

Williston Town Hall Nature Trail points of interest

This trail offers a living example of some of the invasive and native plants that inhabit Williston. Plants with an asterisk (*) are invasive plants, and a photo is included for each **highlighted** species to aid in identification.

1. **Start:** This meadow was farmed for more than 200 years and at one time included two apple orchards. The current meadow has been fallow for the past 25 years with annual mowing to keep it open.
 - a. To the west a grove of poplar trees is spreading into the meadow. Without mowing, natural succession would see white pine and poplar along with gray birch and willows filling the open areas, later to be joined by maple and ash.
 - b. To the east is a large bed of lupine in bloom in spring and early summer. Throughout the meadow is **poison parsnip***—**do not walk off the trail or get sap from this plant on your skin.** Also abundant, **spotted knapweed*** is a beautiful but invasive purple flowering plant.
 - c. As you start on the trail (slight right), look for two willows on your left and a white pine on your right. These native plants are part of natural succession of this open land.
2. **Solar Trackers:**
 - a. The 25 solar trackers in this meadow are owned by the town and generate more than 20% of the electricity used by the town at significant energy cost savings. The trackers face the sun all day and go flat at night or in high winds (note the anemometer mounted on the top on each one). Each tracker is rated at ~9 KiloWatts (KW) and the group of 25 produces more than 200 MegaWatt Hours (MWH) of electricity each year worth more than \$30,000. **Note: Do not touch the trackers.**
 - b. Look for signs of wildlife in this meadow. Visitors include deer, fox, raccoons, opossum, skunk, rabbits, occasional bobcats and bear, along with many birds and small rodents.
 - c. About 200 feet to your West is a lone elm tree with a large glacial erratic (stone) at its base, visible in winter.
 - d. **WARNING: Beware of poison parsnip.* Remain on the trail and do not touch parsnip plants.**
3. **Tree Island:**
 - a. The group of trees on your right include a maturing white pine, gray birch, poplar, willow, and—on the far corner, a tamarack. Tamarack (Eastern Larch) have needles and cones but are deciduous meaning that the needles fall every year. If you visit in the winter, the tamarack may look dead, but it is not!
 - b. To the West of this tree you will see sedges and other wetland vegetation.
4. **Pine switchback:**
 - a. This meadow is mown every year. A few trees have escaped mowing long enough to mature, and you passed a clump of gray birch, then a red maple on the left, then three groups of white pine. See if you can find the apple tree in one of these groups. Between the pines is **multiflora rose*** which grows up in the summer before being cut. Around the pines are **buckthorn*** and young ash.
 - b. Views to the East include the Federated Church steeple, Mount Mansfield and the Green Mountains to its South including Bolton Mountain.
5. **Southern Hedgerow:**
 - a. Under the largest pine at the top of the rise, you will find a mature **honeysuckle.***
 - b. Opposite the largest pines, looking South toward I89, there is an old apple tree demonstrating the agricultural heritage of this meadow.
 - c. Next to the apple tree (to your left/East) is a clump of mature buckthorn.* Note how adaptable it is to different conditions.
 - d. As you walk East at the top of the meadow, native arrow wood and nannyberry shrubs draped with grape vines occupy the fencerow to your right. In Fall and early Winter, they both have dark blue berries (with nannyberry fruits somewhat flattened). Young arrow wood has straight shoots that make good arrows..
6. **SE Corner:**
 - a. Cattails grow in the SE corner of this meadow. Behind them are wiggly-stemmed sumacs.
 - b. Behind them (to the East) are three tall cottonwood on the left/North and several Scots pine on the right/South. There is an understory of mostly buckthorn* and grape vines.
 - c. These trees surround a storm water pond created when I89 was constructed in the 1960's. Cattails occupy much of the pond. In summer, turtles, frogs, and occasional ducks or great blue heron can be found here.

7. **Unmown portion of meadow:**
 - a. As you enter the unmown (since about 2012) portion of the meadow, there is nannyberry and arrow wood on your left adjacent to the trail.
 - b. A large copse of grey-stemmed dogwood (6' - 8' high) is about 50' further North. In spring the blooms of a few pin cherry trees can be seen poking through on the West end of this copse.
 - c. As you proceed, there is a small amount of young **buckthorn*** next to the trail on the left and a single high-bush cranberry about 10' back from the trail on your right.
8. **Wet and unmown:**
 - a. The large copse of gray stemmed dogwood is now on your left.
 - b. Red osier dogwood surrounds you.
 - c. Clumps of pussy willow emerge just north of the gray stemmed dogwood.
 - d. Bebb's willow is on the right as you proceed to the North.
 - e. In late summer and fall you will also see Joe Pye weed on your right.
9. **Wetter (face West):**
 - a. **Purple loosestrife*** in the foreground on the left
 - b. Cattails are spreading through this wetter area
 - c. A few small **Phragmite*** are at the further reach of the cattails (and there is also a large group off the trail near the I89 Rest Area)
 - d. Several types of willow are emerging in clumps around this area
10. **Shrubs:**
 - a. On your right you have passed by clumps of speckled alder (about 12' tall). If this meadow didn't have a history of being mown, its wetter parts would probably be dominated by speckled alder.
 - b. After that is **honeysuckle*** and more red osier dogwood
 - c. On your left is a group of gray-green **autumn olive*** with red berries in the fall. Like many invasives, these are escaped exotic non-native plants. Unlike some others, their berries are edible.
 - d. Against the hedgerow is serviceberry and further to the north several high-bush cranberry.
 - e. Within the hedgerow is shadbush, elm, ash, box elder, gray birch, and—of course, **buckthorn.***
 - f. About 50' further to the North is a multiflora rose
 - g. The North-South ruts in this section are from heavy equipment mowing the meadow prior to 2012.
11. **Upland plants:**
 - a. After the turn to the West, the land becomes drier but is still in the unmown area. The young ash trees sprouting up are eaten by deer in the winter. Any that escape the deer are trimmed by volunteers so this area doesn't become a succession forest. (The same goes for red maple closer to the hedgerow.)
 - b. Buckthorn also likes this habitat and is periodically removed.
 - c. Meadow sweet, goldenrod, and milkweed thrive in this upland soil.
 - d. In the distance to the North near the house with turret are White Poplar trees,* another introduced invasive tree with silvery back-sides to the leaves.
12. **Hedgerow adjacent to four trackers:**
 - a. On the right is another apple tree showing the agricultural legacy of this land. Apple trees are not native, but are not considered invasive.
 - b. In the hedgerow is box elder, a native tree that can seem invasive and tolerates wet soils well.
 - c. Buckthorn* [if not yet removed] and Bebb's willow are here as well.
 - d. To the left (South) about 30' away is a clump of apple, willow, and buckthorn growing together.
 - e. As you proceed back to the trail-head, there is also low shrub willow with yellow stems that survives being mowed. Beware of the poison parsnip in this area and look for the lupine on your right (in spring and early summer).
 - f. Thank you for visiting! We hope you enjoyed your walk on this trail.

More information:

These notes are a companion to the [Town Hall Nature Trail map](#). The back side of this map has images of some of the invasive plants on this trail.

For scientific names of the plants mentioned, and a more comprehensive list of plants present, visit the [Town Hall Trail inventory of plants](#).

Town Hall Nature Trail



Legend

- Trail
- ① Point of Interest*

* See reverse side for descriptions



Find the [Town Hall Nature Trail inventory of plants](#) on the town website. →



Town Hall Nature Trail



This ½ mile trail passes through a wet meadow with a history of agricultural use, now conserved by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. The map and corresponding guide highlights features of interest - native and invasive trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants present on the property. The numbered locations on the map are described on the inside of this brochure. Photos are provided for identification purposes.

For scientific names of the plants mentioned, and a more comprehensive list of plants present, see the [Town Hall Trail inventory of plants](#), accessed with the QR code in this brochure.

For more information about invasive species, visit <https://vtinvasives.org/>

Rules of the Trail

- Pack out what you packed in
- Dogs must be on a leash
- No camping or fires
- No motorized vehicles
- No biking

Questions or Comments?



Town of Williston
 Conservation Commission
 7900 Williston Road
 Williston, VT 05495
 (802) 878-6704

Credits:

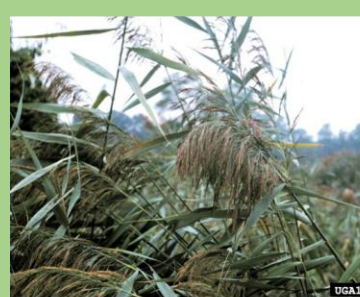
- Chapin Kaynor: Points of interest narrative and trail layout.
- Katherine Kain (of Vermont Fish & Wildlife): 2017 site visit and follow-up
- Melinda Scott: Williston's Conservation Planner
- 2019 Vermont Master Naturalist class, invasive plant work group: Elle Rolle, Alexa Lewis, Sam Parker, and Chapin Kaynor with additional help from Sabina Ernst.
- Cheryl Dorschner: 2019 review of drafts and additional info
- Lynn Blevins, Bernie Paquette, and Maeve Kim trail layout and review.



Autumn olive/*Elaeagnus umbellata*



Common buckthorn/*Rhamnus cathartica*



Common reed/*Phragmites australis*



Honeysuckle/*Lonicera* spp.



Multiflora rose/*Rosa multiflora*



Purple loosestrife/*Lythrum salicaria*



Spotted knapweed/*Centaurea stoebe*



Wild parsnip/*Pastinaca sativa*