

For Immediate Release 7/1/2024

Press contact: Beth Rowland
Elizabeth.rowland105@gmail.com
301.988.3089

Adirondack Garden Club
P.O. Box 72
Keene, NY 12942
www.adirondackgardenclub.com

Adirondack Garden Club shares update on the Essex Quarry Nature Preserve Project

KEENE—In the roughly one year that the Adirondack Garden Club (AGC) has been tackling invasive plants on a one-acre plot in the Essex Quarry Nature Preserve in the town of Essex, progress has been significant, with the benefits extending well beyond the direct remediation of nuisance species. The project is funded through a three-year grant from the Garden Club of America's Partners for Plants program. The Essex Quarry Nature Preserve is owned by Champlain Area Trails (CATS), which purchased the property in 2018.

In the Essex Quarry project, the AGC team, headed by Conservation Committee Chair Nancy Budd, removes invasive trees, seedlings, vines and shrubs — mainly buckthorn, honeysuckle and bittersweet. The stumps left behind are then covered with heavy plastic "buckthorn baggies" to prevent sprouting. The areas will then be planted with native species.

Under terms of the grant, no chemicals are used, no debris is removed from the property and no species are brought in from off-site. That last requirement meant the AGC members had to collect seeds from the quarry's existing native plants last fall, winter them over, then germinate the seeds this spring, with the resulting plants being returned to the quarry this fall to replace the removed invasives. Native species include thimbleweed, various goldenrods, assorted asters, baneberry, Joe Pye weed, columbine, yarrow, and Allegheny monkey flower, among others.

The work has been done under the supervision of botanical experts Steve Young, retired chief botanist at the New York Natural Heritage Program in Albany and his wife Laura Lehtonen, an Ecopreneur and expert at propagating wildflowers from seeds, a rapidly emerging field that is fundamental to restoring native plants and their ecosystems. Steve had previously prepared for CATS an inventory of the plants found in the quarry — over 210 species by Steve's count.

The AGC's June meeting was held at the Essex Quarry Nature Preserve and opened to the public for an update on the project, with over 40 people in attendance. Steve presented on

the ecology of the site, the limestone forest, the native plants, the history of the invasives brought in through quarrying and farming and the methods by which AGC has been removing invasives. Laura presented on the collection and propagation of the native seeds and how important it is to maintain the ecotype of the seeds on site in order to preserve the integrity of the ecosystem. After the presentations, Steve and Laura led a tour, pointing out the work, the methods and the plants.

Beyond restoring native plants to the affected area, the Essex Quarry Nature Preserve project has become a “real world” classroom for how such restoration can be successful. AGC’s Nancy Budd spoke at the Adirondack Park Invasive Plants Program (APIPP) annual Spring Partners meeting and received APIPP’s certificate of appreciation for work at the quarry. APIPP members and guests then toured the quarry project. Nancy’s presentation can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MI9aNMA0UI>.

CATS Intern Peter Biss is using the project area to conduct an experiment determining which plants are best able to grow in areas where buckthorn has recently been removed. This information will be useful for future projects removing invasive plant species.

The Essex Quarry Nature Preserve project continues, and volunteers are always welcome. Contact the garden club through the contact form at adirondackgardenclub.com.

The Adirondack Garden Club was founded in 1928. The club’s mission is to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening, to aid in the protection of native plants and birds, and to encourage civic planting, and the conservation of our natural resources. Its purpose is the conservation of the plants, shrubs and trees native to the Adirondack region, and the making of both wild and cultivated gardens characteristic of the environment in which they are placed, the furthering of the cultivation of gardens throughout the Adirondack area, and the promotion of civic conservation and beautification. The Adirondack Garden Club is a 501 c(3) nonprofit organization. More information is available on the club’s website.

Captions to photos:

DSC2504.jpg:

Steve Young, retired chief botanist at the New York Natural Heritage Program shows visitors to the AGC’s Essex Quarry Nature Preserve project examples of invasive plants and discusses the ecology of the site. Photo by Laura Sells-Doyle.

DSC2540.jpg:

AGC member Melinda Beuf shares the plans for the day’s visit at the Essex Quarry Nature Preserve project with an interested crowd. The garden club opened the meeting to the public for the project update. Photo by Laura Sells-Doyle.

DSC2543.jpg:

“Buckthorn baggies” cover buckthorn stumps to prevent sprouting and propagation as part of the eradication of invasives. The AGC will replant with native species grown from seed collected at the site. Photo by Laura Sells-Doyle.

DSC2544.jpg:

Champlain Area Trails (CATS) Intern Peter Bliss shares details of his experiment on successful plant growth after the removal of invasive plant species with the fascinated crowd of AGC members and guests. Photo by Laura Sells-Doyle.