

NLCC Trail Adopters Guidelines

Consider what a trail is. In a forest it is a treadway and a corridor (in the sense of an opening or vista through the trees). In the winter, in unbroken snow, it is a white carpet and a corridor. Anything that disrupts this treadway and corridor, such as plants in leaf in the middle of the trail, down branches, down trees across the trail, tree branches reaching into the corridor so as to squeeze or narrow the corridor, all of these make the trail harder to follow.

A standard of maintenance used by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Appalachian Mountain Club suggests that the trail corridor should be at least four feet wide and eight feet high. In practical terms try to cut the branches and sprouts back far enough so that you could walk the trail without rubbing against the stems or foliage even after a season's growth. This is important when the plants are wet. Cutting the corridor four feet wide might assure that it won't become less than two feet wide before you return to clip.

Overhead branches may need attention, too. Consider their impact when wet or snow-laden. Be sure to cut blaze obstructions.

When could you reasonably leave a tree across the trail as a "stepover?" If the tree is more than knee height at the top, it is too difficult to step over reasonably. In all cases, cutting should flush to the ground or trunk so that there are no dangerous stubs.

You are asked to:

1 - Maintain your trail several times a year.

Late April or early May is an appropriate time to clean water bars, and clean up the branches and trees brought down during the winter. Most branches provide a potential threat to trip the hiker. Round, straight segments of branches could roll underfoot. Keep in mind that the plant sprouts that are ten inches long in April may become two feet tall in August and covered with foliage. Clipping could be done also. Try to improve drainage off the trail. Any puddles should either be drained or stepping stones should be placed.

Midsummer is a good time to cut back all the growth that is impinging on the trail. Particularly troubling are the sprouts from beech tree roots, hobblebush and blackberry briars.

Mid to late October is a good time to clear up the branches brought down by fall winds, and to clean out water bars and drainage ditches. Clipping could be done also.

2 - Paint blazes during dry weather, and tend to plastic blazes. See the NLCC Blaze Guidance. Blazes are usually painted every three years.

3 - Look for roots that loop into the air which might catch a hiker's foot. You may either cut these with loppers (both sides), or pile soil and rocks on either side.

4 - Report to the trail coordinator any inappropriate incursions onto Conservation Commission trails and any projects needed on your trail which require more person-power than you can muster. If you need someone to chainsaw a tree for you, let us know. Also report where signs are missing or otherwise needed, maps or Mutt Mitt bags need to be restocked.