

NEW STATE TAX CREDIT AVAILABLE!

A boost for Local Land Conservation

Starting last year, for the first time ever, landowners who engage in conservation transactions with the East Quabbin Land Trust or public agencies may be eligible for a powerful new tax advantage—a State income tax credit worth up to \$50,000. This is exciting news for the land trust and the landowners we are working with. While there have always been income tax deductions available for land gifts on donor's federal returns, we have never been able to offer any incentives on the State tax side. Now we can.

The State approved the first 21 applications in December, returning \$800,000 in credits to landowners, including those in the East Quabbin region. A full \$2 million in tax credits are available statewide in 2012.

Conservation of 19 acres on Narrow Lane in Petersham last December was a direct result of this added tax benefit for land conservation. Mick and Louise Huppert generously donated the land to keep the wood and wetland resources on the property open and available to the public forever. Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust owns the land and the East Quabbin Land Trust holds the conservation restriction, ensuring its permanent conservation. Mount Grace is planning to create a walking trail in the near future.

The Commonwealth has provided guidelines on how the program will work. The type of transaction (land gift, conservation restriction, bargain sale, reserved life estate) is less important than the characteristics of the land itself, so long as the land is permanently protected. The Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs must certify that the land preserved is significant to protect drinking water supplies, rare species and other wildlife habitats, agriculture or forestry, recreational opportunities and scenic or cultural values of state or regional importance. While those themes are fairly broad, you can see how a gift of a vacant lot in a subdivision might not qualify. Still, the East Quabbin region is blessed with many resource protection parcels that have been neither yet developed nor preserved that could qualify.

The landowner must have the land pre-certified by the State (we can help do the paperwork) before the gift or bargain sale is completed. An appraisal is needed to justify the land's market value and establish the credit

amount. The State will refund any unused credit in the first year of the gift. That means that not only would your State income tax be wiped out for that year, but the State will issue you a check for the difference between that year's tax liability and \$50,000 or 50 percent of the appraised value, whichever is less. For example, if you donated a parcel worth \$30,000, your tax credit would be \$15,000. If your Mass. income tax is \$5,000, you would pay no state tax and get a tax refund for the remaining \$10,000. If you donate a conservation restriction appraised at \$120,000, your tax credit would be the maximum \$50,000. If your Mass. income tax is \$10,000, you would pay no state tax and get a check for the \$40,000 difference. (The total of tax credit and refund check cannot exceed \$50,000.) You do not need to reside in Massachusetts or even pay taxes here; so long as you own the land, and the land qualifies, you qualify.

Remember that this new tax credit is in addition to the regular federal income tax incentives for charitable contributions of land or interests therein. The East Quabbin Land Trust can be contacted for more details or a free, confidential consultation. ■

(This article was originally prepared in February 2012 by Mark H. Robinson, Executive Director of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, Inc. and Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition and was revised and reprinted with permission.)



Looking across the Lorinda Brook wetland, a portion of which was permanently protected through a recent conservation donation.

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



A couple months ago, I heard about *The Nature Principle*, by Richard Louv, and thought I'd give it a try. I'm more of a fiction reader, but the title was intriguing and it's helpful to keep abreast of conservation theory and practice beyond the East Quabbin region. The ideas were inspiring and led to the idea of the Land Trust hosting a book discussion. Please join me on June 19 at 6:30pm for a conversation about *The Nature Principle*.

There's a large amount of research that shows that nature-based exercise provides tremendous benefits beyond our typical focus on physical fitness, including strengthening our senses, our intellectual capacity and our mental health. In the first two parts of *The Nature Principle* Louv details the studies and builds the case that getting outdoors for hiking, fishing, gardening and other outdoor activities is a path to good health. With this broader view, Louv contends that "health isn't just the absence of illness or pain, it's also physical, emotional, mental, intellectual and spiritual fitness – in short, it's about the joy of being alive." pg. 71. And living our lives in ways that incorporates the natural world is key to improving our health, including our creativity and energy.

The theory of *The Nature Principle* goes beyond just encouraging people to get out and take a daily walk or work in the garden. The principle encourages us to "conserve and create nature, in the form of native habitat" including on roofs, walls and public spaces in cities and suburbs where nature is currently lacking. The concept is that "In addition to conserving resources and preserving wilderness, we must create new, regenerative environments. By the old way of thinking, a botanical garden should be in every city. By the new way of thinking, every city should be in a botanical garden." pg. 257.

The Nature Principle lays out a compelling argument for the conservation and active engagement through stewardship of all areas outdoors, including in rural settings such as the East Quabbin region. One emphasis is to focus on establishing the right plants that foster diverse insect populations that rebuild the local food web. Several youth groups are working with our Service Learning Coordinator to establish pollinator gardens at Mandell Hill and the Frohloff Farm this summer to do just that.

As you read *The Nature Principle* other ideas and actions will grab your attention. I look forward to hearing your thoughts at the book discussion on June 19 about ways that we can expand the creative energy and health of the East Quabbin community. ■

THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST

works to foster the sustainable use of our natural and historic resources for the benefit of all generations through the conservation and stewardship of the farmlands, woodlands and waters in our region of Massachusetts.

As a non-profit organization the East Quabbin Land Trust envisions a regional community that continues to care for its natural environment and supports a sustainable local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come.

We welcome your thoughts, articles, and photographs on events in our area. For more information about the land trust, to become a member, or request a change of address, please contact our office at:

East Quabbin Land Trust

120 Ridge Road, PO Box 5
Hardwick, MA 01037-0005
413-477-8229 (tel & fax)
email: eqlt@comcast.net

Visit our website at www.eqlt.org

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UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL...

Saturday, April 28, 1:00 PM

Opening Ceremony of the new West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area, on Wickaboag Valley Road north of the Shea Road intersection, West Brookfield – Join your neighbors and representatives of the Mass. Department of Fish and Game to officially open the West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area, that was protected at the end of 2011 in cooperation with the McRevey Family Trust and facilitated by the East Quabbin Land Trust. After the official remarks we'll go explore the property. Be sure to wear appropriate walking shoes and bring water.



MAY...

Saturday, May 19, Two Events:

At 7:00 AM - Warblers and Wildflower Walk, 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick – Meet at the EQLT offices and we will carpool to the Moose Brook Preserve. Join us for a leisurely stroll to identify delicate spring wildflowers, colorful warblers and other birds using Moose Brook as a nesting or resting stop. All birding levels welcome, bring binoculars and wear appropriate clothing and hiking shoes for outdoor activities. Lead by Chris Buelow and Caren Caljouw. (We'll provide a light breakfast for those interested in staying for the wildlife monitoring workshop.)

At 10:00 AM - Wildlife Monitoring Workshop, 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick – We need your help to monitor wildlife populations and plant communities on our preserves. Join us for this two hour workshop which will focus on grassland bird conservation and monitoring at our Mandell Hill Preserve. Bring binoculars and water. Dress for outdoor activities. RSVP to Caren at ccaljouw@eqlt.org to sign up.

Sunday, May 20, 4:00 PM

Annual Membership Meeting and Potluck, 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick – Bring the whole family and join us for this annual potluck gathering with friends and meet others who support the Land Trust and conservation in the region. The featured talk is about the *Ecology and Status of Whip-poor-wills in Massachusetts* by Chris Buelow. Bring your favorite dish to share.



JUNE...

Tuesday, June 19, 6:30 PM

Book discussion of *The Nature Principle*, 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick – Take some time to read the thought-provoking book by Richard Louv, *The Nature Principle*, and share your thoughts and insights to his research and call to action. What can we do in the East Quabbin region to reground ourselves and our society in the world that sustains us. Refreshments will be available. Please RSVP to Cynthia at chenshaw@eqlt.org.

Saturday, June 23, 10:00 to 4:00 PM

Beauty in Barre: A benefit garden and farm tour – Bring your friends and family to explore the special garden spaces created by our local garden enthusiasts. See several water features, a Japanese garden and creative use of stones. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased on-line at www.EQLT.org under the Events tab or calling 413-477-8229.

COMING IN OCTOBER...

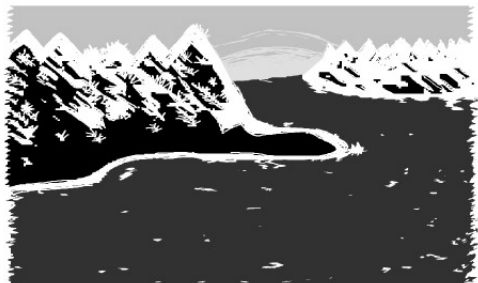


**1st Annual
Station Loop Ramble 5-miler
Sunday, October 14, 2012, 10:00am**

A hilly road and trail race with a flat fast finish on the Mass Central Rail Trail. Entry fee: \$20 for adults and \$10 for children age 13 and under if received before September 14, 2012. For full details and to register go to www.EQLT.org under the Events tab or contact Cynthia at chenshaw@eqlt.org or 413-477-8229.

ELEVENTH ANNUAL DINNER AND SILENT AUCTION

The Board of Directors sincerely thanks everyone that attended and supported our annual fundraising dinner and silent auction on February 18, 2012. With over 200 people in attendance, it was the biggest crowd to date. People came from throughout the East Quabbin region, representing all eight towns plus others across the area. Everyone had the opportunity to make new friends, renew acquaintances and greet old friends. We are especially appreciative of the financial support received from the following underwriters.



NEW HARBOR

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Dresser & McGourthy, LLP
Attorneys At Law

Please support these businesses and thank them for underwriting the Land Trust dinner!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

As a fundraiser the evening was a terrific success! The silent auction raised over \$12,000, thanks to the many donations of incredibly diverse and interesting items. In addition, a 1:1 challenge to the audience was made and encouraged over \$15,000 in additional pledges to support the East Quabbin Land Trust. Thanks to the many, many individuals and local businesses that have donated items to the silent auction.

Silent Auction Item Donors:

Toni Allard
 Doug Anderson and Dan Salvucci
 Carol and Bob Andrews
 Jim Baird
 Dorothy Benedict
 Jason Benoit
 Aurelio Bolognesi
 Wendy Bolognesi
 Gladys Boss
 John and Martha Bowden
 Gail and Murray Bruce
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 June's Bake Shop
 Klem's
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 Lyon Iron
 Nat Falk
 New England Premier Stone
 New Harbor Financial
 North Brookfield Eye Associates
 Quabbin Composting Club
 Robinson's Farm
 Rose 32 Bread
 Ruggles Hill Creamery
 Salem Cross Inn
 StillLife Farm
 Stillman's Farms
 Teresa's Restaurant
 The Cultural Center at Eagle Hill
 The Centered Place
 The Kitchen Garden
 Wigwam Ridge Studio



How we use items donated to our organization

We are extremely grateful for the tangible items that our generous members donate to the Land Trust to help us raise money to further our mission. Most items go into our annual auction. Oftentimes, we have too many items to put out in one year, and we save some for the next. Some times, a donation can be more valuable to us sold through another venue: finding a collector or putting it up on Ebay, for example. There are also times, when items come in that we consider valuable to keep for our own use. We have a growing collection of nature and bird guides and equipment that we use in the office and in the field, that have come to us through the donation process. Once a year, we also set up next to the Hardwick Farmer's Market and sell smaller items that have not sold at our auction. So, if you've given something for the auction, and don't see it that night, don't despair. Everything we get is appreciated; everything is put to use. Really, we just want to say "Thank You!" Know that we feel your generosity is phenomenal, and our thanks are heartfelt! Your donations, large and small, help us in very real ways.

IN THE THREE SISTER'S GARDEN

By Kelly Wheeler

According to Iroquois legend, corn, beans, and squash are three inseparable sisters who only thrive when grown together. Corn was an important staple for early Native Americans as it provided more calories than any other crop. However, corn never produced well when grown alone, it required the companionship of its sisters to prosper. The corn grown by native people was not the same sweet corn we buy from roadside stands in the summer, it was mainly dry corn used for making flour. What the Native American corn and our newer varieties do have in common is that they are both tall plants susceptible to being blown over by wind, and they are both very heavy feeders (What does that mean?). This is where sister bean comes in.

The beans traditionally grown in the Three Sister's Garden are pole beans. The beans were harvested dry and stored to be eaten throughout the winter months. Beans were an important protein source for the native people when they didn't have enough meat



Squash and beans sprouting under corn

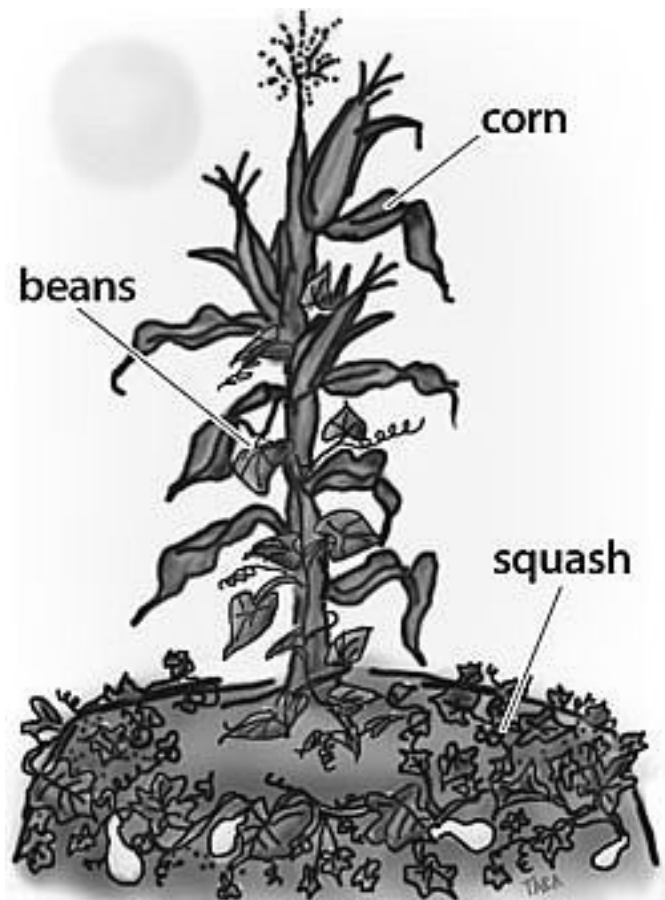
or fish. In the garden, corn forms a trellis to support the sprawling beans, as the beans climb up the cornstalk they strengthen the corn to stand up against the wind. An added benefit is that beans are members of the legume family and have a symbiotic relationship with nitrogen-fixing bacteria that live in nodules on the plants roots. These bacteria have the ability to sequester nitrogen gas out of the air and convert it into a usable form for the plant to use. As the beans' roots die, they become fertilizer to the other plants sharing the soil.

Squash's name comes from the Massachusetts Narragansett word "askutasquash". The type of squash customarily included in the Three Sister's Garden was hard winter squash with a trailing habit rather than bush types like summer squash. This member of the companion guild acts as living mulch, sprawling across the ground suppressing weeds and keeping the soil cool and moist. The stems and leaves of the squash plant are spiny which deter animals such as raccoons from eating the beans or corn.

This spring, try to grow a Three Sister's Garden of your own. Make a grid of mounds 18 inches apart. In June, when all danger of frost is past plant four corn seeds per mound leaving room for the beans and squash. When the corn is a few inches tall it is time to plant the other "sisters". Plant a few beans around the cornstalks. The squash can be

planted in their own mounds alternating with the corn and bean mounds. Make sure to plant corn in a grid rather than a single row because each silk coming out of the ear needs to be pollinated. If there is not enough pollen to do the job you will end up with corn cobs with empty kernels. Try substituting in different varieties like sweet corn and green beans for eating fresh.

To see the Three Sister's in action, stop by Frohloff Farm this summer and see what our youth gardeners from Ware's Kid Stop School-age program are up to. They will be planting a Three Sister's Garden along with a pizza and salsa garden. The majority of the produce will be donated to the Ware Senior Center. The Three Sister's Garden is a productive traditional polyculture that is still practiced today. Try it yourself and enjoy the harvest! ■



**Direct-Sow, Easy-to-Grow:
The Ancient *Three Sisters* Method**

CARING FOR THE LAND

By Caren Caljouw

When the days begin to warm quickly, we listen to loud choruses of wood frogs and spring peepers, as they congregate in vernal pools and swampy habitats to breed. Their vibrant calls bring the promise of new life each spring and for us days spent outside unencumbered by layers of heavy clothes, hats, gloves, and boots. Many of us can't wait to turn the soil in the garden, check the over-wintering spinach plants for new leaves, or venture into our favorite woodland in search of spring wildflowers.

This is a great time of year to visit the East Quabbin Land Trust's preserves, take a quiet stroll on one of our many trails and enjoy the increasing colors and sounds of spring! Watch for trailing arbutus along the Mass Central Rail Trail, the brilliant yellow flowers of marsh marigold at Patrill Hollow Preserve, or the delicate blanket of trout lilies along the Ware River at Frohloff Farm. Listen for eastern towhees at Deer Park, watch for the first waves of migrating warblers at Moose Brook, and bobolinks returning to the grasslands at Mandell Hill.

Each of us has a special connection with the land around us, deriving strength and a sense of well-being knowing that the land is healthy and functioning properly. The East Quabbin Land Trust takes its job of caring for its fee-owned properties and conservation restrictions on privately owned lands very seriously. With a limited staff and the many tasks involved with caring for conservation land, our stewardship work depends heavily on the help of volunteers. We are fortunate to have many dedicated volunteers who assist us in a variety of ways, ranging from joining a crew on a single work day to adopting a preserve and helping to monitor and maintain it for longer periods of time.

Earlier this spring, the Land Trust held a training session for volunteers interested in adopting one of our ten preserves. With the help of preserve stewards, we hope to increase our ability to visit properties regularly and ensure that the values that originally motivated us to conserve the land are not jeopardized by inappropriate activities, invasive organisms, lack of maintenance, timber trespass, and a variety of other physical and biological threats. This is the first in a series of training workshops for preserve stewards with a focus on finding, marking, and

photographing property boundaries, collecting information regarding the condition and potential changes on the land, and reporting the findings to the Land Trust. Preserve stewards are also asked to check for problems such as trail erosion, dumping of trash, and unauthorized activities such as off-road motorized vehicle use. This increased monitoring of all our preserves will allow the Land Trust to protect sensitive resources, and prevent or more easily solve encroachments and user conflicts.

Our next training workshop is scheduled for mid-May. We are seeking enthusiastic volunteers to help monitor wildlife populations and plant communities on our preserves. If you're interested in natural history and would like to help us monitor

populations of declining birds such as the eastern meadowlark and bobolink, join us for a workshop at the East Quabbin Land Trust Office at 120 Ridge Road on Saturday May 19, starting at 10 AM. This workshop, lead by skilled naturalist Chris Buelow, will emphasize the biology, conservation, and habitat characteristics of these declining birds. You'll learn how to perform the monitoring protocol and collect important biological data for the Land Trust. We will use this information to make well-informed management decisions on our preserves. For instance, knowing when the bobolinks return to our area after their long migration, how many pairs are nesting in the grasslands at Mandell Hill, and when they complete their breeding cycle, will help us determine when cattle may return to graze the upper fields this summer. If you are interested in attending this next workshop on biological monitoring or would like more information on becoming a preserve steward at the East Quabbin Land Trust, please contact Caren at 413 477-8229 or ccaljouw@eqlt.org. ■



Volunteer Cory Elowe using a GPS unit to digitally mark a boundary



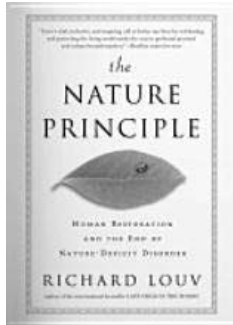
Volunteers learning about preserve boundary marking and management practices at Mandell Hill in Hardwick.

Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

P.O. Box 5
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Phone/Fax 413-477-8229

www.eqlt.org

EQLT News | INSIDE...



Book Discussion:

The Nature Principle,
by Richard Louv

Tuesday, June 19th
6:30 PM

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BEAUTY IN BARRE

A Garden and Farm Tour to benefit the East Quabbin Land Trust

Saturday, June 23, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

A self-guided tour of the many beautiful gardens, farms and special places in Barre and neighboring locations. Participants will see several water features, a Japanese garden and creative use of stones.

Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased on-line at www.EQLT.org under the Events tab or call 413-477-8229. Tickets may be pre-ordered until Tuesday, June 19th to be mailed. If purchased later, they will be available for pick up at the Barre Common on June 23rd.



Tickets may be purchased the day of the event at the Barre Common from 9:30 - 2:00.

Optional pre-purchased box lunch tickets are available for \$15.00 until June 21st.

