

INSIDE

Pfeiffer Arboretum	2
Riverfront Trail	3
Lake Mansfield	4
River Walk	6
Events	8
Walk for Conservation	10



FIELD NOTES

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

Thank You to Our Land Conservancy Community

Christine Ward, President



GBLC's First Annual Walk for Conservation on October 12th, 2025.

How important are you to the Great Barrington Land Conservancy? You are essential!

Your support fuels the volunteer efforts needed to accomplish challenging goals. When you lend a hand as a volunteer, you experience firsthand the power of community action. When you journey beside the Housatonic River on River Walk or the Riverfront Trail, along the lakeside trail or forest trails at Lake Mansfield, or enjoy bog bridging and boardwalks at the Pfeiffer Arboretum you can feel the difference that the sustained efforts of a volunteer organization can make. But we can't do it without you.

GBLC is a volunteer-based organization dedicated to the conservation and stewardship of our community's natural resources and special places. We organize community volunteers on behalf of land conservation and stewardship. We provide fun community programs for adults and kids that foster a deeper understanding of our rich natural resources. You are invited to be a part of this joyful work.

*Stay connected!
Visit our website
to donate today!*



Our community depends on members like you to shape our efforts and accomplish our goals. Along with providing project leadership, GBLC's volunteer directors raise the funds needed to build and maintain trails, to plant native trees, shrubs, and perennials, and to battle invasive species. We believe that a healthy community depends upon a healthy environment. We believe in the power of an engaged community to accomplish great things. Please give generously to assure that this amazing effort can continue for the rest of the year!

Please plan on attending our GBLC Annual Meeting and Guided Tree Walk on Saturday, June 13th at 2pm. Please save the date for our 2nd Annual Walk for Conservation on Sunday, October 4th.

Promoting land conservation, farm preservation, and community trails since 1992.

Pfeiffer Arboretum Turns 30

by Ben Barrett, Project Leader



Adam Brown of Shire Forestry at Pfeiffer Arboretum, 2025.

The Pfeiffer Arboretum lands were gifted to the Great Barrington Land Conservancy in late 1996 through the generosity of Ted and Elsbeth Pfeiffer. There had been a cabin down near the water that was carefully dismantled and hauled away after the acquisition of the property. Only the chimney is left standing. The 38-acre tract abuts Long Pond which serves as a water source for Housatonic and Great Barrington. Because of this designation, it's critical that we remember there's no public access to the water for any reason; no fishing, no swimming, and no boating. The shoreline is fragile so please remain on the established trails and observation deck.

The land slopes gently toward Long Pond, and as a result water can be problematic during the maintenance of the trail system in the wet seasons. Many factors today could be contributing to an everchanging ecosystem at the Arboretum: climate change, deer browse, invasive plants, erosion, and invasive insects (namely emerald ash borer) are just some of the things impacting the site. Over 30 years much has been done to try to address these issues, but it's a never ending effort.

You can help! This year GBLC will be hosting work parties at the Pfeiffer Arboretum. We will be planting native plants and battling invasive species as well as repairing trailways, so be sure to keep an eye out for announcements. Sign up at GBLand.org/volunteer.

As project leader for the Pfeiffer Arboretum, I would be happy to hear from users on how to improve upon this wonderful asset. Please feel free to email info@gbland.org with any questions or suggestions. I look forward to hearing from you!



Did you know...?

Did you know that the Great Barrington Land Conservancy (GBLC) is charged with monitoring multiple Conservation Restrictions (CR) on various properties around town? This yearly monitoring (which usually takes place in the spring before the leaves come out) is done by board members and the property owner(s) if they're available. While not difficult to accomplish, this vitally important inspection is performed to verify that the terms of the CR are being adhered to and that no violations have occurred over the past year. Members bring copies of the maps and walk the property to confirm boundaries and make notes about any changes of merit.

If you're considering a CR on your property or would like to learn more about the intricacies of how they work and how your land could benefit from one, please reach out to us at info@gbland.org and we'd be happy to discuss the matter with you.

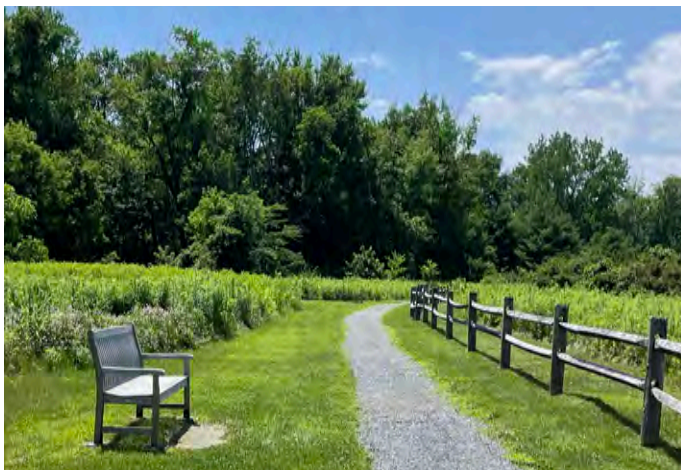
Riverfront Trail Turns 6

Project Leader Joe Maleady

Nestled in the heart of Great Barrington, the Great Barrington Land Conservancy (GBLC) maintains a network of serene riverside trails that invite both residents and visitors to slow their pace and reconnect with the natural world. Among these, the Riverfront North Trail stands as a beloved path in the center of downtown while the lesser-known Riverfront South Trail offers a quieter secluded experience just a mile to the south. Together, they form a pair of accessible, welcoming walks that reflect the town's commitment to preserving open space and fostering a walkable community.

The Riverfront North Trail is especially cherished for its convenience to downtown Great Barrington with access points on Bridge Street beside the Railroad Street Youth Project and at the Olympian Meadows Little League Fields. The trail provides a half-mile stretch of peaceful terrain connecting the two entries. Visitors beginning at Olympian Meadows will find ample parking and a charming entrance: a short walk past a small shed and over a wooden footbridge leads directly onto the trail. From there, the path winds alongside the Housatonic River, weaving through the woods and opening into a broad meadow.

The meadow is a highlight of the Riverfront North Trail. Wooden benches invite visitors to pause and take in their surroundings. It is a place equally suited for quiet reflection and casual conversation, where the sounds of the river and birdsong replace the bustle of nearby streets. East Mountain rises in the distance and there are views of the historic Searles Castle. Closer to the trail, visitors can enjoy the comings and goings of bluebirds to nesting boxes installed behind the split-rail fence.



The Riverfront South Trail is located one mile south behind Bostwick Gardens Apartments on Brookside Road. A hidden gem that offers another intimate encounter with nature, its entrance is easy to miss, lending it a sense of discovery for those who seek it out. Though shorter in length, the trail rewards visitors with tranquil views of the winding Housatonic River, many visiting bird species, and two benches where visitors can enjoy the ever-changing seasonal beauty of this riverside habitat.

Both trails are thoughtfully designed to be accessible to all. They accommodate a wide range of visitors, including those with strollers, walkers, or wheelchairs. In keeping with their purpose as pedestrian sanctuaries, bicycles are not permitted.

Now celebrating six years as cherished community resources, Riverfront North and South Trails are also important to wildlife. Canada geese glide overhead and patient observers may spot a beaver tracing the water's edge. Deer, bobcats, and even black bears occasionally pass through, reminding us of the rich ecosystem that thrives alongside the river. In every season, Riverfront North and South Trails remain a testament to the enduring value of preserved land and the simple pleasure of traveling alongside the river.

Lake Mansfield Habitat Stewardship

by Dale Abrams, Lake Mansfield Habitat Stewardship Coordinator



In 2024 and 2025, GBLC project coordinators and volunteers launched a substantial habitat restoration effort in conjunction with the construction of Lake Mansfield's new beach area and lakeside trail. The town of Great Barrington's Lake Mansfield Improvement Project included planting dozens of native trees and shrubs around the beach park area and the reconfigured parking area, as well as many native shrubs along the shoreline near Whale Rock. With a commitment to habitat restoration, scores of lake-loving GBLC volunteers planted hundreds of additional native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, propagated and/or donated by Ward's Nursery and Helia Native Nursery.

Lake visitors can now enjoy wild willows, dogwoods, roses, and dozens of herbaceous flowers and wetland sedges in their next stages of maturation. Gardeners often use the phrase, "Sleep, Creep, Leap" as a way to depict the growth pattern of new plantings: minimal growth in the first summer, slow growth in the second, and significant growth in the third season. Last year was the "Sleep" or "Creep" year for most of the plantings. This year, we can expect to see a "Leap" of growth in the restoration areas. Some of the best places to see these beautiful native plants are in the swales along the lakeside trail south of the beach, which were designed to slow, capture, and infiltrate stormwater runoff into the ground, and the shoreline restoration areas near whale rock.

Lake Mansfield volunteers are learning to distinguish between the native and non-native plants so that they can help with important stewardship work in habitat restoration along the eastern lake shore.

This spring, volunteers and leaders planted a dozen more trees along the lakeside trail and removed pernicious invasive species like multiflora rose, honeysuckle, barberry, and bittersweet. Supporting native plants provides increased food sources and nesting habitats for native birds and pollinator insects.

We are eager to grow our habitat stewardship volunteer team. Volunteers are needed to help with native plantings and invasive species control at Lake Mansfield. Sign up at GBLand.org/volunteer.

Lake Mansfield Volunteer Days

With the help of amazing volunteers, we completed three spring workdays to help get the beach area ready for summer. We will let the summer heat pass before diving back in with fall workdays led by GBLC board members Dale Abrams and Brad and Kate Roblin.

- Saturday, September 19, 9:00-11:00am- Tasks will include litter collection, beach restoration, and general tidying after the summer rush.
- Saturday, October 31, 9:00-11:00am- Tasks will include leaf and debris removal along the forest trails, as well as maintenance of native plantings to prepare the area for winter.

Register at www.GBLand.org. Volunteers will meet at the Lake Mansfield parking lot and should bring work gloves, water bottles, and protective clothing.



Snow Moon Walk at Lake Mansfield

by Trevor Hoffman, GBLC Student Representative

On a chilly, clear night well below freezing, we gathered to set out on an evening walk through the woods. Beneath the brilliant light of the nearly-full Snow Moon, over 40 explorers of all ages from our community gathered by the snow-blanketed Lake Mansfield.

We intentionally scheduled the walk to take place the evening before the Snow Moon reached its full form. On the night prior to the full moon, the moon both rises earlier and burns clearer. It was a beautiful evening despite the freezing cold, and thanks to the clear skies we also were able to enjoy a soft pink sunset on the horizon.

GBLC board members pitched in throughout the evening. Dale Abrams greeted guests and talked about the native owls that can be heard on a winter's night. Ben Barrett warmed up mulled cider and hot cocoa on his propane stove. I set up my family's pop-up tent and worked with some friends to shovel away the deep snow to create the refreshment area. Jeff Bradley brought along wood and his solo wood stove so that a contained fire could help keep folks warm before and after their walks.

The night was enjoyed by everyone, no matter their pace or ability. Three guided walk options allowed for folks to choose the activity that would be a good fit for them while taking in the quiet beauty of the woods in deep winter. The first group was led through the Lake Mansfield Forest Trails. A second group took a shorter route through the woods and to the brook. For those who were looking for a more mellow experience, there was the option to walk along the accessible lakeside trail.



Underneath the light of the moon, we observed skeletal branches, frozen ground, deep snowy paths carved out by previous walkers, and the stillness that only comes when winter has truly settled in. The blanket of snow reflected the light of the moon and the trail lit up like dusk the whole way through. It was so bright that headlamps were left at home.

At the end of the adventure, everyone made their way down to the beach area where it all started. A warm fire and hot beverages were exactly what all of the forty cold-faced folks needed! There were baked goods to go around, as well. As the group gathered, conversations about the evening began brewing.

Throughout the process of organizing this event, it was so nice to feel supported by GBLC, and I feel very grateful to be part of such an incredible group of people. I hope that Moonlit Hikes can become a seasonal, recurring event, to bring our community closer! Nights like this are a reminder of how simple, shared experiences in nature can bring us together, no matter the time of year.



Coming this Fall:

Full Moon Walk at Riverfront Trail!

This fall, join GBLC for a magical experience along the Riverfront North Trail as the moon rises over East Mountain and the Housatonic River. Whether you are a regular trail visitor or will be discovering it for the first time, plan to come and enjoy autumn's crisp air on a peaceful Berkshire night.

Date to be announced. For more information, subscribe to our newsletter at GBLand.org.

River Walk Turns 39

by Christine Ward, River Walk Director

Did you know that downtown Great Barrington is home to a national recreation trail that provides visitors with the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the Housatonic River and a lush healthy native habitat?

Working together can have an enormously positive impact on our community. Over three decades ago, dedicated community volunteers cleaned up the bank of the Housatonic River just behind Main Street, which had long been used as a dumping site, and in doing so they unknowingly set off a chain reaction that would slowly transform into the trail that you see today. Despite the grueling work of filling dump trucks with a startling collection of debris, the early cleanup crews experienced firsthand how uplifting the connection to the river can be. These early volunteers envisioned a quiet trail that could allow all visitors the opportunity to enjoy a riverside sanctuary. River Walk's founding director Rachel Fletcher donated her time and energy to making that vision a reality, knowing full well that volunteers would always be essential to River Walk's care and well-being.

Today it continues to take a team to care for River Walk. Each and every day we honor the hard work and determination that has been generously donated by our community since 1988. As the current volunteer River Walk Director, I am well supported by the expertise provided by our long-term horticulturist Heather Cupo. For over 25 years, donations from near and far have enabled River Walk to employ Heather as she guides our restoration efforts at River Walk. In addition, your donations have also supported our River Walk Greenagers internship program. Each year River Walk employs Greenagers interns to provide weekly care and maintenance of the trail. Onsite training gives our interns the skills they need to implement trail and ecological improvements. In this way, River Walk is a learning laboratory for local youth that helps them to develop a clear sense of their role as environmental stewards.



Every week our Greenagers River Walk interns collect litter, refresh brochures, and maintain the trail. Madison Melino, Bethany Sweet, and Jonah Gray (above, left to right).



On March 24th a group of 11 students from the W.E.B Du Bois Middle School arrived at the W.E.B Du Bois Rain Garden Park to learn about River Walk, Du Bois, William Stanley, and the Housatonic River. Together they removed large woody branches from the compost enclosure and flipped the organic matter to help with its decomposition.

It Takes a Team!



Most importantly, a continual outpouring of volunteer support is essential to our success. So far this year River Walk has already hosted two volunteer groups from the W.E.B Du Bois Middle School and Big Y. Volunteers have raked trails, installed split-rail fencing, and refreshed our huge compost bin.



ABOVE: A team of 18 volunteers from Big Y's Great Barrington and Lee stores teamed up to make a big difference at River Walk. They emptied our huge compost bin into pickup trucks so that this organic material can be used in local composting facilities, installed a new length of split rail fence to increase protection of the fragile riverbank area.



Working together, seven volunteers have collected and woven together an artful bittersweet enclosure to protect our beloved Red Oak tree on Bridge Street from compaction and river beavers. Northern red oak trees provide critical food resources and habitats to over 1,000 different species of mammals, birds, and insects. Keystone species maintain ecological balance: their disappearance can trigger negative effects throughout an ecosystem.

We need YOU! You too can volunteer to help with the ongoing care for River Walk. For more information and to sign up, email riverwalk@gbland.org.



Trail Connections are Powerful!

All are invited to attend GBLC Annual Meeting and Guided Tree Walk. Saturday, June 13th at 2 PM / Start at the Mason Library Community Room / light refreshments. Registration requested, space is limited!

Come meet your land conservancy board of directors at our Annual Meeting and learn about how volunteerism is powerful for ongoing conservation in Great Barrington. Each year GBLC engages volunteers to care for native habitats and community trails. Project leaders will provide reports on efforts at the Pfeiffer Arboretum, Lake Mansfield, River Walk, and the Riverfront Trail.

The Great Barrington Land Conservancy believes that nature connections are essential to a healthy community. Deb Phillips, a community health professional, will provide a look at all the ways that community trails can help us to feel better. Her work has drawn her to a deeper understanding of the strong connection between community health and connection with and stewardship of our natural environment.

Do you love trees? Massachusetts Certified Arborist Tom Ingersoll will guide a tree walk highlighting the great variety of native tree and shrub species that can be found along River Walk and the Riverfront Trail. The program will conclude with a tree planting demonstration on the Riverfront Trail that illustrates the best steps for planting new trees.

All GBLC members will be invited to enter our TREE BOOK raffle. Maybe you will go home with:

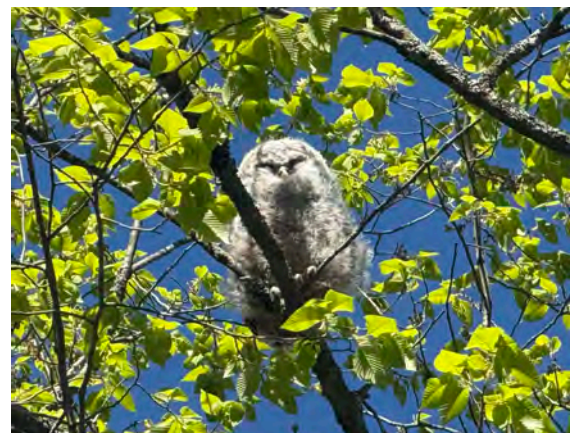
- *Tending Your Forest* by Paul Cantanzaro and Anthony D'amato
- *When the Forest Breathes: Renewal and Resilience in the Natural World* by Suzanne Simard
- *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants* by Doug Tallamy



Calling all nature photographers!

by Nadine Chidester, Project Leader

Would you like to see your work in the Great Barrington Land Conservancy's first ever calendar project? We're looking for views of our trails around Lake Mansfield, Pfeiffer Arboretum, Riverfront Trail, and River Walk. Anyone can submit up to 4 photos, 1 per season, through our website by Tuesday, June 30th for a chance to be featured in our standard-size wall calendar in 2027!



Owlet at Lake Mansfield, May 2026,
photo by Carol Noble.

Tom Tynning at Lake Mansfield



Have you ever held a tiny turtle or gazed into the eyes of a charming milk snake? No? Fear not! Tom Tynning is heading back to Lake Mansfield on **Wednesday, July 15th at 10:30AM (rain date: Thursday 7/16)** so that families can get up close and personal with creatures that we usually just get to glimpse.

This is a fun family event designed to connect kids and their adults to nature. We will meet at the Lake Mansfield Beach Area. Please bring a blanket for sitting. You might also want to consider a trail walk and/or swim before or after Tom's presentation. Accessible walking trails are available within the adjacent Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest and along the Lake Mansfield Shoreline Trail.

Tom is professor of environmental science at Berkshire Community College, author of *A Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles*, and an expert Berkshire County naturalist. His enthusiasm and excitement for the wiggliest and scaliest creatures is contagious!

This program is being offered in partnership with the Mason Library as part of a July Series of Family Events.

Yoga on Lake Mansfield

June 6th through October 31st: 9 am in June, September, and October. 8 am in July and August.
A gentle/ moderate community practice.

Donation-based. Suggested \$15 per class. Bring a blanket. No experience necessary. Accessible to all levels.
Instructor: Senta Rafaela M.Ed. E-RYT, YACEP. More information on Facebook at [Yoga on Lake Mansfield](#).



GBLC Walk for Conservation

On Sunday, October 12th, 2025 a strong volunteer team and 75 champion walkers turned out in support of community trails and land conservation at the first annual GBLC Walk for Conservation. The event was a smashing success, showing support for a strong town-wide trail system including accessible trails for all. Community trails are essential to community health. We believe that trails connect us to nature and to each other are essential to physical and mental well-being.

Participants chose their own routes from three options, a one-mile accessible route on Riverfront Trail, a two-mile route along Riverfront Trail and River Walk, and a five-mile Lake Mansfield loop. All members of the community, regardless of contribution or registration, were more than welcome to attend. Champion walkers raised funds through sponsorships and/or individual contributions.



A mighty team of volunteers made GBLC's first Walk for Conservation possible.



Friends and families used the event to connect with each other, choosing the route that worked best for them.



Our one-mile route is the perfect length for kids (and jesters!).



We are deeply grateful to all who helped to make the 2025 Walk for Conservation a big success!

Please save the date for GBLC's 2nd Annual Walk for Conservation on Sunday, October 4th, 2026!



Many thanks to the 23 local businesses that pitched in to support this new fundraiser! Walk for Conservation enables GBLC to raise the annual funds required to keep River Walk, the Riverfront Trail, Lake Mansfield Forest Trails, and the Pfeiffer Arboretum Trails in excellent condition and open to all!

Thank you to our generous 2025 business sponsors:

Lead Sponsors:

Berkshire Compost
 Guido's Fresh Market
 Lee Bank
 NBT Bank
 The Red Lion Inn
 Ward's Nursery & Garden Center
 Wheeler and Taylor
 Windy Hill Farm

Business Sponsor:

Adams Community Bank
 Adelson & Company PC
 Barrington Brewery & Restaurant
 BOLA Granola
 Greylock Federal Credit Union
 One Mercantile
 Robbie's Community Market
 Roger the Jester
 Tom's Toys

Named Sponsor:

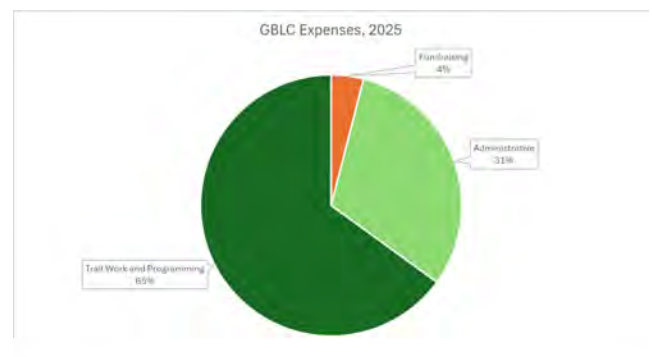
Berkshire Balance Center
 Domane's Liquors & Fine Wines
 Farnsworth Fine Cannabis
 Ingersoll Land Care
 Saltwater Flies
 Sheffield Land Trust

Your Support is Powerful by Jane Angelini, Treasurer

As a donor-based organization we rely heavily on community support. 2025 results showed how valuable trails and open spaces are to you. Donations to GBLC increased 22% and we added a record number of new and first time members. Local businesses have always supported GBLC's efforts. Without batting an eye, they responded as sponsors and with in-kind donations to our new annual fundraiser, Walk for Conservation.

All the funds received by GBLC are maximized by an enormous volunteer effort!

This spring over 315 volunteer hours have been donated by community volunteers and volunteers from Big Y, the W.E.B. Du Bois Middle School, Great Barrington Rotary, the South County Recovery Center, and the Berkshire Waldorf High School. Your volunteer GBLC board of directors have also donated 556 hours. In Massachusetts, the estimated value of a volunteer hour is \$42.00. That means that by May 31st, 2026, GBLC volunteers have contributed a value of \$36,582.00 to our community.



SAVE THE DATES!

GBLC 2026 Events

- June 13 GBLC Annual Meeting & Guided Tree Walk
- June 30 GBLC Calendar Photo Submission Deadline
- July 15 Tom Tying at Lake MansfieldLake
- Sept 19 Mansfield Volunteer Day
- October 4 2nd Annual Walk for Conservation
- October 31 Lake Mansfield Volunteer Day



GBLC Board of Directors, 2026. Left to right, top: Sharon Siter, Nadine Chidester, Dale Abrams, Ben Barrett, Trevor Hoffman, Brad Roblin, and Joe Maleady. Left to right, bottom: Jeff Bradley, Christine Ward, Jane Angelini, and Kate Roblin with Josie. Nicolas Emery was unable to attend for this photo.

Explore GBLC Trails!

Housatonic River Walk

A downtown riverside trail connecting you to Housatonic River ecology and our cultural history. Two ¼-mile crushed stone trail sections with seating and interpretive signage. Access at 179 Main Street, Dresser Avenue, or Bridge Street.

Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trail

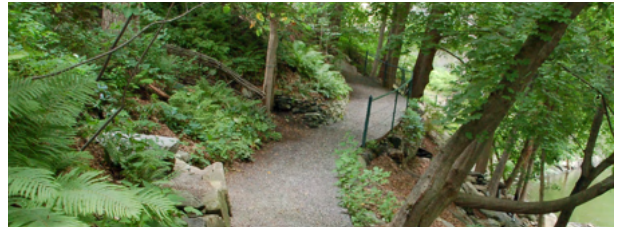
A ½ mile of shady trail nestled in a 29-acre woodland. Features diverse native plants, birds, and mammals. Look for a bridge boardwalk and for the glacial erratic, a boulder moved by ice thousands of years ago. Access Lake Mansfield Road off Christian Hill Road at the beach area parking lot.

Pfeiffer Arboretum

A 0.7-mile woodland loop trail with a branch that overlooks Long Pond Reservoir. Features a variety of native trees and plants with 3 boardwalk sections. Park at 249 Long Pond Road, off Division Street.

Riverfront Trail

Two sections of accessible crushed stone pathway that follow the river's edge and offer woodland and open field views just steps from town. Tree Walk signage. Steps from Bridge Street. Park at Olympian Meadows or Brookside Road.



GREAT BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVANCY



GBLand.org

Graphic Design by Amelia Wood
GBLC logo courtesy of Michael McCurdy

GBLC is dedicated to conservation and stewardship of our community's natural resources and special places.

We work to protect open space for ecological, recreational, agricultural, and scenic purposes. We organize community volunteers on behalf of land conservation and stewardship. We partner with local, regional, and national land trust organizations. We support sustainable agriculture as a means of preserving our farming heritage. We support neighborhood initiatives that align with our mission.