



Secor / Palmer Meadow Restoration

Village of Scarsdale
Conservation Advisory Council

In consultation with Friends of the Scarsdale Parks, Inc.

20 May 2016

Site

From center of field, facing Palmer



From center of field, facing Secor



Site Plan



Site Characteristics

- Borders Palmer and Secor Roads.
- Adjacent Neighborhoods: Secor Farms (Quaker Ridge) and East Heathcote.
- No public use or public visits to this field have been observed over the last *eight years*.
- Periodic, persistent flooding nearer to Palmer; on the east side of northbound Palmer is a small, Village-mapped wetland area.
- Closer to Secor Road, the field is generally dry.
- Soil is expected to be clay, as is typical of the area.
- Full sun most of the day, a necessary requirement for a meadow planting. Insufficient sunlight will favor shade tolerant and understory herbaceous and woody species over herbaceous wildflowers and grasses.
- Bordered on Secor Road primarily by non-native, invasive Callery pear trees, on Palmer Road by non-native Zelcova trees, and on the southwest perimeter by a thin, disorganized wooded border and fence screening the DPW facility.
- Bisected north/south by a sanitary sewer
- Gas line along periphery on Secor
- Storm water drain located near Palmer within area of persistent flooding
- Field is mowed by DPW

Potential Goals

- A more environmentally sustainable and beneficial site
- Increased public participation
- Aesthetic improvement
- Site-specific or adjoining flood relief
- Storm water retention
- Education
- Demonstration of landscaping alternatives
- Demonstration of low maintenance plants and practices not requiring fertilization, herbicides or insecticides

CAC Recommendation: A Native Wildflower Meadow



Benefits of a native flowering meadow versus the current site, a grass field

Ecological/Environmental – establishing a haven for diverse flora and fauna, storm water management

Public Use – aesthetic improvement, potential for bird watching

Educational – a local demonstration of “field to meadow” restoration. Potential use by schools

...all at low or no additional lifecycle cost

Sample Timeline for Meadow Conversion

A meadow takes several years for a self-perpetuating, more desirable plant community to be fully established.

- First Year in the Fall
 - Tilling to remove existing growth
 - Manual seeding with native perennials and covering with hay
 - So the site looks well-kept, maintain a mowed border that encompasses perimeter trees
- Two years thereafter
 - Mow every 6 weeks to a height of 4-6” to gradually favor seeded perennials over “weeds”
- Following years
 - Mow once either in late fall or early spring

Source: Larry Weaner and Associates
<http://lweanerassociates.com/?p=1203>

Traffic Line of Sight Concerns

Currently, cars on intersecting roads (Palmer or Secor) may easily be viewed on approach or at the Palmer/Secor intersection.

A mowed border would fully maintain intersection visibility.



Field depth would keep vegetation height low relative to the road



Pest Concerns

A natural area will create habitat for insects, small mammals and birds. We do anticipate more potential for:

- Ticks
- Bees
- Mice

No mitigation likely will be required, as the site is isolated, although tick population can be reduced by mowing at those times (early and late season) that disrupt their life cycle.

The site is sufficiently isolated that no (human) residents would be adversely impacted by habitat enhancements.

Secondary Recommendation: This Summer, Benign Neglect

This summer, we encourage the Village to undertake a simple experiment, permitting the field to grow wild and unmown all summer long, with only the perimeter mowed.



More Ideas

Compatible with current recommendations

- Remove Callery pear and other trees interfering with utility wires – replace with a beneficial native trees such as multi-stem Amelanchier. In adjacent non-utility locations, plant native wetland tolerant trees such as Black gum, Red maple and Red oak
- Path - once a meadow has been established, add a path through it that could be used for education and simply enjoyment of the meadow environment. The path could even feature installations.
- Additional trees planted on the field itself
- “Beautification” of side bordering DPW facility with native trees and shrubs
- Eastern Blue Bird boxes in coordination with the local Audubon chapter’s monitored project

Excursions from current recommendations – storm water mitigation

Note that flooding the field might create unanticipated problems at the adjacent DPW yard. It might also defeat what seems to be the conservation purpose of the meadow planting and suggested pathway, possibly causing the installation to fail unless the planting is more of a wetland buffer.

- Direct water from the school bus yard. This would undoubtedly require engineering to direct and contain water in the field, which currently is at the same height at the neighboring DPW facility.
- A cut and channel to direct seasonal flooding on Secor Road onto the field. This may require a change in chosen vegetation to absorb excess water.