

FRIENDS OF WEST MILL CREEK PARK

Park News • 2025 Review / 2026 Preview

A Message from Friends of WMC Park

2025 was a great year for West Mill Creek Park. There were many new faces at our work days, and the number of people who joined our email list increased substantially. We also received significant financial and hands-on assistance from others who value West Mill Creek Park. We are delighted and energized by this new wave of support. For details and more news, read on!

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEER MASTER NATURALIST

Michelle Detwiler has just completed her commitment to provide three years of volunteer service as required for her Master Naturalist certification under the **Pennsylvania Master Naturalist** program. We are grateful that Michelle chose West Mill Creek Park for her pro bono service. She has donated many hours of hands-on gardening work, led all our Friends of WMC work days, and shared her encyclopedic knowledge of the complex interactions of native plants and animals in our area — to the great benefit of our planting program and of many local home gardeners.

Michelle is also principal of [Wild About Native Plants](#), a local residential garden design company that focuses on ecological gardening. Her enthusiasm, knowledge, tact and humor have enhanced the experience for everyone. Thank you, Michelle!

APRIL WORK DAY

On Saturday, April 26, volunteers **Judy Argon, Bonnie Anapol, Ellen Briggs, Michelle Detwiler, Neil Eklund, Karen O'Neil, Ellen Reese, and Mary Ann Sheldon** gathered for our annual Spring Weeding Day. We concentrated on cutting back dead flower stalks and weeding invasive plants in our newest gardens at the entrance and exit to the parking lot. We also spread mulch delivered by the Township in the spicebush bed at the far end of the park.

Longtime Friends of WMC Park supporter **Karl Middleman** stopped by to photograph the team in action — see the photos below. Thanks, Karl, for these lovely photos!



Volunteers arrive at the parking lot for Spring Weeding Day



Clearing beds and cutting back dead stalks in the entry gardens

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Park News • 2025 Review / 2026 Preview



Spreading mulch in the spicebush bed at the far end of the park



A volunteer tackles deep weeding in the garden beds



Careful hands-on work restoring the native garden plantings



Freshly mulched and weeded garden beds looking tidy and healthy

EAGLE SCOUT DAY AT THE PARK

On the morning of June 8, 2025, Friends of West Mill Creek Park members gathered to honor two Scouts: **Jonathan Ware** of **Merion Liberty Troop 71**, and **Julian Pace** of **Narberth Troop 176**. Each Scout chose West Mill Creek Park as the site of their very different but equally beneficial Eagle Scout projects.

Jonathan Ware — Lost & Found and Compost Bin

Jonathan designed and built a handsome new Lost and Found, located next to the kiosk at the park entrance. It features dog-shaped pegs for small items, a tray for larger ones, and a roof to keep everything dry. Special thanks are due to **DMI Home Supply** on Haverford Road, which donated building materials, and **O'Donnell Roofing** on Lansdowne Avenue, which supplied roofing. The Lost & Found has been in active use since the very day it was installed. Jonathan also created a new double compost bin, sorely needed since our old one was totaled in a car accident. Many thanks to Jonathan and to his fellow Scouts from Troop 71.

FRIENDS OF WEST MILL CREEK PARK

Park News • 2025 Review / 2026 Preview



Our fabulous new Lost & Found kiosk — with Eagle Scout Jonathan Ware (nearest to kiosk), Christopher Ware and Gabriel Ware of Merion Liberty Troop 71, and members of the Friends of WMC Park Steering Committee.

Julian Pace — Rain Garden

Julian created our new rain garden, located on the Mill Creek Road side of the long wooden walkway. A large metal culvert emerging from under the road dumps Township stormwater directly into the park. Julian's rain garden — a wide shallow depression with a berm on the downhill side — slows that rush of water, filters out pollutants, provides habitat for beneficial insects and birds, and protects the health of the creek.

The garden was planted with native species adapted to periodic flooding, and Julian created an attractive educational sign explaining its benefits. Do take time to read it next time you pass by. Many thanks to Julian and to fellow Scouts from Troop 176 who assisted him.



FRIENDS OF WEST MILL CREEK PARK

Park News • 2025 Review / 2026 Preview

L to R: Michelle Detwiler, Eagle Scout Julian Pace, Lars Pace, and members of the Friends of WMC Park Steering Committee in front of Julian's fabulous new rain garden.

After viewing both projects, **Karen O'Neil**, an original member of our Steering Committee, formally expressed our thanks, and we presented each Eagle Scout with a Friends of WMC tee shirt as a token of our gratitude.

BURDOCK BURR DAYS

2025 was a banner year for non-native invasive burdock — those giant plants that bear super-sticky round burrs in the Fall. As any regular WMC dog walker knows, the burrs get into dog fur and are almost impossible to remove without cutting them out. On July 31 and August 1, 2025, seven brave volunteers stepped up: **Bonnie Anapol, Judy Argon, Ellen Briggs, Michelle Detwiler, Craig Oliner, Ellen Reese, Susan Roth, and Mark Wassmansdorf** donated a total of **15 hours** cutting down the plants and piling them on tarps for pickup by our ever-obliging **Lower Merion Township crew**. This reduced the number of burrs in the park by thousands!

Good News for the Future

Research into the burdock life cycle revealed that the roots are not perennial — these plants spread only from seed. While there are many seeds in the soil already, regularly disposing of plants before new seeds form may allow us to eradicate them eventually. We also now know to cut them down earlier, before seeds form barbs and before plants are mature enough to reproduce.



L to R: Ellen Reese, Michelle Detwiler, Ellen Briggs, Craig Oliner, and Mark Wassmansdorf — part of our Burdock team pictured with a pile of vanquished burdock. Apologies to those hardworking volunteers who weren't present when this picture was taken!

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Park News • 2025 Review / 2026 Preview

FALL PLANTING DAY

We held our Annual Fall Planting Day on October 22, 2025. Thirteen volunteers — **Judy Argon, Ellen Briggs, Jake Canale, Katie Courtney, Michelle Detwiler, Emily Hermann, Will Merriken, Karen O'Neil, Ellen Reese, Estelle Saltiel, Mary Ann Sheldon, Lynne Shuda, and Mark Wassmansdorf** — put in a total of **38 hours** removing invasive non-native plants including knotweed, ornamental grasses, mugwort, and multiflora rose. They also spread arborist wood chips to protect and enrich bare soil near the Welcome Garden, and with Township crew assistance, planted many perennials to add beauty and biodiversity to the park.



Fall Planting Day volunteers gather to kick off the work day



Removing invasive knotweed and ornamental grasses



Spreading arborist wood chips near the Welcome Garden



Two volunteers take a well-earned moment among the native plantings

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Park News • 2025 Review / 2026 Preview

IN MEMORIAM

In 2025, six Kappa Kappa Gamma sisters from Bucknell University donated a sitting boulder and a native redbud tree in memory of **Julie Rebecca Raezer**, who loved the peace and natural beauty of our park. The boulder provides a quiet place for park visitors to rest and reflect.



A park visitor enjoys the view from our new memorial boulder.

THANK YOU, 2025 DONORS!

We extend heartfelt thanks to all those who donated to Friends of West Mill Creek Park in 2025:

- 🐾🐾🐾🐾 **Four Paws (\$150 or more):** Judy Argon, Ellen Briggs, Nora Engel
- 🐾🐾🐾 **Three Paws (\$100–\$149):** Rob Dalonzo, Gustavo Klurfan, Judith Axelrod, Virginia West
- 🐾🐾 **Two Paws (\$50–\$99):** Alissa Elke, Katie Maza Courtney, Jean Persenaire, Darien Zimmerman
- 🐾 **One Paw (up to \$49):** Yi-Li Godfrey, James Hence

THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS WEBSITE HOST

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Park News • 2025 Review / 2026 Preview

We owe a big thank you to Friends of WMC member **Jamie Markizon** and his company [Strategic Websites](#) for donating their services to modernize our website. Park supporters can now make donations or join our mailing list online. There is no doubt that their work contributed significantly to our success bringing new people on board this year.

NEWS AND ADVISORIES FOR 2026

Fencing Upgrade On the Way

Several members have noted that fencing along Mill Creek Road has deteriorated. We are working with the Township to correct this, and they have already measured and begun the process of ordering new fencing. Stay tuned for more news!

Stream Bank Restoration Status

As you may know, many of the plants installed in Fall 2024 to comply with Pennsylvania water quality regulations have not survived. We are working with the Township and their landscaper to create a plan for a successful re-planting this Spring. To meet water quality goals, planting will extend all the way to the water line, meaning stream access will only be available at designated access points. Foot paths along the stream banks will no longer be available.

Please respect the new plantings. If allowed to grow, they will control erosion and keep stream water cleaner by filtering out pollutants. Thank you for your cooperation.

Off-Leash Permits

This newsletter would not be complete without our yearly reminder: please **obtain a 2026 off-leash permit** for each dog you bring to the park. The application is easy to complete online, and the permit grants off-leash access to both Rolling Hill Park and West Mill Creek Park. Obtaining a permit is a great way to show your support for the Township's off-leash program.

Interested in Donating?

It's easy to support Friends of West Mill Creek Park with a donation — either online or by sending a check to our Treasurer. Details are available under the [Get Involved!](#) tab on our website.

To join, volunteer, or learn more, visit us online or connect on social media.