

The *Villages at Loudon Homeowners Association (VALHA)* is a relatively new 100 home 55+ Community in Loudon NH. We have extensive water run off systems connecting throughout our community, developed by Tony Marcotte of Bedford Designs. Our homeowner association is an active community of volunteers committed to improving our Common Areas.

In the fall of 2016 our Board of Directors created a reserve fund for improvements to our Common Areas. Our Architectural Review Committee held a community wide meeting to solicit opinions toward the development of a 5 year strategic plan to care for our land. We began our journey by touring our ground water run off areas with the designer Tony Marcotte, followed by a balancing review with Amy Papineau of the Merrimack County University of New Hampshire (UNH) Extension. From those enlightening walks we began the necessary research required to naturalize our swales to assist with the proper percolation of storm water runoff.

In the spring of 2017 we had NH Forester, Scott Rolfe tour our property and present to homeowners on proper tree care and maintenance. Later in the year we worked with Hillsborough County UNH Extension to identify plants growing in our swales, followed by Jeremy Delise, Merrimack County UNH Extension performing 12 random soil samplings around our community. Jeremy presented those results to the community, offered proper soil amendment and best practice for healthy natural lawns and to enhance well water quality.

In the fall of 2017 Dennis Fogg of Presby Environmental came to speak to the community on proper use of our septic system and to explain clearly how our system works. Dennis spoke at length on how proper care of our septic systems protect our rivers, streams and eventually ourselves as we have our own fresh water system with wells.

In conjunction with these diverse and well attended community education sessions we have stopped mowing approximately 3 acres, saving money. We planted conservation mix in our swale which had been mowed for many years and become hard packed. This fall we planted 100 Cat



Tails to begin our Rain Garden area. We have planted hundreds of Daffodils, and have stopped mowing our retention pond area to allow the critters to remain in place and away from our homes.

We are also allowing our side hill areas, which had been clear cut, to naturalize allowing for new growth of hardwoods to emerge. VALHA is spending time learning to be good stewards of our shared property. While naturalizing can be a ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’ situation we have worked hard to educate residents with regards to our environment, soils, septic systems and storm water run off which benefits both our surrounding rivers and streams in addition to our well water. We are making a difference together.

Story submitted by Sharyn Goddard, Chair of the VALHA Architectural Review Committee, November 2017