Outlook

Greenspace Newsletter

From Jennifer Erena <steward@bobolink-greenspace.com>
Date Sun 5/3/2026 12:30 PM

View in browser

The Neighborhood Chronicle #9

BOB O LINK GREENSPACE

Things are Growing!

We have cleared the invasive honeysuckle and smaller trees of heaven, so it looks like a blank slate now! Things are growing and we are identifying the good, the bad, and the ugly and making plans to protect, remove, and treat. Bruce Hutcheson (President of FOWR and conservation champ) and I picked up 50 small trees and shrubs from Jannine Baker, who grows them for the Wolf Run Watershed. We will be planting from the most upstream portion to the greenspace, through the downstream side of Mark Felice's property. This area is reachable with my water hose. This area has some invasive winter creeper to remove. This will be our May focus area and tasks.

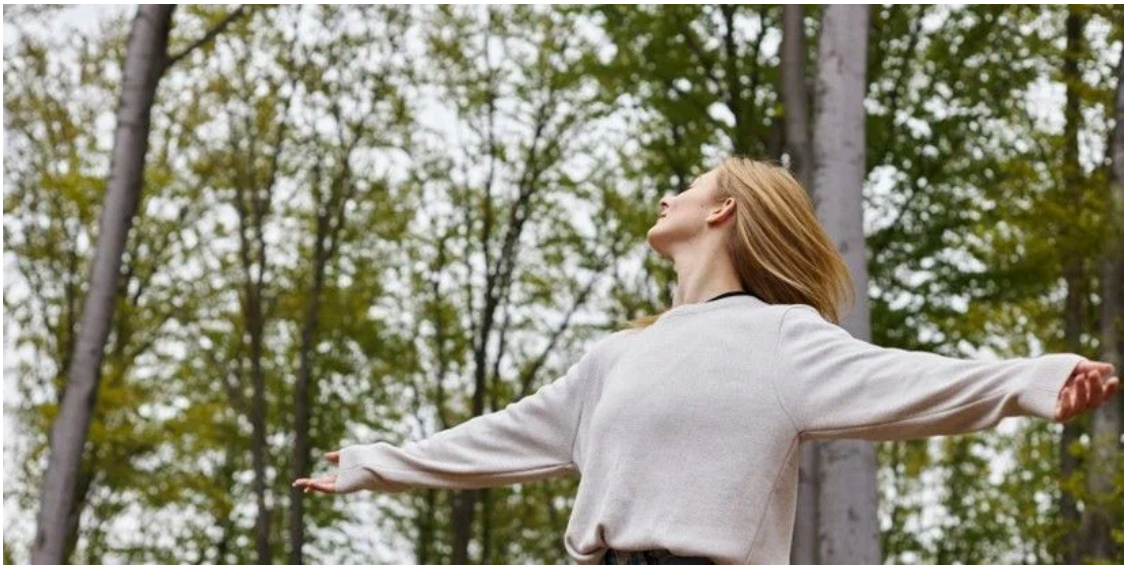
Stay green, stay kind, stay connected - Jennifer Erena

STEWARDSHIP SUPPORT

Our Main Funding Source if the LFUCG Water Quality Grant >

we are working through our 2026 grant. And have applied for a 2027 grant (more on that next month)

FIELD NOTES



Peace in Nature

Ah, stress. The antecedent to a lot of our troubles. It raises our cortisol levels, it can increase inflammation, put strain on our cardiovascular systems, and cause chronic disease.Stress is a real bear when it comes to our health. Well, not a *real* bear, because bears seem to take care of themselves better than humans. And maybe that's because they live in nature, while we live in offices and cars surrounded by pavement.

Keeping all that in mind and as summer beckons us outside, today's topic is Backyard Bathing. Now, before you get your panties in a wad, let me make it clear that backyard bathing includes the wearing of panties, as well as every other garment you would normally wear in public. This is not an exposé, in any sense of the word.

Backyard Bathing is my suburban takeoff on Forest Bathing (also not an exposé), a therapeutic practice developed in Japan in the 1980s as massive development and work stresses were steamrolling the country and keeping its growingly tense population inside. Shinrin-yoku, as it's known in Japan, is a method for healing the mind and body through nature.

Forest Bathing is a mindful practice of slowing down to connect with nature (trees in particular) by using most of our senses: vision, hearing, touch, and smell. I don't recommend taste. My general rule of thumb is it's not a good idea to taste anything in the woods unless you're an experienced, educated forager, and you know for sure what you're tasting. But that may just be me not wanting to die.
Trees put off compounds known as phytoncides, pronounced *fight-on-sides*, that are their defense against pathogens and insects. Luckily for us, though, studies have shown that this tree defense system can give a kickstart to our immune systems, improve our moods, and even help with our sleep quality. Studies have shown that breathing in phytoncides lower cortisol levels. Though cortisol is an important hormone in our bodies at appropriate levels, continuously high cortisol from chronic stress can increase inflammation and insulin resistance, so it behooves us to keep those levels under control.

Another benefit of phytoncides is to encourage natural killer cells in our bodies. While the mere thought of "killer cells" roaming our bodies could bring on the stress that drives up our cortisol levels (I mean, what the heck is going on in there?!), killer cells are important in fighting infections and tumors.
These phytoncides sound pretty good, so you may be wondering, can't we just bottle this stuff and mix it into a cocktail with a pretty pink paper umbrella?

Well, no. Like most things in life, you must work for this – if working means taking a few deep breaths and relaxing near trees. We're

fortunate on this street to be wrapped in greenery. Most of us have trees on our property, and we're blessed with a lovely greenspace that Mary Sigafus, Bill Holland and their family generously allow us to enjoy. If we can't find the time to find a forest to rest our souls in (though our county has many wooded options), we can do it right here in the neighborhood.

Nearly 20,000 people who participated in a study in the United Kingdom reported improvements in their health and sense of well-being after spending at least two hours a week in nature. It doesn't have to be two consecutive hours either. A short break here and there over the course of a week seems to have the same results. One caveat though. This isn't about storming through the woods on an intense hike from Point A to Point Z or trying to document and identify everything you see. This is about relaxation, about slowing down, thinking less and feeling more. Sit with your back against a tree, whether it's in a forest or in your backyard, and take deep, cleansing breaths. Close your eyes, tune your ears to the sounds of birds and squirrels. Open your eyes and enjoy the sight of squirrels playing, of flowers tossed in a light breeze, of sunlight dappling the landscape beneath the canopy. Feel the roughness of the bark or the smoothness of a blade of grass. Sniff a flower. Observe an insect's path on the ground next to you. Take it in and realize that you are very much connected to every tree, flower, animal, and insect that shares this space with you.

Shinrin-yoku is a practice to help you find peace in the moment, that enhances creativity, empathy and improves relationships. And who couldn't use some of that these days?

If you see me with my back against a tree and a smile on my face, just wave and pass on by. I'll be soothing my soul with a long, cleansing forest bath. Or join me.
Fully clothed, of course.

Carol Lea Spence
Kentucky Master Naturalist
Neighbor



STEWARDSHIP STEPS

There are scheduled greenspace workdays every 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month. From 10 am - 12 pm.

What to Expect:

You will be taught how to do various tasks in the greenspace.
You will work at your own pace. No pressure to perform!
Come during scheduled workdays, or work on your own and record your time on paper, or online at Volunteer Hours Capture – Fill out form
Some workdays will be educational classes (June and November)
You can bookmark our GOOGLE Calendar or add it to your calendars to see all related events. The calendar is also on the website - Bob O Link Greenspace Calendar

Examples of Activities:

Removing winter creeper

This is a great group activity, each performing a step.

1. Rake the area with a long forked "potato rake". Gather the vines in piles, or on a tarp to pull to a designated location.

2. Use a push-pull tool to slice just under the soil level to cut roots.

3. Use a hand-held chopping tool to free tough roots.

4. Rake up debris with a regular rake.

Removing invasive that are easy to pull up

This is dependent on size and moisture of the soil.

Pull up soft invasives and put in a garbage bag - we don't want t save these and have seeds multiply their growth. This is great in early spring with Garlic Mustard.

Planting Trees!

1. Digging holes
2. Planting tree
3. Mulching

Trash Clean Up

1. Grab some gloves and a bag and pick up trash along the stream banks.

Perhaps what suits you best is education or hospitality!

We will always weave education into our activities - check out our more formal programming below. Also, it's great to have someone helping the working crew with water, snacks, etc.

Upcoming Days

9-May 🌳tree planting, 🎀winter creeper removal

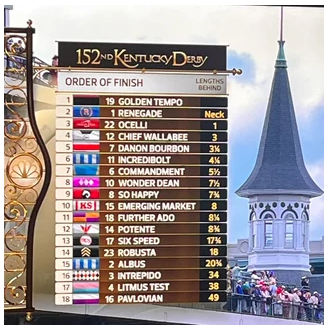
23-May 🌳tree planting, 🎀winter creeper removal

13-Jun 🎓class - **creating outdoor spaces** (Guest, Russ Turpin)

27-Jun 🎓class - **creating outdoor classrooms** (Guest, Russ Turpin)

SEASONAL SNAPSHOT







Unknown Green Box - if you know about the green box that was installed on the transmission pole, contact us so we can learn more about it.

Derby 152 - what an event!

Cold Snap - so we were basically 1 month early when it came to seasonal changes. My tomato plants could've gone out a month ago! Then the cold air blows in, just to wake us up. Great for yard work, and luckily not a bad hit for plants.

Past Newsletters - Chronicle of Activities

🎓 **Learn more** about our beautiful planet and greenspace from our talented neighbors at https://bobolink-greenspace.com/

📩 **Want to write an article?** Or have a topic you want to learn more about? Send your article/ideas to jennifer.erena@me.com.

Bob O Link Greenspace, Volunteer Steward, 394 Bob O Link Dr, Lexington, Kentucky 40503

Unsubscribe Manage preferences