



SPRING 2024

# Landlines

SIMSBURY LAND TRUST

Since 1976

## Am I a Member?

If you are not, we would like you to be! Often people are unsure of whether they are members of the Simsbury Land Trust. Membership is based on the calendar year. Renewals are sent in late fall and early winter for the next calendar year.

### Why do you need members?

Annual membership contributions are key to the daily operations of the SLT. Membership donations are like votes when we apply for public and private funds. The more members we have, the stronger our voice is.

### Your annual contribution funds:

- **Stewardship** — property maintenance, trail work, tree removal, kiosks and signs, new trails and bridges.
- **Conservation** — habitat restoration, bird houses, invasive plant removal and native plantings.
- **Communications** — Landlines, website, annual report, and other publications.
- **Day-to-day operations** — our small office, including two part-time employees.
- **Recreation and education events** — including walks and hikes, educational programs and family activities.

### What other ways can I support the Simsbury Land Trust?

There are several ways for donors to support SLT in addition to your membership contribution.

- The SLT Richard A. Davis Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG) provides a permanent source of funds for the SLT with an annual dividend and opportunities for grants. Donations to this fund must be made directly to the HFPG. Visit their website, [www.hfpg.org](http://www.hfpg.org) for additional information on how to contribute.
- Special appeals for stewardship, property acquisition or other projects.
- Bequests and planned giving — over the years property and monetary bequests from O. Preston Case, the Walker Family, Alice Weldon, Marie Dugan and more have helped SLT with

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## Seeing Stars: Turn Out the Lights!

*Margery Winters, SLT President*

As an instructor at Roaring Brook Nature Center for many years, I have often asked my students what are animals that are active at night called. Without hesitation they respond in unison, nocturnal! If then asked, what are animals active during the day called, I see puzzled faces and general silence. Rarely do I get the correct answer, diurnal. My favorite answer was “normal,” and I have often wondered if we, as diurnal animals, consider daytime to be the norm and nighttime to be an aberration. And is it our diurnal nature that makes us have a profound desire to light up the night?

In fact, night is a habitat essential to much of the Earth's wildlife. The predictable light cycles of day and night have been encoded in the DNA of all plants and animals for billions of years and govern a host of circadian processes from sleeping, mating, migration, hunting, predator avoidance, hibernation, to plant budding, flowering, and leaf drop.

These circadian rhythms were little unaffected until the invention, and use, of the electric light bulb 140 years ago. The increased efficiency of new LED lighting technology has resulted in even *more* artificial outdoor lighting, with NASA and NOAA finding that global light pollution is increasing at the rate of 2% per year. Each year the nighttime display of stars is less impressive, and the Milky Way is a rare sight available only during regional power outages.

The excessive or inappropriate use of outdoor artificial light has an increasingly documented host of negative and deadly effects on many nocturnal creatures including amphibians, birds, mammals, insects and plants, as well as on human health and safety. According to the National Audubon Society, the majority of birds migrate at night and are disoriented by artificial lighting at night (ALAN). ALAN has been found to decrease the ability of fireflies to attract their mates and is one of the many reasons for their decline. ALAN affects nocturnal pollinators and can reduce the overall pollination rates of our

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## Seeing Stars

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crops. We are all now aware of the impact of the blue light from our electronic devices on our sleep cycles, but excess nighttime lighting is being linked to an increasing list of human health issues, including cancer.

### SEASONAL PERIODS FOR LIGHTS OUT

Unlike many environmental issues, light pollution is a problem that can disappear with the flick of a switch or with small lighting changes. This past year the Connecticut State General Assembly took a major step to protect migratory birds in Connecticut by **unanimously** passing the “Lights Out Bill” (Act 23-143). Signed into law by Governor Lamont, this bill requires that State buildings turn off unnecessary lighting between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Homeowners and businesses are encouraged to do the same. By dimming or turning off unnecessary outdoor and indoor lighting from at least **11 p.m. to 6 a.m. each night especially during peak bird migration (Spring: April 1–May 31; and Fall: Aug 15–Nov 15)**, we can help birds migrate and nest safely in Connecticut. Similarly, we can help our fireflies by dimming/turning off lights or closing our curtains to prevent light spillage from our homes during peak firefly season, mid-June through mid-July.

*The excessive or inappropriate use of outdoor artificial light has an increasingly documented host of negative and deadly effects on many nocturnal creatures including amphibians, birds, mammals, insects and plants, as well as on human health and safety.*

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Turn out lights you are not using! Turn off as many outdoor lights as you can. Close your curtains at night so light doesn't escape in the surrounding areas.
- All lights should have a clear purpose. Remove lights that are only for decoration, such as tree lighting and facade lighting. Put lights on timers and turn off after 10 p.m.
- Install motion sensors to switch off your lights when not needed. (Motion sensor activated security lighting has been shown to be more successful in deterring crime.)
- Dim your lights and install lighting fixtures that are shielded and point downward.
- Use warmer-color lights (2700 Kelvins or less) where possible. Switch out white porch lights with yellow LED “bug” lights that don't attract insects. Use the least amount of light needed.

Share this information with friends and family and take the Lights Out Pledge at [www.lightsoutct.org/pledge](http://www.lightsoutct.org/pledge).

### Am I a Member?

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property acquisitions and added valuable properties to the list of those already protected. Planned giving offers a wide range of gift options for people who care about protecting Simsbury's rural landscapes. Because of the variety of tax benefits that are designed to encourage charitable giving, planned giving may enable you to give a more significant gift than might have otherwise been possible, while at the same time allowing you to receive potential financial benefits.

### Please join or renew today!

If you have not renewed for 2024, or are not a current member, take a minute to complete the enclosed envelope and join or renew your membership today. Or visit our website at [www.simsburylandtrust.org](http://www.simsburylandtrust.org) for a convenient credit card payment option.

Don't know if you are a member? If you are unsure of your current membership status, please contact Liz Cushman at [financeandmembership@simsburylandtrust.org](mailto:financeandmembership@simsburylandtrust.org).

***Thank you for your continued support!***

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# Four Invasive Plants to Remove this Year

It's garden season, and a good time to take a look at what you have growing and learn the best way to remove and replace invasive plants from your yard. There are many different invasive plants, but we are putting pictures and information on a few of the most common invasives you may find in your yard.

## WHAT IS AN INVASIVE PLANT?

An invasive plant is a plant that is not native to a particular ecosystem, whose introduction does or is likely to cause great ecological harm.

## WHY ARE INVASIVE PLANTS SO SUCCESSFUL ON OUR LANDSCAPE?

Invasive plant species often lack natural predators, diseases, and other herbivores that keep them in check in their native habitats. They have competitive adaptations including early leaf-out, aggressive reproductive strategies, and efficient dispersal methods.

## WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Invasive plants are a direct threat to the health of Simsbury's open space habitats. The aggressive growth of invasive plants can affect forest regeneration, the habitat value of grassland areas, threaten our recreational areas, impact our health, and potentially decrease property values.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- Remove invasive plants from your yard.
- Replace invasive plants in your garden with native alternatives.
- Ask your local garden supplier to offer more native species.
- Don't allow non-native garden plants to spread into the wild.
- Volunteer to help remove invasive plants from Town open spaces and parks, Simsbury Land Trust properties, and other areas.
- Help educate others about the problem.

*Burning bush hedge in the fall. Photo: Ron Rathfon*



## Burning Bush or Winged Euonymus

*Euonymus alatus*

This handsome shrub was first introduced into North America in the 1860s for ornamental purposes. Unfortunately, it is still sold today. It can invade a variety of habitats including forest edges, old fields, roadsides and undisturbed forests. Once established, it can form dense thickets, displacing native vegetation. Birds and other wildlife eat and disperse the fruit. This shrub does not support native insects or nestling songbirds .

Yes, it is beautiful in the fall, but please remove it!

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## Four Invasive Plants

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Older burning bush stems may have four corky edges or “wings.”

- Hand pull or dig out small burning bush.
- Cut down large burning bush and trim new growth repeatedly as needed or treat cut stems with herbicide. Cutting and pulling can be done at any time during the year but preferably before or during flowering (April–June).
- If the shrub is pulled in the fall while in fruit, the berries should be bagged and disposed of in a landfill — do not compost.

## Japanese Barberry

*Berberis thunbergii*

Japanese barberry forms dense stands in a wide variety of natural habitats where it alters soil pH, nitrogen levels, and biological activity in the soil. Once established, barberry can form extensive thickets that displace native plants and reduce wildlife habitat and forage. Areas with extensive barberry have been found to have more deer ticks and more Lyme disease.

- Dig out Japanese barberry — be careful of the thorns!
- If you cannot dig it out, in March–June cut the multiple stems to 6 to 12 inches from the ground and let it sprout. Cut the resprouted plant July–early September to one inch from the ground and paint cut stems with glyphosate herbicide.



Green barberry foliage dominating wild areas



Small leaves and short, needle-like thorns



Bright yellow stems and roots

## Asiatic (Oriental) Bittersweet

*Celastrus orbiculatus*

This vigorously growing, sprawling woody vine produces dense shade that weakens and kills shrubs and trees. The twining vines wrap around tree trunks, girdling the bark and killing the tree. The excessive weight of the vines can break and uproot trees. Bittersweet produces an abundance of orange fruits that are spread by birds and other animals to new locations.

- Hand pull small plants and seedlings when soil is moist. Be sure to remove the entire root. Solarize the pulled plant material—do not put in compost.
- In late summer or early fall, cut mature vines close to the ground and immediately paint the lower cut surface with an herbicide for woody plants (i.e., triclopyr) to prevent resprouting. Also cut larger vines at chest height to prevent new vines climbing up old ones. Leave vines to die in the canopy; pulling the vines from the trees can cause damage to tree and injury to you.
- Cutting stems multiple times (6x per year) during the growing season over three years may kill the plant, but diligence is needed.
- For dense, very large infestations, cut or bush hog all vines in mid-summer, then foliar spray triclopyr solution the following summer before flowering when plant height is lower and less herbicide is needed. **Always follow the label on the herbicide container and wear proper protective gear.**



Unripe bittersweet



Mature bittersweet vines



*Mature garlic mustard*



*Garlic mustard can become a dominant understory plant*



*Second year flowers and heart-shaped leaves*

## Garlic Mustard

*Alliaria petiolata*

In many Eastern U.S. forests and floodplains, garlic mustard has become the dominant understory species. The roots of garlic mustard produce a toxin that kills the soil mycorrhizal fungi that many native plants depend on, allowing garlic mustard to out-compete native plants. It is also toxic to some native insects and, because white-tailed deer rarely feed on garlic mustard, large deer populations may help to increase its population densities by consuming competing native plants.

Garlic mustard takes two years to mature and produce seeds. Seeds germinate in February to early March of the first year and grow into a short rosette by the middle of the summer. In the second year, a stalk develops, flowers, sets seed and dies by June.

### Easiest Invasive to Hand Pull!

- One of the few invasive plant species that can be controlled by hand pulling. Plants should be pulled before seed pods develop. Bag and solarize pulled plants as even early removal treatments probably include some plants that have viable seed.
- Treating during basal rosettes with spot foliar spray can be done anytime the aboveground temperature is above freezing. Applying in the late fall through winter and early spring of the basal year avoids accidental overspray on native species. **Always follow the label on the herbicide container and wear proper protective gear.**

**Persistence and a long-term approach is necessary to control this invasive.**

## DISPOSAL OF INVASIVE PLANT MATERIAL

Each invasive species has unique disposal requirements. For detailed information please scan QR code or visit: <https://cipwg.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/244/2022/05/Invasive-Terrestrial-Plant-Disposal.pdf>



## IT TAKES A VILLAGE!

These invasive plant control efforts on SLT properties are futile if these ecologically damaging plants remain on our privately held properties. We encourage you to use this information to help you identify and remove these plants from your yards, and to volunteer to help us remove these plants from our wild areas.

Visit the website of the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group ([www.cipwg.uconn.edu](http://www.cipwg.uconn.edu)) or ask a gardening or landscape professional for advice and information on controlling invasive plants on your property.



## We are looking for some helpers!

Join us for a morning (or two or three) of invasive plant removal, along with a little education, camaraderie, habitat restoration, and some snacks! These bi-monthly volunteer opportunities will teach you how to identify and manage invasive plants in your own backyard while you help us control and remove these harmful plants on the SLT preserves.

You are welcome to join us on all or any of these dates. Please let us know in advance if you will be joining us so that we can let you know of any last minute changes due to weather or other issues. If you are interested in attending these workdays, please email [margerywinters@comcast.net](mailto:margerywinters@comcast.net).

Please dress appropriately for working in the woods! Bug spray and long pants and long sleeves recommended. Bring loppers and work gloves if you have them. Meeting location, workday details, and waiver will be emailed to registrants prior to the workday. Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

**Saturday Invasive Workdays 9–11:30 am: April 13, May 18, June 15, July 13, August 10**  
**Wednesday Invasive Workdays 9–11:30 am: May 1, June 5, July 10, August 7**



# Volunteers Are Key to Our Success

Our committees need your help! Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization. We are reorganizing and rebuilding our committees and looking for some new volunteers. Committees meet two or three times a year for planning, and in between they run educational programs, lead and attend hikes, or participate in stewardship and conservation work.

## STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION

Do you like to work outside? Build? Do you enjoy gardening? This group is for you! Much of SLT's work is in the unheralded area of property management and conservation. Under the leadership of the Stewardship Coordinator Tom Crawford, with the help of many volunteers, SLT maintains hiking trails, trail head parking areas, kiosks, and informational signs, among other things. Conservation Coordinator Fred Feibel and a team of volunteers work diligently to control invasive plants and introduce native plants.

Easement monitors regularly monitor our conservation easements at Rosedale Farms, Tulmeadow Farm and George Hall/Pharos Farm. Annual monitoring and reporting are required by state and federal agencies that helped fund the purchases of the easements. These monitors meet annually with the farmers and conduct a thorough inspection of the property and report back to the SLT and to state and federal government agencies.

## RECREATION AND EDUCATION

Like to hike? Love to learn? We need you! SLT is looking for volunteers to help lead hikes and plan our programs. Each year we host a variety of educational programs and activities, as well as lead hikes on our properties and beyond. Recreation and Education programs and activities are an important function of our organization and part of our mission.

Education programs are mainly held at the Simsbury Public Library, and include book talks, educational lectures and film and discussion nights. Topics range from tree ID to controlling invasive plants to animal habitats and dark sky.

Hikes are held mainly on weekends, but we would love to be able to offer weekday hiking! Past hikes include family and kid-friendly farm walks, longer over-the-mountain hikes into Bloomfield, as well as group hikes on SLT trails, McLean Game Refuge and more.

Some members of the Recreation and Education Committee lead the hikes and conduct the programs, but some just have an interest in attending and a willingness to help with planning or to look for others outside the group to help lead the activity.

## WE NEED YOUR HELP!

If you are interested in joining a committee or to become a property steward, workday volunteer, member of the invasive removal work group, hike leader or educational event planner, please contact Amy Zeiner at amyzeiner@aol.com or call the SLT office at (860) 651-8773.



*Interested? Please attend one of our committee planning meetings:*

### Recreation and Education

Monday, April 29, 2024 • 7:00 p.m.  
Simsbury Historical Society Visitor Center

### Stewardship and Conservation

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 • 7:00 p.m.  
Simsbury Historical Society Visitor Center

RSVP to amyzeiner@aol.com if you plan to attend.





## Support Our Local Farms

The growing season is here, and soon there will be a large variety of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables, flowers and more available in Simsbury. We are fortunate to have Rosedale Farms, Tulmeadow Farm and George Hall/Pharos Family Farm, as well as other smaller farms, right in town. Some have a limited number of CSA farm shares available. We encourage you to support these farms by buying a CSA farm share, stopping into the farm stores to buy ice cream, wine, produce and more.

SLT has conservation easements on three of the town's largest farms — Rosedale Farms, Tulmeadow Farm, and George Hall/Pharos Farm. These farms represent a significant amount of our protected open space, and each has marked trails open to the public.

Note — If you visit the farms, please be sure to stay on the marked trails and follow the farm's policy regarding pets. These are working farms and it is important that you stay off the fields, don't pick the produce, and observe any trail or area closed signs for your safety.

### WHY ARE FAMILY FARMS IMPORTANT TO SIMSBURY?

**A Valuable Natural Resource:** Some of the finest agricultural soil in the Northeast lies along the Connecticut and Farmington Rivers. Several of these farms use little or no pesticides.

**Locally Grown Food:** Fresh produce is a current and future luxury. Farmland makes community-based farming possible.

**A Local Business:** Farms produce jobs, make local purchases and are a significant tourist attraction.

**Scenic Vistas:** These scattered farmscapes add to the character of the town. No other part of our landscape changes so noticeably from week to week, reminding us of nature's cycle.

**Wildlife Habitat:** Fields would disappear without the active cutting that farming provides, and along with them, we would lose a large and important segment of our non-woodland plants and animals.

**History:** Some of these farms are over 200 years old and provide a visual reminder that for most of its existence Simsbury was primarily a farming village.

**Taxes:** The alternative to protecting our last remaining farmland is the fiscal strain of yet another residential development.





# SIMSBURY LAND TRUST

P.O. Box 634 | Simsbury, CT 06070

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Permit No. 158

Preserving Simsbury Open Space Since 1976

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### BEYOND BIRDFEEDERS

**Thursday, April 25 • 7:00 p.m.**  
**Simsbury United Methodist Church – Wesley Hall**

Birdfeeders do help some of our feathered friends through the winter months, but birds do not live by birdseed alone. Learn what you can plant in your yard to provide food to an even greater variety of birds throughout the year while promoting biodiversity in your neighborhood.

### EASTERN COYOTES IN CONNECTICUT

**Thursday, May 16, 2024 • 7:00 p.m.**  
**Simsbury Public Library Program Room**

Join us for an evening with wildlife conservationist Paul Colburn. His “Eastern Coyotes in Connecticut” presentation focuses on the history of coyotes in Connecticut, an overview of coyote habitat, diet, behavior, and reproduction. It also provides practical recommendations for optimum coexistence with our coyote population. Coyote artifacts will be shared with the audience.

### TRAILS DAY HIKE ON THE WEST MOUNTAIN TRAILS

**Saturday, June 1, 2024 • 9:00 a.m.**  
**Meet at the SLT parking area at 60 Westledge Road**

Registration is required for this hike. Registration opens May 8 at <https://trailsday.org>.

This hike begins at SLT’s trailhead at 60 Westledge Road, where there is off-street parking. It will cross the 60 Westledge property

with its Hop Brook bottomlands and historic dam. It will follow the red trail from there, up to and along a ridgeline affording splendid views of the Farmington Valley and beyond. A fairly steep descent will lead to the white trail through the saddle, which connects to the blue trail. The blue trail returns to the starting point through a dramatic and geologically significant valley. The loop totals about six miles, much of it steep and with somewhat difficult footing.

This is a strenuous hike, not recommended for small children. Wear boots or sturdy shoes. Bring drinking water, bug repellent and if you use hiking poles, you will probably want them.

### TRAILS DAY HIKE AT GREAT POND STATE FOREST

**Saturday, June 1, 2024 • 9:00 a.m.**  
**Meet at the Great Pond State Forest parking lot.**

Join us for a Trails Day Hike! We will do a 3.7-mile loop starting at Great Pond and crossing over to SLT’s Wagner Woods before returning to the parking lot. Come explore approximately two miles of trail in Great Pond and 1.7 miles of trails in Wagner Woods, home to numerous wildlife species and birds. Flat and easy terrain with occasional mud in low lying areas. Bring water and snack, bug spray recommended.

### We’re looking for some helpers!

**Saturday Invasive Workdays 9–11:30 a.m.: April 13, May 18, June 15, July 13, August 10**

**Wednesday Invasive Workdays 9–11:30 a.m.: May 1, June 5, July 10, August 7**

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