

LUCY STONE PARK, WARREN, MA

A History of Restoration

Lucy Stone Park is a delightful 5.4 acre community park located on the banks of the Quaboag River in Warren, western Massachusetts. The land, consisting of 3 separate parcels, was originally granted to the "inhabitants of the Town of Warren" in the 1960's. It is located in close proximity to Warren Center and the Quaboag Regional Middle/High School, and within a few miles of the Lucy Stone homestead in neighboring West Brookfield. The park was officially dedicated as a memorial to Lucy Stone in 1968.

The Warren Conservation Commission is entrusted with the care of Lucy Stone Park but over the years the Town has been unable to commit resources to maintain the park, which rapidly deteriorated. Invasive multiflora rose, bittersweet, other undergrowth and dead trees rendered the park unusable as a community resource.

Undertaken four years ago, Lucy Stone Park is currently being restored by the Warren Conservation Commission. Local businesses, many townsfolk and, in particular, members of Warren Scout Troop 142, members of Warren's Quaboag Regional Middle/High School Junior and Senior National Honors Society students, and members of the Senior Environmental Sciences Class have contributed on a regular basis as volunteers. Many local businesses have contributed significant services and materials as donations. It should be noted that this project is entirely volunteer and is funded 100% by grants awarded to the Conservation Commission.

The park is divided by Old West Brookfield Road into 2 almost equal portions, East and West. Both portions are on the banks of the Quaboag River. The Commission's approach was to start clearing the East side of all invasive growth, dead trees, etc. This would leave a steep slope of conifers as a backing to the lower floodplain and river bank. The lower area was then seeded with upper wetland grasses, providing a lush, gentle field ideal for walking, picnicking, fishing, kayaking, and enjoying the abundant natural wildlife. A weeping willow was also planted on the riverbank, supplementing the existing mature trees. With a good expanse of grass on the banks of the river, this side of the park is ideal for future community events and already we see expanding use by townsfolk and children. In all, the east side of the park took 2 seasons of work to be completed, including upfront planning, initial advertising of plans and locating of community volunteers, especially those with equipment appropriate for the job.

The West side of the park has 4 ecological habitats: 1) a small upland area along the roadside that is grass, 2) a slope down to the flat floodplain, 3) the river bank, and 4) the river itself. A small gravel parking lot is adjacent to the road. Because of abundant sunshine hours, the Commission determined that this area would be the focus for replacement of strictly native species of trees, shrubs, and perennials. Again, the first step was to remove invasive rose, vines, undergrowth, dead trees, etc.; a major undertaking which took another whole season. Also at this time the Commission was involving our local Scout Troop 142 in potential projects for the following season and also National Honors Society students and Environmental Sciences students from the Quaboag Regional School. Much planning was undertaken into the types of trees, shrubs, and perennials that would be planted in the subsequent fourth season of work. It should be noted that criteria in selection of shrubs and trees included not only shape, height, colors, shade, resistance to disease, and suitability to the particular ecological habitats present at the park, but also their attraction to pollinators, birds, small mammals, reptiles, and even children, who in 10-15 years' time will be able to climb the particular species of Tulip Tree selected for planting along the riverbank.

In 2017, the restoration group of 5-35 volunteers planted over 260 native plants, shrubs, and trees on twice monthly work days. Compost was also donated, a 500 gallon watering tank,

tons of gravel to improve the parking lot, and many truck loads of wood chips to be placed in planting areas to promote water retention. One other major addition to the project was for Warren Scout Troop 142 to plan and build a riverside trail running from the parking lot down and along the riverfront for 350 feet to a picnic area and picnic table built by the Scouts. This required significant labor preparing the trail foundation, adding layers of stone and stone dust and finally the picnic table itself. The total trail project took 10 months to complete and enabled the senior scout to achieve his well-earned "Eagle" status.

While students have contributed greatly to maintenance at the park, they have also enjoyed exposure to a project of this nature - and "getting their hands dirty" in the process. They also receive "community service hours", which is a requirement in their National Honors Society status. The entire effort serves to support the community as a whole and offers our local town residents, families, and children the use of a delightful and unique local park.

Plans for the 2018 growing season are challenging. Established goals are:

- Planting of additional native trees and shrubs - a great task for students and scouts. This task is already in progress.
- Promotion and planting of native shrubs and plants donated from gardens of volunteers and other residents for late season.
- Install a granite bench trail-side. Stone already donated.
- Install 2 wooden benches at Lucy Stone East.
- Build an informational kiosk and install in the parking area.
- Build and install an arbor at the entrance of the riverside trail
- Paint pedestrian crossing lines across the road to connect the east and west sides of the park (already approved by town officials).
- Order and install street signs as roadside warnings to pedestrians crossing. Also street side directional signs from the town center to the park (already approved by town officials), and "disabled" signs for the parking area.
- Coordinate with school officials on student participation/learning over the summer/fall season, and Scout Troop 142, not forgetting many, many individual volunteers and businesses in the local area.
- Finally, and most importantly, the Commission is entering a phase of promoting community awareness of the park and its use, not only for individual and family recreation, but also for local and "near-town" community events. Even though the Commission and its volunteers are always "spreading the word", we now need to focus our efforts towards community activities that can make full use of this delightful location.

Lucy Stone Park is open to all, dawn to dusk, and is free. Already we have commitments for the Annual Duck Race to be held at the park this summer. This is a fun community event especially enjoyed by families and friends. Also we will be welcoming kayakers and canoeists from the Brookfields using the Quaboag River as a "Blue Trail" to its destination point at Lucy Stone Park.

This community park will live and grow in true memory and recognition of Lucy Stone and her achievements, not only in this small community but across the state of Massachusetts.

Follow us on Facebook@warrenconservation.

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Native Plant Garden at Lucy Stone Park

Lucy Stone Park is on the Quaboag River, just a few miles from the home site of the famous abolitionist and suffragette. The park was established in her honor in the 1960s. Over time, the park became overgrown with multiflora rose, bittersweet, and honeysuckle, which encroached on the grassy areas adjacent to the river and limited access to one small path to the water. Fishing or putting in a canoe was very difficult. Several years ago, the Warren Conservation Commission secured funding to restore Lucy Stone Park in stages, with work being done over several years. The east side was cleared first, then the river bank stabilized. A sand and gravel canoe/kayak launch area was created. The east side now offers a wide grassy adjacent to the Quaboag River, with plenty of access for putting in and taking out canoes or kayaks.

Lucy Stone West

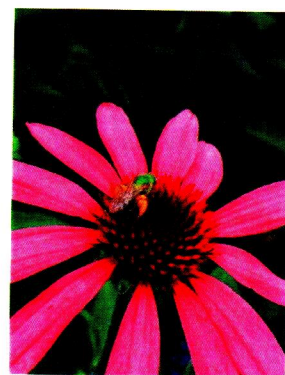
The west side drops off rather steeply from the road level to the shoreline. For this side, the Conservation Commission wanted an improved parking gravel parking area, a disabled access path down to the river, and a few benches and picnic tables for people to sit and enjoy the riverside.



A local Boy Scout troop took on the construction of the accessible path as an Eagle Scout Project. A garden was suggested to stabilize the steep bank and enhance the natural features of the site to make it a more inviting spot. The use of native plants was proposed to provide both aesthetic and wildlife benefits and require less maintenance than a formal flower garden. The Lucy Stone Garden was designed using plants that are found in the wild in New England, with a few others that are native to the broader United States. All of the plants help feed the local wildlife who use the river corridor, from butterflies and bees to the many types of birds.

Native Plants for Pollinators

Many of the plants were chosen because of their benefits to pollinators: the birds, bees, butterflies, bats, and other small animals that pollinate plants. These creatures help pollinate agricultural crops, bringing us one out of every three bites of food. Pollinating animals travel from plant to plant carrying pollen on their bodies; this helps the plant reproduce and make fruits and seeds. While honeybees are the most well-known pollinators, they were actually introduced to North America. We have a huge variety of native bees in many shapes and sizes, like bumblebees and mason bees, that pollinate our orchards and crops.



Many Hands Make Light Work



This garden is the result of many hours of labor from many sources. Special thanks go to:

Warren Conservation
Commission members
Ellen Sousa, Turkey Hill Brook
Farm Nursery
Bigelow Nursery

Nasami Farm, New England Wildflower Society
Boy Scout Troop 142, Warren
Boy Scout Troop 118, West Brookfield
National Junior Honors Society, Quaboag RSD
Warren Garden Club

Special thanks to the Warren Highway Department, for moving the REALLY big things!

Native Plant Garden at Lucy Stone Park – Plant List

Trees and Shrubs:

American elm
Shadblow/Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*)
Arrowwood Viburnum or Witherod
Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*)
Shrubby Dogwood (*Swida sericea, racemosa* or *amomum*)
Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)
Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)
Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)
Northern Bush-Honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*).
Virginia Rose (*Rosa virginiana*)
Dwarf Winterberry Holly (*Ilex verticillata*)
Winterberry Holly
Inkberry Holly (*Ilex glabra*)
Smooth Hydrangrea (*Hydrangea arborescens*)

Perennials:

Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea*)
Rudbeckia
New England Aster
Showy Goldenrod
Butterfly Milkweed or Swamp Milkweed
Wild Senna
Joe Pye Weed
Iron Weed
Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*)
Wild Bergamot
Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)

