



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP MATTERS

What's been happening at the Race Track Nature Preserve?

The Race Track Nature Preserve will celebrate its second anniversary in August. It was in 2016 when the Village Board of Trustees unanimously voted to allow the transformation of the 21-acre land – a horse show ground during the Gilded Age subsequently used as a tree refuse dump – into a nature sanctuary for the environmental, aesthetic and educational benefits of the community. Much progress has been made since.

Under advice from Larry Weaner Landscape Associates (LWLA,) a landscape firm who specializes in ecological restoration and native meadows, the flat basin has largely been cleared of invasive plants such as Barberry, Miscanthus, Japanese knotweed, Japanese angelica (Hercules' club) and more.



Barberry (Berberis) harbors ticks.



Miscanthus grass (Miscanthus sinensis) may look pretty but it is mono-cultural and highly invasive. It could easily take over the entire landscape.



*Japanese knotweed (Fallopia japonica) can damage the foundations of driveways and buildings. It should **never** be cut (cutting encourages growth.) Visit www.tptreeboard.org (Homeowners' corner) for information on how to eradicate them.*



*Japanese angelica or Hercules' club (Aralia elata) should **never** be cut (cutting encourages growth.) See www.tptreeboard.org (Homeowners' corner) for information on how to eliminate them.*

With the invasives under control, native plants have returned in abundance to the delight of birds, animals and insects. In June this year, we also seeded the southern and northern sections of the basin (where we had eliminated the worst invasives) with native meadow flowers and grasses, and will continue this seeding operation in 2019 while diligently pursuing a maintenance program (getting rid of any re-emergent invasive.)



Black-eyed susan (Rudbeckia hirta,) a returning native at the Preserve.



Wild Bergamot (Monarda fistulosa,) butterflies and bees love this native plant.



A gorgeous field of Spiderwort (Tradescantia.)



Milkweed (Asclepias, butterflies love them too) and wild Asparagus behind on left.



Turkey eggs in the basin!



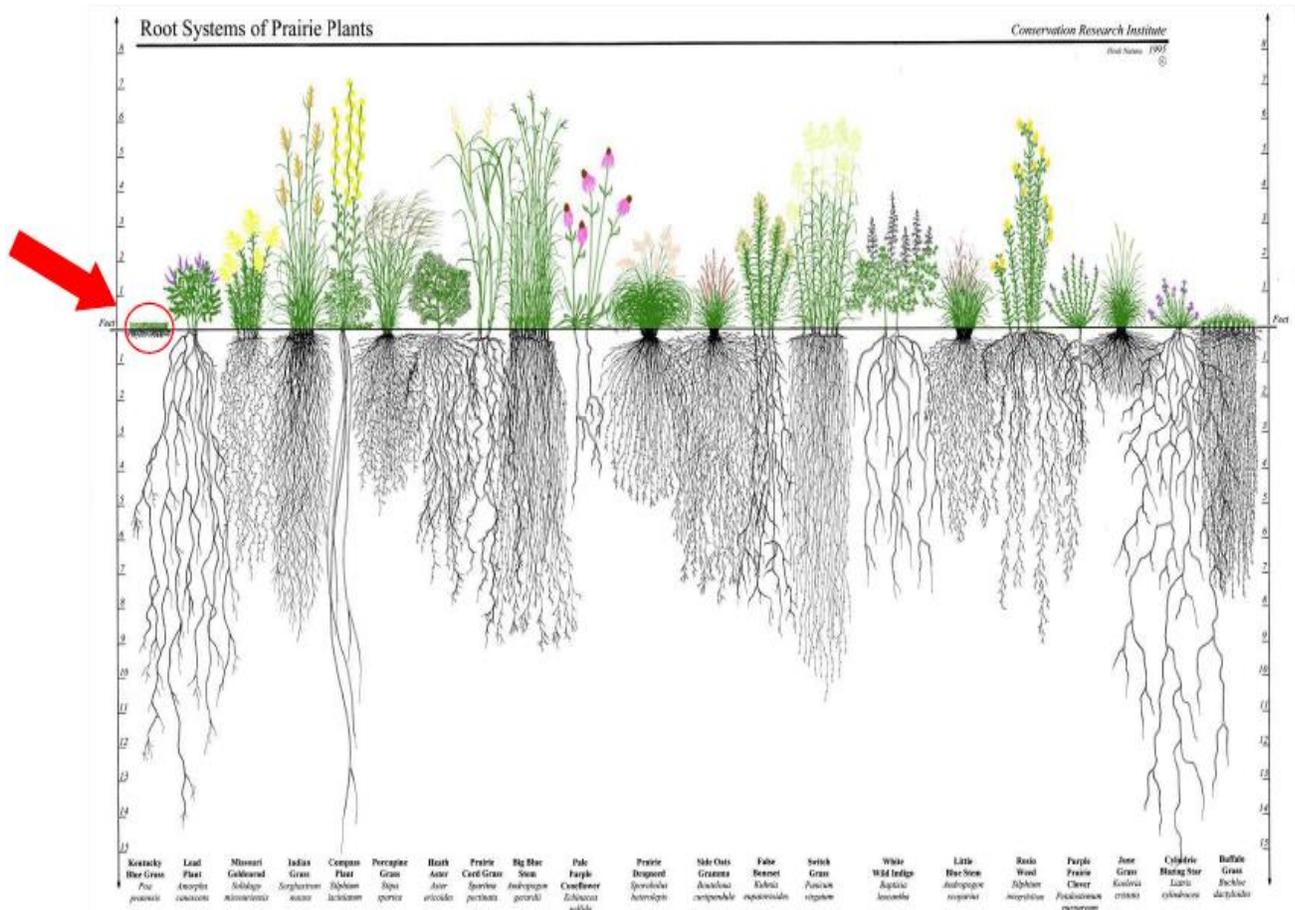
The above image illustrates what we are working towards at the Preserve. An expanse of native meadow flowers and grasses is beautiful – and far superior to a grass lawn.

Seeding a meadow is not different from seeding a lawn, but maintaining a meadow is significantly cheaper: meadow flowers and grasses don't need any additional watering apart from rain, ever. They don't need fertilizers, thus making them environmentally superior. Remember: every time your landscaper fertilizes your lawn, unabsorbed nutrients eventually seep into our lakes – and into our drinking reservoir, Tuxedo Lake. Nutrients are a major contributor to our Milfoil and Algae problems.

Meadow plants have deep roots that can extend to fifteen feet (see image on the next page,) making them ideal for any area that requires erosion control. Indeed, our DPW (Department of Public Works) had used native meadow seeds (instead of grass seeds) to stabilize the disturbed areas at the Wee Wah Dam project.

The best time to seed a meadow is in June or in the fall (dormant seeding.) In year one, the new meadow is mowed once a month between June and October. Thereafter, it only requires mowing once a year in February/March.

You don't need 21 acres to plant a meadow. You can plant native meadow flowers and grasses in any corner of your garden, on a slope on your property, or replace a lawn you don't walk on.



Lawn grass vs meadow plants root systems.

Meanwhile, we have also made significant infrastructural improvements to the Preserve: we installed native stone rip raps in front of drainpipes and cleared drainage trenches to slow storm water runoff and to reduce soil erosion, created a new entrance on East Lake Stable Road where there is convenient parking, and cut new paths to provide varied viewing points.

While the seeding and invasive control have been performed by LWLA professionals, the heavy-lifting work of mowing, regrading, debris removal, tree trimming, rip rap installation has been done by our capable DPW, led by Jeff Voss.



Proud Preserve workers! (From left) Matt, Coco, Danny and Dan of the DPW.

You can see these exciting developments by joining the guided tour on July 28, or by arranging a private tour. Or, simply take a stroll on the mowed paths (if you bring your dog, please use a leash for your pet's safety) and enjoy the sight, scent and sound of nature.

We have come a long way since 2016, but much remains to be done to keep fighting back the invasives and planting/encouraging native plants. A native meadow, once seeded, takes three to five years to establish and to become self-sufficient. The Preserve will soon turn two years old, but we are only in year one of planting.

Please give us your feedback and find out how you can help by contacting racetrackfriends@gmail.com, or me and my colleagues on the Tree Advisory Board (Christopher Gow and Jill Swirbul) at tptreeboard@gmail.com.

Thank you for your continued support.

Chiu Yin Hempel
Chair, Tuxedo Park Tree Advisory Board
July 2018