



LEEDS LETTER

SEPT-OCT 2020



UPCOMING 2020 EVENTS

MONDAY, OCT 26
DEADLINE FOR PARKING
RESTRICTION COMMENTS
leedscivic.org/survey

FRIDAY, OCT 30
LEEDS PUMPKIN CONTEST
5:30- 7:30 PM
See article on flip side for details.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10
LCA MONTHLY MEETING (ZOOM)
7:00 p.m.
For an invitation contact Karyn at
karynnelson@gmail.com

LEEDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 114, Leeds, MA 01053
LeedsCivicAssoc@gmail.com
LeedsCivic.org

Good Ideas Take Bloom in Leeds

An interview with Lora Sandhusen about the Mulberry Street Welcome Garden - Heidi Stevens

When was the garden was first created? Who was involved in that process?

I got the idea to re-start the garden about 10 years ago. Before then, our city councilor Ray ("Ish") LaBarge maintained it, with the help of teenagers doing community service. Local nurseries donated annuals, and I remember seeing Ray with his truck, trailer, and teens planting the slope every spring.

After Ish passed away in 2009 the garden was neglected, and turned into a bunch of weeds that attracted litter and drugs, and said "we don't care what happens here." I just couldn't stand to look at it this way, and after trying to start a "Garden Club," I realized a (very) low-maintenance garden was the way to go. Smith Voc delivered some compost – a lot of compost- and this was key to the garden's success. Their screener was broken, so every so often I'd find a plastic fork from the school cafeteria in there.

I enlisted some friends – Linda Butler, Jim Montgomery, Karen Kelly and Kathy Harris to lay out cardboard to kill the weeds and spread out the compost in the fall. David Rondina pulled out some scraggly yews, and George Merriam helped with the first loads of mulch. Annie Morehouse had studied garden design at the New York Botanical Garden, so she came up with a plan that would take advantage of sun and shade, provide a succession of blooms, and, most important, be low maintenance. In the spring, I raided other friends' backyards for the plants Annie suggested. The day lilies came from Valerie Vignaux; the cranesbill and nepeta from overcrowded plants at the Sojourner Truth Garden; Scotti's and Sue Carbin donated large hosta divisions; Trippel Brook Farm gave me some clumping bamboo; Sue & Jon Curtis provided the grasses. I was pretty aggressive with my scrounging ("uh, can I have some of that? I've got my shovel right here..."). I filled in with plants from my own backyard perennial garden. Lee Lashway (a Leeds resident) has graciously donated mulch from Lashway's in Williamsburg every spring. Matt Verson prunes the large yews and crabapples. Red Greene often showed up with just what was needed – wood chips, pruning, whatever!

How many years have you been tending it? How often during the growing season?

Because there's no water source nearby, I try to move things around to fill in empty spaces in the spring during a wet spell. Because of the compost and the mulch, it doesn't take much weeding. Many of the plants are pollinator-friendly, so I make a virtue of necessity and forego fall garden cleanup so the seeds are around all winter (a plug for "The Pollinator Victory Garden" by Kim Eierman and illustrated by my daughter Greta Moore).

Who is in the new volunteer group taking over the garden upkeep?

Rick Hart, Norma Adler, Dolores Arroyo, Heidi Stevens and Tricia Reidy have volunteered to take sections of the garden to maintain. Chris Ulrich and I are splitting a larger section.

Have you had any funny or memorable moments while working in the garden?

I really do feel the love, when I'm in the garden in my Zen weeding mode. Many people thank me, or new residents tell stories of first driving through Leeds and seeing the garden. Many others ask me to go work on their yards – which did get me thinking that maybe I should do that with my own yard! Actually, since my father passed away 8 years ago, I've been spending a week every month in N.J. with my mother, who is 93. I also have 6 step-grandchildren (ages 3 to 9) who spend a lot of time with us. Along with my work commitments, I haven't been able to give the garden the attention it deserves. And, honestly, my heart hurt this summer when I saw the ever-present bag of trash parked in the middle of the phlox and catmint. So it's time to spread out the joy – there are still segments that need to be adopted. It'll be waiting for you this spring!

Dear Lora, Thank you for all your scrounging, digging, and zen weeding year after year. You've brought the garden back to life and Leeds loves it. The new volunteer recruits will ensure that it continues to thrive for years to come.

Dear Readers, To adopt a garden section email: LeedsCivicAssoc@gmail.com.

Leeds Parking Restrictions

After reviewing the parking situation in Leeds in July, the DPW issued an emergency order and put up yellow temporary No-Parking signs on Main, Mulberry, Front, Florence Street and Grove Ave. At the September Traffic and Parking Commission meeting, DPW director Donna LaScaleia presented her conservative recommendations for parking restrictions in Leeds. You can view maps of the proposed changes and make comments at [Leedscivic.org](https://leedscivic.org). Deadline for comments is October 26.

Pumpkin Carving Contest is On!

So as not to skip a year in the 24 year run of the Leeds Pumpkin Party, and to offer neighbors some extra motivation to carve a Halloween



jack-o-lantern, the LCA will be hosting "A Pared Down" Pumpkin Party for Leeds residents. It will be a simple pumpkin display and contest, held at the Grove Avenue bike path extension.

Masks will be required and everyone must social distance while checking in and viewing the pumpkins. Hand sanitizer and masks will available at the registration table.

Please follow the directional arrows while viewing the creations. The event will be different from past years, much shorter with no food, but safe and filled with the spirit of Halloween eve! Pumpkins will be lit with electric lights provided by Leeds Civic or feel free to supply your own electric light source. Entries must be dropped off between 5:30 and 6:30. A registration table will be positioned near the Grove Ave. end of the bike path where you will get a number and lights for your entry. Pumpkins will be placed 6 feet apart on marked spots on the bike path.

In order to keep things simple there are no special categories this year. It will be ranked voting; first, second and third place. Everyone is welcome to view the jack-o-lantern gallery and cast votes... However, more pumpkin entries will make for a better gallery experience!

Vote slips are to be deposited into the ballot box on your way out. Votes will be tallied over night and the winners will be announced on the LCA website, leedscivic.org on Halloween. Pie Bar gift certificates will be awarded to first place (\$50), second place (\$35) and third place (\$25). Prizes will be delivered to the winner's homes the day after Halloween.

Improving Swimming Sites in the Longterm

The Planning Department held a virtual community forum on Oct 19th where Wayne Feiden presented long-term ideas to improve access to water recreation spots in Northampton. Among the possible recreation sites being considered are the Connecticut River Front Park off Damon Road and the Maines Field Mill River area. Two other spots are located in Leeds, Cook's Dam (owned by the City) and Chartpak Dam (owned by Chartpak). Nonotuck Dam located in Florence (owned by National Grid) is another possible site. We are waiting for the Planning Department to put together a proposal for the sites in Leeds that will hopefully create a positive result for our businesses, Leeds residents and allows for open access that is sustainable. For six years, the LCA has been supportive of the Planning Department's plan to take the unknown owner parcel north of Chartpak by eminent domain and make it conservation land, which would allow free access for everyone to enjoy the river and natural setting with rules and guidelines that ensure sustainability for the fragile ecosystem. The proposed plan and associated material can be found by clicking the "River Swimming" link here: <https://www.northamptonma.gov/1353/Environment-Greenways>

To date, no comprehensive plan by the city to address short term solutions to overuse and abuse of the sites in Leeds has been presented.

Leeds Resident Turkey - Heidi Stevens

In late summer two turkeys were seen together in yards along Grove Ave. Just one turkey has been seen for the past two months. No one knows what happened to the other turkey. In the fall hen turkeys usually live in flocks with their female offspring. The solo wild turkey spotted around the village may have lost her companion hen, may not have successfully hatched other chicks and for some reason was unable to join another flock of lone hens, or she may have fallen low in the breeding rank pecking order and was shunned by her flock. She has become Leeds' resident wild turkey and the talk of the town. She has been given various names by various fans. River Road residents call her Petunia Wattles, the girls on Grove call her Harriet, others call her Turkules, Lizzie or T-girl.

In the summer, the turkey was frequently seen eating grasses and pecking for insects on the mansion's lawn, Main Street Green and in yards along Grove Ave. and Front Street. Rachel Agolia was walking with a friend on Front St. and saw the turkey walk along Melissa Gnatek's yard, hop onto the hood of a parked van that blocked her way, pause a moment before fluttering off and continue walking. Chris Ulrich said the turkey is not very shy and lets her get quite close to gently scold it for raking up the bark mulch in the side garden. The turkey was often seen in my yard during the summer and in late September at dusk we spotted her napping on a sturdy oak branch. She had been fattening up for winter on the calorie-rich acorns below. The turkey has been a frequent visitor to Joan Anderson's Grove Ave yard. Joan puts seeds on her ramp railing and sure enough the turkey flaps up to eat and preen her feathers.



Preening on rail by Joan Anderson

The wild turkey's life-saving technique of roosting in trees at night helps them avoid ground predators. The only predatory threat to a turkey snoozing in a tree would be from an owl, however the size of an adult turkey would be off-putting to any wise owl. Turkeys prefer older trees with a 20-30 foot branch-free wide trunk and high strong branches growing horizontal to the ground for comfortable perching. Hardwood trees are favored in fair weather and hemlocks in harsher weather. Turkeys typically roost in different trees each night. Turkeys will flutter about on the branch until it's comfortable and as darkness falls it tucks its head under a wing and goes to sleep. Luckily for the fans of our resident wild turkey the wooded area above the village green and the wooded area along the mansion driveway have several safe perches for roosting no matter the weather.



Feathered Friend and Neighbor by Jason Johnson



Turkey Van-Go by Rachel Agolia