
State of the Park - 2022

Hamilton Park, Jersey City, 07302

Presented by the Hamilton Park Conservancy

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Statement of Intent | 2 |
| Section One: Specifications, Seasonal History, and Major Events | 2 |
| Section Two: Projects, Maintenance, and Community Involvement | 3 |
| Section Three: The Canopy Report | 5 |
| Section Four: Shrubs and Herbaceous Borders Report | 7 |
| Section Five: The State of the Lawn Restoration | 9 |
| Section Six: The State of the Spotted Lanternfly | 10 |
| Section Seven: Impediments to Park Preservation and Prosperity | 11 |
| Appendix - Image Gallery | 13 |

Statement of Intent

It is the purpose of this document to present a current state of the living ecosystem in Hamilton Park, and to provide reasons behind ecological and botanical challenges as they relate to human interaction and climatological stressors. This report will provide observable and scientific evaluations of all horticultural areas of the Park, as well as evaluate any progress or decline that has occurred since the 2020 season. This document is also intended to be comparative to the “State of the Park 2020” document that was written as a baseline for all further assessments. Whereas the 2020 document provided basic introductory information about the park and its horticulture, this 2022 edition will not. It is therefore suggested that the “State of the Park 2020” should be read before this document for a more comprehensive understanding of what will be addressed this year. It is hoped that the information contained here will continue to serve as a catalyst for improvement and change, and will be regarded as a path to preserve and restore Hamilton Park for the future.

Section One: Specifications, Seasonal History, and Major Events

1. Hamilton Park is a 5.57 acre park located in Downtown Jersey City with the official address of 25 W. Hamilton Place, 07302. It was designated as a park in the early-to-mid Nineteenth Century, and is completely human made - with no areas of wilderness or natural environment. It is divided by centrally intersecting walkways into 8 sections; four of which are designated for active recreation, and four of which are designated for passive recreation. It is a public park, and as such is subject to the jurisdiction of the City of Jersey City and its Department of Parks and Forestry. (The City Municipal Code can be found at library.municode.com) In 2008, a major renovation of the Park was undertaken. This included the construction of new recreational amenities, the restoration of existing structures, the remediation and capping of contaminated soil, the design and planting of new landscaping schemes, and the installation of extensive drainage and irrigation systems. In 2022, the City of Jersey City Department of Parks and Forestry was put under the umbrella of the new Department of Recreation and Youth Development.

2. The Winter of 2022 saw a cold January followed by a mild February and a general dryness that would continue through March. (6th driest Winter on record) April had precipitation slightly above normal, though, which helped to balance out the dry conditions. The whole Spring saw a mild average temperature of 52.7 degrees with a warmer than usual March and temperatures in April and May well above normal mildness. The area had another warmer-than-normal Summer with an average temperature of 75.1 degrees (2.0 degrees above normal). It was the hottest August in recorded history. Coupled with the Summer heat was the prolonged drought - rainfall was 5.53 inches below normal which made it the driest Summer since 1966. Autumn 2022 was warmer and wetter than normal,

which led to an improvement in the drought watch conditions that existed after the Summer. Late 2022 was characterized by wildly fluctuating temperatures in December (which ended up being Winter's coldest month) and precipitation quite below normal leading to the second least snowy Winter on record. In general, 2022 in New Jersey was the 14th warmest year on record with 7 months of the year clocking above average temperatures - 2 of which fell in the top 10 warmest of that month in recorded history. (Weather and climate information is from the Office of the NJ State Climatologist at Rutgers University. Detailed data is available to the public at climate.rutgers.edu)

3. January 2022 began with two significant snow events on the 3rd and again on the 28-29th. The most significant climactic event of the year, however, was the Summer drought which dominated the season. Hudson County was marked in "Severe Drought" by the National Drought Mitigation Center, and the NJDEP did not lift its drought watch in this area of New Jersey until the end of the year. There was a great deal of notable agricultural and horticultural impact from the drought throughout the state - Hamilton Park is still suffering from its residual effects. Our area felt the remnants of Hurricane Ian between September 30th and October 5th with excessive rain and winds gusting up to 40mph. (No damage of much significance was noted in the Park.) The storm that hit on December 22nd saw rain, heavy gusting winds, and a severe temperature drop from 60 degrees to below freezing within hours. What followed was a brutal cold snap that gave us one of the coldest holiday weekends on record. Park trees, plants and wildlife suffered greatly during this sudden spell, and the after-effects will surely be seen in the 2023 Spring growth.

Section Two: Projects, Maintenance, and Community Involvement

1. Spring: The first signs of a amber-colored ooze (gummosis) were observed on the horizontally growing Wild Cherry tree on the South/ East side.¹ Samples and photos were sent to the Rutgers University Plant Diagnostic Laboratory for analysis. It was determined to be the fungal disease *Botryphaeria* which entered the tree from wounds sustained by physical damage. The tree was fenced to prevent climbing and further spread. The Jersey City Department of Forestry was notified to assess any risk, and it was determined that it did not fit the criteria for removal, but permanent fencing was recommended. Sudden hot temperatures in May brought on an explosion of insect infestation. The annual Leaf Miner and Psyllid infestations of the *Buxus* (box shrubs) were observed to be average, but a new extreme infestation of Whitefly began and would plague many of the Park's flowering shrubs throughout the season with no treatment able to ameliorate it. On June 3rd, Lacewing larvae were released in an attempt to aid in fighting the infestation, but to no avail. (An absence of beneficial insects in the Park due to the lack of turfgrass and an unsupportable ecosystem is a strong contributing factor to out-of-control insect invasions.) On June 21st, five overgrown and infested (Pillowy Scale and Sooty Mold) American Holly shrubs were removed from the Gazebo Gardens by permission from the City to prevent infestation spread, to allow light and water to return to the area, and to restore the unobstructed view from the Gazebo.

2. Summer: In June, the rapid and extreme damage done to a *Prunus* (cherry) tree by Peach Borer in the grove on the West walkway was observed.² The infestation and possible spread was reported to the Jersey City Department of Forestry. Continuing attempts to control the Whitefly infestation proved ineffective. The August drought again proved the need for drip irrigation, which can run throughout the day in planting areas instead of the ineffectiveness of just watering once pre-dawn. September 15th was the first observed symptoms of decline and death in the Japanese Holly (*Ilex crenata*) through the South walkway corridor.³ One dead shrub was dug up and taken to the Rutgers University Plant Diagnostic Laboratory for analysis. It was determined to be Theiliaviopsis (Black Root Rot), a serious and virulent root disease that persists for years in the soil. Protocols were put in place, and targeted shrubbery removal was begun to mitigate spread and preserve uninfected areas. Issues with this persist to this day and the disease continues to spread throughout the *Ilex crenata* in the Park with no end yet in sight. (Spotted Lanternfly will be addressed in a separate section to follow.)

3. Autumn: On September 29th, the Department of Forestry removed 2 trees adjacent to the East walkway that were assessed to be a risk to public safety and met the criteria for removal. One was a Norway Maple that had been dropping large limbs into the North Tennis Court, and the other was the least healthy of the Park's 9 Ash trees.⁴ The stumps were removed by the City a few months later. In November through December the Spring bulbs were planted in the Gazebo and Fountain Gardens. The circular "Children's Garden" in the East/ South corner was cleared out, dug up, and planted with 800 bulbs for the first time in many years. On November 22nd, the large Ginkgo tree dropped all its leaves overnight - they were collected and used for over-Winter mulch in all Park planting beds. Active work in the Park by the Conservancy was ceased for the Winter months on December 19th.

4. Throughout the season, the local schools and parent groups from the schools engaged with the Hamilton Park Conservancy in a variety of special events.⁵ In 2022, the following took place :

- May 16: Nature walks / Park tours with the 4 Cordero School Kindergarten Classes
- May 26: Park Stewardship Tour with The Garden Preschool
- May 31: Park Stewardship Tour with Scandi School Parents
- Nov. 11: Ecological Park Tour with Scandi Classroom
- Dec. 10: Winter "Bear Hunt" themed Park Tour with Montessori School (HPMS) Parents and Children. (80 people)

Section Three: The Canopy Report

1. The following passage is from the “State of the Park 2020” : “A general comment that can be made from careful observation and scientific analysis, is that most of the trees in Hamilton Park are suffering from serious issues that significantly impact their overall health and condition. Almost every tree exhibits some degree of fungal infection, a number of trees have open cavities and cankers, and both girdling roots and root rot symptoms have been observed. It is crucial to note that trees that are physically damaged or infected with minor pathogens become weakened which leaves them open to other more virulent, destructive, and irreversible disease. In a healthy ecosystem, strong trees have the ability to resist infection and infestation, but, as will become clear throughout this report, the ecosystem of Hamilton Park is not healthy, and it’s trees are showing strong signs of decline.” Sadly, nothing in the condition of the Park’s tree canopy has changed in two years - it has, indeed become worse. Many of the Park’s trees that were barely holding on from succumbing to disease were pushed over the edge by the high stress of the 2022 Summer drought. The full extent of the drought’s damage remains to be seen until trees begin to re-foliate this Spring, but many trees have already been marked for closer inspection in 2023. Trees experience stress like humans, and city park trees - which are already fighting the stressors of pollution, salt, light uncertainty, and human damage - are even more susceptible than their wild counterparts. Any extreme climactic event added to these stressors can have seriously damaging implications for the arboriculture of the Park. Many of the diseases and infestations the Park trees had already been struggling with were exacerbated by the drought. All of the following tree issues were small in 2021, but advanced exponentially through the Summer of 2022.

a. All of the Park’s 9 Ash trees had been showing some signs of Emerald Ash Borer - a highly destructive wood-boring pest that is responsible for the decimation of tens of millions of trees in 30 states. Since the drought, the observable symptoms have advanced quickly, leading to the removal of one Ash tree in the Fall, and putting the other 8 on closer watch for 2023. The oldest tree in the Park is a Green Ash, and without some pruning attention this season, it is doubtful it will survive. (It should be noted that the Hamilton Park Conservancy was willing to fund Ash Borer treatment - a series of injections to combat the insects. However, the trees needed to undergo the pruning off of dead branches before this quite expensive treatment would have had a chance of being effective.)

b. Two of the Park’s evergreen trees - a Norway Spruce and a Red Pine showed evidence of an infestation of Zimmerman Pine Moth in late Summer.⁶ The larvae are attracted to wounds on the trees caused by human damage, and their boring causes an ooze that resembles macaroni salad or rice pudding to drip from the tree trunk. Aside from chemical insecticide treatment, there is little that can be done to combat the infestation. The Norway Spruce was fenced off for its protection in 2020 (sadly, it would appear, too late), and plans to fence the diseased Pine are under way. Should either tree exhibit signs of extreme dieback, it may be necessary to discuss removal. They are being closely monitored.

c. The easternmost Cherry tree in the grove of 6 that border the West walkway exhibited signs of Peachtree Borer in the early Spring - a destructive boring pest of peach, cherry, plum and other stone fruit trees - and it very rapidly advanced throughout the season until a large chunk of the lower trunk was completely eaten away.⁷ In the Autumn, more signs of nascent infestation were observed (in the form of collected sawdust-like frass) on 3 other trees in this grove. Peachtree Borer spreads effectively and rapidly, and without control, this infestation may manifest in the whole grove. Insecticides are effective, but the trees would have to be fenced off to prevent human contact, which is not a very supportable course of action in a heavily used public space. The Municipal Arborist was made aware of this issue, and will hopefully have some course of action this year. It will be closely monitored.

d. The majority of Hamilton Park's old high-canopy trees are still in need of close monitoring. Some have a tendency to drop limbs and branches without warning, and many of the Silver Maples have hollow limbs in which quantities of squirrels have been observed to live. There has been a marked decline in all the Park's Maple trees this past season - one was removed in the autumn - and they will all continue to be closely watched. With a new Municipal Arborist and the usage of SeeClickFix in 2022, the City has been quite efficacious in responding to potential limb emergencies in a timely manner. However, some necessary tree work that was set to be done in September of 2020 was never finished. Throughout two years, the Conservancy has asked the City repeatedly to accomplish this work on trees that were said to be precarious, and at last there is a resolution before the City Council for extensive work to be approved. Proper and regular pruning and maintenance is what keeps old trees safe, and it needs to be done regularly in our parks with especially high traffic.

e. On a positive note in a season of negatives, it would appear that the fencing of the large Oak tree on the West/ South lawn has been successful in restoring that tree's health and protecting it from further damage. Not only is the cavity in the trunk getting measurably smaller, but the area around the tree no longer floods constantly. (Vegetation is actually growing there now.) It is a testament to what we can do as a community if we commit to preserving something and cooperate with the decisions made to do so.

2. During most of 2022, the City did not have a permanent Municipal Arborist, and much of the routine tree work that may have been done during the year was halted. Work was recommenced in the Autumn with the hiring of a new permanent Arborist. He was kind enough to spend a few hours in Hamilton Park making note of many of our trees. He has instigated a new criteria for assessing and making actionable decisions about city trees, which will be used for the Conservancy's own assessments as well going forward. The new Arborist supervised the removal of two trees in the Fall which met the criteria and were deemed hazardous. In the early Spring of 2022, in anticipation of the Lawn Restoration Project, the Division of Architecture had an outside certified arborist carry out a complete assessment of all the trees in Hamilton Park. His findings showed that most of the trees in

the Park were in need of some level of pruning both for reduction and safety. Four trees require level 3 safety work (the highest) - mostly Silver Maples. Most all require elevation of the tree skirt for better under-clearance, dead wood pruning, and some level of canopy thinning. At the writing of this document, the City is making a decision to approve a resolution for this work as a first step in Lawn Restoration.

Section Four: Shrubs and Herbaceous Borders Report

1. Hamilton Park is home to hundreds of shrubs - deciduous and evergreen - both within designated planting areas, and in other areas in the open lawn. The 2022 season saw many of them succumbing to disease and infestation from the after effects of the drought. To date, almost 20 have been removed to prevent the spread of disease, and more are slated for removal in 2023.

a. Thielaviopsis, or Black Root Rot, is a highly spreadable root disease that attacks many herbaceous shrubs, but is a very serious contagion in certain forms of holly. Hamilton Park has hundreds of one of those particular forms - *Ilex crenata*, or Japanese Holly - some of which have already died, and many more of which are now at risk.⁸ The official diagnosis was given by the Rutgers University Plant Pathology Laboratory after a diseased shrub was taken for analysis. The other form of damage that this pathogen can do comes from the fact that even after the diseased shrub and roots are removed - if indeed all the root structure can be successfully removed - the fungus can persist in the soil for up to 4 years, making it extremely difficult to re-plant anything in the area. It is clear that the stress of the drought brought this disease into the open, and the effects are still being dealt with park-wide as these *Ilex* are in every park section, and the disease has spread quickly. Hopefully through a combination of careful removal, organic soil treatments, and soil replacement it may be combatted successfully, but it may take a significant amount of time.

2. The Playground Garden

The Playground Garden is the fenced area adjacent to the North walkway contained inside the Playground. Most of it is in Part Shade, and the rest is in Full Shade. This area continued its annual trend of becoming rapidly overgrown and jungle-like. However, there were no observable signs of fungal disease or high mosquito population as in 2020 proving that thinning out the amount of Dogwood shrubs in the area has improved conditions. The roses in this area struggled this

season both with the park-wide Whitefly infestation and the early high heat in May which caused them to bloom all at once and require propping for the rest of the season. This whole area received a hard prune in late Winter 2023, which should lessen some of the challenges faced there.

3. The Gazebo Garden

The Gazebo Garden is contained in the four sections that face out from the Park's central Gazebo. 2022 saw a huge transformation in these gardens, as the 5 large overgrown American Holly shrubs were removed and sunlight and rain could finally penetrate. Unfortunately, plans to re-design and plant these gardens in the Autumn had to be halted when Black Root Rot was found in *Ilex crenata* in this area. It was deemed irresponsible to spend money for a large quantity of plants for areas of diseased soil when they would most likely perish. This re-planting project will go forward in Spring 2023 after soil replacement and treatment are undertaken. The Conservancy is looking forward to this project, and will be undertaking it with the advice and approval of the Division of Architecture. The Conservancy is also working on securing attractive permanent fencing for the Gazebo Gardens to protect the new plantings and ensure that they can flourish. It will most likely be funded by the Conservancy but will need to be done in partnership with the City. (At the writing of this document, the Conservancy is awaiting information from the City on furthering this project.) Many perennials in the Gazebo Gardens suffered from the Whitefly infestation as well - roses, hydrangea, knifophia - and a number of perennials will need moving now that the areas are in full-sun. This new-found sun will open up far greater possibilities for plant choice in the future, and there is great anticipation for being able bring more pollinator and native plants into Hamilton Park now that this change has been made.

4. The Fountain Garden

The Fountain Garden surrounds the fountain which is located on the South walkway. It is a fenced-off area also separated from the lawn by semi-circular hedgerows. This area receives widely varying amounts of sun throughout, which has been a challenge to planting in the past, but which is continuing to improve every year. New perennial choices that are soil and sunlight appropriate continue to thrive in this garden area, and it was anticipated that 2022 would be another season of improvement and growth until the Whiteflies showed up. The following was written in the "State of the Park 2020": "In general, insects and their larvae are not yet a serious factor in the Park, but given the direction in which the Park ecosystem is going, it is sound to assume they will be", and that is definitely what has happened. It is unclear how the Whiteflies were brought into the ecosystem (probably from a garden center plant), but the Fountain Garden was definitely ground zero for the infestation. Many

perennials were fine or only mildly infested, but the Hardy Hibiscus, the False Sunflower, and the Hypericum were overwhelmed. The Park ecosystem is so lacking in beneficial insects that are natural Whitefly predators that this infestation became apocalyptic almost overnight. (Many beneficial insects need turfgrass for their life cycles - the Park's lawns are almost completely void of grass, thusly no good insects.) In the 2023 season, there will be an attempt to re-populate the planting beds with beneficial insect larvae in the hopes that this can be ameliorated going forward. It was always the intention to remove the Winter fencing in the Fountain Gardens once the perennials grew to full height, but with the infestation and the subsequent organic treatments that were attempted, it was considered best to leave them up. The Box shrubs in the Fountain Gardens are still supporting a robust late Spring infestation of Leaf Miner Flies and Psyllids - which normally die off a couple of weeks after laying their eggs for the next year. This issue will continue to be monitored, but, for now, is less of a concern than others plaguing this area. Two areas of the Fountain Garden's hedging succumbed to the Black Root Rot, but careful and strategic removal seems to be working to prevent spread. This disease would be especially destructive to these gardens if it is permitted to spread, as the whole garden is surrounded by *Ilex crenata* - probably 100 or more. It will be challenging to retain the design symmetry of these gardens after the removal of the diseased shrubs, as they cannot be replaced with more of the same, so there may be a necessity to pivot the design schematic for at least a few years until the Root Rot is eliminated from the soil. However, it will mean the possibility for new, creative ideas which should only help to move the Park's ecosystem and biodiversity forward.

Section Five: The State of the Lawn Restoration

1. "The State of the Park 2020" addressed the challenges of growing grass in Hamilton Park in great detail. A second reading of that document is suggested to understand what issues are being faced with the Park lawns going forward. In the 2020 document, the Park lawns could be divided between areas that were in dire circumstances, and areas where grass was growing effectively - this is no longer able to be done. All turfed areas of the Park are now considered damaged, the only differentiating factor being the degree to which each area has declined. To date, no actual work has been done by the City to either protect or restore the lawn areas, yet the threat to the entirety of the Park's ecosystem without turfgrass is higher than ever.⁹

2. Prompted by the "State of the Park 2020" assessment findings, The Hamilton Park Conservancy began a campaign in 2021 to lobby the City of Jersey City to restore the declining lawns in Hamilton Park.¹⁰ Councilman James Solomon's Office spearheaded the effort with the Conservancy and helped to form a committee comprising the HPC, the

HPNA, the Office of Architecture, the Department of Parks and Forestry, and later the Department of Recreation and Child Development which would meet periodically over a two year period to advance the Lawn Restoration Project. A great deal of research, consulting and work went into the solutions that were eventually agreed upon for beginning the path to the restoration and long-term stewardship of the Park's turf areas. It was anticipated that work might begin in the Autumn of 2022, however the City's budgetary constraints seemed to shelve the project temporarily. In the Winter of 2023, it was determined that, though the budget might not be available for the whole restoration project, there might be money to start a first phase - tree pruning and canopy thinning. This first phase work went out to bid this Winter, the City received 4 bids, and as of the writing of this document has accepted one of them and will be voting on the resolution for the work at the City Council Meeting on April 26th.

Section Six: The State of the Spotted Lanternfly

1. Jersey City saw it's second season of the Spotted Lanternfly infestation in 2022, and, as expected, it grew in scope exponentially. Whatever presence they have had in other areas of the city, this document will only respond to their effect on Hamilton Park. Generally, the health of the herbaceous and woody plants and trees of the Park has not been much altered thus far by the Spotted Lanternfly. The Park has one *Ailanthus* tree - very old and quite large - that does attract them during the adult phase primarily, and is currently displaying egg masses on the upper branches far beyond reach. The Department of Forestry is aware of this, and is working to decide on a solution. (It is an enormous tree, and removal will be a challenge, if that is the course of action to be taken). Most of the trees in the Park are very old and have much thicker bark than is convenient for feeding Lanternflies, which keeps such trees from any real harm. The younger trees in the Park with thinner bark were monitored closely and showed no exceptional presence of insect activity. One occurrence in the Fall of 2022 that sparked unusual Lanternfly activity was the unseasonal warm weather that lasted well into December. After depositing egg masses, adult Lanternflies will usually die off after the first hard frost, however that did not happen in this area until December, which meant that the insects were still alive for months after they should have perished. Gatherings of sluggish Lanternflies were observed in sunny areas on trees and around the Park for months before the frost, but they posed little threat at this point, as their actual breeding cycle had long ended. The Lanternfly issue will continued to be monitored closely throughout the next season (which will more than likely be worse), and the Park will comply with all protocols put in place by the City, State and Region. Two excellent sources for the most recent scientific information about the Spotted Lanternfly in our region are the Rutgers University Agricultural Experiment Station at: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/spotted-lanternfly/> or Penn State University's Extension at: <https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly>.

Section Seven: Impediments to Park Preservation and Prosperity

1. Throughout the different sections of this report, an attempt was made to link observed issues and challenges to their place in the ecosystem as a whole. Every component of an ecosystem affects and is affected by every other. There is no single solution to any of Hamilton Park's challenges, instead the impact of all the destructive vectors must be lessened in unison if the Park is to even survive - let alone thrive.

a. Probably the strongest factor obstructing the positive development of Hamilton Park is its overuse and overpopulation. The Hamilton Park area has seen more development of large residential buildings in the past years, and therefore a marked increase in the local population that uses the Park on a consistent basis. No less that 7 new large residential buildings have been constructed in the neighborhood since the Park's renovation in 2008 - which means that the parameters and guidelines set up then are no longer sufficient for protection any more. Not only is Hamilton Park used by it's own neighborhood, but it is seen as a destination for residents from all over the City. Surveys are showing that a fair percentage of private parties thrown in the Park are by persons from other city areas. Seven schools use the Park on a daily basis for recess, physical education, and programming. Large permitted events (that are not Hamilton Park Community specific) are consistently booked in Hamilton Park, when they could be pivoted to other city parks to both help preserve Hamilton Park and create equity and representation throughout the city. It may be prudent, for the sake of preservation, to put a cap on the number of events of a determined amount of attendees that can be permitted in the Park per month. Hamilton Park can no longer accommodate the ecological stress of it's own community if it continues to be asked to accommodate so many others.

b. Four of the Eight sections of Hamilton Park are designated for "Active Recreation". These areas encompass the Playground, the Basketball Court, the Tennis Courts, and the Dog Runs. Of the 4 lawn sections, 2 are designated for "Passive Recreation Only", and forbid the playing of ball games and the presence of dogs as per the City Municipal Code. (signs are posted). The lack of adherence to these rules is a significant factor in lawn destruction and the inability to grow grass. Pick up soccer games, physical education classes, field days and other activities of large scope should be pivoted to parks and fields that were built to accommodate active recreation. Playing fields are grown in sunny, well aerated open areas - a description that cannot be applied to any area of Hamilton Park. The community needs more open fields or creative use active areas so that youth can still take part in this sort of play without being in Hamilton Park where challenges to healthy turfgrass and natural turf restoration are already numerous. Dog urine damages herbaceous and woody plants. Preserving the horticulture of Hamilton Park will require a discussion about how dogs and plants can both coexist happily within it. No one wants to be rule enforcers or cause conflict or angst within the community, but it will be necessary to find some common ground and make some compromises on these issues if we want the Park to survive and flourish.

c. During the past couple of years, the Conservancy's commitment to education and outreach have begun to succeed in fostering better Park stewardship in the younger members of the community. It is very impressive how the children of Hamilton Park have stepped up and become a strong part of the solution for Park preservation, and the Conservancy is grateful to the teachers, schools, and parents who are partners in our ongoing efforts. There are, however, still some marked examples of behavior in the Park that are inappropriate both for the comfort of all who use it and the prevention of destruction and decline. It is important that children are always supervised in the Park and that teens understand that the Park has parameters and rules. Fences should not be crossed, the branches of trees should not be snapped, leaves should not be pulled from shrubs, flowers are for the enjoyment of everyone and should not be picked or trampled - to name just a few specifically. Chaotic Park-wide games and aggressive un-directed active play are not only unsafe for everyone, but lead to a lot of the visible damage to the horticulture of the Park. Again, no one wants to be an enforcer, so it is up to adults in supervisory positions to help young people be a more positive force in the Park rather than a destructive vector. There can be great benefit to the youth of the Park community when they become a part of solving the problems and challenges of the ecosystem - it fosters a strong sense of commonality and cooperation that can be an important part of development and growth. The Conservancy is always happy to assist with this however they can.

The greatest challenge to maintaining the ecosystem of Hamilton Park is balancing conservation with relevance. In other words, how can we preserve the ecological and horticultural narrative of the Park while still supporting its existence as a vibrant community space? Once lawn restoration efforts are accomplished, a balance must be achieved between both these goals if anything is to remain for the future. All the groups and people that use the Park for an array of different purposes will be asked to find common ground in their desire to see the Park flourish, and to find a way for environmental empathy to exist along side Park activities. There should be an understanding that the responsibility for the damage to Hamilton Park does not fall on just one group, but to many - to ALL of us - and so should the solution. The time has come to decide how this neighborhood is going to contribute to the story of Hamilton Park - to decide if we are willing and ready to come together with one purpose: to create and conserve the park our community wants - the park we all deserve.

Appendix - Image Gallery



1- Prunus (Cherry) with Botryphaeria



2-Peachtree Borer Damage



3 - Thielaviopsis Japanese Holly



4 - Tree Work



5 - School/ Parent Engagement



6 - Pine Moth



7-BorerInCherry



8-Thielaviopsis (Black Root Rot)



9 - Lawns in Rain



10-Lawn Erosion

