



# Litchfield Land Trust

Conserving and Protecting Land. Forever.

## Into the Woods

During a recent trip to New York City, as I strolled through Central Park, I celebrated Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's architectural vision and genius - the importance of green spaces for human well-being. After the completion of Central Park in the 1870's, Olmsted sent circulars to doctors with directions to Central and Prospect Parks. His posters included a description of these natural destinations to aid convalescents.

While it may seem obvious that a good hike through a forest can cleanse your mind, body, and soul, science is now discovering that hiking can actually change your brain... for the better! In her 2017 book, *Nature's Fix*, Florence Williams describes this latest research in detail infused with humor.

Psychologists Ruth Ann Atchley and David L. Strayer found that creative problem solving can be drastically improved by both disconnecting from technology and reconnecting with nature. Researchers found that performance on problem solving tasks improved by 50% for those who took part in this tech-free hiking excursion. A sustained hike, without technology, can reduce mental fatigue, soothe the mind, and boost creative thinking.

Participants who went on a 90-min walk through a natural environment reported lower neural activity in the subgenual prefrontal cortex, an area of the brain related to self-rumination and mental illness. These results suggest that accessible natural areas may be vital for mental health in our rapidly urbanizing world. The conclusion reached by the researchers noted that increased urbanization closely correlates with increased instances of depression and other mental illness. A Finnish study found that even 20 minutes a day spent in nature can lower blood pressure and raise feelings of vitality. While not a pharmaceutical treatment, the Finns recommend at least five hours per month, ideally ten, to have a significant impact on a person's well-being. ([Link to Study](#))

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is becoming more common among children. Children who have ADHD have a difficult time with impulse control and staying focused, they get distracted easily, and may exhibit excessive hyperactivity. A 2004 study came to the obvious conclusion that getting outdoors and doing something active can reduce the symptoms of ADHD. Green outdoor settings appear to reduce ADHD symptoms in children across a wide range of individual, residential, and case characteristics. ([Link to Study](#))

The Litchfield Land Trust Board understands the multifaceted benefits of conserving natural spaces. Habitat corridors, watershed protection, Carbon sequestration, and the well-being of you - our friends and neighbors. We manage over 12 miles of publicly accessible hiking trails at five Litchfield sites. Distances on these mostly wooded trails range from .5 miles on the Marsh Hawk Trail to 4.5 miles on the Prospect Mountain trail complex. These five parcels are actively managed to maximize biological diversity and hiking accessibility. If, as Robert Frost admonishes in his poem "Birches," "It's when I'm weary of considerations, And life is too much like a pathless wood," perhaps it is time to get to the woods by exploring one of Litchfield Land Trust's five hiking trails. It will be good for your head!

### Mark your Calendars!

Our Annual Sunset Party will be held Friday September 9, from 5-8pm at Bunnell Farm. We



hope you can join us for some great food, good music and wonderful company while supporting the mission of our organization.

## THANK YOU!

A big thank you to everyone who purchased plants from our Ecotype Plant Sale! It was a great success! We'd love to see how your gardens are growing - tag us on Instagram @litchfieldlandtrust!



**Saturday June 4, 9-10:30am**

Join LLT board member Dean Birdsall on the new Katzin Trail connecting to the Nancy Danaher trail. There will be ups & downs in mixed hardwood/conifer forest among boulders and water features, richly endowed terrain over a stem and loop route.

[Register here](#)

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*We acknowledge that we are on the land of Indigenous ancestral tribes. Litchfield is located on the Pootatuck tribal homelands and is situated on the homelands of the Weantinock peoples whose descendants are the modern day Schaghticoke people. A small portion of the Tunxis homelands can also be found in Litchfield. For this land and these peoples, we give thanks.*

Credit: Institute for American Indian Studies (IAIS) Museum  
[laismuseum.org](http://laismuseum.org)

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