



Saving the Anniversary Hollies

by Martha Robinson Heard

On a recent blustery Saturday morning in November, with a Nor'easter in the wings, members of the Friends of Greenwich Point joined forces with local garden club members to rescue the Anniversary Holly Grove at Greenwich Point from the smothering embrace of the invasive porcelain-berry vine. Green Fingers Garden Club organized and led the effort to remove the vine, which is one of a number of invasive species of plants growing throughout the Point. The group of sixteen volunteers worked with approval from the Town of Greenwich's Parks Department, which hauled away debris and will follow up by addressing the roots of some of the larger vines.

The Anniversary Holly Grove was given to the town in 1959 by Allan and Helen Binney Kitchel in celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary. Mrs. Kitchel was one of the foremost contributors to the

creation and preservation of natural parks in Greenwich and chaired the first group formed to protect Greenwich Point. Protecting the hollies from invasive plants helps preserve this treasured piece of the town's living architecture while also paying tribute to the generous contributions of Helen Kitchel and the town's rich history of conservation.

Green Fingers together with the Friends of Greenwich Point and other Greenwich garden clubs hope to elevate awareness in the town of this important issue and also garner support by residents in identifying and eradicating invasive species. Porcelain-berry can grow up to 15 feet a year, shading out the plants it uses as for support, eventually killing them. In the fall, it is easy to notice the beautiful berries of this relative of the grape vine (Vitaceae family). Mature berries are shades of vibrant turquoise blue and mix

pleasingly in the same cluster with the lilac and paler-hued tones of ripening berries. Those beautiful berries are the reason why this import from Asia was first introduced to this country in the 1870s as an ornamental garden and landscaping plant. Birds spread the berries and now it is found widely throughout the Northeast and beyond, disrupting the natural diversity and local ecosystems with its unchecked growth. Many other invasive species are also overtaking significant areas of the natural landscape in Greenwich.

Editor's note: If you would like to help this effort, please continue or renew your support of the Friends of Greenwich Point and the local garden clubs. To become more involved, contact FoGP at 203.987.6712 or info@friendsofgreenwichpoint.com and leave a message for Lynda Elliott.