

A photograph of a forest with tall, thin trees and a dirt path, serving as the background for the title. The sun is visible through the trees on the right side, creating a warm, golden light. The ground is covered in green grass and fallen logs.

# Simsbury Land Trust

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



2022-2023 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Many thanks to our photographers:  
Danielle D'Ermo, Katie Piccirillo,  
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IBC Simsbury, Canton and  
Granby Open Space map

Welcome Liz Cushman!

Bringing years of experience as a certified public accountant, Liz grew up exploring our local trails. She joined the SLT in June 2023. Her role integrates her passion for financial management and conservation, allowing her to ensure the organization's financial well-being while supporting Simsbury Land Trust's mission of preserving the community's natural beauty.

Liz manages the daily financial operations of the organization and the annual audit process. Additionally, she oversees membership donations and collaborates closely with the executive director to engage the community in the mission of the Simsbury Land Trust.





# Letter from the President

After a recent trip to the Canadian Rockies this summer, my husband observed that we saw as many species of wildlife on our late-night drive home from the airport as we did on our stay out west. Our healthy and diverse wildlife populations are due to the preservation of our wild areas. And, as our options for travel increased this year, I once more came to appreciate how fortunate we are to have an abundance of open space preserves within a short distance of our homes.

And speaking of these preserves, have you ever decided to go to a Simsbury Land Trust preserve only to drive right past the trailhead? I have, even for the preserves with which I am well acquainted. But just as the Town of Simsbury has upgraded their signage for their open space properties, so has the SLT. Our preserves will now be easier to find thanks to new signposts that we are beginning to install at their main entrances. This year also saw a continued effort by our Trails Committee to mark the boundaries of our preserves, monitor for encroachments, and survey their health. This tireless group of volunteers also kept the trails safe, passable, and well-blazed, and we are appreciative of their efforts.

Our Conservation Committee is once again looking for volunteers to help with invasive plant removal, which with each passing year becomes an increasingly important task for SLT. While some removal activities, such as those at the Tanager Hill Preserve, have been hired out to professionals, other smaller tasks can be accomplished by muscle and grit before the invasives get out of hand and more expensive to deal with. If you are hale and hearty, and looking for a task that is essential to the health of our preserves, please contact us. Various removal days are being scheduled. And even if you can't join us at our preserves, removal of



any invasive plants in your own yard makes the task of removing them from SLT preserves easier.

This past year saw changes to the SLT staff. After 20 years of dedicated service to the Simsbury Land Trust, Trish Hazelwood, our Director of Finance and Membership, stepped down. We thank her for all she has done and wish her well in her retirement with her husband. We were extremely fortunate that Liz Cushman agreed to step into Trish's position. She brings years of experience as a CPA and manager at PricewaterhouseCoopers. We look forward to working with Liz.

Looking back, it has been another good year for the Simsbury Land Trust, thanks to the support of our members and volunteers, and staff. We couldn't have accomplished what we have without you.

Thank you and happy trails to Trish!

Margery Winters





## A Rose by Any Other Name Is Not as Sweet — Margery Winters, SLT President

Take a walk in one of the Simsbury Land Trust Preserves and use one of the many plant ID apps now available on your cell phone to identify the lush foliage that surrounds you. If you are not a plant aficionado you are in for a surprise. Increasingly, the plants that you ID will bear the nationality of other regions with similar climates to ours — Japan, China, Korea, Russia, Europe. But how did these plants end up here in our woods and fields? The majority have escaped from our gardens where they were planted for their supposed beauty and ease of care. Their seeds may have been deposited in the droppings of birds that ate their berries, blown by the wind, or carried on hiking shoes.

Many of these non-native plants thrive in their new habitats because the biological control mechanisms (insects, herbivores, pathogens, etc.) that kept their growth in check in their homeland were left behind. Without these checks introduced species can become invasive, dominating local habitats. The Oriental multiflora rose is one such example. This incredibly adaptive, noxious weed aggressively outcompetes our native roses and other native plants. Its dense thickets of arching canes quickly form a monoculture that is extremely disruptive to local native plants and food chains. With its sharp, downward curving thorns, it is painful to remove. Although a rose, it is most definitely not a sweet addition to our landscape. In fact, invasive non-native plant species are now the biggest threat to the health of our wild areas.

But how can a plant be an ecological threat? Well, just as we are limited in the number of types and parts of plants we can eat, so are local wildlife, and most importantly, insects. Over thousands of years, a complex and often mutually supportive dance of co-evolution has played out in our local habitats. Native flowers bloom with just the right flower shape, color, pollen and nectar, at the exact moment specific local pollinators emerge from their dormancy, helping these specialized pollinators survive





and breed, thereby ensuring the plant's future pollination and seed production. Native berries are produced in just the right size, at just the right time, and with just the right nutrients to be eaten by native birds who then disperse the seeds in their droppings, helping both the birds and the plant. Native plants support vastly greater numbers of caterpillars that become highly nutritious protein packages for nestling birds, that as adults, consume insects that would threaten the health of the same plants.

Unfortunately, the non-native plants dance to different co-evolutionary tunes and timings and are badly out of step with our local insects and wildlife. Indeed, these plants are a form of biological pollution.

The problem with non-native invasive plants like the popular landscaping plants burning bush, Japanese barberry, as well as long list of others, is that it has grown exponentially over the past 30 years and will get much worse if actions are not taken now to address this problem. Ask any gardener or property owner and they will tell you that invasive plant removal is becoming an increasingly demanding task. Drive around Simsbury and you will see more trees strangled by non-native bittersweet or understories dominated by burning bush, multiflora rose, and prickly barberry. Even public health is impacted by these invasive plants: thickets of Japanese barberry are known to harbor increased populations of deer mice which carry the tick responsible for Lyme disease.

These invasive plants pose the greatest threat to the ecological health of SLT's preserves. These uninvited, invasive non-native plants need to be removed from preserves to restore the ecological health of our wild areas. SLT is spending more volunteer time and effort and increasing amounts of its limited funding to tackle these invasions in our preserves. But SLT cannot tackle this problem alone: it makes little sense to remove these plants from SLT preserves while they are still present, being planted, and escaping from home landscapes.

For effective management of these invasives, all residents, town and businesses entities in Simsbury must participate in this effort.

As not everyone is aware of the negative impact of these non-native invasive plants or may be unable to identify the species that pose the greatest threat to our on our wild areas, invasive plant education will be a focus of many of our upcoming programs in the coming years. We are seeking funding to publish an invasive plant guide booklet for every property owner in town, and we will host invasive plant identification walks, invasive plant removal days, and will work with other Town and local organizations to collectively focus the public's attention on these problematic plants. Only together can we make a big difference.

*We are seeking funding to publish an invasive plant guide booklet for every property owner in town.*

*Stay tuned to learn more. We welcome your help in this critically important effort in the years ahead!*



## Volunteer Help Wanted!

Do you have a love of plants and gardening? Do you get satisfaction from de-weeding your yard? If so, we need you! We are looking for team of volunteers to meet on a regular basis to help combat our invasive plant issue on several of our parcels. If you are interested in participating, please contact [amyzeiner@aol.com](mailto:amyzeiner@aol.com). Thank you!





## Stewardship Work Continues — *Tom Crawford, SLT Stewardship Chair*

Over the past year we have continued to see significant trail use on all our properties as people enjoy hiking, bird watching, and nature. Our Stewardship Committee has been busy keeping the trails accessible, clearing downed trees, maintaining boardwalks and benches, installing signs, and trimming alongside the trails. All trails are open for hiking, birding, and nature walks. We hope you are enjoying the results of hard work put in by our stewards!

Many of our trails require regular mowing as they cross fields and open terrain. We appreciate the work that Tim Ryan (Ryan Family Flower Farm) puts into this effort as they balance keeping it natural while making it comfortable to traverse the fields. In addition to mowing, we will be doing our annual brush hogging in late fall/early winter. The brush hogging project requires a balance to keep fields active for wildlife while not letting them become forested.

In addition to following best practices, we need to consider the time of year when the land is dry or frozen for the equipment to operate efficiently and minimize the impact to the fields. The results will be a continuation of open fields where wildlife can thrive, and people can enjoy the vistas.

Signage has been another major project. We have trailhead kiosks, trail informational signs, maps, and property descriptions that have all been improved, updated, and reprinted. Rosedale Farms has a brand new kiosk, relocated down toward the river, in addition to several replaced educational signs. The Bog boardwalk has fresh new informational signs as well. The West Mountain Trail has five new maps to help hikers navigate the red and blue trail system. We are also installing SLT property signs near the entrance to our parking areas and trail access points. The first was installed at Wagner Woods, and six additional





## Two Generations of SLT Stewardship

Cara and Alex Hodgson have been working with their grandfather Joe Treacy on SLT projects since they were in fifth grade. Joe has been a long-time member and stewardship volunteer. He takes care of the 60 Westledge Preserve. Cara is now a college freshman and Alex is an SHS Junior. Both are also members of the Simsbury Land Trust. Over the years they have participated in the reconstruction of the 60 Westledge bridge landings, installation of cleats on the blue trail boardwalks and removal of numerous downed trees. They both feel that the various projects have been rewarding experiences, while helping the community and spending time with their grandfather. It has been the absolute best!



## Taking Care of SLT Properties for Over 25 Years

Bill Howard has been caring for Simsbury Land Trust properties for over 25 years. A Life Member, Bill started as steward in 1997. A strong proponent of conservation and stewardship, Bill was the chair of the Stewardship Committee for many years, developing baseline and property management plans for most of our early parcels. He is particularly proud of his work on the Cathles Preserve and remembers going with then-President Dick Davis to meet with Betsy Cathles to discuss donation of the property. He also mapped out and worked on the original trails on the parcel. Now in his 90s, Bill has "scaled back" his work with the SLT, and serves as one of the easement monitors for Rosedale Farms, a role he has had since the farm easement was acquired in 2004.

signs will go up this fall and winter. With all of that we are trying to maintain a balance of not having too much signage vs. providing useful information to the public.

Our bird houses have been challenged this year with the increase in bear activity. You may have noticed repeated attacks with bird houses being knocked over, destroyed, and put back up. Although we have tried several natural methods to discourage the bears, they seem determined to feed off nesting boxes. We may have to reconsider where bird houses are located and how best to maintain them going forward.

All this work is accomplished with the help of our 30+ volunteer stewards, many who are active on the properties every week. I thank all of our Stewards for their efforts and contributions to the SLT Stewardship team.



# Financial Highlights

## Statements of Activities

For the Years Ended June 30, 2023 and June 30, 2022

	2023				2022			
	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS		TOTAL	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS		TOTAL
		TEMPORARY	PERMANENT			TEMPORARY	PERMANENT	
<b>CHANGES IN UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS</b>								
<b>Revenues:</b>								
Membership Contributions	\$121,044	-	-	\$121,044	\$130,734	-	-	\$130,734
Contribution Income – Restricted *	-	-	\$19,250	19,250	-	-	\$7,950	7,950
Grants	1,500	-	-	1,500	-	-	-	-
Land Donation	-	-	-	-	-	\$189,696	-	189,696
Investment Income/(Loss)	38,785	-	(66,092)	(27,307)	34,724	-	27,796	62,520
Other Revenue	1,366	-	-	1,366	1,100	-	-	1,100
<b>Total Revenues</b>	162,695		(46,842)	115,853	166,558	189,696	35,746	392,000
<b>Expenses:</b>								
Administrative	36,116	-	-	36,116	37,876	-	-	37,876
Salaries and Benefits	43,682	-	-	43,682	38,790	-	-	38,790
Membership	29,830	-	-	29,830	19,629	-	-	19,629
Stewardship	27,353	-	-	27,353	19,843	-	-	19,843
<b>Total Expenses</b>	136,981	-	-	136,981	116,138	-	-	116,138
<b>Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over Expenses</b>	25,714	-	(46,842)	(21,128)	50,420	189,696	35,746	275,862
<b>Other changes in unrestricted assets:</b>								
Unrestricted assets used for land improvements	-	-	-	-	(27,569)	27,569	-	-
Unrealized gain/(loss) on short term investments	(16,409)	-	-	(16,409)	(49,552)	-	-	(49,552)
<b>Total other changes in unrestricted net assets</b>	(16,409)	-	-	(16,409)	(77,121)	27,569	-	(49,552)
Change in net assets	9,305	-	(46,842)	(37,537)	(26,701)	217,265	35,746	226,310
Net assets, beginning of year	488,945	15,141,123	53,933	15,684,001	515,646	14,923,858	18,187	15,457,691
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	\$498,250	\$15,141,123	\$7,091	\$15,646,464	\$488,945	\$15,141,123	\$53,933	\$15,684,001

\* Restricted Contribution Income is funds donated to the Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund held at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.





Balance Sheet

Fiscal Years Ended June 30, 2023 and June 30, 2022

	June 30 2023	June 30 2022
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash	\$104,339	\$104,980
Short-term Investments	392,674	382,729
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	497,013	487,709
<b>Other Assets</b>		
Investments Held by Others	302,959	349,800
Land	14,846,492	14,846,492
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	15,149,451	15,196,292
<b>Total Assets</b>	\$15,646,464	\$15,684,001
<b>Fund Balance</b>		
Unrestricted	497,013	487,709
Restricted – Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund	302,959	349,800
Temporarily Restricted	14,846,492	14,846,492
<b>Total Fund Balance</b>	15,646,464	15,684,001
<b>Total Fund Balance</b>	\$15,646,464	\$15,684,001

Please stay on the trail...and off the fields

From time to time it is important to remind hikers that while Tulmeadow is a great place to take a hike, it is a working farm, and the fields are their crops. Please review the trail rules below and follow them at all times while on the farm. Similar guidelines are in effect for Rosedale Farms. Thank you for your cooperation and respect for private property.

This is a working farm. Fields are closed to the public at all times.

Please remain on the blazed trail.

Animals may accompany walkers only if on a leash at all times. Please clean up after your pets.

The farm trail is open to the public from sunrise to sunset.

No bicycles or motorized vehicles allowed.

Public trail may be closed periodically for farming needs.

Great volunteers are hard to find and difficult to part with.

Happy trails Joe and Ted, and thank you for your great work on behalf of Simsbury Land Trust.

Thank you to long-time volunteer and SLT member Joe Springman

Joe Springman, long-time SLT member and steward of the Tanager Hill and Owen-Mortimer Preserves, is retiring from his steward role and moving to North Carolina. We appreciate his support and hard work on behalf of the SLT. Good luck Joe, and happy trails!



*“My best memory of being a land trust member and steward is meeting hikers while working on trails and hearing their compliments for SLT’s maintenance of open recreational space for the town.” — JWS*

Ted Almy retires from the board

Ted has been an SLT Trustee since 2000. He served and chaired various committees over the years, and uses his knowledge of finance to help manage the SLT investments. After almost 25 years he is retiring from the board, although he will remain as a member of the Advisory Board and help manage our funds. Thanks Ted!



*“My years on the Simsbury Land Trust board have allowed me to support a mission that I care deeply about and serve with a group of some of the most interesting and capable individuals I have ever had the pleasure of working with. I find it extremely satisfying to think of the timeless legacy and quality of life this organization is preserving for current and future generations of Simsbury residents.” — TA*





## Conservation and Habitat — *Fred Feibel, SLT Conservation Chair*

The past year has seen an increase of activity in the Conservation and Habitat arm of the Stewardship Committee. Along with our continued long-term conservation planning, we have been putting boots on the ground to increase biodiversity with invasive plant removal and native plantings.

Under the direction of Merlin Ennis, we began a project to reduce Japanese barberry at Tanager Hill. We started by “forest mulching” a six-acre plot in the fall and followed up with directed herbicide spraying this spring. So far the results have been very positive and we just completed work on an additional 3.5 acres this fall, which was partially funded by a grant from the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic Committee.

In addition to our large scale projects, we have been trying to build up our volunteer corps to work smaller issues.

Early this summer we covered a large section of highly invasive mugwort at the Glover Preserve with clear plastic, hoping to burn it out. There is more work planned for this fall and we are looking for volunteers!

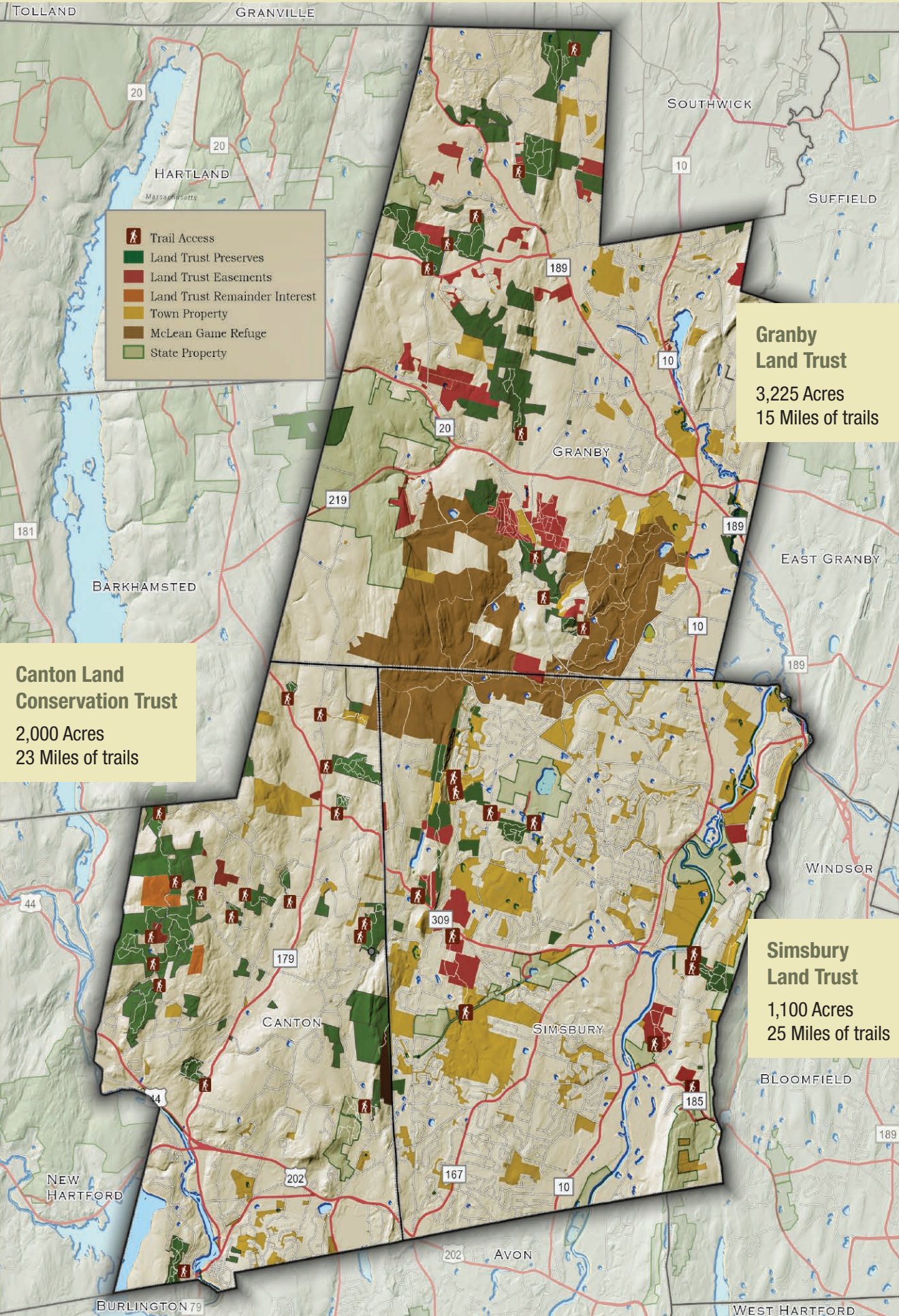
As many of you may be aware, large numbers of Eastern Hemlock trees have been decimated by Woolly Adelgids, an aphid-like insect. This past spring SLT participated in a project run by Farmington River Watershed and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to release *Sasajiscymnus tsugae*, a beetle which feeds on the Adelgids. On May 26th, Susan Van Kleef joined these folks to release several colonies of beetles at Tanager Hill. We were proud to be asked to join the project!

We need your help. If you are interested in helping us battle invasives, join us on one of our removal days or contact the office!





# Open Space in Simsbury, Canton and Granby







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## A Family Tradition of Land Trust Support

Preserving trails and open space in Simsbury for future generations rings true for the Knierim family. Gloria has been a long-time member, as has her son Chip and his wife Linda. Son Paul Knierim was a long-time Board of Trustees member for the SLT. Granddaughter-in-law Michele has taken her turn and is now serving on the SLT Board. Michele and Dan regularly bring their children (Gloria's great-grandchildren) Bode and Remy on SLT hikes and other family events. We thank them for sharing their love and support of the outdoors through the generations!

If you have children or grandchildren, please consider making the time to introduce them to nature and hiking by taking them along on a hike or to an SLT event, or by gifting them an SLT membership for a birthday or holiday. Gift memberships are available by calling the office or completing the membership information on our website. Thank you for your continued support.

**Fun Fact:** Did you know you can gift a membership to the SLT? It is a great way to share your interest in the SLT with your children and grandchildren.

## Time to Renew for 2024!

Your membership is important!

Life has ups and down, just like a hiking trail — and paper and printing costs. In an effort to save our funds for invasive plant removal and other important stewardship work, we have decided to publish the list of member names on our website rather than in the annual report. Our appreciation remains the same, only the location of the listing is different.

Your membership donations provide the funds for all of our work, and your volunteer hours provide the labor. We count on your continued support to run the organization.

Please scan the QR code below, or visit our website at <http://www.simsburylandtrust.org> for a full listing of all of our members. While you are there, take a few minutes to renew your membership online, or complete the enclosed envelope and renew by mail.

**Thank you for your continued support.**

