
July 22 2021 | Summer Issue



Upcoming Events and Wonderwalks:

On July 28 from 6:30-7:30 PM, our founder Scott Quitel is supposed to guest speak at a happy hour event at the [Discovery Center](#) after giving a walking tour of the grounds. Stay tuned for more information about this event in our weekly walk reminders!

All Urban-Eco Wonderwalks are led by Scott Quitel, the Founder of LandHealth Institute.

In accordance with the CDC COVID-19 guidelines, please bring your own mask.



Become a Member Today!

All Urban EcoWalks are free for



Updates from LandHealth's Native Plant Nursery

LandHealth's nursery is continuing our plant sales at the [Food Trust's Fittler Square location](#) in Center City. The Food Trust's mission is to make fresh food available to city residents, especially in neighborhoods where access to healthy food is limited. At the peak of the summer season, the Food Trust operates at twenty locations throughout the city. LandHealth will bring locally-grown native perennial plants to the Fittler Square market once a month, starting in June.

For the latest information on what's currently growing at the Nursery and/or to make an appointment to visit, check out LandHealth's [Nursery page!](#)

LandHealth members, who also receive exclusive merch: tees, plants from our native plant nursery, custom art, landscaping, and unlimited free EcoWalks!

Register for this week's Urban EcoWalk walks and become a member [HERE](#).



New on the Blog: Watershed Citizenship: Exploring My Backyard Watershed by Brielle McQuiston

Many people say they live in a county or town. But take a look at the big picture. One day, they come to a realization that the backyard of their very home is a watershed, one that may hold special memories for someone or a community. No matter where you are, you live in a watershed, and your connections with nature are ever closer...[read more](#)

Missed last week's blog? Read about why native plants species are so critical to ecosystem health [here!](#)



LandHealth's SEPTA Lot Project Update

On the corner of 49th and Parkside Ave, just outside of the gates of the LandHealth Nursery, sits an abandoned lot. It had been neglected for decades and had steadily filled with trash and refuse. In the late spring of 2021, LandHealth began planning to reverse the years of neglect that the site had faced just outside of our doorstep. We developed plans for a native garden with numerous sitting areas, as well as a mural, and pop-up retail area. After over a hundred hours of hard work and dedication, the project is coming to a close and will be finishing up in the coming weeks. Make sure to come by the LandHealth nursery to view our garden, grab a native plant, and escape the noise and commotion of the city!



Our urban meadow managed to support a diversity of grasses and wildflowers

LandHealth's Urban Meadow: Mugwort and the Railroad by Steve Jones

LandHealth's native plant nursery near Parkside Ave. in West Philadelphia sits on a former industrial site that has been the setting of over two hundred years of change in the use of urban land in the industrial era. Part of our site, which we use both for our nursery operation and for educational programs, is managed as an "urban meadow." This re-emerging grassland reflects both the history of the site as a platform for industry, and its current function as habitat for urban life, including people, butterflies, songbirds, and groundhogs.

Our site was once part of a sprawling yard serving the Pennsylvania Railroad, which had its beginnings in Philadelphia in the 1800s. In his fascinating book [Ecology of Center City Philadelphia](#), Ken Frank describes some of the ways that railroads affected the makeup of urban wildlands, including ours.

An example is the spreading of mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), a plant native to Europe and Asia which did not become widespread in the eastern U.S. until the advent of extensive rail networks. Records of plant collectors going back to the 1800s show that mugwort was introduced to our Delaware watershed several times through cross-Atlantic shipping. Ship ballast, containing seeds of mugwort and other exotic plants, was dumped in a number of locations in Philadelphia and Camden, giving this tough, adaptive plant several footholds along the river. The repeated introduction of several different varieties meant that North American mugwort could develop qualities that allow it to adapt to its new setting. Mugwort populations followed the railroad networks that covered the U.S., including the Pennsylvania Railroad lines where our nursery now sits.

Because it is so well adapted to dry and sunny conditions, reproduces abundantly through underground rhizomes, and can chemically suppress the growth of other plants, mugwort can establish itself in an urban meadow to the exclusion of other meadow plants such as grasses. If it is not repeatedly cut, it can easily reach five or six feet and establish a thicket that will not permit the growth of any other plant.



Program for Future Environmental Scientists and Stewards (ProFESS) Updates

The ProFESS program has been off to a great start, we are thrilled to have a total of 35 students who are actively participating in the program!

Last week, with our ProFESS groups, we visited Pennypack on the Delaware, [Johns Heinz Wildlife Refuge](#), and the Wissahickon! Scott Quitel introduced the students to an ongoing journaling project that they will work on throughout the summer. Each steward received a small notebook to record interesting information they learn, observations, or art they draw. Many students already journal whether it's in a scrapbook, sketchbook, or diary, but we hope they can find new ways to engage with the environment by using these journals.

Yesterday, all students met at LandHealth Institute's Native Plant Nursery during their respective time slots. You can see the full schedule below. We're looking forward to a great day outside discussing Philadelphia's native plants!

ProFESS, formerly the Philadelphia Watershed Stewardship (PWS) program and now in its fifth year, was created to empower rising 9th-12th grade students in Philadelphia to become environmental scientists and stewards... change-makers, advocates for a better world through natural history, urban ecology, and watershed health.

Mugwort also does have its human fans: it is used in a wide range of cultures as a medicine and as a food. It is used in traditional Chinese medicine and has been used as an insecticide and as a flavoring for many types of food and drink on several continents for hundreds or even thousands of years.

At our site, although we generally take a “live and let live” approach to plants that appear in our meadow, we need to constantly remove or suppress mugwort in order to make sure we promote a diversity of plants. But mugwort will always be part of the mix in urban wildlands, reflecting the 19th-century version of globalization.



Mugwort dominating part of our site on a former railyard



Doug Goldman, USDA-NRCS Plants Database

ProFESS students meet every Wednesday over the course of ten weeks, from **June 23 - August 25**.

The current program schedule is :

10:00 AM-12:00 PM

NorthEast Philly Watersheds (Poquessing, Pennypack, and Tacony/Frankford)

12:30-2:30 PM

Delaware Estuary and Cobb's Creek

3:00-5:00 PM

Wissahickon and Non-tidal Schuylkill



Partner Highlight - ACLMAO

[ACLAMO](#) provides educational programs, social services, and access to health and wellness programs to Latinos and other community members to empower them to fully achieve their life potential. This past Tuesday, they brought a student group to [LandHealth's Native Plant Nursery](#) for the morning. The students were an amazing help at our Nursery! They helped move mulch, replanted plant plugs into pots, set up a tarp to solarize our field and minimize our carbon footprint, weeded vegetable patches, and installed a water irrigation system. Receiving help from groups like this is invaluable to the work we do at LandHealth. It's also exciting to know that these students will become our next generation of environmental stewards and watching them explore their relationship with nature at our site is rewarding. Thanks for a great day at the Nursery, ACLAMO!

Help Put Nature Back

We are grateful for all of you who support LandHealth Institute's core work in ecological restoration, land revitalization, and immersive environmental education. New merch is on the way!

Donate

Thank you for supporting LandHealth Institute!

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