

The Sherman Road Wildflower Lecture - with John Reinier, Wetland Ecologist, Cleveland Metroparks

Experts like John Reinier are encouraging a lot more habitat development like Sherman Road. They call them “no mow’ areas, and are encouraging park managers to let areas go so that what they call “successional old field habitats”, develop in just a few years. Over time you get these great early successful habitats that are important for pollinators, birds and other small mammals. The land becomes a much healthier place.

“We are now starting to value these types of areas so much more than we used to, because we realized how important they are for a lot of insects, birds, and wildlife species that are on the decline. Even without seeding, the land will come in with goldenrod, then a lot of other native grasses, and naturally over time you'll get thousands of woody stems start to come in from a mature tree line.”

A large-scale tree planting took place at the Sherman Road Preserve a few years ago with a \$60,000 grant. GMLC is letting a portion of the land revert to forest, by purposefully planting certain trees to direct a specific outcome. A large portion of the land is being mowed annually on a delayed basis, creating that habitat development that John Reinier suggests.

The Gates Mills Land Conservancy and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History next door are working to protect areas along the Chagrin River valley between the North and South Chagrin Reservation. “That work is so important”, John said, “because when you start to look at all those areas together, it starts to form a nice little patchwork of corridors for plants, animals and pollinators to move around it.”

Gates Mills is an integral part of the larger geographical landscape and a major contributor of the Chagrin River Watershed. As John Reinier stated, “When you look at Cuyahoga County and the eastern third here along Chagrin River Valley, it is one of the few places where there's a lot of green space left. Protecting these places is so important, and Conservation Easements are just one of the best tools to ensure that land stays natural into the future and doesn't become a subdivision with asphalt. From a watershed perspective, anytime that rain hits asphalt, it shoots off into pipes and causes all kinds of erosion issues downstream. When you have rainfall here, it's a much more natural filtration process and water slowly makes its way to the Chagrin River. Conservation easements have been a great tool for protecting natural areas like this.”