

# Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission

## Summer 2019



*Side By Each Brewers, Matt and Ben Talking about their number one ingredient, water.*

02 Alum Treatment

04 LakeSmart Program

05 Why Going Native Matters

06 EVENTS!

## Good Food Council Connections

Written by Julia Harper, Coordinator, GFCLA

The Good Food Council of Lewiston-Auburn (GFCLA) has noticed in the LA community a strong desire for opportunities to problem-solve and take action to grow the local food economy and agriculture, and to conserve natural resources, such as the Lake Auburn watershed. This was evidenced in part by a March 2019 conference in Auburn that GFCLA hosted with 9 partner organizations, the “LA Region Farmland Access & Food Economy Conference” that sold out at 100 attendees, and had a waiting list.

In the post-conference survey, respondents shared, in part, that they were interested to see more community-building type events around these topics. As LAWPC is also invested in building community awareness and engagement around watershed stewardship, they were a natural partner for GFCLA to build off conference momentum and host a public event called “Food & Water Lewiston-Auburn: A Networking Event”. In June 2019, approximately 40 people gathered at Side By Each Brewing Co. in Auburn for this public, casual networking event for anyone interested in local food and/or natural resource-related topics in the greater Lewiston-Auburn area. Those in attendance included small business owners, farmers, board members and staff from organizations working on neighborhood revitalization, school nutrition, healthcare, land conservation, water treatment, and more. In the post-event survey for this event, the majority of respondents identified that they made a new connection that they intended to follow up with, and that they learned something new about local activities in the watershed and/or food and agriculture.

An additional example of the natural partnership between GFCLA and LAWPC is evidenced by the inclusion of local and sustainable farming as a principle

in the LA Community Food Charter, which is located at [goodfood4la.org](http://goodfood4la.org). The second principle of the Food Charter -- a document that lays out a vision for a healthy local food system and asks for community sign-ons -- states, “Consider local and sustainable agriculture when making food decisions for ourselves and our families. Production systems should enhance healthy soil and clean water...” This line was included in part with the acknowledgement that an informed and engaged community is necessary to not only increase access to healthy foods and support a strong local food economy, but also to maintain the quality of our natural resources, including a clean drinking water supply. Local farmers and landowners are especially important to be informed and engaged, due to their ability to make land-use decisions that can have a significant impact, positive or negative, on water quality. As GFCLA continues support opportunities in the LA Region for increased farmland access and a thriving local food economy, through our partnership with LAWPC, we will also seek appropriate opportunities to encourage sustainable farming practices and healthy watershed stewardship.

The Good Food Council of Lewiston-Auburn is a grassroots, community-based organization formed in 2012 to create and support improvements to the food system of the Lewiston-Auburn community from farm to fork. It does this by fostering coordination between sectors in the food system, educating the public and serving as a forum for discussing issues, evaluating and influencing policy, and supporting programs that meet local food needs.



More information, including to read and sign the LA Community Food Charter, can be found at [www.goodfood4la.org](http://www.goodfood4la.org).

# Lake Auburn Alum Treatment

by Erica Kidd, Watershed

You may have heard about a chemical treatment that is taking place in Lake Auburn this summer. This chemical treatment is an alum treatment; a combination of aluminum sulfate and sodium aluminate that gets applied to the water. Alum binds with phosphorus in the water column and sinks to the bottom of the lake, where it also binds with phosphorus in the sediment.

The benefit of binding and removing available phosphorus from the lake is that it reduces algal growth. Algae use



*The SOLitude Alum Application Barge*

phosphorus to grow and can proliferate with an overabundance of phosphorus in the water. When algae blooms occur, water clarity decreases and turbidity increases. Dissolved oxygen decreases when the algae die and breakdown at the bottom of the lake. These are all negative changes in water quality, particularly for a drinking water supply.

The goal of the alum treatment is to prevent algae blooms in Lake Auburn over the next several years, which will help maintain high quality water that is a source



*The Alum Plume*



*Cobboossee Watershed District and Lake Stewards of Maine Monitoring During the Treatment*

of drinking water for both Lewiston and Auburn. In addition to the alum treatment, the LAWPC is dedicated to mitigating sources of phosphorus in the watershed that are contributing to above-average levels of phosphorus in Lake Auburn. The alum treatment will prevent algae blooms from occurring in the near future, but addressing the watershed sources of phosphorus will prevent excess phosphorus from entering the lake in the first place.

The project is being heavily monitored before, during, and after treatment to assure that Auburn Water District and the City of Lewiston deliver water to customers that meet all drinking water standards.

Special thanks to our partners throughout the alum treatment process: Dr. Ken Wagner (Water Resource Services), Lake Stewards of Maine, Cobboossee Watershed District, SOLitude Lake Management, Tighe & Bond, USDA-Wildlife Services, Dr. Holly Ewing (Bates College), ME DEP, ME IFW, and ME Drinking Water Program.

# LakeSmart Program in the Lake Auburn Watershed



## What is the LakeSmart Program?

It is a volunteer program that assists homeowners with their lakefront properties to help them manage their landscape to protect water quality.

The Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission is trained to provide property assessments for participating homeowners.

To be LakeSmart means that the homeowners have received the education and techniques, and are using natural landscaping strategies to protect their lake. LakeSmart landscaping mimics nature's rich mosaic of plants, shrubs, winding paths, and shady trees – so it looks great, enhances privacy, and works hard to protect property values, wildlife habitat, water quality, recreational opportunities and the vitality of local economies.

This is a program of the Maine Lakes Society, more info can be found at [www.mainelakessociety.org](http://www.mainelakessociety.org)

To get your property evaluated on Lake Auburn or in our watershed, go to our website and fill out a form!

Thanks to our partner organizations and sponsors



Maine Lakes Society



# Native Beauty: Why Going Native Matters

By Heather McCargo, of the Wild Seed Project

Originally appeared in Green and Healthy Homes Magazine

MANY people are hearing the call to plant natives, but there is a lot of confusion about how to do it and why it matters. This article will demonstrate the benefits native plants provide, introduce varieties well suited to Maine landscapes and provide maintenance tips to help ensure a happy, healthy native landscape.

Maine's native plants are crucial to supporting our local ecosystem, and each of us can have an impact on our region's biological diversity by how we landscape our properties.

## WHAT IS "NATIVE?"

Native plants are the species of trees, shrubs, vines, wildflowers, grasses and ferns that have grown in our region for millennia. Species that arrived after European settlement – which marks the beginning of a time of great landscape disturbance in North America – are called exotics. Plants grow together in communities determined by soils and sun exposure, and these native habitats are the foundation of a region's biodiversity.

## ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Native plants create the habitats that support the rest of land-based life. These plants have co-evolved with our region's animals, insects, fungi and soil microorganisms, and many species are mutually dependent on each other – they pollinate plants, disperse seeds and are part the food chain.

The monarch butterfly's need for milkweed during its caterpillar stage is a well-known example of native species' co-dependence. A native tree such as the red oak provides food and shelter for hundreds of other species, from insects to birds and small animals.



Swamp Milkweed

Native habitats also absorb and store carbon dioxide and precipitation, filter pollutants, decompose dead organisms – thus releasing nutrients – and moderate temperature extremes. Scientist sometimes refer to these helpful attributes as "ecosystem services."

We have displaced native plant habitats and all the complex relationships they support with paving, buildings, turf and high-maintenance exotic plants. With a rapidly warming climate, it is important that we not lose more native habitat and the ecosystem services they provide.

Sharing space in our yards and developed landscapes with native plants can help stitch together remaining wild habitats, providing corridors for native plants and animals to forage and reproduce, and the pathways to migrate north as the climate warms.

Plant some native species in your yard, and you will immediately see your garden come alive with pollinators and birds. Native plants interact in the landscape in a beautiful and exciting way that exotic plants cannot match.

## NATIVE PLANTS ARE LOW-MAINTENANCE

Many native plants are less demanding to the landscape than common ornamental flowers and food crops. Domesticated plants have been bred with a harvest in mind (or excessive blooms), and many need a lot of water and nutrients to thrive.

With native plantings, soil preparation and maintenance is less resource-intensive. No more importing top soil, large amounts of composts, manures or fertilizers; after the plants are established, no extra irrigation should be needed. Decaying leaves and aged hardwood bark will supply all the nutrients that most native

# EVENTS

**Saturday August 24 10- 1pm**

**Rt. 4 Boat Launch, Commission Lands**

**Volunteer Clean Up Day**

Join the Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission, Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District and LA Trails in a Volunteer Clean Up Day on the public use commission lands. Bring the family! Parking is at the Route 4 Boat Launch at Lake Auburn! Water will be provided (bring your own bottle!) as well as light snacks. We will be picking up trash on commission owned lands so that they may be clean for public use. Trash bags and gloves will be provided.

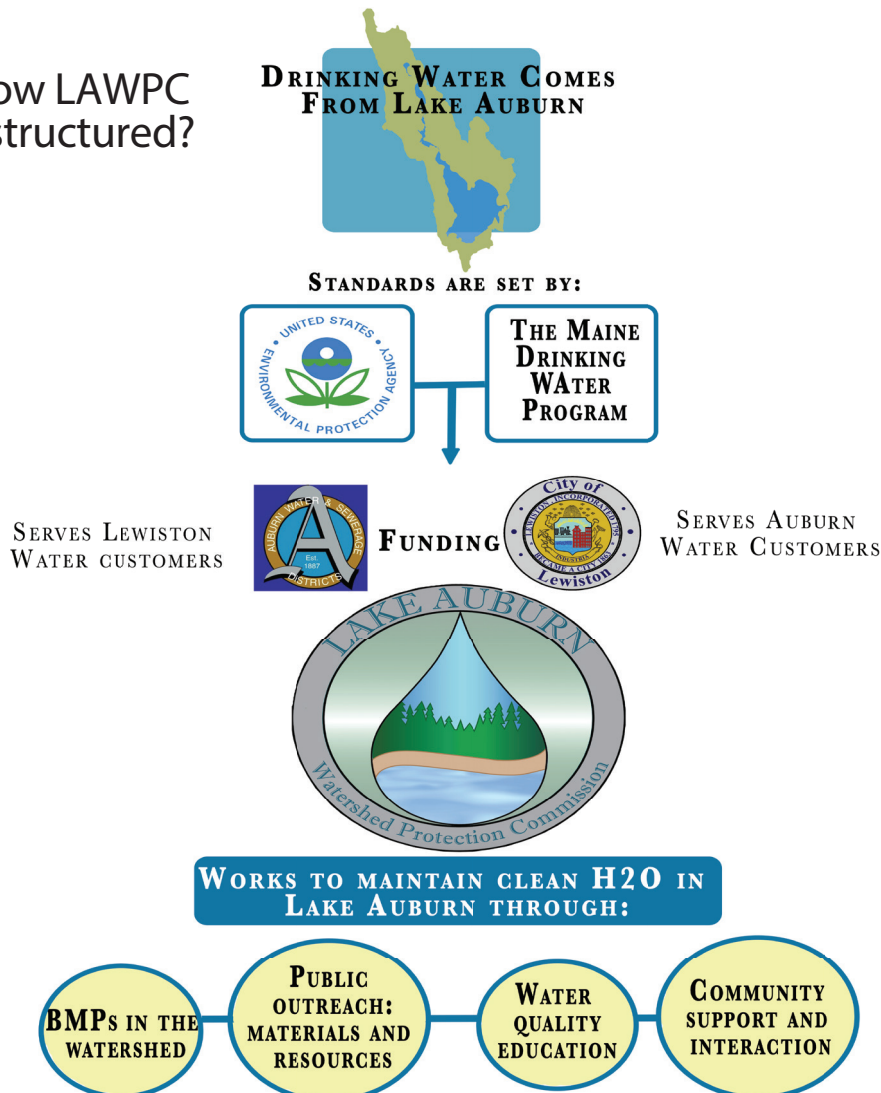
**Friday August 31**

**5:00pm - 8:00pm Bear Bones Beer in Lewiston**

**L/A Art Walk**

The Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission is joining with L/A Arts and Bear Bones Beer to curate a water themed art show housed at Bear Bones Brewery in Lewiston as part of the August Artwalk. You will be able to vote during the month of August for your favorite water themed submission and the winner, announced on August 30th, will receive a gift certificate to Bear Bones.

Ever wonder how LAWPC is funded and structured?



...  
plants require to thrive.

Allowing leaves to remain on planting beds in the fall and planting densely with layers of vegetation (no large patches of mulch between each plant) will mimic the natural processes that protect soils, recycle nutrients and provide overwinter habitat for pollinators.

### **NATIVE BEAUTY**

Maine hosts many beautiful native plants that are easy to grow, and which make resilient garden and landscape plants for every growing condition. For sunny dry sites with gravelly or sandy soil, try introducing butterfly milkweed, sundial lupine and Virginia rose.



*Rosy Meadowsweet*

Instead of viewing wet ditches and low spots as a problem to be fixed, plant blue iris, swamp milkweed and winterberry holly, all of which are well adapted to fluctuating water levels. For tough shady areas where mulch or hostas are the default, choose from a huge diversity of woodland species such as wild geranium, wood aster and ferns that thrive in these low-light conditions.

Native woody plants are a year-round attraction to people and local fauna alike. Choose from beautiful flowering trees and shrubs that bear spring or summer flowers, colorful fruits and brilliant autumn foliage. While unknown to many gardeners, there are even native species of common garden exotics, including several kinds of rhododendron, spirea and viburnum.

### **CHOOSE UNCULTIVATED FORMS OF NATIVES**

While many nurseries in Maine are increasing their offerings of native plants, trends in the modern nursery industry have focused on the mass production of “superior clones.” These cultivars are selected with ornamental traits such as dwarfism, purple or variegated foliage, or altered flower structures such as larger flowers with novel colors or double forms (with multiple petals). These characteristics may be appealing to people, but they often are not to the pollinators and other creatures that have co-evolved with these plants. Blue wood aster is an adaptable fall blooming perennial for tough urban conditions and shady woodland edges.

In the wild, most plants reproduce by seeds, which develop after the flowers are pollinated by insects. This process mixes the genes of multiple individuals, since a given insect may visit dozens of plants in its foraging, promoting genetic diversity. Individual varieties differ in how they deal with conditions such as heat, drought, excessive rain, cold or pollution.

Genetic diversity is a species’ best strategy for dealing with a changing climate, since it allows for rapid adaptation. Landscapes filled with cloned plants lack this resiliency. As you look to add native species to your landscapes, seek out nurseries that are propagating from seed the natural forms of native plants, not the cultivars.

If each of us offers up some space in our yards to native plants, our urban and suburban landscapes could connect with remaining wild habitat to support pollinators, birds and all the diversity of life that makes Maine such a beautiful state.

For more information on native plants, including photos and growing tips, visit the Wild Seed Project website at [www.wildseedproject.net](http://www.wildseedproject.net).

Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission  
268 Court Street  
Auburn, ME 04212



check us out at [www.lakeauburnwater.org](http://www.lakeauburnwater.org)

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