



Highland Place Meadow Annual Report

Elizabeth Gruben, Meadow Coordinator

July 28, 2018

The mission of the Highland Place Meadow Project (Meadow) is to provide habitat for native wildlife, have an aesthetic place to share with the greater Cobbs Hall neighborhood, and save Association costs for mowing several times per year.

The Meadow was initiated in May 2018 with partial clearing and designating a winding path from the pump house to the mailboxes with 5 trial beds on either side of the path. This is a several-year project of 2.8+- acres of the common area in the Highland Place Community Association development. The purpose of the trial beds is to plant as wide a variety of native plants as possible to see which ones will do best in the existing soil. A hose butler, hose, and nozzle were placed in each of the 5 beds and were daisy-chained starting from the pump house spigot. Various signage was placed in most of the beds with a large metal sign on the edge of the Meadow facing Cobbs Hall Lane.

The first exercise in the project took place in March 2018 and was an evaluation of conditions and of existing plants to be removed or cultivated. The soil was surprisingly moist and loamy, although it hadn't rained for nearly two weeks the day of the exercise. Volunteers divided into teams of two, equipped with surveyor flags and seedling ID manuals, as they combed across the field marking plants to either be protected or removed. After the exercise, the path was created and the invasive plants were singed with a garden torch to interfere with their ability to photosynthesize. This is a method that will not harm wildlife nor poison or burn the soil.

The next volunteer event was a planting day in May 2018. We had members of the association, Cobbs Hall neighborhood, Master Gardeners, Native Plant Society members, and Master Naturalists participate. Over 350 donated plants from members the Native Plant Society were in the ground in less than 2 hours. Two weeks later, another 250 native plants arrived and Roger and I planted them over the following couple of weeks. The plants that are dominating the Meadow at this time are non-native Queen Anne's Lace. Although QAL is not native, it attracts monarch

butterflies with its nectar and helps to crowd out undesirable grasses. Also growing are native goldenrod, milkweed, passion vine, and Virginia creeper. The goldenrod will bloom this fall, the rest will bloom over the summer, and some are blooming now. Non-natives to be removed over time are plantain, bindweed, autumn olive, and aggressive non-native grasses, such as Johnson grass. There are a few plants that will crowd these out including sunflowers and black-eyed Susan, which we will be planting in the fall. There are also several varieties of native and non-native clover, which attract the Eastern Cottontail.

We will be experimenting with bed 1 (the small bed on the Jordan Lane side of the pump house) by burning it in the late fall and then planting native seed. The rest of the area, including beds 2-5, will be mowed once a year in the winter after all has bloomed and the field is dormant.

On July 9th David Bryan, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist, came to assess the meadow for Bobwhite habitat success and to discuss maintaining our meadow as a state designated habitat in partnership with USDA-NRCS, VDGIF and VT-CMI. However, we did not meet the first criterion: a minimum 30 acres. He also said we have too much fescue to support quail chicks, although he did observe quail in the crape myrtles around the meadow. And since his visit, I have found quail eggs and heard adults calling to each other from within the meadow. Nonetheless, we will do our best to remove as much of the fescue over time, as was the plan anyhow. Dr. Bryan also said that we have a relatively rare Grasshopper Sparrow nesting quite heavily in the meadow, so we are creating useful habitat in the meantime. Many species of butterflies, other insects, birds, etc. can be observed when walking on the path.

There are no specific scheduled events at this time, but there will be another planting day in May, and other events as needed in the years to come. Please feel free to walk through the meadow and enjoy it. And feel free to water or pull weeds if it looks like it needs it. Until the possibility of freeze comes our way, the water is turned on at each hose butler, so all you should have to do is squeeze the nozzle.

For more information, contact me at bettegruben@gmail.com
General information can be found at <http://highland-place.com/meadow>
Join us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HighlandPlaceMeadow/>