



NEWTON CONSERVATORS

5 November 2022

Dear Parks & Recreation Commission,

On Wednesday October 26, 2022, the Board of the Newton Conservators, Newton's all-volunteer open space advocacy and educational organization, voted strongly to support the concept of creating community gardens at Spears Park, at the corner of Washington Street and Walnut Park. Community gardens at this site would

- activate an underused public space on Newton's north side, where such open space is scarce
- offer outdoor respite, learning, and fellowship to both gardeners and the community at large
- allow neighborhood residents who might otherwise have limited or no opportunity for gardening -- including those living in nearby existing and proposed multifamily housing -- to grow food and flowers both for themselves and for donation to those experiencing food insecurity

In discussion, our Board members raised a few issues that we know Parks, Recreation & Culture staff and the newly formed, neighborhood-based friends group for this project are already thinking about, such as ensuring that it is safe to eat food grown next to the heavy traffic of Washington Street and the Mass Pike, and that the site serves the open space needs of the public at large, as well as of the relatively small number of people who can garden there in any given year. Though we did not discuss how to resolve these issues in detail,

- We are glad the gardens' fencing, beds, bins and sheds will be designed to exclude pests such as rats, but we also hope materials brought onto the site will be screened or treated for less obvious invaders, such as ["jumping worms"](#) (information attached), which have egg cases only a few millimeters in diameter that can easily be transported in soils and mulches.
- Although the site's soil will be tested and any contamination mitigated before construction, we also hope the beds themselves can be tested periodically.
- Some of us would prefer to see more public space for passive recreation at the site, more like the "preferred alternative" presented in August 2022 than like the plans shown at the October 2022 on-site meeting (plans attached).
- Multi-year access will encourage gardeners to invest in soil quality and grow perennials such as asparagus or raspberries but also runs some risk of "privatizing" this public resource. Perhaps just a few beds can be set aside for perennials, and we hope all vacancies will be advertised as widely as possible.
- Finally, we hope the City will approach Newton Community Farm as a potential partner for educational programs at this site that will be open to all. NCF staff and volunteers have significant expertise in urban gardening and have expressed interest in being more active on the City's north side.

We urge you to approve further work on this concept and look forward to the project's future progress.

Sincerely,

Alice E. Ingerson, Vice President
for the Newton Conservators Board of Directors

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PREFERRED CONCEPT

1,900 SF OF GARDEN BEDS



BENCH



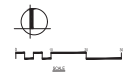
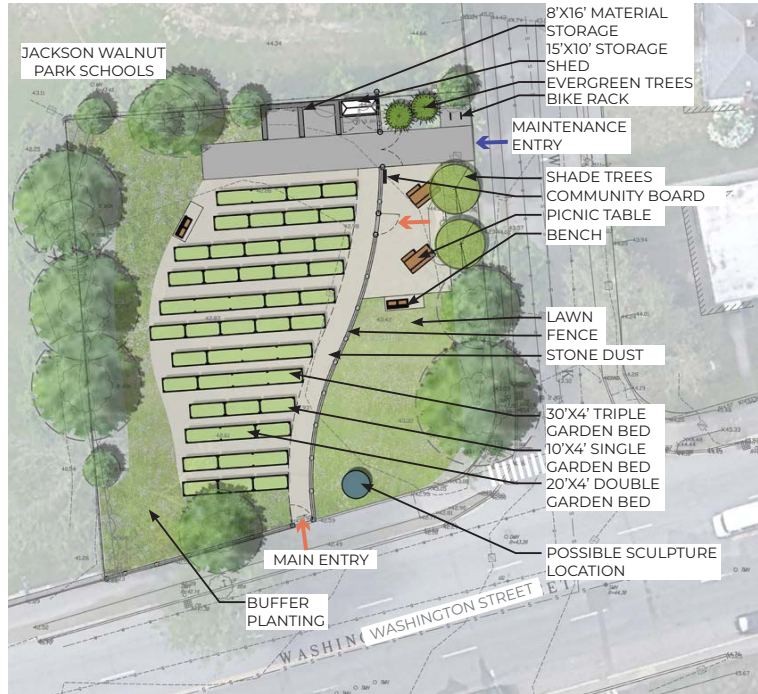
PICNIC TABLE



GARDEN BEDS



STORAGE SHED



18 October 2022



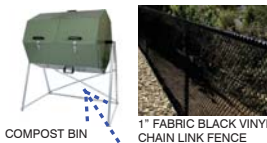
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PICNIC TABLE



GARDEN BEDS

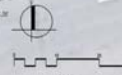
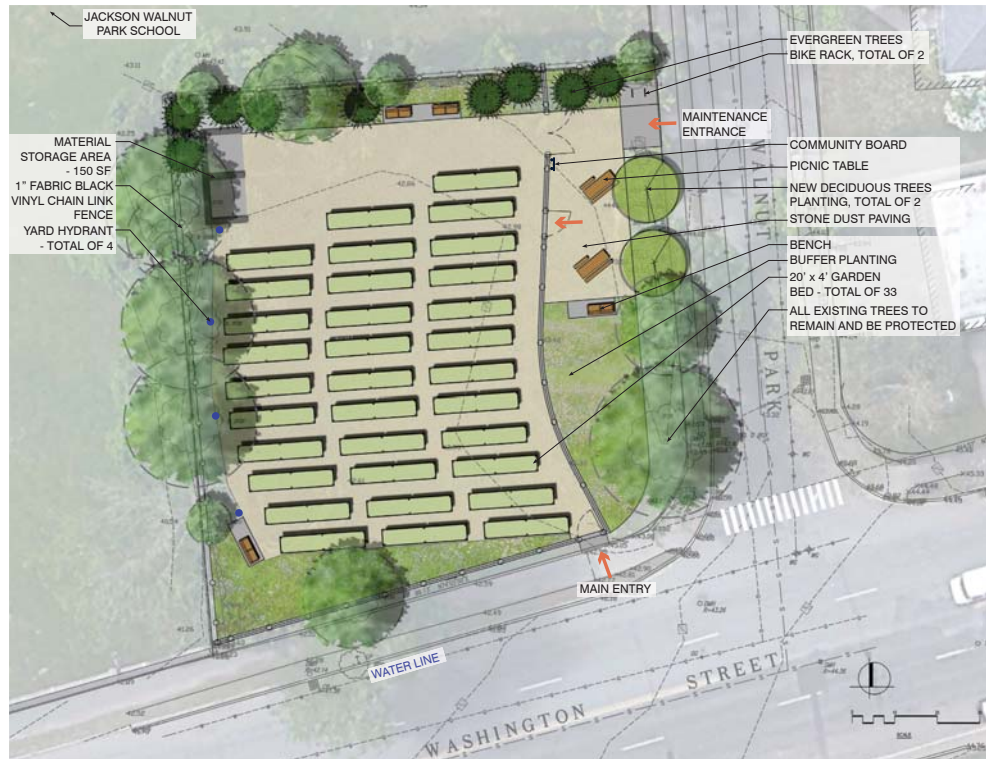


COMPOST BIN

1" FABRIC BLACK VINYL CHAIN LINK FENCE



MATERIAL STORAGE AREA



raised composter with thin legs preferred to discourage animals

CONCEPT PLAN
SPEARS PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN



[Lectures](#)

Jumping Worms in Field and Forest

[Newton Conservators](#)

Originally presented online by Dr. Annise Dobson of the Yale School of the Environment on Wednesday, April 20, 2022 as part of the Newton Conservators 2022 Spring Webinar Series hosted by Beth Wilkinson.

Dr. Dobson presents a distressing topic in a masterful way. Nearly all earthworms in New England are introduced from Europe and Asia. While some species of earthworms benefit some species of plants, invasive earthworms have caused major shifts in North American plant communities. Jumping worms alter the structure and chemistry of the soil dramatically, leaving a grainy soil full of worm excrement (castings), and they can damage lawns, landscapes and forest habitat. This talk presents the impacts and history of earthworms (and jumping worms in particular) and provides information on identification of jumping worms.

Dr. Annise Dobson is a postdoctoral researcher at the Yale School of the Environment. Currently, she is working to identify the movement of jumping worms through New York City and assessing their impacts on urban plant communities. Her contact info is available at her lab's website:

<http://schmitz.environment.yale.edu/annise-dobson.html>

She provided a link to the following publication:

<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/103692>

INVASIVE SPECIES FOR HOMEOWNERS
ASIAN JUMPING WORM *Amythas agrestis*, *A. tokiensis*, and *Metaphire hilgendorfi*. Family Megascolidae

BACKGROUND
Earthworms might be a friendly sight in gardens or your favorite tool for catching fish, but almost all earthworms in the northeast U.S. are non-native. Jumping worms, a group of species originally from Asia, are invasive species that alter soil qualities and make it inhospitable for some plants and animals. They do this by consuming the upper organic layer of soil, which leaches nutrients and erodes the ground. This makes it hard for many plants (including garden plants) to grow and threatens even the most well-tended lawns. What's worse—humans spread worms without realizing it, carrying jumping worm egg cases (cocoons) in soil, mulch, potted plants, landscaping equipment, and even the treads of shoes and tires.

KNOW THE WORM
Life Cycle: Most jumping worms have an annual life cycle. In the spring they hatch from poppy-seed-sized cocoons and after 70-90 days become mature and can produce new cocoons. In the late fall, adults die but the cocoons over-winter to start the next generation.
Behavior: These worms thrash wildly and often jump or flip over. Sometimes they cast off the end of their tail.
Castings: Their castings (feces) appear like coarse coffee grounds that create a loose layer between leaf litter and mineral soil beneath.

IN A NUTSHELL
When jumping worms invade, they consume and degrade soil which threatens the future of gardens, forests, and lawns.
Jumping worms are often spread by people through mulch, compost, gardening tools, and tires.
Stop the spread! Use our checklist (pg. 2) to be worm-smart.

Look-alikes: Jumping worms might be confused with another invasive worm, the nightcrawler (*Lumbricus* spp.); both can be large with dark coloring. Jumping worm adults have a smooth milky-white collar (clitellum) close to the head end (14-16 segments away), whereas nightcrawlers have a raised pink-red collar more central along the worm's body.

JUMPING WORM **NIGHTCRAWLER**

COCOONS
Cocoons overwinter in soil until conditions are favorable. Cocoons continue to hatch into the following year.
A jumping worm holds their eggs in cocoons the size of a poppy seed. Like this, can you find the 7 other cocoons?

JWORM
Jumping Worm Outreach, Research & Management
2019-2021

A Note the collar's color and its distance from the head. Credit: UW Madison Arboretum

Asian Jumping Worms: A Homeowner's Guide

Date Issued: 2021

Author: Bezrutczyk, Abigail; Bowe, Audrey; Brown-Lima, Carrie; Dávalos, Andrea; Dobson, Annise; Herrick, Bradley; McCay, Timothy; Wickings, Kyle

Abstract: ... most earthworms in the northeast U.S. are non-native[, but] jumping worms, a group of species originally from Asia, are invasive species that alter soil qualities and make it inhospitable for some plants and animals. They do this by consuming the upper organic layer of soil, which leaches nutrients and erodes the ground. This makes it hard for many plants (including garden plants) to grow and threatens even the most well-tended lawns. What's worse – humans spread [these] worms without realizing it, carrying jumping worm egg cases (cocoons) in soil, mulch, potted plants, landscaping equipment, and even the treads of shoes and tires.

This guide was developed by the Jumping Worm Outreach, Research & Management (JWORM) working group to help homeowners identify and prevent the spread of jumping worms.