



# SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road,  
Hardwick, MA 01037

413.477.8229 |  
EQLT.org

## #NourishTogether Outdoors

Volunteers of the East Quabbin Land Trust have hosted activities for all ages that nourish our bodies and excite our spirits on the land over the past few months.

During winter school vacation week, young people and their families came out in the snow at EQLT's offices, 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick to learn how to tap a maple tree, challenge themselves to identify various types of animal signs, and create kindness rocks. Part of the afternoon was spent sliding down the lawn and checking out the Forest Play Trail under snow. Amy Trevvett, AmeriCorps Land Stewardship Coordinator serving at EQLT, organized the activities with volunteers Mike Stoll, Beth Cafarella, Mike Perkins, Tim Messer, and Ginny Rich.

Christine Kiraly-Thomas led a workshop for beginning walkers and hikers with a goal of making our outdoor time safe and rewarding. Chris shared essential categories of preparation and supplies to bring when spending time on the trails:

- Know where you're going, have a map, compass, or GPS system
- The sun is powerful, even on overcast days so bring sunglasses, sunscreen, and a hat
- Dress for the weather with appropriate layers of jacket, hat, gloves, rain shell, and maybe even thermal underwear
- Especially during winter walks, carry a flashlight or headlamp
- Bring a First Aid Kit for the unexpected
- Carry matches or lighter in case you need to start a fire
- Sometimes things break so bring some duct tape, knife, screwdriver, and scissors
- Pack nutritious food with plenty of protein and maybe a little salt
- Water, water, water which is essential for life functions
- Carry an emergency shelter or space blanket
- Attach a non-metal whistle to your pack in case you need to get the attention of other hikers

Practicing hammer skills was part of the April school vacation activities as the young people built bluebird houses. The gathering fire was placed on Magi's Lawn where important wishes could be written down and offered to the flames. Nearly 50 kindness rocks were planted, and many placed along the Forest Play Trail to be enjoyed during future outings.

The Geocache Scavenger Hunt, organized by Renee Gregoire, finished up on May 4th with two weeks of a self-paced search for geocaches, or boxes, hidden at various EQLT preserves and found using GPS technology, easily used from your phone.

Coming soon are opportunities for beginning birders and for learning about edible plants. Get onto our email list or check out event postings on Facebook or Instagram to join us! ■



MESSAGE FROM THE  
**Executive  
Director**

*Cynthia Henshaw*



The Ware River is a vital landscape feature that runs through multiple towns in the East Quabbin region, draining approximately 60,000 acres in the towns of Barre, Hardwick, Hubbardston, New Braintree, Oakham, Rutland, and Ware. Land is conserved along different portions of the river, among them are EQLT’s Henry’s Grove preserve on Lombard Road in Hubbardston, River’s Edge Preserve off Maple Street in Hardwick, and Frohloff Farm on Church Street in Ware. Many tributaries of the Ware River are cold-water fishery streams, providing safe refuge for insects, fish and mussels that require well-oxygenated, cold waters for their survival.

There are a few obstacles in the river blocking the free flow of water, nutrients and wildlife. One is the Wheelwright Pond Dam, located in the village of Wheelwright and spanning between Hardwick and New Braintree. Until the 1970s, the dam provided waterpower to the papermill built along the banks of the river. Now the dam provides no public benefit. Raitto Industrial Park, Inc. is the current owner and partner of EQLT and the Mass. Division of Ecological Restoration to remove the dam structure.

When completed the Wheelwright Pond Dam removal project will restore natural riverine processes and reconnect 130 miles of high-quality freshwater habitat in the Ware River Watershed, including 34 miles that is cold-water fisheries habitat. Other benefits are reducing vulnerability to extreme weather events and changing environmental conditions. The dam is 500 feet long. Its removal will be one of the largest and most significant dam removals in Massachusetts. Lowering of the water level continues through 2025. With committed grant funding, the dam can be removed in 2026.

EQLT volunteers and staff are taking an active role in this hugely beneficial re-wilding effort in the central portion of the Ware River. We look forward to reconnecting tributaries resulting in a free flowing river in the near future. ■



*Photograph by Mike Leclair*

**THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST**  
fosters a meaningful relationship with the natural world by conserving, connecting with and caring for the farmlands, woodlands and waters in the East Quabbin region of Massachusetts.

**For more information about the land trust, to become a member, or request a change of address, please contact us at:**

**East Quabbin Land Trust**  
P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road  
Hardwick, MA 01037  
413-477-8229  
Email: office@EQLT.org

**Visit our website at [www.EQLT.org](http://www.EQLT.org)  
or “Like” us on Facebook and  
Instagram!**

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# Renee Gregoire: Geocache Scavenger Hunt Planner Extraordinaire

By Donald Root

The head cook, bottle-washer and organizer for the recent Geocache Scavenger Hunt fundraiser held from April 19<sup>th</sup>–May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025 is Renee Gregoire. For those of you who are not familiar with Geocaching, it's a treasure hunt game where participants use GPS coordinates and clues to find hidden caches. It combines the fun of a scavenger hunt with the challenge of using technology.

With a little help from her hand-held, battered GPS (which once flew off the top of her car in Wyoming and has the scars to prove it), Renee wanders the wonderful EQLT properties prior to the event in search of the perfect hiding places for this year's Geocache Hunt:

- Endeavoring to find new unique places each year for hiding caches
- Finding places that are out of sight of the general public where too much traffic going back and forth to one spot could result in someone removing a cache
- Stashing the cache in a somewhat weather protected hide so it is not sitting in a puddle
- Creating hikes that are of varying lengths and highlighting places on EQLT properties that she particularly enjoys

Renee grew up in Auburn and attended Auburn High School. Her heart was always in veterinary medicine but unfortunately, she was unable to find a way to fund the eight years of education. As a result, she attended the School of the Worcester Art Museum which at the time had a three year Graphic Design or Fine Arts program. Renee successfully graduated with a degree in Graphic Design.

She currently lives in New Braintree with Angelo (aka "Alphonse", "Stinky Ba Dinky") the cat. Over the course of her career, Renee worked as a graphic design freelancer, but spent most of her career (following her passion) as Office Manager/Veterinary Technician for Buck Hill Veterinary Service which is now EquidDoc Veterinary Services. Renee is also actively involved in her town and has served many years as the website administrator and as



a member of the Finance Committee. She is currently the Town Auditor. She looks forward to retiring soon and spending more time actively involved in her town.

Renee has always enjoyed the outdoors where she would spend many hours walking in the woods or enjoying bike rides. An avid cyclist since childhood she now enjoys mountain biking as her favorite mode of exploring. She first got in contact with EQLT at a rail trail workday. This participation then led to Renee's being asked to create the first annual Geocache Scavenger Hunt back in 2020.

We are so grateful to Renee for her tremendous support in making the 2025 EQLT Geocache Scavenger Hunt a huge success! Renee shared that organizing the annual Geocache Scavenger event makes her VERY happy when seeing how much people

enjoy it and hopes to continue organizing it for many years to come.

**Thank you, Renee!**



# #NourishTomorrow during the 21st Dinner and Silent Auction

Over 180 supporters gathered on April 26, 2025 at The Center at Eagle Hill to break bread together and celebrate another successful year of land conservation and caring for the land in the East Quabbin region. Again the Davises generously issued a \$50,000 matching challenge grant, which was enthusiastically received and immediately responded to, committing another \$40,000 in support of our work together.

Help complete the fundraising challenge by making a gift to EQLT now where every dollar is doubled!





# Thank You to Our 2025 Business Partners

*Our Business Partners play an important role in helping the East Quabbin Land Trust continue to Care for the Land that Sustains Us! Together, we #NourishTomorrow!*



## GOLD



## SILVER



**We are grateful to the many businesses and individuals who donated auction items, which raised an additional \$7,400!**

Agromy Farm Vineyard  
Bemis Farm Nursery  
Wendy Bolognesi Massage  
Garrett Wade  
Louise Garwood Landscape Designs  
Get Up and Dance  
Golden Goose Geoponics Farm  
Hannaford Supermarket  
Hanover Theatre & Conservatory  
Hardwick Farmers Co-op

Hardwick Sugar Shack  
Many Hands Organic Farm  
New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill  
Ragged Hill Cider  
Emily Slezak Fine Gardening  
Sherman Oil  
Still Life Farm  
Stillman's Farms  
The Center at Eagle Hill  
The Centered Place  
The Icon Museum and Study Center

The Kitchen Garden  
Walker Farm at Whortleberry Hill  
White Spruce Farms  
Whitesfield Farm  
Worcester Art Museum  
Workshop 13  
  
Anonymous  
Becky Bottomley  
Claudia and David Broschart  
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Krista and Jay Goguen

Nancy Grimes  
Neil Halin  
Ann Hicks  
Judith Jones  
Jody Kablack  
Jane McCauley  
Ginnie Reed  
Mike Stoll  
Jake Stukuls  
Linda Tomasi  
John Woolsey  
Bill Zinni

# Who Blooms There? Finding Vernal Ephemeral Wildflowers in the East Quabbin Area

By Mike Stoll

First, a disclaimer ... I'm a bit of a redneck Yankee and not an academically trained botanist. However, information in this article is mostly from my personal observations and from my photographs over several years. All plants are herbaceous except one (do you know which one?).

Now a bit about this past winter and some of the temps I experienced: DEC -04°F, JAN -17°F, FEB -4°F and MAR -2°F. The result was the frost went 'deep'. One of our EQLT members quipped, "I'm so excited to have an old-fashioned February!", this crazy lady will remain anonymous (for now)! Additionally, I'm in the shadow of Mt Wachusett; therefore, my bloom dates are typically later and you'll likely want to check on the front end of the date ranges I provide.

My first go-to bloom is the **Skunk Cabbage** which



flowered on March 9<sup>th</sup> this year. This is often the only plant I find blooming in March and isn't a typical looking bloom!

• **Where:** Usually found near shaded, damp, mucky

floodplains and swamps.

- **When:** Flower emerges first in early- to mid-March with the leaves following a couple of weeks later.
- **Super power:** This plant uses thermogenesis (ability to generate its own heat) giving it a head start compared to other plants.

Sliding into April, I look for Bloodroot, Trout Lily and Mayflower. **Bloodroot** has a white flower, eightish petals with yellow-orange.

- **Where:** The Mass Central Rail Trail upriver from the Church Street parking area.
- **When:** Early April in loamy floodplains.
- **Super power:** Used by the Indigenous Peoples of the area as a red dye.

**Trout Lily** normally has a multi-petalled hanging flower with two basal mottled brownish green leaves.

- **Where:** Lots of places in mixed hemlocks and hardwoods. EQLT's Hidden Meadow and Henry's Grove Preserves may be good choices.
- **When:** Early April.
- **Super power:** Old age ... colonies can live for hundreds of years.
- **Fun Fact:** I've been told the first year it grows it only has one leaf and doesn't bloom, later when it has two leaves a bud stalk will emerge and flower.

**Mayflower** is a bit of a misnomer because I usually find it blooming regularly in April! Look for a low creeping vine with little pinkish white flowers. It gives you advance warning because it delivers a powerful and pleasing fragrance ... I smell it before I see it!

- **Where:** Below Barre Falls Dam near trail to mill site. Sunny spots along rock outcrops with moist seeps.
- **Fun Fact:** It is the only woody plant on the list.
- **Super Fun Fact:** Many believe the Pilgrim's ship was named after our American Mayflower. The ship actually had an English Hawthorne flower\* carved into its [bow, mast, deck?] \*which the Brits call their Mayflower.

In May blooms begin to explode! First, early in the month with the Fringed Polygala (Gay Wings) Painted, Red, and Nodding Trilliums and then the Moccasin Flower.

**Fringed Polygala**

- **Where:** Near Maremeadow Reservoir pullouts in at least some full sun moist gravelly areas.
- **When:** Early to mid-May.
- **Super fact:** Many people initially think it is a type of orchid due to its frilly bloom ... nope! It's actually in the milkwort family!

**Trilliums (Painted, Red and Nodding)**

Varied colored petals; however, always comes in threes (petals, sepals and leaves).

- **Where:** Trustees of Reservations in the meadows and forests above East-branch of Swift River below Connor Pond Bridge (Rte 122).
- **When:** Early to mid-May.
- **Super fact:** Trillium seeds have a coating that ants are strongly attracted to. Ants carry the seeds back to their nests; thereby helping with dispersal and "planting" the next generation!

**Moccasin Flower (Pink Lady's-slipper)**

- Mid to late May.
- **Super fact:**



Protected by The Orchid Act of 1935 (along with all of our other orchids, Wild Azalea and Cardinal flower)!

If you want to know more about specific plants, their flowering times and habitats to look for them, I've had success with the The Audubon Society Field Guide to North America (eastern region). ■



*Caring for the Land that Sustains Us*

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**INSIDE:**  
**#NourishTogether Outdoors**  
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Barre, MA



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# Hills of East Quabbin Ride

## Coming Saturday, June 14, 2025

Pedal past the beautiful farms and deep woods of central Massachusetts. Take your choice of a Short loop (23.1-mile) or a Long loop (46.6-mile), both start and finish at Farmer Matt's, 860 West Brookfield Road, New Braintree. The mid-ride rest stop with snacks and bathroom break is at EQLT's office at 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick.

Other tour highlights include passing EQLT properties of Wendemuth Meadow (25 Bates Street, North Brookfield), Mandell Hill (660 Barre Road, Hardwick), Deer Park Preserve (Barre Road, Hardwick), Patrill Hollow Preserve (Hardwick Road, Hardwick), and Eva's Woods (Ware Corner Road, Oakham).

Participate and support  
more farmland  
conservation!



**Registration is \$70  
early bird (before May  
31) registration is \$60**

