

Trees Matter: Nature's Own Community Activists

Last month's message was simple and straightforward: *West Newbury's trees and forests are important for our environment, our community, and our well-being.* But how? When we look at trees in the yard or when we hike West Newbury's trails, we are seeing community activism in progress! Community activism is simply good stewardship -- acting to preserve, protect, and enhance the best features of West Newbury for future generations.

Witnesses to the past, sentinels of today, and heralds bearing messages into the future, our trees stand for us. *They are the humble stewards of our town -- nature's own community activists* -- nurturing the welfare of West Newbury 24/7, 365 days a year without calling attention to themselves, foregoing all recompense save an occasional muted request for a bit of care, perhaps a drink of water or some artful trimming here and there.

By sending down roots to anchor themselves, trees secure valuable topsoil and nutrients against intense rain events. The topsoil and nutrients create a robust nursery for understory and forest floor plants. Have you spotted any wintergreen plants on the forest floor? Picked any wild raspberries on the forest edges?

Trees secure our future municipal water supply. Our trees intercept rainfall and reduce impact on surrounding soil, provide physical barriers to sheets of fast-moving surface runoff, and hold water in roots and trunks for gradual release. This enhances groundwater recharge that, in turn, replenishes our private and municipal wells and restocks our reservoirs. All without cost, for the long-term, and as a counterbalance to land clearing. Nature's community activism and stewardship, indeed.

Just how much do forests reduce climate change by simply growing, removing CO₂ out of the atmosphere, and storing it for perhaps 100-200 years?



How much of West Newbury's changes has this Bailey's Lane Black Oak observed? How is it adding to the welfare of future generations?



Sugar maples leaves doing double duty as CO₂ absorbers and natural air conditioners

[A recent comprehensive study](#) says that:

"Forest pathways offer over two-thirds of cost-effective NCS [natural climate solution] mitigation needed to hold warming to below 2 °C and about half of low-cost mitigation opportunities." West Newbury trees thus are already playing a valuable role in combatting global warming. They also keep us up to 20°F cooler than grass and soil. This directly reduces the fossil fuel energy needed for air conditioning in increasingly warm summers. In addition, trees cool ground level air by a process known

as "evaporative cooling." While hard to exactly quantify the amount of evaporative cooling in towns like West Newbury, one estimate suggests it may be up to 10°F. For more information, visit this [USDA Cooperative Extension service website](#).

Trees provide habitat for wildlife and insect pollinators for gardens, adding to local



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

biodiversity and our own aesthetic enjoyment. In addition to birdlife, trees sustain animals in many ways. Acorns, beech nuts, hickory nuts, and walnuts are vital nutrition sources that support the forest and field food webs. Tree bark helps various mammals overwinter when other green nutrition is scarce. When we grow garden flowers or vegetables, trees provide critical habitat for pollinators. Oak trees, for example, support over 500 different pollinators from ants to

honeybees to hummingbirds and more. Maples, black cherries, and basswood trees are also recognized as important pollinator habitats. For more information, please visit this [USDA website](#).

We encourage everyone in West Newbury to celebrate our trees and forests and recognize their stewardship as outstanding examples of nature's own community activism.