



# Friends of Webster Trails

FWT Newsletter - Fall 2021



**Genesee Land Trust and Webster Parks and Rec Preserve the Big Field**  
(graphic from Kevin Farrell, GLT)

## Upcoming Events

Saturday Oct. 23 – FWT Workday at State Road Preserve  
- 9 am at State Road Preserve

Saturday Oct. 23 – Hike at WRNP – 9 am at Whiting Road  
Parking lot

**Friday Nov. 5** - Parks and Rec 10th Birthday Bash - FWT  
will have a Table from the 5-8pm in the Multi-purpose  
room.

Saturday Nov. 6 – Scavenger Hunt at FMCP, 10:30 –  
12.30 at Four Mile Creek Preserve Parking lot, ages 2-12,  
\$5, (emilypettit@gmail.com)

Saturday Nov 6 – Hot Cocoa Hike at WRNP, 7 pm at  
Whiting Road Parking lot

## Monday Nov. 8 – FWT Annual Meeting 7 pm

Rare chance to check out Liberty Lodge at Finn Park,  
meet the Board and Trail Stewards and provide YOUR  
input to the Board. 7pm

## President's Column – Anna Taylor

Happy Autumn everyone! It is an incredible time of year  
to take a hike in Webster. Now that I think about it,  
every season is an incredible time of the year to hike in  
Webster. For FWT 2021 has been a year to get back on  
track, to grow and look towards the future of our  
organization and the future of our greenspaces in  
Webster. Although Covid protocols continue in their  
varying forms, keeping within current guidelines, we  
have enjoyed in-person meetings when we could have

## FWT Newsletter - Fall 2021

them. We reinstated our monthly Trail Workdays and our Habitat Workdays.

In looking towards the future, this year we launched two new exciting initiatives. One new endeavor is our Tree Project. Read more about the details of this project later in this newsletter. We understand that with this project we are taking on a BIG task. It is our belief that addressing the environmental and invasive threats to our trees and woodlands with research and planned action can minimize negative impacts and is worth our time and effort. Small wins will develop into big wins, which will lead to positive outcomes.

Our second initiative looking to the future is with the goal of potentially adding to the footprint of greenspace in Webster. FWT has joined a committee commissioned by Town Supervisor Tom Flaherty to develop and execute a plan for conserving undeveloped land in Webster. We assisted the Webster Open Space Committee in identifying properties that would make good candidates for protected greenspace in Webster. The criteria FWT offered to help develop the list of properties is the following: adjacency to current preserved land, wooded land, parcels with important watershed, land that would provide greenspace to an underserved area of Webster, and land that has value for trails and public access and connections to neighborhoods. From a master list of properties, the committee has started outreach to gauge interest of property owners in greenspace conservation. Initial outreach was in a letter from Tom Flaherty in late August. There is no obligation from property owners to conserve their land, we will follow up only with those property owners who expressed an interest in adding to the Webster's Greenspace footprint.

To grow community awareness and use of our trails, and to grow our Friends of Webster Trails membership, we forged new relationships and participated in new events. One event which we participated in for the first time with an informational booth was the Webster Waterfront Arts Festival. We were met with very positive feedback. One of the consistent questions we heard from folks at the festival was, do we host group hikes or bike rides on our trails. In response, I am excited to report, that along with our Hidden Gem hikes, this year we have kicked-off a monthly FWT Group Hike.

With the first hike in August on the Bird Sanctuary trail, we will continue to schedule these fun low-key hikes into 2022.

FWT had a great year of trail maintenance. Our Trail Stewards continue their incredible work. Thank you for all your hours of service, it is truly appreciated. In addition, our Trails Chair Craig Hurlbut coordinated projects, volunteers, materials, and tools with great success. Thanks to all those who support Craig on our Trail Workdays, and thank you to the volunteers, who reach out and show up, ready to get the job done.

I want to also thank our Board, our website crew, social media coordinator, mapping volunteers, and the Pettit family who organized and hosted trail Scavenger Hunts in 2021. Finally, thanks to all the hikers, bikers and trail enthusiast who reach out to us. We love and share your enthusiasm!

As we close out 2021 here at FWT we have one remaining Trail Workday, three group hikes, our Annual (nighttime) Hot Cocoa Hike, and a November Scavenger Hunt for kids and families. Join us - we would love to see you there!

### **Mowers Needed**

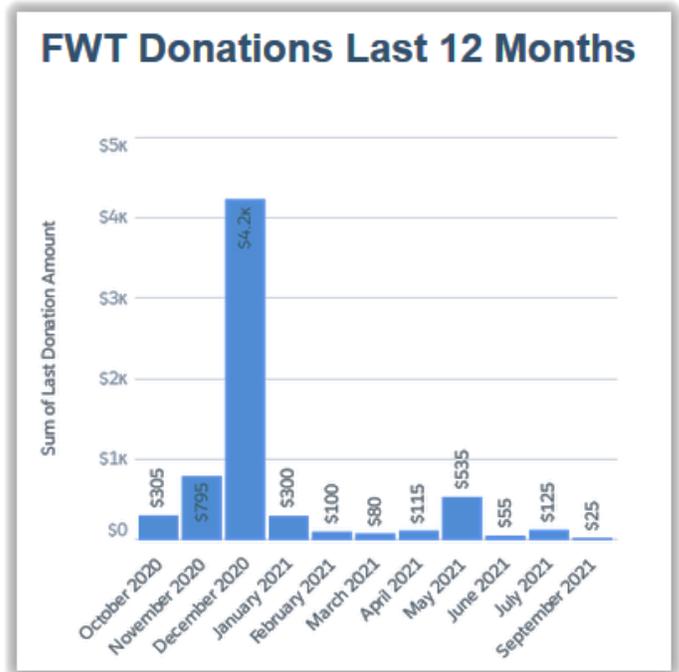
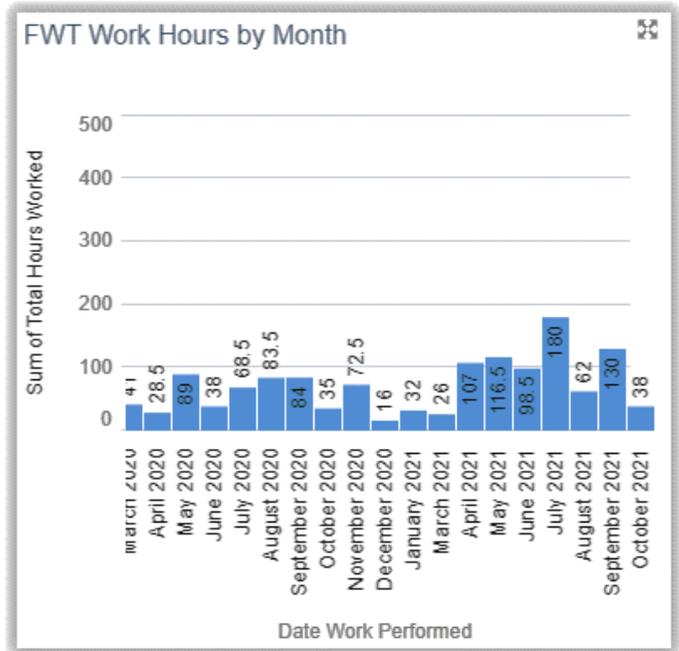
FWT plans to buy a mower for our trails and we need folks to run them. This would be a great way to help with the maintenance of our trails. This would take about 3-4 hours each month, and the work would take place during the work week. Contact Craig Hurlbut (see board contact info later in this newsletter).

### **Social Media Coordinator Needed**

Our current media person, Ken Merkey, is leaving after several years of valuable service. We are looking for a replacement. If you have the time and background, contact Anna Taylor (see board contact info later in this newsletter).

**Membership News - Denise Billsback**

There has been a trickle of new members every month this year. Unfortunately we had a bunch of members that did not renew in the last year but over all numbers are holding steady. Volunteer hours are up this year 754 hours so far this year. Last year total 590 hours for the year. They were lower due to covid. Donations were significantly higher this year around the holidays. Thank you



## FWT Newsletter - Fall 2021

### Treasurer's Report – Bill Polito

Donations/Memberships on par with the prior year. Expenses up compared to last year as Hickory Bark Trail & Four Mile Creek had some repair work done earlier this year.

<b>Friends of Webster Trails</b>			
For: Sep 2021			
Income Statement		YTD	YTD Prior Yr
<b>Donations</b>			
Memberships - PayPal		\$1,640	\$1,421
Memberships - Checks		\$1,495	\$1,445
Amazon		\$72	\$58
United Way			
Scavenger Hunt		\$557	\$205
Interest Earned on Saving			\$3
United Church of Christ			
Roc Trails			\$1,000
Michael Johnson Donations		\$300	
<b>Total Donations</b>		<b>\$4,064</b>	<b>\$4,132</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>			
Community Arts Day			
IRS Filing Fee		(\$100)	(\$40)
Supplies		(\$2,936)	(\$485)
McAllister sign			(\$30)
PayPal Fees		(\$75)	(\$60)
Other, Wegman's, Chipotle, Guidas		(\$9)	
Weekend Printer		(\$300)	
Site 5		(\$258)	
Papa Reggios		(\$32)	
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>(\$3,710)</b>	<b>(\$615)</b>
<b>Net Cash Movement</b>		<b>\$354</b>	<b>\$3,517</b>

### Trails Chairman Report – Craig Hurlbut

The State Road Preserve is where you'll find our newest trail. In April we welcomed several volunteers to work on clearing and trimming. A bridge was built over a small stream to keep any intrepid hikers' feet dry. This trail will need a lot more effort next year as the trail is completed.

The Big Woods trail as it approaches Pellet Road is sloped for several yards. In May a small group of FWT members worked on "benching" the trail or levelling it out. We hope this makes it easier to walk particularly when it's covered with snow and ice.

In June we had a couple volunteers join us to work at Four Mile Creek. There were a few low spots along the red trail where water would collect and turn into mud. We brought in several 2 x 10's to create boardwalks to go over these spots. Hauling the lumber back into the trails

is good hard work and we'd be happy to have more volunteers next year when we do similar projects.

In July the Webster Thomas cross-country team, boys and girls, came out to help at Whiting Road. Several yards of gravel were hauled by wheelbarrow and spread along the trails to cover some wet and muddy spots. We finished in an hour to just miss the rain and consume a few dozen doughnuts. The cross-country runners put in a lot of miles on the Whiting Road trails and we're glad to have them help with trail maintenance. Many thanks to Coach Brunswick and all the team members.

The Chiyoda Trail and Bird Sanctuary trail received our attention in August. We're grateful for the efforts of the ROOTZ mountain biking group. Their team leader contacted us in June offering to help and we didn't hesitate to accept. Their volunteers worked at spreading gravel along the Chiyoda Trail. On the Bird Sanctuary Trail, we also spread gravel over several wet spots with the help of Fred Keck and his tractor. Several big rocks were dug up and removed so they no longer protrude up into the trail.

In 2021 we purposely limited volunteer group sizes and did not actively promote trail workdays. We are very hopeful that in 2022 there will be no need for similar restrictions, and we can invite many more volunteers!

### Steward Reports from the Trails

Finn Park and Schloski Woods Rebecca and Bernie Bonn

A trail head was added and FWT kiosk was moved closer to the parking lot (west of the original by about 75 ft). This was done by the town. It was done in order to keep folks from having to walk past the lodge and possibly "intrude" on a private party at the lodge. Work is still being done in the big field. Large excavators removing rock and soil from retention pond and moving to the south side of the field (along rte. 104 fence) creating a large berm/barrier between park and highway. A large section of the field (northwest of the ponds) has been mowed over (approx. 1/4 of the field). I assume this was done to make it easier for the construction vehicles working in the area around the ponds. The part of the trail that is in the woods is in good shape. I continue to pull up multiflora rose and other vines growing in the path of the trail when possible. It appears that someone not too long ago used a weedwhacker along the side of the trail - maybe the town?

## FWT Newsletter - Fall 2021

### Four Mile Creek Preserve

Dennis Kuhn

The Town of Webster has made some very nice improvements to the north side of the parking lot where it parallels Lake Road. They cleared the brush and debris as well as landscaped the areas around the base of the trees with mulch. The grass has been mowed and the result is a very eye-pleasing, park-like setting. I currently share the responsibility of mowing the grass around the parking lot with the Town. It's a job that often needs to be done on a weekly basis. I would greatly appreciate some voluntary help with the mowing as well as some trail maintenance on a continuing basis regarding the Preserve. Eighteen acres of adjacent land has recently been acquired by the Town, but at this time future development has not been determined.

### Hickory Bark Trail

Sharon Galbraith

This short trail across from the library is a lovely stroll along a boardwalk bordered by shagbark hickories. At present it is littered with many hickory nuts. If you have not experienced this place, I recommend that the next time you go to the library, you do so. It is a busy place with scurrying squirrels and chipmunks. The maples are beginning to turn scarlet near the start of the trail.

### Hojack Trail NW

Bud Gearhart

With respect to the north end of the Hojack Trail (Van Alstyne to Lake Road), the trenching performed last year around the trailheads at Van Alstyne and Drumm Road significantly improved the drainage and reduced the wet spots this year. The primary challenges of this section of the trail are keeping it trimmed and mowed. The sections from Van Alstyne to Vosburg require hedge-trimming several times during the summer, and from Vosburg to Lake Road needs a brush cutter, as a mower can't access most of that section. Mowing has been a big issue, as the Town doesn't seem to have the resources to mow often enough. We hope to correct this problem in the near future with the purchase of our own mowing equipment. Fortunately, a neighborhood volunteer recently mowed the trail from Klem Road to Vosburg, which puts that section in good shape for the rest of the year. Fall will bring the need to blow the leaves off the trail to preserve the grass and keep the trail from getting mushy. Looking to the future, we will be in need of more volunteers to help with mowing. In general, we are in need of more volunteers at all of our monthly work parties.

### Hojack Trail Middle

Matt Steiner

I think the trail is looking better than it has with drainage and surface improvements. Continued upkeep and maintenance efforts will be on going but no real concerns.

### Hojack Trail SE

John Boettcher

The Town mows the edges of this section of Hojack and takes care of low tree branches. There is a small section or two east of North Ponds Park where the trail surface gets overrun with invasive Japanese Knotweed. I have been managing this by cutting it back. Near Rt. 250 there are parking lots which border the trail and sometimes vehicles park partially on the trail.

### John Ungar Nature Trail

Norma Platt

This secluded location continues to delight. The new mini-meadow just off the Hojack provides comfortable access to the trail where benches overlook Shipbuilders Creek. The trail continues uphill to make small loop under mature trees. Please visit in person, or enjoy the on-line video prepared by Webster Library <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DISPyvCtJQ8>

### Whiting Road Nature Preserve

Ron Happ

It has been another busy year at WRNP. I am amazed at how many people I have seen using the trails. The undergrowth, especially the invasive plants have seemed to grow more and faster than ever. As I write this, I still have to trim back most of the Blue Trail which is probably six days working then mow the trails one more time. This summer, the R.L. Thomas cross country team did a great job spreading stone on the Blue, Orange, and Black trails in the rain. Also, many thanks to Ed Hewig who brought his ATV and trailer over to carry stone to the more distant areas and thanks too to Ed for doing trimming work on the Green Trail. I hope that everyone enjoys the trails this fall and also this winter.

### Whiting Road NP Green Trail

Linda Siple

Tom Gibbons and Linda Siple are the new stewards for the green and brown trails at WNP. We have hiked the trails several times and cut back a lot of encroaching growth. We repainted the blazes along the green trail and will work with Eric Turberg to replace rotted planks on one of the boardwalks.

## FWT Newsletter - Fall 2021

State Road Nature Preserve Hal Harris  
SRNP consists of 84 acres adjacent to Arbor Creek townhomes. This preserve was dedicated to the Town by the developer. It contains several wooded areas, several marshes, an old farm pond and is bisected by Four Mile Creek. The developer has built a trail on the west side of the creek. Although it is on Town property, the HOA is responsible for its maintenance. We are working on a trail system east of the creek. This fall we expect to build a bridge across the creek to connect the east and west trails. We also expect the Town will put in a trailhead parking lot on State Road next year.

### FWT Habitat Preservation Committee: 2021 Spring and Summer Report - Norma Platt

We're baaaack! After a long COVID vacation we've been out in the field, enjoying the weather, each other and the gifts offered up by Mother Nature.



As of the end of September, 20 volunteers have logged **245 hours** of work! We've been working to make the Webster open spaces better looking and friendlier for native species. These are our dedicated volunteers:

Alicia Alverado, John Boettcher, Carolyn Brown, Eric Brown, Mary Dangler, Paul Dangler, Sharon Galbraith, Sheryl Gracewski, John Griffiths, Carmen Gumina, Isobel Kaplan, Geri McMahon, Melissa Mihalyov, Tom Nash, Nancy Poeth, Tom Poeth, Barb Rehberg, Sherri Reinbold and Sarah White.

Here are some of our projects:

- 1) Pulling Garlic Mustard on the trails at Bird Sanctuary and John Ungar. We've been returning for many years and the plants are becoming harder to find now that the seed load is nearly depleted.
- 2) Maintaining the new mini meadow at John Ungar and planting Hackberry seedlings, a native tree that provides good food for wildlife.
- 3) Removing Spotted Knapweed from the Gosnell Small Meadow.
- 4) Policing the understory of alien invasive plants at the south portion of Four Mile Creek, the big gully in the Big Woods, and a portion of the hemlock forest in Whiting Road.
- 5) Removing larger invasive trees such as Ailanthus and Norway Maple.
- 6) Clearing woody plants in the Gosnell Big Field.

A good portion of our time has been running a census wooded areas in the Open Space. This activity was done to provide the ReTree committee with benchmarks needed to plan improvements Webster forests. Please see the separate article in this newsletter.



### The ReTree Project - Norma Platt

Wooded areas of Webster Open Spaces are currently or will be under the threats of disease and alien invasive insects and plants. With the blessing of the FWT board, a group of volunteers have initiated efforts to make these

## FWT Newsletter - Fall 2021

wooded areas more resilient and diverse. Here is our (provisional) mission statement

The Webster Open Space ReTree Project is an initiative of *Friends of Webster Trails*. It aims to fulfill two objectives:

(1) Improve the ecological resiliency of forested habitat within the Webster Open Space areas

-and-

(2) Increase public knowledge of the threats to local forest ecology and ways we can collectively mitigate these risks.

We intend to preserve, protect, and restore wooded habitat by enriching species diversity and increasing tree cover in disturbed areas in order to realize these goals of achieving a more robust forest ecosystem.

Our combined actions will result in a network of Webster Open Space areas that can continue to provide recreational, educational, and ecological value for generations to come. So far, we have benchmarked the trees and habitats in Webster Open Spaces (with the help of the Habitat Preservation Committee) and enlisted the support of the Town and Genesee Land Trust. We are currently working on how to partner with other organizations, setting the physical scale of the work, how to fund the work and how to keep the effort going in the future.

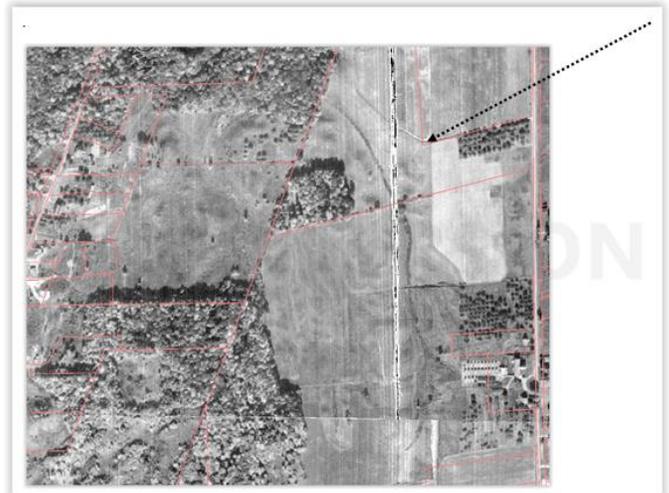
### **Webster Meadows: Rare and Vanishing Habitats - Norma Platt**

The Gosnell Big Field and Small Meadow and the fields in Whiting Road Nature Preserve offer stunning views and a sense of space. They are habitats where field wildflowers, birds, butterflies, and pollinators can live.

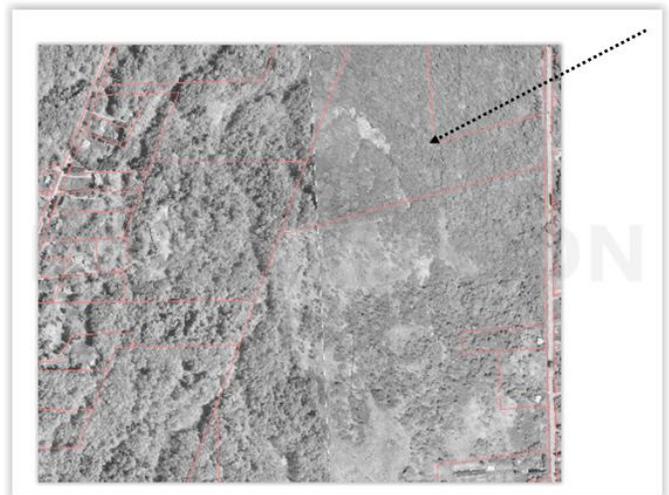
Here in Webster, we are fortunate to have meadow habitats, as opposed to the closely mowed lawns and ball fields normally seen in suburbia. These grasslands are not accidental and must be protected from encroaching woody plants. We are fortunate and grateful that the Town of Webster does an annual mowing to remove the woody growth.

Hopefully, this example will help you understand why the Town does annual mowing. The east side of the Whiting Road Nature Preserve (WRNP) illustrates what happens if the woody growth is not removed. Here's an aerial

photo from **1951**, where east side of what is now WRNP was used for agriculture and consisted of orchards and fields. Let's compare it with the **1999** aerial photo (As a point of reference I've added an arrow that points to the same lot-line intersection, the vertical line on the extreme right is Whiting Road.)



**1951**



**1999**

Aerial photographs of land along Whiting Road (Monroe County archive).

The fields were left fallow, and in the 48 years between 1951 and 1999, filled with woody plants, mostly alien invasive shrubs and fast-growing ash trees. The next time you walk through WRNP, you will notice that the areas off-trail are not maintained, you will be surrounded by thickets of Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose and Tartarian Honeysuckle except for those fields that are mowed by the Town.

## FWT Newsletter - Fall 2021

Hopefully this example will help you appreciate what you see and feel in the fields in the Whiting Road and Gosnell Nature Preserves.....Keep the meadows as meadows!

**GLT and Webster Parks and Rec Preserve the Big Field -**  
The yearly mowing of the Big Field in the Gosnell Big Woods Preserve did not happen last year due to equipment problems at Parks and Rec. The result was the explosion of woody plants on the edges of the field. This is a natural process. In the past, a field such as this would be kept open by agriculture, grazing animals, or fire. Most of the invaders are native but there are a few non-native species.

Rather than mow the entire field, as has been done in the past, Kevin Farrell of the Genesee Land Trust surveyed the location and identity of the invaders and came up with map shown on the first page of the newsletter. Kevin then got together with Glenn Morrill of Parks and Rec to go over the plan and have it executed by his staff. Not mowing the entire field saves the Town money. Casual observation suggests that the desirable grasses and flowering plants in the field have benefited from the break in mowing, making them able to compete with the non-native invasives such as Swallowwort. Knapweed and brambles. Literature also suggests that earlier mowing might be beneficial.

### **Bringing Nature Home by Douglas W. Tallamy – book review – john boettcher**

I was directed to this book from several sources. When I got a chance to look it over, I quickly bought my own copy and read it carefully. I think others should also.

The thrust of the book is that plants harvest sunlight and turn it into food. Food for us and numerous herbivores but also for insects which represent one of the lowest rungs of the food chain but one essential to a great number of the wildlife we depend upon (bees) and enjoy (birds).

The author spends some time describing how current landscaping around the home and elsewhere usually involves plants that are resistant to insects. This is done by using plants that are frequently imported from other ecosystems and our insects cannot use them as food sources, so they remain untouched. Native plants would be a better choice but then the owner would have to accept the damage done by insects feeding on them.

Another example is the typical lawn, where chemicals are applied to fertilize, discourage weeds, and insects. The vast amount of greenery might be pleasing to the eye but does nothing to support our ecosystem. On the contrary, run off of the chemicals into our creeks and lakes upsets their ecosystems.

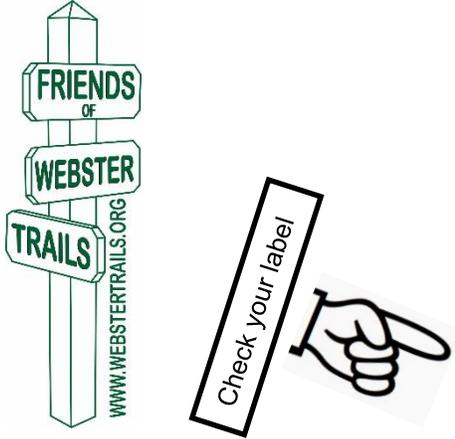
Diversity is another theme that the author wishes to encourage. The more diverse our plantings, the more they can support a variety of insect life which is self-supporting and self-regulating.

At the end of the book, the author gives a shopping list of plants for the home ranging from canopy trees to ground covers for all the areas of the country.

### FWT Leadership 2021

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Friends of Webster Trails  
Webster Community Center  
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**Friends of Webster Trails** advocates for the preservation of the natural character of Webster's open space lands. We promote through sensible management, education, and low-impact access. We advise the Parks and Recreation Department and assist by planning, maintaining and promoting recreation trails in the Town of Webster.

**The Friends of Webster Trails newsletter is published each Spring and Fall**

Editor: John Boettcher

Send any submissions, questions or corrections to:

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