in leaf density and seed production. Tree squirrels have also been known to steal eggs from birds’ nests/birdhouses or even eat the new hatchlings.

– Kristen Begor, Chair, Conservation Commission



Photo by Shellie @ Firefly

MILE-A-MINUTE VINE (PERSICARIA PERFOLIATA)

Scientists and staff at the University of Connecticut (UConn) and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) are continuing their collaborative efforts to control mile-a minute vine (*Persicaria perfoliata*) and remind the public to remain on the lookout for this plant. Mile-a-minute vine is a highly invasive annual plant from eastern Asia that can quickly outcompete and replace native vegetation, damaging habitat for native plants and animals.

Invasive plants are a significant threat to CT’s natural resources and mile-a-minute is potentially one of the worst.

“The public is the best source of reports about this invasive plant, and as we approach the end of the growing season, these plants become especially visible in parks, forests and yards. The early fall is the ideal time to find and report these plants,” said Logan Senack, Connecticut Invasive Plant Coordinator.

Donna Ellis, Senior Extension Educator at UConn advises, “If you find mile-a-minute be sure to report it before pulling it up.”

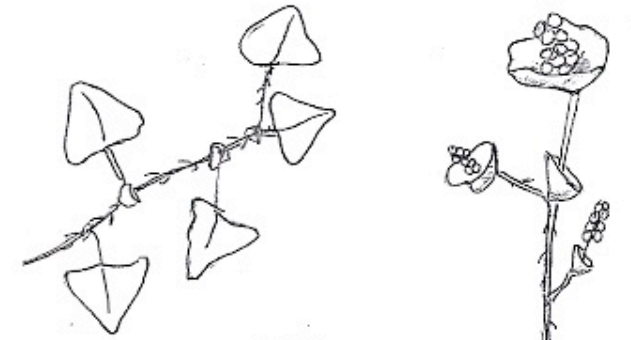
Mile-a-minute was first found in CT in Fairfield County in 1997. Since then, it has spread to 20 towns, including Wilton. Mile-a-minute spreads by seed and quickly grows into dense stands. Berry like fruit is blue when ripe. The vine gets its name from its rapid growth, growing up to 6 inches on a hot summer day. The vine wraps around and grows over other plants, drastically reducing sunlight to the plants and hindering their growth.

In the last three years, scientists from UConn and CT Agricultural Experiment Station have released insects that feed exclusively on the plant in several sites throughout the state including Wilton, in an attempt to use biological means to control the vines. In August, scientists monitoring Wilton, reported feeding damage and the continued presence of the weevils. It is hoped these tiny insects will help hold the spread of this vine in check.

Tests done in China and the U.S. determined the weevil would help control the spread of the vine without attacking other native species.

Visit www.hort.uconn.edu/mam for additional identification tips. To report a suspected mile-a-minute sighting, visit the above web site or call Donna Ellis at UConn at (860)-486-6448.

– Susan DiLoreto



IDENTIFYING MILE-A-MINUTE:

1. Triangular leaves with equal sides
2. Small but sharp barbs that curve down along the stem
3. Small saucer-shaped leaves found at branching points along the stem

Don’t Move Firewood

You can still have a roaring campfire, or a cozy night in front of the fireplace, if you just know how to burn safe.

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) beetle has killed tens of millions of trees, destroying our forests, fishing spots, campgrounds and neighborhoods. We need your help to protect our trees.

The most effective way to stop the EAB is to not move firewood in or out of areas within 25 miles. The beetle’s eggs and larvae tunnel into the trees they infest. Cutting a tree into firewood does not kill EAB developing inside of it. Adult beetles can still emerge, infesting healthy trees when they do.

To report a sighting, please contact The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station at 203-974-8440.

Dear Wilton Resident:

The Town of Wilton, the Conservation Commission, Energy Commission, and Wilton Go Green are reaching out to help you reduce your energy consumption and heating costs – protecting the environment and your wallet.

The best way to save money on your energy bill and increase comfort in your home is by participating in Home Energy Solutions—a rate-payer subsidized program offered by CL&P and the CT Energy Efficiency Fund. For the low cost of \$75*, two certified home energy consultants will complete a comprehensive home energy assessment for you that includes:

- Air sealing; weather stripping and caulking
- Duct sealing
- Insulation evaluation
- Appliance inspection
- Heating and cooling system evaluation
- Water-saving measures
- Lighting; installation of up to 40 compact fluorescent light bulbs
- Rebates and incentives for home insulation and appliances

Save an average of \$400 a year in energy costs and help the Town of Wilton reach its energy reduction goals. Our town leaders have taken the first step by having home energy assessments in their own homes and, together with others, eliminated 7 million pounds of CO2 emissions from Connecticut’s atmosphere.

Together, we can help Wilton reduce its carbon footprint and help protect our natural resources for future generations. Act quickly to schedule your Home Energy Solutions visit**. **Just call the Neighbor to Neighbor office at (860) 372-4406 or visit www.CTEnergyChallenge/HES** today.

Thank you for helping make Wilton a clean, energy-efficient community!

Sincerely,

Bill Brennan	Bruce Hampson	Jana Bertkau	Kristen Begor
First Selectman	Energy Comm. Chair	Wilton Go Green	Conservation Comm. Chair

*The Home Energy Solutions Program is being subsidized by a small charge on your electric bill; it’s your money so take advantage and start saving today! See next page for more details.

** The Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge team selected high quality Home Energy Solutions vendors. Technician performance is monitored to ensure your home receives the best in residential energy efficiency services. Mr. Handyman and New England Smart Energy Group are among the certified Neighbor to Neighbor HES vendors servicing Wilton, so one such firm will follow up with you after you call or register online to show your interest in this program.

Your house is leaking!



We can help . . .

You can *feel* when your home is working efficiently. Improve your home’s comfort and performance with a Home Energy Solutions assessment by one of our recommended contractors*. Your end results are lower utility bills and a more comfortable you. *Don’t wait! The low \$75 co-pay for oil heat customers is only available for a limited time.*

* The Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge team selected high-quality Home Energy Solutions vendors. Technician performance is monitored to ensure your home receives the best in residential energy efficiency services.

Get started today!

1. Sign up for your Home Energy Solutions assessment by calling 860-372-4406 or go to www.CTEnergyChallenge.com/HES.
2. Save instantly with energy-saving products installed during your assessment. (Air leaks are fixed on the spot as part of the assessment! Participants save an average of \$400 per year from the assessment alone.)
3. Receive rebates along with a prioritized list of cost-saving improvements you can make in your home.



SHARPSHOOTING

Ten years have passed since the town concluded that Wilton’s over-abundant deer population poses a threat to public safety, health, and our open spaces, and as such, warrants action. Hunting is the only available means to manage the problem. The Deer Management Committee is reflecting on the efficacy of their efforts. It was initially planned to take 300 deer each year though hunting in order reach the accepted goal of 10-20 deer per square mile in seven years, give or take. We have yet to reach that goal or even come close.

This year, following a survey of the hunters and guidance from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the committee put together its most assertive harvest plan to date. More hunters were added and the controlled hunting on reservoir and open spaces began at the earliest possible date and incorporated Saturdays. Also, the committee continues to promote and facilitate hunting on private land to increase harvest numbers.

Even with a dedicated team of hunters, recreational hunting may not be able to achieve the harvest levels necessary to meaningfully alleviate the risks associated with too many deer. Accordingly, the committee is educating itself on sharpshooting as a potential alternative in accordance with Public Act 03-192. The Act, among other things, requires the town submit an application to the CT DEEP detailing why recreational hunting has proven ineffective, what the plan is going forward, and a quantified explanation of the problem. If pursued, this permitting process will also allow the committee to clearly communicate to the public why this option was chosen and what the plan consists of. Interested residents are encouraged to keep an eye out for coverage in the local papers and visit the committee’s website for updated information, <http://www.wiltonct.org/departments/environmental/deer.html>.

– Patricia Sesto, Director, Environmental Affairs

Wilton Property Owners



Too many deer = Lyme disease, property damage & deforestation

Consider participating in Wilton’s program to match homeowners with a licensed, vetted, proficiency-tested bow hunter.

E-mail : deercommittee@wiltonct.org

Let them know you are interested

Drug Take-Back Box Located at Wilton Police Station

Concerns about the safety and environmental risks posed by keeping medication in the home, flushing them down the toilet or disposing of them in the trash have prompted some local and state governments and other organizations to initiate longterm drug take back programs. As a means of addressing this vital public safety and on-going public health issue here in Wilton, a permanent lock box is located in the foyer of the Wilton Police Station for deposition of expired prescription drugs on a year-round basis. Please see the table below for acceptable items.

Items Accepted

- Prescription medications (including controlled substances like Vicodin, Codeine, etc)
- Street drugs (including cocaine, methamphetamines, marijuana, etc)
- Vitamins and supplements
- Medicated ointments, lotions, creams
- All over-the-counter medications
- Medication samples
- Pet Medications

SEPTIC SYSTEM CARE

When we think of all the significant components of our homes that we safeguard, we focus on things like the roof and furnace and maybe a few other sizable pieces. The oft overlooked component is our leaching system, despite its importance to our everyday life and expense to replace. Nearly all single family homes in Wilton are individually served by a septic system to dispose of sewage. The cost to replace a failed septic system is often \$10,000-\$30,000.

Even with this notable financial incentive, the majority of septic failures result from homeowner abuse. The system, comprised of a septic tank and leaching fields, is sized according to the number of bedrooms in your home and soil conditions under the leaching fields. Consequently, a level of use that exceeds the normal amount associated with the number of bedrooms in your house can overtax the system. Other burdens include extravagant shower heads and spa tubs. These fixtures use a lot of water at one time and may be the equivalent of adding a bedroom’s share of water. Lastly, leaks from toilets or other sources continually add water to the leaching fields, potentially amounting to thousands of gallons over the course of a year.

Too much water is one problem and another is disposing of hazardous material down the drain. The chemicals can kill critical sludge-digesting bacteria in the septic tank. The leaching field also depends on a bacterial crust that coats the outer boundary of the leaching field-soil interface. Household chemicals can kill the beneficial bacteria crust and render the system ineffective at digesting harmful nitrogen, bacteria, and viruses.

In addition to overburdening a system from within the house, damage can come from poor care outside as well. Many septic tanks have been broken and/or leaching system soils compacted by vehicles driving over one or both components. Failure to have the tank pumped regularly is a common problem. Solids exiting the house enter the septic tank where they are intended to settle. It is important to have the tank pumped, roughly every 3-5 years, to remove these solids. Should the solids accumulate and get pushed out the leaching system, they clog the voids and cause effluent to push to the surface causing a break out.

Protecting this vital asset doesn’t take much more than conscious decision making. Work to spread out water use; if the family showers in the morning, do laundry later in the day. Use the delayed start option on clothes- and dishwashers to run them overnight. Think twice before installing luxury showerheads or multiple showerheads. There is nothing luxurious about replacing your leaching fields. Utilize the town’s hazardous waste day collection event and never pour chemicals or cleaners down the drain. If work is being done at your home, rope off the tank and leaching fields to prevent trafficking over or parking on the system.

And finally, get on a schedule to have the tank pumped. Every 3-5 years is fairly common, but more often may be warranted if you have a busy household and/or your tank is 30 years or older. Older tanks are often smaller. Be present when the tank is being pumped. Don’t be alarmed that the tank is full – it should be full up to the discharge pipe. If it is not full, there may be a leak. Ask about the level of sludge and adjust your pump schedule accordingly. Also ask about the condition of the tank overall and the interior baffles in particular. Planning a big event at home? Have your tank pumped just prior and after to avoid overloading the leaching field.

We collectively need our septic systems to function properly to avoid pollution from nitrogen and viruses. These can affect our own drinking wells and also provide a source of disease that can be transmitted by mosquitoes. Don’t despair, just be mindful. With a little forethought and care, your valuable septic system can dependably work for decade upon decade.

– Patricia Sesto, Director, Environmental Affairs

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION



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