

A Trail Elf Guide to Singletrack Maintenance

The Mission:

A trail elf desires that any soul who wanders upon their section of trail will have a most pleasurable experience and thus think highly of the Swedetown Trail System.

To accomplish this trail elves should strive for the following:

1. Mow the ferns and grass and keep them from encroaching on and/or covering the trail tread.
 - a. This keeps sight lines open for trail users and allows them to see obstacles or other users.
 - b. It makes it more difficult for users to pick up ticks or contact noxious weeds (i.e. poison ivy)
2. Lop the brush that also encroaches into the trail corridor (the area approximately 3 feet wide and 7 feet high surrounding the trail tread. As a general rule anything you can reach with 24" loppers from the center of the trail should be cut. Ideally we do not want trail users to be contacted by the forest flora.
 - a. Also makes for good sight lines.
 - b. Keeps trail users from possible injury to body or eyes.

Best times to maintain trail.

1. At the beginning of season the trails should be cleared of deadfalls and debris from the fall & winter. Brush may need to be lopped back that is entering the trail corridor. We schedule workdays to get extra help to accomplish this prior to Memorial Day weekend.
2. In mid June to early July grass and ferns grow and sometimes cover the trail and should be mowed. Some additional lopping might be needed at this time depending on how far back the brush was cut in May.
3. During the first week in August a thorough cutting and lopping to get the trails ready for the Deer Chase is needed. Remember riders will be going at race speed and sight lines become very important to keep them on course and out of danger. In many cases this might be the last time the trail needs care. A bit of maintenance may be required in September on an as needed basis.

In the case of trail issues that are beyond your comfort zone or area of expertise please let Rick Oikarinen, Pat Szubielak or Marc Norton know the issue and location and they will assess and find a solution to the problem. Such cases may include fallen trees, eroded trails and sustained wet sections of trail.

Generally a mile and half long section of trail (i.e. Southside) would require about 6-9 elf hours to mow and lop. So one individual would be looking at about 18-27 hours per season to make Swedetown the best maintained system in the area. Recruitment of help is encouraged as it lightens the work load and spreads the joy of a job well done. (Generally a second person saves about 1/3 the time. Instead of 6 hours it would take 2 people 4.) Some trails are a bit more labor intensive, others are longer but require less work.

The Swedetown Trails Club has some equipment available to make maintenance more efficient and is usually stored in the white shed by the Chalet. Marc Norton has some of his personal equipment available as well. Both he and Pat Szubielak can assist with training in the use of the equipment if you are unfamiliar.

Elves must wear proper safety gear when working on the trails. Gloves, sturdy foot wear and eye protection are a must. Depending on the equipment, steel or composite toed boots, chaps, helmet with face shield would be very prudent.

Take pride in your work and let's see what group of elves will have the best maintained trail this season. Enlist some friends or family to help with your section as many hands make light work.

Current STC equipment available:

- Walk behind string mowers (2) (Great for ferns & grasses on edge)
- Hand held string trimmer
- Walk behind brush mower/finish mower
- Brush Saw
- Loppers
- Chain Saw
- Leaf blowers (3)

Marc Norton's equipment

- Loppers
- Leaf Rakes
- Hand held string trimmer
- Mega Lopper (string trimmer with a very heavy blade, cuts back brush efficiently) Requires helmet with face shield, heavy gloves, chainsaw chaps, heavy shirt, steel or composite toed boots and safety glasses to use.
- Pulaskis
- McLeod Rakes
- Rogue Hoes
- Action Hoes
- Weed Wrench (to pull small saplings etc)
- Leaf Blower
- Powered Wheelbarrow

Training to use any of the above equipment is available by contacting Marc Norton at 906-337-1300 during normal business hours M-F. Email: trailelf@charter.net or leave a message on his cell 906-370-1300.