



OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY
CONSERVATION IN BUCKS COUNTY



PUBLIC ENEMY #1
MEET ROSA MULTIFLORA



FARMING IN BUCKS COUNTY
PHIL JOHNSON
BEECH TREE FARM



2023 INITIATIVES
HELP US CONSERVE THE LAND WE LOVE

CONSERVATOR

Celebrating our 25th Anniversary

The Land Trust of Bucks County (LTBC) was founded in 1997 to protect and preserve environmentally significant land and natural resources in Bucks County, Pennsylvania for future generations.



Our 25th anniversary year saw a continuation of the essential work we do and a return to some sense of normalcy after two years of COVID.

Conservation Easement Monitoring

In 2022, LTBC, working with partner townships, monitored 118 properties and over 5300 acres of conserved land. As a part of Bucks County's Agricultural Land Preservation Program, we monitored an additional 7000 acres on 124 properties.

Conservation management is an important part of what we do and our annual inspections are critical for understanding current property conditions. By identifying and characterizing changes and pressures to preserved properties, we not only ensure compliance with the terms of each easement, but we help meet the expectations of easement stakeholders.

[LTBC monitors over 12,000 acres of preserved farmland in Bucks County annually](#)

New Preserved Property

LTBC partnered with Solebury Township and the Mageras family in 2022 to successfully conserve over 43 acres on Pidcock Creek Road in New Hope. This farm property features a vineyard, beautiful farm fields, magnificent woodland, wetlands, and a natural habitat for a multitude of woodland creatures.

Bucks 100 Road Rally

2022 saw a return to sponsored events and our popular annual road rally. Held in June of this year, participants traversed the 100 km-long rally and many of the most scenic roads in Bucks County. The rally winners were

1st Place: Reb and Abby Brooks

2nd Place: Karen & Rick Winston & their cute co-pilot Misty

3rd Place: Kevin and Robin Lear

Congratulations to the winners and our thanks to all who participated and volunteered.

Public Enemy No. 1

Okay, it may not be public enemy #1 but it is up there with Russian Olive, Bradford Pear, Japanese Stilt Grass, and Celandine. It is designated a noxious weed in PA.



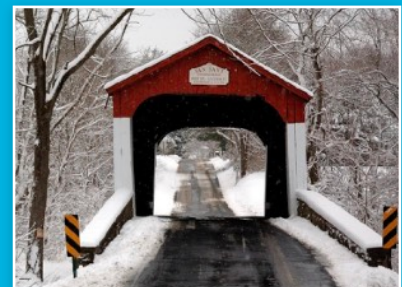
Rosa Multiflora, more commonly known as Multiflora Rose, is a wild rose and native to eastern Asia. It is believed to be one of the species from which modern roses originated and is now found throughout eastern North America.

Did you Know?

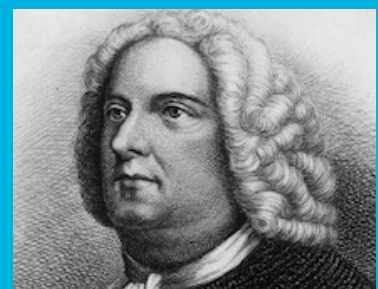
Click and Learn



Preserves, parks, and other conserved lands in PA are not automatically exempt from real estate taxes. Click here to find out why.



There's lots to do in Bucks Co. in the winter



Pennsylvania's founder William Penn was something of a bad boy.

The Problem with Rosa Multiflora

R. Multiflora spreads aggressively and forms impenetrable thorny thickets in woodlands and across grazing fields. According to the USDA it "forms dense thickets that restrict the growth of other vegetation and reduce available site resources (e.g., light and nutrients). This vigorous plant has large, prolific thorns which are hazardous to both humans and livestock. R. Multiflora can reduce land value and it is difficult to manage." We can tell you from experience that it makes the monitoring of our properties challenging.

If you have R. Multiflora on your property, especially around water, *Nature Conservancy Magazine* recommends the following: cut the stems close to the ground and dab exposed ends with Garlon 3A - an EPA approved herbicide for use around wetlands.

[R. Multiflora infests over 45 million acres in the eastern United States](#)

Farming in Bucks County

Philip and Joy Johnson are the owners of Beech Tree Farm, a preserved farm in Solebury Township. We talked to Phil, an emeritus member of our Board of Directors, about farming in Bucks County.



So, how long have you been farming?

"I grew up on a small vegetable farm in northeast Philadelphia. It was 9 acres and my grandfather also rented an additional 5 acres. The entire farm had excellent soils, far superior to most of the soil found in central and upper Bucks County. Until I was 11 years old, my grandfather and father, who worked part-time, farmed with horses, so we also had to grow hay, small grains, as well as some corn for our chickens.

"My farm chores included the daily feeding of the chickens, shelling and grinding corn by hand, and a weekly cleaning of the two horse stalls.

"So, you can see, I have gone from the "husking peg" to a combine; from loose hay put up on a hay wagon and stored in the barn to a small square baler and then a roll baler; from a team of horses to 200 HP GPS-guided tractors, and from plowing and harrowing to no-till. Technology has really changed everything."

Were you full-time farmers in Philadelphia?

"Our farm in Philadelphia was always a part-time endeavor with the surplus vegetables, including

asparagus, rhubarb, tomatoes, beets, potatoes, sweetcorn, celery, fresh eggs and whole chickens sold directly from the farm to local customers. My father and my family continued to farm in Philadelphia until I was 39 and then we moved to Bucks County."

It's hard to imagine farms in Philadelphia. Were there many?

"Yes, there were many, but after 1957 things really started to change. When I was young I worked on another farm, the Stoker farm, where Northeast Philadelphia Airport now is. After 1957 the city expanded outward and the farms were the last frontier. I went into the army in '57 and when I returned in '58 there were already big changes. There was a highway through our farm!"

[No-till is a way of growing crops without disturbing the soil through tillage](#)

So, when you moved to Bucks County you bought a farm. Did you then go full-time?

"Up until when I retired from my full-time employment, our Bucks County farming operation was also part-time. Now with my son, I farm approximately 300 acres. 49 acres is our farm and the rest is made up of preserved farms or rented property. We farm 14 different properties."

So you farm other properties?

"Yes, many of the properties we farm are too small for most of the farmers' equipment in our area, so they have no interest in them. It's a way to keep that land working and it provides us with the opportunity to do a better job of crop rotation along with better insect and pest control."

That sounds like a win-win situation. What are you growing here in Bucks County?

"Unlike our Philadelphia truck and vegetable farm, we have morphed into small grains, feed corn, soybeans, and horse quality hay. Hay and straw are the most consistent for profit. We also raise chickens for eggs. We have beef cows and pigs. In the winter, we do custom sawing. The hardest part of farming is trying to keep all the equipment operational, but the most satisfying part of farming is smelling hay in the barn that hasn't been rained on. One doesn't go into farming to be a millionaire. If farming were our only source of income, I would be broke. I have never taken a salary from the farm, but have been able to upgrade the equipment and pay for part-time help."

[small grains include winter and spring wheat, winter and spring barley, oats, rye, buckwheat and flax](#)

Running a small farm is not easy, is it?

"It is definitely harder to farm now in Bucks County for the following reasons: an increase in vehicle traffic and corresponding speed, taxes on real estate, rents, and depressed crop prices."

"Moving machinery is a problem because people are not used to farm vehicles being on the roads anymore. We are often moving equipment that is wider than a lane. We try to be careful and travel when traffic is lighter, but motorists need to be mindful and more patient. Also tax structures on preserved farms should be reduced and neighbors should be more respectful of farm fields, both during the growing season and in the dormant months. People do not realize how much damage is done to all crops by deer and geese in this area. If they did, they would be more willing to allow more control. Solebury is trying to help with deer control, but is receiving a lot of pushback from residents who don't understand the losses farmers are incurring because of the over population of both deer and geese."

It sounds like they do not understand the pressures faced by farmers

"Yes, but having said all this, I wouldn't change it for anything!"

2023 Initiatives

Bucks County has some of the most beautiful tracts of farmland and open space in Pennsylvania. In our relatively short 25 years of existence, the Land Trust of Bucks County has proven to be a valuable tool in the county's efforts to preserve open space.



Despite our accomplishments we cannot rest. Going forward the Trust must assume a much larger role in order to preserve Bucks County as we know it. Development pressure is unyielding and government funds for purchasing land may be harder to come by. In 2023 we will increase our conservation efforts in the following areas:

Educational outreach

Conservation education is a way to empower people, both young and old, to become active participants in solving environmental problems. Whether the objective is sustainable development or understanding how conservation can help to mitigate climate change, education is fundamental to our shared goals. Through the distribution of educational resources and organized activities, LTBC will be at the forefront of conservation education in Bucks County.

Acquire and preserve properties

It has taken generations for Bucks County to reach its present level of development. While much has been done to preserve what makes our county special the fate of our remaining, unreserved acreage is uncertain. Our towns and our way of life will be defined by what we do now and we cannot rely solely on government funds.

Moving forward

These are important initiatives, but to succeed we need your help. Charitable contributions are the foundation of support that enable the Land Trust of Bucks County to continue and expand its conservation efforts. Please visit our website and give what you can.

We would like to thank our contributors and members for their generous support. Together, we can continue to protect the natural beauty, resources, and unique biodiversity of Bucks County.

*Give to the
land you love*

LAND TRUST
of Bucks County

[Visit the Land Trust of
Bucks County website by
clicking here](#)