

URBAN WILDS STEWARDSHIP GUIDE



City of Boston
Environment



City of Boston
Parks and Recreation

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Introduction

The City of Boston preserves and manages urban wilds across the City's distinct neighborhoods. These urban wilds offer refuge from Boston's dense, urban environment and manicured parks. They serve as outdoor classrooms for children and adults to learn about nature, as well as provide habitat to native plants and animals. Additionally, urban wilds perform many ecological services, such as storing floodwater; filtering stormwater run-off; producing oxygen; and reducing the "urban heat island" effect.

Urban Wilds Stewardship

Urban Wilds are meant to be enjoyed by all. However, these are the areas that accumulate the most trash & litter. Some residents might view Urban Wilds as a dumping ground for bottles, trash, and unwanted possessions. This impacts the overall health of the plants and animals that reside there. As visitors or volunteers, you can help the City as stewards of these important natural areas.

We encourage all residents to enjoy these natural spaces. We also ask that as you do, you help us protect these Urban Wilds and other natural areas from encroachment, and uses that degrade their natural character, as well as maintaining them to promote their ecological integrity.

Waiver

Anyone conducting any task outlined in this guide should be in good health and in proper physical condition to participate in such an activity. Anyone that undertakes a task does so voluntarily and assumes all risks of injury, illness, or death. The City of Boston is not responsible for any loss of personal property and cannot be held liable.

SAFETY

First and foremost, the safety of our visitors and volunteers is crucial. Please take the necessary safety precautions to protect yourself and prevent harm or injury. It's important to know your limits, stay hydrated, avoid overly strenuous activities, and when possible, work in pairs.

Hypodermic Needles

If any hypodermic needles are found, please leave them in place and call 311, or use the 311 app. The City of Boston Mobile Sharps Team will find and collect the needle.

Ticks and Mosquitos

Be on the lookout for ticks! Be sure to wear effective bug repellent and appropriate clothing and check yourself thoroughly after being out on the site.

Poison Ivy

Examine the photos on the right to familiarize yourself with what poison ivy looks like in different life stages and seasons. Do not try to remove this, simply avoid it and communicate with other




visitors and volunteers where there are large swathes and what areas to avoid. This plant tends to vine, so check trees before touching or leaning against them. In the event you do come in contact, buy some poison ivy soap to wash with and keep an eye on the affected area.

Site Work and Tools

Working in pairs is advised, or at the very least be sure to notify someone of where you will be going. Additionally, whether or not tools are being used, wearing gloves is crucial.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

 = Easy Activities

 = More Strenuous Activities

 = Should be Reported

Trail Maintenance

Clearing trail blockage

In early spring in particular there tend to be lots of dead branches on the ground that have fallen over the winter. Those branches that fall into the trailways must be cleared. As you walk through the site, simply pull any down branches that are either blocking the trail or could cause potential harm off to the side of the trail. Please leave any large downed limbs in place and report them via 311.

Waterbars and Drainage Swales

These two trail structures are important for keeping the trail walkable and dry, preventing trail erosion. A water bar sits at an angle across the path in an effort to catch water and divert it. About $\frac{1}{3}$ of a properly installed and functioning water bar should be protruding from the ground, so as to prevent water from simply running over it. Please see photo for an example.



A swale you'll often see paired with a water bar. These run parallel to the trail and act to prevent the runoff from eroding the path. They also act to filter out any debris that might be on the trail. Please see photo for example.



Check water bars to make sure they are securely in place. Ask yourself, does it look like water would collect or simply run over the bar? If it looks like the water bar isn't doing its job, there are a few things that can help. Using any number of tools or even your shoe, you can improve the quality of the water bar. Simply try and create a small trench along the upper side of the bar. Be careful not to dig too much, as we want the path to be walkable and the bar to remain in place.

Check the swale and if present, ensure the rocks (rip rap apron) are in place, no bare patches or huge piles. Swales tend to get clogged with leaves and other debris. You can clean them out using your hands, or sometimes a stick can be useful. Don't be afraid to move the rocks in order to clear it out, as long as you put the rocks back.

Take note if any areas of the trail you notice look eroded and may require more extensive and skilled labor, and report them via 311.

Trash Pickup

One simple great way to help out is to collect any trash you might see while out walking. This is a great way to recycle plastic grocery bags! When done frequently, this can make a huge impact and prevent trash from building up along the trails. Make sure to use gloves for this task. If any hypodermic needles are found, please leave in place and call 311, or use the 311 app.

Off Leash Dogs

Do your part as a steward of our Urban Wilds. Encourage other patrons to keep their dog on a leash. Off leash dogs can be harmful to the woodland ecosystem.

Display Case Monitoring

Help ensure that the display cases are clean and that the information inside them is up to date. Wipe down the outside of the case fairly regularly, and dispose of old, out of date fliers.

Monitor for Dumping

Unfortunately, there are issues with dumping, both yard waste and trash. If it appears as though fresh dumping has occurred, thoroughly document offense, including dates and photos, in an email, call 311, or use the 311 app. Cleaning up this

debris using yard waste bags and properly disposing of it with Boston's yard waste recycling program would be an enormous help in promoting the health of the site.

Entrance Maintenance

Health of Restoration Plantings

At many of the entrances extensive work has been done to restore these entrances. While walking the site, be aware of the health of these areas. Do the plantings look healthy? Are any of the leaves discolored or dead or is growth sparse? Notice whether it seems to be just one plant, or many of them which could indicate a larger problem. Make note of any plants that seem to need pruning, a subject that requires some tools and skills. Document these plants and let us know if they need our attention

Weeding of Restoration Plantings

In addition to checking the health of the restoration plantings, it's important to ensure these more formal areas and entrances look clean and attractive. Simply run through the area and weed out any volunteer plants growing between the intentional plantings.

Invasive Weed Removal

One large threat to the health of urban wilds is the prevalence of invasive plants. These are typically non-native plants that thrive and overtake the plants we want, by stealing space and nutrients. There are a few different plants to be aware of while walking the site, some involving simple removals, while others requiring more tools and skill. A list of common invasive species can be found on our website at <https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/urban-wilds-program>