



Spring 2022 ROBBINS FARM ALMANAC



Boston on a wintry morning from Robbins Farm Park

Photo by Ed Sassler

Note From FORFP Board President

The past year has certainly had COVID ups and downs, but luckily Robbins Farm Park has been there to provide respite for us all throughout. From sledding and snow adventures in the winter, the gradual greening and appearance of daffodils and sports leagues in the spring, through summer picnics and events, and into the autumn with leaves falling, the park drew people from near and far.

Thanks to Covid vaccines, cooperating weather and the long-awaited reopening of Robbins' playing fields, for the first time in years the Friends of Robbins Farm Park (FORFP) hosted a full season of events in 2021! We had large turnouts for all of our events, including our 4th of July celebration showcasing music and apple pie; our festive classical, jazz and rock concerts with listeners picnicking and enjoying tunes; and movie night featuring *Raya and the Last Dragon*. Finally, our popular fall Field Day celebration featured old-fashioned games, races and a scavenger hunt where kids of all ages learned about Farmer and Mrs. Robbins and life on the farm. Historic maps and trivia about the farm were displayed on the granite benches outlining where the old farmhouse stood, a unique gathering point for young and old to learn about the genesis of this remarkable park donated by farmer Nathan Robbins.

We are indebted to the many, many volunteers who pitched in to make 2021 events successful, including the fun and impactful spring and fall Park Cleanup Days! We hope that you'll sign up again as we plan another full season of events in 2022.

In the past year, we also worked with the Town to beautify and improve the park, work that will continue into the new year. This includes a multi-year effort to eliminate invasive weeds and nurture seven new trees to provide a lovely canopy of shade along Eastern Avenue in years to come. But perhaps our biggest focus going forward will be on the upcoming redesign and rebuild of the park's playground. We coordinated with Town officials in 2021 as they secured funding for the rebuild and look forward to weighing in as the Town begins the design phase in the Fall.

For more information about these activities, read on!

On behalf of the FORFP Board of Directors, thanks to our volunteers, members, donors, town officials, and other partners who make our work possible. We couldn't do it without you!

Sincerely,
Elaine Backman

FORFP 2022 EVENTS

- **Jul 4:** 4th of July & Pie
- **Jul 14:** Harvard Alumni Jazz Band Concert
 - **Aug 6:** Rockin' Robbins Concert
- **Aug 27:** Arlington Philharmonic Classical Concert
 - **Sep 10:** Movie Night
 - **Oct 15:** Field Day
 - **Nov 5:** Fall Cleanup Day

See FORFP website for the most up-to-date schedule

Let It Slide: New Slides Are On the Way! by Jim Hampe

As everyone who enjoys the park knows by now, the two iconic slides at the playground are out of commission. The bad news: the slides will not be fixed until next year, which is very frustrating for those of us with little ones!!! The good news: the time that the slides will be out of commission is as short as can be expected since planning for the renovation was already underway. And a silver lining: the playground will be fully renovated!

The existing slide vendor went out of business in 2020, so when the slides broke no replacement parts were available. The Town had already begun a town-wide assessment of all playgrounds to help prioritize the order of playground renovations, and Robbins Farm was on the list. Due to ongoing planning and recognition of high usage of Robbins Farm, the timeline for this playground renovation was accelerated, and new playground construction is slated to begin in spring of 2023, with completion expected in late summer of 2023.

The first stages of the process are to select a design firm and solicit public feedback. One area of discussion is incorporating universal design concepts in the new playground. Universal design ensures the playground is accessible to everyone regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.



The broken slides
(now removed for safety)

FORFP is excited about the possibilities and will keep members updated on specific dates for public input so your voices can be heard. Feel free to reach out to any of the Friends board members to share your feedback.



*What would you and your kids like to see in the park?
Email us at friend@robbinsfarmpark.org with your suggestions.*

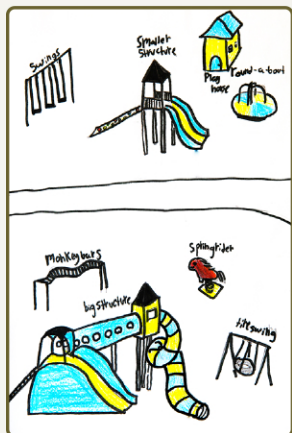


Kids Share Playground Ideas

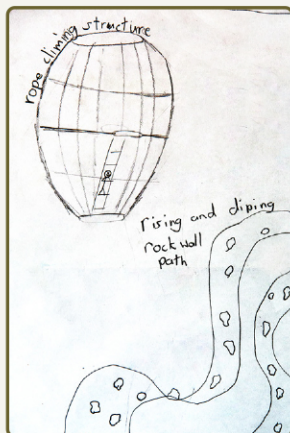
We collected some early—and eager—feedback from future users. Practicality and feasibility were not criteria in this poll. Special thanks to Cub Scout Pack 313! Here are a few of their ideas:

- Really long tube slide with windows
- Zip line (low to ground - like Joey's Park)
- Climbing structures like at Cambridge Commons
- Gaga ball pit -- Gaga is a form of dodgeball that originated in Israel in the 1970s
- Large tree feature with a tube slide around it
- Monkey bars
- Petting zoo
- Roller coaster
- Large rope structure for climbing

The talented 5th graders at Brackett Elementary shared some of their own ideas for the playground redesign ...



By Maeve Hartmann



By Wes Roehl



By Anna Van Dyke



By Sam Railey

Tackling Invasive Plants at the Park by Corinna Vanderspek & Mike Smith

In Massachusetts, invasive plants are defined as “non-native species that have spread into native or minimally managed plant systems in Massachusetts. These plants cause economic or environmental harm by developing self-sustaining populations and becoming dominant and/or disruptive to those systems.” (MIPAG 2005).

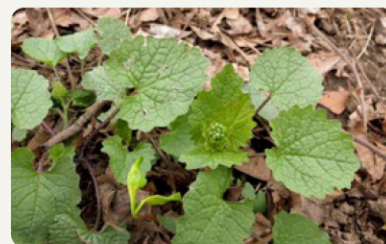
This past fall, we conducted an inventory of the invasive plants at our park. It turns out that there are quite a lot of them – we’ve identified thirteen species so far, occurring all around the park. We are now starting to develop a longer-term plan to remove the invasive plants – and we may need your help!

For now, here are some of the culprits:

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

Identification: Triangular, heart-shaped leaves with toothed edges and white four-petal flowers

Ecological Threat: Garlic mustard threatens the biodiversity of many native ecosystems. It spreads its seeds in the wind and gains a foothold by emerging earlier in spring than many native plants. Its roots also release chemicals that inhibit the growth of important species like trees.



Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)

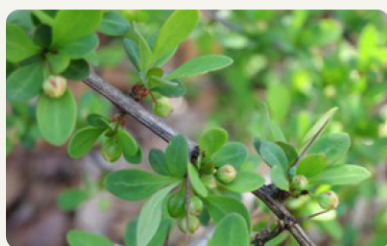
Identification: Small, purple shoots suddenly appearing from the ground; broad green, shield-shaped leaves and bamboo-like stems

Ecological Threat: It spreads quickly to form dense thickets and pushes out native plant species, particularly in riparian areas.

Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)

Identification: A deciduous tree that grows up to 40-60 feet tall. Bark is grayish black and furrowed. One of the easiest ways to differentiate it from sugar maple (a native species) is to cut a petiole (leaf stalk): if a milky substance oozes out, it's a Norway maple.

Ecological Threat: They have shallow roots and produce a great deal



Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)

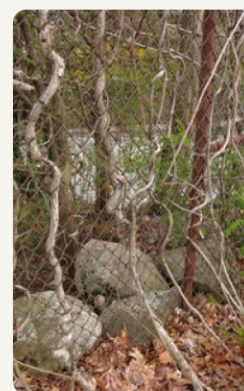
Identification: Spiny deciduous shrub up to 3' ft tall with narrow oval leaves; branches are deeply grooved, brown and have a single spine at each node.

Ecological Threat: Where it is well established, barberry displaces many native herbaceous and woody plants. In large infestations, its leaf litter causes changes in the chemistry of the soil, making it more basic. Wildlife spreads the seeds, while local vegetative spread is through root creepers and tip rooting branches.

Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

Identification: Woody vine with broadly-oval, glossy leaves.

Ecological Threat: Oriental bittersweet can single-handedly strangle mature trees. It grows rapidly with a twining nature that clings to anything, easily climbing trees up to 90 feet tall. As the plant grows, it chokes or girdles other plants it clings to.



For more information on invasive plants, please see:

1. <https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/us/massachusetts>
2. <https://massnature.com/learn/invasiveplants>
3. <https://shop.massaudubon.org/a-guide-to-invasive-plants-in-massachusetts>



“Classical Concert at RFP” Watercolor by Kathy Lobo

Join Us!

Support RFP and honor the legacy of Nathan Robbins, Farmer-Philanthropist. FORFP seeks to continue his tradition of bringing this community together and providing recreational space.

Funds go towards projects, events, & upkeep of our wonderful park.

Join or renew your household membership:

1-year \$10, 3-year \$25

OR

a gift of your choice \$_____

Join or Donate Now

Go to robbinsfarmpark.org

& click on “JOIN/DONATE” at the top of any page.

Robbins Farm Park Off-Leash Dog Hours

6-9:00 am Mon-Fri (7/1-8/31)

6-7:30 am Mon-Fri (9/1-6/30)

8:30-9:00 am Mon-Fri (9/1-6/30)

6-8:30 am Sat & Sun (4/1-6/30 & 9/1-11/15)

6-9:00 am Sat & Sun (11/16-3/31 & 7/1-8/31)

Notes: If field is in use for school department activity, off-leash activity is allowed behind backstop only. Fields are generally closed to all users in wet weather. For e-mail alerts re: park and field closures, subscribe to the Field Conditions Notification e-mail list at www.arlingtonma.gov/subscriber.

Friends of Robbins Farm Park Mission

- Promote the beautification, restoration, & improvement of Robbins Farm Park
- Sponsor & promote cultural, educational, recreational, and other community activities
- Invite active membership in the organization & represent the Robbins Farm Park community

[FORFP is a 501 \(c\)\(3\) all-volunteer organization](#)



“Arlington View” by Janice Hayes-Cha

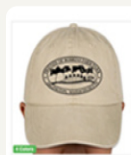
FORFP ONLINE MERCHANDISE STORE

OUR ONLINE STORE IS THE PLACE TO SHOP FOR ITEMS TO SHOW YOUR PARK SPIRIT

Purchases help support the work of our nonprofit community organization.

Ordering T-shirts and Caps is now a click away!

Go to robbinsfarmpark.com & click on “STORE” at the top of any page.



Online Store
is **OPEN!**

Our mailing address is:

P.O. Box 750013

Arlington, MA 02475

INFO: friends@robbinsfarmpark.org

VOLUNTEER: volunteer@robbinsfarmpark.org

WEBSITE: www.robbinsfarmpark.org

