



# Citizens for Lexington Conservation

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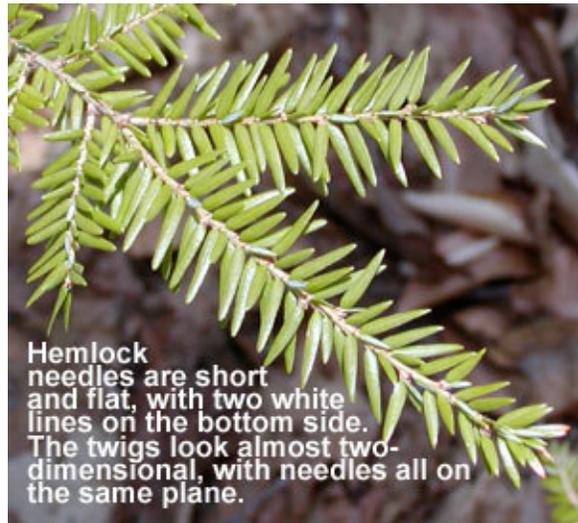
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**Kate Fricker, Editor**                      **April, 2004**                      **Eileen Entin, President**

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Hemlock needles are short and flat, with two white lines on the bottom side. The twigs look almost two-dimensional, with needles all on the same plane.



Citizens for Lexington Conservation is a non-profit organization that relies on dues paid by members to cover its expenses. Look at your mailing label to check your membership status. If it says "Dues paid 2004," you are up to date. If it says "Dues paid 2003" (or earlier), then it is time to renew your membership for 2004. If it says "Complimentary Copy," you are receiving a complimentary copy of our newsletter because you are a Town Meeting member or other public official in Lexington. We hope that those who receive complimentary copies will find our organization of value and will become dues-paying members. To join CLC or renew your membership, please send \$7.00 for a regular membership or \$10.00 for a sustaining membership to CLC, P.O. Box 292, Lexington, MA 02420-0003.

There is an electronic version of the CLC newsletter, sent as an attachment on an e-mail. This newsletter has illustrations in color, and it arrives much sooner than the snail mail version. If you would like your newsletter by e-mail, contact Kate Fricker at [kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu](mailto:kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu).

## CLC PUBLICATIONS

Over the years CLC has encouraged members to write guides to the open spaces in Lexington. These guides have now been scanned and are available at no charge on our web site, <http://www.lexingtonma.org/clc/HomePage.htm>. You may also use the web site to contact us about conservation-related happenings or sightings of unusual birds and wildlife that we can use on our web site and in our newsletter.

The files are saved as Adobe Acrobat .pdf files, and require the free Acrobat Reader. You can obtain this reader at <http://adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html>.

Available titles are:

A Wildflower Walk at Whipple Hill
A Walk Through Hayden Woods
Birds of Dunback Meadow
Birds of the Great Meadow
Birds of Whipple Hill
Building a Brushpile
Checklist of Lexington Birds
Discovering the Paint Mine
Ferns of Whipple Hill
Flowers and Shrubs of Whipple Hill, 1982
Flowers and Shrubs of Whipple Hill, 2000
Geological History of Lexington
Guide to the Great Meadows: A Walking Tour
Gypsy Moth
Insect Pests of Shade Trees
Introduction to Hayden Woods
The Red Fox in Lexington
Wildflower List for Lexington
Winter Feeder Checklist



If you would like copies of the guides and do not have access to the Internet, you will find computers available at Cary Memorial Library.

# Citizens for Lexington Conservation: Spring Walks, 2004

## **Lincoln Park Garlic Mustard --- Annual Service Walk**

Sunday, May 2, 1:00 – 4:00

Come learn to identify this common yard-invasive pest and why it's so important to combat it. Spend an hour or so helping carry on our campaign to eliminate Garlic Mustard from this heavily used recreation/conservation area. Meet at the Worthen Road end of the bike path through Lincoln Park. Bring a plastic yard trash bag and a pair of gardening gloves with you.

Leaders: Nell Walker (781-862-6943) and Keith Ohmart (781-862-6216)

## **Parker Meadow Trail Care**

Saturday, May 8, 8:30 - lunch

Join the Lexington Conservation Stewards, CLC, and the Lexington Conservation Commission for trail care at Parker Meadow, one of Lexington's nicest conservation areas bordering the Minuteman Bikeway. Assistant Director of Community Development/Conservation Administrator Karen Mullins will support us as we construct and repair boardwalks and maintain trails. An excellent opportunity for students to log environmental community service hours. Meet at the parking area where the Bikeway crosses Revere Street. Bring work gloves and a hammer. FREE LUNCH!

Leader: Mike Tabaczynski (mjt1@rcn.com or 781-929-8748)

## **Trails of Whipple Hill and Locke Pond**

Saturday, May 15, 9:00 -11:30.

If you have never explored Whipple Hill, you will be amazed at its variety and feeling of remoteness. As we look for migrating birds, we will climb to the top of the hill, then drop down past rocky outcroppings to a vernal pool, circle through the ecologically rich wetland area around Locke Pond, and, depending on the water level, cross the marsh on the boardwalk. We'll return to the entrance via a trail that skirts around the foot of Whipple Hill. Wear sturdy shoes or boots. The entrance to the area is on Winchester Drive immediately east of Russell Road. If the tiny parking lot at the entrance is full, park on Berkshire Drive, the side street opposite.

Leader: Kathy Goldin (781-861-1343).

## **Chiesa Farm**

Saturday, May 22, 2:30 – 4:00

Probably everyone has driven many times past the attractive frontage of Chiesa Farm. Join us for an afternoon exploration on foot over its scenic fields and pastures! Wear comfortable walking shoes. Meet on the sidewalk in front of 44 Adams Street, but be sure to park on Porter Lane (immediately opposite) or another side street.

Leader: David Williams (781-861-4884)

For further information on all walks, contact Maryanne King (781-860-0229).

For more walks in Lexington and vicinity, CLC suggests:

- Seasonal nature walks, woodcock observation evenings, and invasive plant control workdays sponsored by the Friends of Arlington's Great Meadow. <http://www.foagm.org>
- Many bird walks, sponsored by Menotomy Bird Club. <http://www.mrines.com/menotomy/Trips.htm>
- Waltham Land Trust monthly walks. <http://www.walthamlandtrust.org/calendar.html>

## Volunteer Opportunities

By Eileen Entin

In its annual candidates' question, CLC asked town-wide and town meeting candidates for their ideas on how to deal with maintaining and protecting the town's existing conservation land, given budget-constraining factors such as the loss of the summer conservation cleanup crew. Almost 50 percent of the respondents to our question (see the February edition of the CLC newsletter) suggested that we will need to rely on volunteer help in maintaining our conservation land. CLC and other groups have been trying to spearhead such volunteer activities, including cleanups, trail maintenance, and elimination of invasive vegetation. Our Spring Walks include two such projects that require volunteer help. Please join in for one or both of these days and bring some friends with you.



We think there are many people who are willing to volunteer to help maintain our open space, especially if someone will let them know how they can help. Here are some suggestions:

- CLC Board members Keith Ohmart and Mike Tabaczynski are leading CLC's volunteer efforts. If you are willing to help out in other maintenance activities, and especially if you are willing to lead a maintenance-related activity, please contact Keith ([kohmart@verizon.com](mailto:kohmart@verizon.com) 781-862-6216) or Mike ([mit1@rcn.com](mailto:mit1@rcn.com) 781-861-1537) and let them know how and when you are willing to help.
- If you wish to work on a particular conservation parcel you can volunteer to be one of the stewards. Contact David Kaufman at [davidkaufman@rcn.com](mailto:davidkaufman@rcn.com)
- You can also contact the Conservation Administrator, Karen Mullins, directly at 781-862-0500, ext. 226. Any work on conservation land must have prior approval from Karen.

### Reading the Forested Landscape

A slide presentation by Tom Wessells

What do the shapes of trees, patterns of stump decay, construction of stonewalls, and lay of the land tell us about the story of the forest and history of land use? Find out at the Annual Meeting of Friends of the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge, on April 28, 2004. The meeting starts at 7:00. Presentation is at 7:30, at Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, Weir Hill Road, Sudbury. For more information contact <http://www.farnwr.org> or 978-443-4661

### PAYT for Belmont?

We note with interest that the Belmont Solid Waste and Recycling Committee has voted to support a "Pay as you Throw" initiative.

## Control of Invasive Plants

By Kate Fricker

A search of the Internet yielded the following advice about control of invasive plants.

There are two approaches: pull the plants up or cut them down. If you pull them up, do it in the spring, when the ground is loose and wet. The tool most commonly recommended on my Internet sources was a Weed Wrench. (<http://www.newtribe.com>) Afterwards tamp down the disturbed soil to discourage sprouting of more invasives. If you cut the weeds down, do it in the fall when they have stopped growing, and cut very close to the ground. One source also recommended a five-second burst of flame from a torch around the base of small buckthorns as a way to kill the cambium layer and prevent growth. On private property, within a day of cutting you can use a spray or sponge brush to carefully apply a layer of glyphosate (Roundup or Rodeo) or triclopyr (Brush-B-Gone or Garbon) onto the cut stump. Water-soluble dye can be added to the herbicide to make it easier to control where the herbicide goes. Herbicides are particularly effective when used in the fall, when the woody plants are drawing nutrients back into the roots. It is important to know that herbicides can't be used on town property or near wetlands unless you have permission from the Conservation Commission and a herbicide application license.

For removal of invasives on town property or wetland areas, Karen Mullins, the Conservation Administrator, reports: "Removal of vegetation, including invasives, requires a permit from the Conservation Commission when conducted within a wetland resource area or its 100-foot buffer zone. In addition, any removal of vegetation on town-owned conservation land, even if it is within an upland area, requires prior authorization from the Conservation Office. Please inquire with Karen Mullins, the Conservation Administrator (781-862-0500 ext 226), when proposing to conduct activities on conservation land."

Here is specific advice for four of the common invasives in Lexington:

- **Oriental Bittersweet:** Roots are shallow, so it can be pulled up in spring when the ground is soft. If not, cut vines close to the ground at the time of the first killing frost. Brush-B-Gone can be applied to the cut stump.



- **Buckthorn:** Pull them up in the spring; a weed wrench makes the job much easier. In the fall the trees can be cut close to the ground, and the stump face can be painted with Roundup.
- **Garlic Mustard:** This plant can be hand pulled in spring when the blossoms first appear. If there are too many plants for hand removal, a monofilament weed whip can be used to cut the stems close to the ground. Put the plant remains in the trash barrel, or they may resurrect. Since the seeds live for five years, any treatment must be repeated for at least five years.
- **Japanese Barberry:** We can thank the Arnold Arboretum for introducing this bush into the U.S. The leaves open early in the spring, so it can be identified and pulled up at that time.

## **Doran Meadow**

Development of a native grass and wildflower meadow in an abandoned field

By Barbara Kent

"The finest stand of Little Bluestem prairie grass in all of Lexington." declared resident meadow professional Nell Walker. Nell volunteered to oversee the development of a meadow in this ancient Doran Farm carrot field now owned by the Morrow Crossing Condominium Trust. The town holds a conservation easement through the field.

Ridding the acre of invasive plants began in 2001, a matter of cutting down bushes, vines, saplings, etc., and painting the stalks with Round-Up. Thirty plots of 16 sq. feet each were cleared on the west side of Doran Farm Lane in preparation for wildflower plants. More than 500 Little Bluestem grass clumps were transplanted from the dense growth area to the vicinity of the cleared plots; this grass native to our midwest prairie forms the "perfect matrix" for the wildflowers, according to Nell.

In April of 2002 the Lexington Fire Department burned the field, thus discouraging invasive lawn grass and weeds, promoting the spread of the native prairie grass (we now know the prairies were dependant on fire), and adding nutrients to the soil.

In early June 250+ wildflower plants ordered from a Wisconsin nursery by Nell were planted in the squares, Little Bluestem on perimeters. It seemed amazing how many flowers bloomed that summer and fall. Nell had chosen varieties providing continuous color from spring to late fall, with color variations in each blooming period. In 2003 four Monarch Butterflies were seen on one stalk of Meadow Blazing Star, and in late summer the insect chorus was wonderful.



Last fall, seeds were gathered and spread west from the wildflower plots. Hopefully this meadow will one day bloom from Doran Farm Lane to the Lower Vinebrook beyond the bike path.

### **Thank you, Fall Walk Leaders**

Our thanks to Gerry Paul, Jerry Van Hook, Andrea Golden and Keith Ohmart for your leadership and inspiration on CLC's Fall Walks.

### **Reminders**

- The next household hazardous waste collection will be on April 24 at the Minuteman Hazardous Waste Facility on Hartwell Avenue. Hours are 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM.
- The Composting Facility on Hartwell Avenue is now open from 7:30 AM to 3:00 PM on weekdays and from 8 AM to 4 PM on Sundays. Bring leaves, grass and other non-woody vegetation to the compost area. Branches up to 4" in diameter go to a separate brush pile.

## Massachusetts Land Trust Conference, Worcester, MA, March 13, 2004

By Keith Ohmart and Mike Tabaczynski

This annual conference, dedicated to open space preservation, provides ideas and inspiration for land trusts, conservation groups and town agencies from across Massachusetts. We were among 400 people attending this year. Workshops covered topics such as land protection, conservation land acquisition, taxation, enforcement, training, affordable housing, zoning issues, and more.

The most important message from this conference was how broadly-based our thinking needs to be in working for land conservation. Due to the high cost of land and our limited funds, it is no longer possible to simply purchase parcels as they come on the market. With the help of ideas from conferences such as this one and a legislative framework at the state level that encourages smart growth, we can not only protect the open space already set aside, but also acquire and protect additional open space.



**Beech trunk with lichen spots**

We urge more representatives from Lexington to attend this conference in the future.

## Town Meeting Article 40

By Lucy deWolf

Article 40 in the Town Warrant deserves particular consideration by CLC members. It is a motion to amend the town's noise bylaw so that it conforms with the Massachusetts anti-idling law.

Placing noise pollution in the wider context of environmental pollution gives us a local imperative to confront a major source of preventable air pollution in Lexington: idling vehicles.

It is well documented that vehicle emissions, especially diesel, promote asthma and are carcinogenic. For many, the connection hasn't been made that they are creating a health hazard of concentrated fumes for everyone near their car, when they eat their lunch in their running car, or wait for a companion who is shopping or in the library.

I have been made ill by the diesel fumes of the massed school buses at the high school. Every day, children walk out of schools to board buses that have been standing running. What a toxic soup, added to by the exhaust of idling parental cars! How many cases of cancer might be prevented if we eliminated this toxic daily exposure?

Former Boston Globe columnist Linda Weltner has an excellent article on the Massachusetts anti-idling law on the web (<http://www3.shore.net/~weltner/feature1.html>). Check also <http://www.ucsusa.org>, the Union of Concerned Scientists. Educating each other about this law, which may become a town law as well, and letting the Police Department know that we want this statute adhered to and enforced by them with the prescribed fines, would be a significant step toward more environmental responsibility for Lexington. I hope that CLC, as the town conscience for environmental concerns, will consider publicly supporting this initiative.

## Lexington Tree Management Manual Now Available

by Nell Walker

This new thirty three page Lexington Tree Management Manual provides guidelines for Lexington residents interested in upgrading or maintaining their landscape. It is also directed at contractors and builders to complete their projects in compliance with the Lexington Tree By-law.

The manual is divided into various sections. Some relate specifically to Lexington while others have much broader application, e.g., tree planting guidelines, specifications for pruning, tree protection during construction, and tree selection. Eleven distinctive illustrations are spaced

**Tulip Tree at Buckman Tavern**



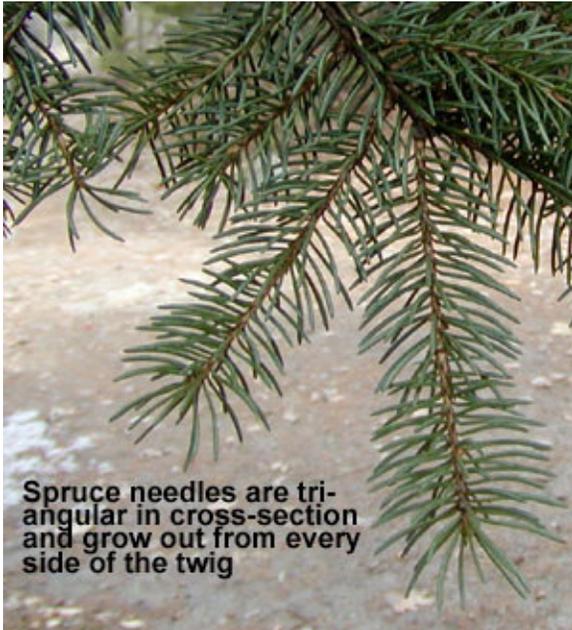
throughout the manual. A list of recommended trees is included along with practical information such as the common names, mature heights and general characteristics. Invasive species are noted.

Work on the Lexington Tree Management Manual began shortly after the appointment of the Tree Committee by the Selectmen in October 2000. The committee then presented to Town Meeting Article 34 (the Tree By-Law), approved in March, 2001. The by-law protects trees on both public and private land and is considered the first comprehensive law giving some protection to trees on private property in the state. This along with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 87 (Shade Trees) is the legal basis of the manual. Article 34 (Tree By-law), Mass. G.L. Chapter 87 (Shade Trees) and Section 15c (Scenic Roads) are reprinted as an appendix in the manual.

To fund the project, the committee applied for grants. In 2003, the committee received a grant for creating graphics from the Lexington Field and Garden Club, followed by a grant for printing costs from the Mass. Department of Environmental Management Urban Forestry. The Selectmen approved the manual for publication and granted additional funds for printing costs.

The Tree Management Manual is available for \$4.00 plus \$1.50 postage. Checks can be made out to "Town of Lexington". Address requests for copies to the Department of Public Works, c/o David Pinsonneault, 201 Bedford Street, Lexington, MA 02420, or they can be picked up there in person. The Tree Management Manual is also available at no cost, in PDF format, on the town web site, <http://ci.lexington.ma.us/dpw/Documents/treemanual.pdf>.

## Book Reviews



**Spruce needles are triangular in cross-section and grow out from every side of the twig**

Members of the CLC Board asked that we publish in the newsletter short reviews of good conservation-related books. Here are two initial offerings. We welcome more reviews from readers who would like to share their conservation reading finds. Send results or questions to [kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu](mailto:kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu).

**Living on the Wind**, by Scott Weidensaul, published by North Point Press  
Reviewed by Keith Ohmart

This book does a masterful job of allowing us to explore the world of bird migration from many different perspectives. It ranges from descriptions of the intricacies of the act of migration itself to the urgencies of modern threats to critical habitat that different migrating bird species have depended on for thousands of years. This book is recommended for both

birders and non-birders. It will change the way you look at your feathered summer visitors.

**ENOUGH**, by Bill McKibben  
Reviewed by Ingrid Klimoff, published by Henry Holt and Co.

This book calls for a critical examination of genetic manipulation and nanotechnology. McKibben asks if we really want the ability to choose to have only boy babies? Do we actually care what color hair, or skin, or eyes our children will have? Must all our children be geniuses? McKibben argues that to change what we are, and what we know ourselves as, is to cross an "enough" threshold. He opens the door to a soulless future where our vital passions, our spirits, are lost in a sea of standardized, modified, semi-automatic people.

The ethics and validity of genetic engineering are currently a hot topic in the press, but it is important to recognize that these seemingly abstract national debates are also making inroads into our own town. Bioengineering means jobs, taxes, and a growth industry right where we live.

Read the book. It will make you think. We need to decide where and how this science should be used.



**Yew trees have wide flat needles that are yellow-green underneath. They have no white stripes.**

## **Managing Town-Owned Lands**

Julian Bussgang, Nell Walker, and Lisa Baci

### **Town-Owned Open Land in Lexington**

Lexington has over 1300 acres of conservation land, i.e. 12% of our total 10,650 acres. The town also has an additional 600 acres of public land acquired over the years as park, school, or town-owned land. Much of the open land that is public property was acquired by votes of Town Meeting, by transfers of no longer needed school land, as gifts to the town, and as property taken over by the town for nonpayment of taxes. The combined tracts of this open land have created valuable parcels of open space for walking, biking, and skiing, and other passive recreation activities.

When individual pieces of publicly owned open land can be connected they form a regional park. An important example of a potential regional park is the open space connecting the Jack Eddison Bikeway (really a linear park), the Battle Green, Buckman Tavern grounds, the Center Playground, the High School Grounds and Lincoln Park. The School Committee controls 10 wooded acres next to Lincoln Park (proposed as a Senior Center site last year). Next to it are the Hayden Centre wetlands, accessible through the Lee Fitness Nature Trail, and the Town owned wetlands under the jurisdiction of the Recreation Commission. One can proceed from there along the bike path and cattail marsh to Middleby Road, to the Bridge School grounds along the open Vine Brook, to the Reservoir and its woodland (also under Recreation Commission jurisdiction). From the Reservoir on Route 2A it is a 15 minute street walk to the Battle Road Trail, connecting to the Fiske Hill and Cranberry Hill conservation lands and Minuteman National Historical Park. If just one of these parcels were intensively developed the potential for a regional park would be severely diminished if not erased.

Other examples of major attractive parcels in Lexington are Dunback Meadow, Whipple Hill, and Willards Woods. There are also a number of smaller scattered parcels. While these conservation lands are protected, very little of the remaining open space is protected from development.

People enjoy our open space without thinking about which town board or committee controls or administers it, and who will decide its future. Yet, this future, which should be precious to us all, is by no means assured and deserves centralized oversight. There is always a competing need to use open land for recreational facilities, or for development, for low income housing, or for municipal buildings.

### **Current Status – Who Administers What**

The current status of administration of the open land splits up the responsibility into many pieces, which in an overall sense is ineffective for planning. It is useful to review the elements of our current fractured open land oversight.



Under the Selectmen-Town Manager Act the Town Manager is responsible for the use [Section 8(d)] and maintenance [Section 9(d)] of all town property, except school buildings and grounds. Also under the Act [Section 2(d)], the Town Manager, subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen, appoints a Conservation Commission.

The primary role of the Conservation Commission is to administer and enforce Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. Ch. 131, s. 40) and the Wetland Protection Code of the Town of Lexington (Chapter 130; formerly General By-law Article XXXII). The procedures for enforcing the Wetlands Protection Act generate so much day-to-day activity for the staff of the Conservation Commission that they are very stressed for time.

The Recreation Commission (under Chapter 130, Sec. 29-17 and -18) administers the program and policy of the public playgrounds and recreation centers of the town. For example, land such as the Pine Meadows Golf Course is administered by the Recreation Committee.

The Planning Board and the Planning Department are in a similar situation, very busy with various development issues. They make recommendations on open space issues that arise. They support the creation of open space when cluster developments come up, or when major developments like those of Patriot Partners (former Raytheon property) or Avalon Bay (MetState) propose expansion, but they have little time to focus on open space administration and planning.

The Parks and Cemetery Divisions of the town are consolidated under the supervision of the Public Grounds Superintendent. His staff members are the ones caring for the town-owned conservation and non-conservation land. The Parks Division consists of town employees who provide valuable maintenance services, but do not engage in policy making or planning.

Last but not least, the Board of Selectmen also shares responsibility, since they are the ones who review which land should be converted to housing, recreation, or other new uses. But most of their attention these days is devoted to financial issues.

Land use planning for public open space in Lexington is hampered by the current fractured situation. Individual parcels of open land are designated as "under the jurisdiction" of specific bodies that have other primary missions and little time to act beyond their primary function.

### **The Need for Comprehensive Planning and Oversight**

Years ago, the town had a Board of Park Commissioners who supervised the town's parks and playgrounds. That committee no longer exists. We propose reconstituting what can be called an Open Space or Open Land Committee, that can take a comprehensive view of all the town open land and advise the Selectmen, the Town Manager, and the other committees about how to plan and manage the overall situation. It would be composed of Lexington citizens, with representatives from the Conservation Commission and Planning Board.

An Open Space Committee could identify key parcels of land to be protected for open space and prioritize those parcels. It could serve the function of balancing open space and recreation needs of the town when they conflict, as happened in the case of the soccer fields at Lincoln Field. The Committee could also be the town body assigned to promote the Massachusetts Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B Land Classification and Taxation Programs to help keep the few remaining parcels of private undeveloped lands for farming and forestry uses. This citizen's committee would supplement the work of the town manager, town staff, and town boards and committees by unifying the effort to retain the town's scenic and historic landscapes.

## A Few Interesting Web sites

By Kate Fricker

Key for identifying trees from their leaves or needles:

<http://www.cnr.vt.edu/dendro/forsite/key/intro.htm>

Aerial Photos: <http://ortho.mit.edu/nsdi/index.html>

Click on the location on the index map and zoom in on an aerial view of your house.

Gorgeous photographs and information about the biology of lichens: <http://www.lichen.com>

Topographic maps covering the entire U.S.: <http://topozone.com>

<http://informatics.bio.umass.edu/research/odenews/bnikula>. Click on the names listed to see lovely photographs of Massachusetts dragonflies and damselflies.

Maps of the 26 largest conservation areas in Lexington:

<http://www.lexingtonma.org/conservation/Lands/Conslandkey.html>

## Lincoln Park Athletic Fields Project Update

By Karen Mullins



Spotted Wintergreen

On December 23, 2003, the Lexington Recreation Department filed an Abbreviated Notice of Intent with the Lexington Conservation Commission to conduct supplemental activities associated with the Lincoln Park Athletic Fields Project. The proposed activities involve installing a 12-inch polyethylene overflow drainpipe from an existing detention basin within the 100-foot buffer zone bordering vegetated wetlands. The installation of the overflow drainpipe will redirect runoff from the detention basin that currently sheet flows overland across the meadow and discharge it down the gradient of the meadow and walking paths to prevent erosion caused by runoff channeling along the walking paths. After conducting a site walk and holding two public hearings, the Conservation Commission issued an Order of Conditions approving the proposed activities on February 26, 2004.

