

Westchester Land Trust Community Connections on the Land

Newsletter Brief  Summer 2020

Volunteer Spotlight

Students step up to help out



Chad and Tyler Petschek are students with a passion for trail work, who have worked on spike crews on the Appalachian Trail. They have been defining trails, building waterbars, and even improving stream crossings at WLT's Frederick P. Rose and Danner Family preserves.



Samantha Rubin (right) is a student working on large-scale invasive removal and mapping vegetation at the Westchester Wilderness Walk / Zofnass Family Preserve.

Charlie Rudge (left) is a student who enjoys hiking and trail running. He's helping to build kiosks, remove invasive plants, and restore wildlife habitat.

An update from our stewardship team

Notes from the Field

Field season is always busy, but never has this work been so different and so essential.

Like most parks, we've felt and seen the crucial role that trails and nature play in our lives. This was particularly clear at our Westchester Wilderness Walk / Zofnass Family Preserve.

Using trail cameras, we estimate that up to 300 hikers visited on nice days, which is four times higher than the previous record.

To no surprise, that had an impact on our trails, parking areas, and the amount of time needed to keep our land in great shape for visitors.

And just like that, our work changed. Signs were updated at our 18 trailheads to reflect the latest health guidelines and rules, and some trails were widened to accommodate social distancing.

One particularly narrow (and popular) trail was closed to foot traffic, hundreds of feet of stepping



stones were added to fix damaged stretches, and weekends were spent engaging with and welcoming preserve visitors.

While preserve visitation has slowed slightly as the reopening creeps along, we do see signs that the popularity of preserves and trails will not fade away.

We've heard it directly from our visitors—about 70% of the people we met on the trails this spring and early summer were first-timers who couldn't wait to come back again.

You can hear it in their words and see it in their smiles and muddy shoes. And it's these same interactions that remind and reassure us of the value of trails and nature. Being in nature is a restorative experience for everyone.

We look forward to seeing you out on the trails soon.

How can you help?



Stay on the trails to prevent erosion



Keep pets leashed at all times



Report trail damage to WLT staff



WLT's Sugar Hill Farm, Bedford Hills, NY

Easy Farm-Fresh Stir Fry

Ingredients

- Cooked rice or noodles
 - Veggies + leafy greens
 - Eggs (1 or 2)
 - Extra virgin olive oil or avocado oil
 - Soy, tamari, or coconut aminos
 - Sesame oil
 - Salt + pepper
 - Scallions
 - Sesame seeds
1. Sauté veggies + greens in a heated pan with oil.
 2. Add rice or noodles and heat through.
 3. Heat a pan and make a thin omelet. Cut into strips, add to mixture.
 4. Season with soy flavoring, sesame oil, salt, and pepper.
 5. Garnish with sesame seeds and chopped scallions.

Courtesy of Ellen Best, WLT Advisory Board Member

Why does this newsletter look different?

Our Summer Newsletter has gone digital! Shifting to an online-only format allows us to save natural resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, streamline our expenses in the face of ongoing challenges, and ensure that more of your donation goes to preserving land and caring for the trails you love.

WLT's mission has never been more important! We are seeing record numbers of hikers on our trails, and more families than ever turning to food pantries for the organic, local fruits and veggies grown right at WLT's Sugar Hill Farm.

Our community needs us. Make a gift today at bit.ly/WLTdonate.

How's it Growing?

This summer, our Sugar Hill Farm garden—which supplies fresh food to local food pantries—is the place to be on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

You may be surprised to learn that 1 in 5 Westchester residents will experience food insecurity this year and due to the global pandemic, the demand for fresh produce is on the rise.

If you're looking for ways to help with this problem, we have just the volunteer gig for you. You can join our growing roster of (the world's best) volunteers who farm with us at Sugar Hill.

Got a student with a bit of extra time this summer? Sign them up! This year, we have more local high school and college-aged students helping us than ever before.

Volunteers plant, water, and harvest hundreds of pounds of produce which is enjoyed by our

neighbors in need through our partnership with the Community Center of Northern Westchester.

If you have an hour or two to spare this summer, check out our Sugar Hill Farm schedule and plan to join us. With an annual average harvest of 7,000 servings of veggies, we need all the help we can get. No experience? No problem! The talented Allison Turcan, farmer and founder of DIG Farm in North Salem, oversees our volunteer sessions and guides you every step of the way.

Registration and the wearing of a face-covering are required. We cannot accommodate walk-ins due to social distancing protocols.

Visit our website to sign up!



Thanks to Con Edison for partially funding this program and for supporting local efforts to **make our communities more pollinator-friendly.**



Pollinator Pop-Up

Check out WLT's website and preserve kiosks for family-friendly pollinator fun!

The Pollinator Pop-Up offers fun and practical information about the pollinators that support our local food supplies and ecosystems. We can all do our part to help native pollinators! Visit the **Pollinator Pop-Up page** on our website, as well as kiosks at our Pine Croft Meadow (Lewisboro), Hunter Brook (Yorktown), and Otter Creek (Mamaroneck) preserves for resources and activities.