

Grounds Position

Lupinewood Collective

05-21-2026

Grounds is responsible for everything outdoors at Lupinewood with a few exceptions. As is true with all positions, whoever is responsible for Grounds can choose to manage the work however they like; they can also sculpt what is and isn't part of their work through proposing changes to the collective.

What follows is how the collective member currently responsible for Grounds manages the position, which also gives a good sense of what the position all entails. It's organized into the following sections:

I – An overview of annual care actions

II – A Breakdown of the annual steps as they relate to different plants and habitats

III – Tasks that are done when needed and check every two weeks

IV – A short list of additional responsibilities of the grounds position

V – Plant information

VI – Habitat type

Habitats are in black.

Special plants are in grey.

I | OVERVIEW

The major steps of care taken to support special plants and habitats over the course of the year.

Spring

April – June

- Spring bed cleaning & pest/disease inspection (April)
- Spring pruning (April – May)
- Spring amendments (April-May)
- Spring mulching (April – May)
- Spring watering (April – June)

Summer

July – September

- Summer bed cleaning & pest/disease inspection (July)
- Ongoing watering
- Ongoing weeding

Fall

October- December

- Fall bed cleaning & pest/disease inspection (October)
- Fall pruning
- Fall amendments
- Deep watering (mid- to late November).
- Fall mulching + plant cold protection (by end of November).

Winter

January – March

- Winter bed cleaning & pest/disease inspection (January)
- Winter soil testing (late March)

II | BREAKDOWN

More in-depth explanations of plant and habitat care actions taken over the course of the year, broken out for habitats, as well as different species and ages of plants.

Spring cleaning & inspection

Clear beds of non-mulch (trash, parts of the plant) and inspect for pests, diseases, and nutrient deficiencies; walk the land and make notes of needs for the upcoming season.

- **Spring sweep:** Walk the land and take notes; tidy and pick up trash as you go.
- **Spring gutter clean:** Clear the gutters of debris and inspect downspouts and outflow to make sure water is being diverted away from the foundation of buildings.
- **Rhododendron:** Especially lace bugs on younger plants and leaf spots on mature plants.
- **Magnolia:** Insure trapped water is drained and problem areas freed of debris. Check for woodpecker damage and protect if necessary.

Spring pruning

First pruning of the year

- **Bushes:** Prune dead, damaged, or crossing branches before new growth begins. Shape as needed for air circulation and aesthetics.
- **Rhododendron (young):** Prune limitedly and only dead or damaged wood.
- **Rhododendron (mature):** Deadhead spent flowers and prune for shape (otherwise avoid pruning).
- **Chestnuts:** Shape the tree to maintain a central leader and evenly spaced lateral branches. Remove crossing or crowded branches to improve air circulation.
- **Magnolia:** - Prune dead, diseased, and damaged wood first. Cut back to healthy tissue, making clean cuts just outside the branch collar. Remove 20–30% of the crowded inner branches to improve airflow and light penetration; focus on crossing and rubbing branches. Shorten the width and height slightly but maintain an overall balanced structure. Shape the remaining branches to direct energy toward the regrowth of the missing half.
- **Lilacs:** Only prune right after first flowering. Remove 1/3 of the oldest, thickest stems at ground level to encourage new growth for each of the coming three years. Focus on brittle or dead stems. Thin dense areas by pruning small, crossing branches to improve airflow and light penetration.

Spring amendments

Add amendments as needed based on winter testing.

- **Grass:** Aerate soil where needed.
- **Grass & meadow:** Add seed mix.
- **Grass & meadow:** Add thin layer (¼") of compost.

- **Rhododendrons (all):** If pH was tested above 6.0 add acidic amendments like elemental sulfur or acidic organic materials like pine needles, peat moss, or cottonseed meal.
- **Rhododendrons (young):** Remove mulch and add 1-2" garden compost or humanure 6-12" from base.
- **Chestnuts:** If pH is above 6.5 amend with things like elemental sulfur to maintain acidity. Add 1-2" garden compost or humanure under branches 6-12" away from base.
- **Magnolia:** If pH was tested above 6.5 add acidic amendments. Add 1-2" garden compost or humanure under branches 6-12" away from base. Micronutrients are particularly important for this plant.
- **Lilacs:** If pH is below 6.5 add amendments to raise alkalinity. Add 1-2" garden compost or humanure under branches 6-12" away from base.

Spring mulching

Mulch helps retain moisture, and protects roots from freezing and desiccation (winter drying from exposure to winter colds and winds).

- **Bushes:** 2-3" mulch, 3-6" away from base.
- **Walkways & Paths:** 2-3" mulch, 3' wide.

- **All plants:** Replace 4" of mulch for young plants, and 2-3" for mature plants, keeping it 3-6" away from base of plant, and extending the mulch out under the plants branches.

Spring watering

Making sure young plants have what they need, and watering all plants during times of exceptional dryness.

- **Rhododendron (young):** Water 1-2 inches per week unless the ground is already soaked.
- **Rhododendron (mature):** Water during dry periods, but allow topsoil to dry slightly between waterings.
- **Chestnut:** Water 1-2" per week unless ground is already soaked. Water deeply to reach roots.
- **Magnolia:** Water during dry periods.

- **Lilacs:** Begin watering if rainfall is below 1 inch per week. Lilacs prefer deep, infrequent watering.

Summer cleaning & inspection

Clear beds of non-mulch (trash, parts of the plant) and inspect for pests, diseases, and nutrient deficiencies; walk the land and make notes of needs for the upcoming season.

- **Chestnuts:** Check for fungal diseases, pests, or nutrient deficiencies like yellowing leaves.
- **Magnolia:** Insure trapped water is drained and problem areas freed of debris.
- **Lilacs:** Watch for signs of powdery mildew, leaf miners, or aphids. Treat with neem oil or insecticidal soap if needed.

Ongoing weeding

Keeping beds and surrounding airspace clear of competing plants

- **All plants:** Check every two weeks and remove weeds as needed.

Ongoing watering

Watering plants that are young or struggling, and watering all plants during times of drought.

- **Rhododendrons** like their soil to be moist but not waterlogged, 8-12” deep, applied under the canopy only, avoiding the crown and the base.
- **Lilacs:** like deep and infrequent waterings, 12-18” deep watered at dripline. Water if rainfall is below 1” per week.
- **Magnolia:** 15-20 gallons, 18-24” deep watered at the dripline and slightly beyond. If already saturated with water, be careful not to overwater / waterlog.
- **Chestnuts** get watered to maintain soil moistness throughout the spring and summer. They like their soil to be moist but not waterlogged, 18-24” deep, starting at the dripline and extending outwards 1-2’. Especially susceptible to fungal diseases and rot that come along with waterlogged soil.

Fall cleaning & inspection

Clear beds of non-mulch (trash, parts of the plant) and inspect for pests, diseases, and nutrient deficiencies; walk the land and make notes of needs for the upcoming season.

- **Fall sweep:** Walk the land and take notes; tidy and pick up trash as you go.
- **Fall gutter clean:** Clear the gutters of debris and inspect downspouts and outflow to make sure water is being diverted away from the foundation of buildings.

- **Rhododendron:** Check especially for Lace bugs on younger plants and leaf spots on mature plants.
- **Magnolia:** Insure trapped water is drained and problem areas freed of debris.
- **Chestnuts:** Look for rodent damage around base, deer damage of leaves or bark, and signs of blight.

Fall pruning

- **Meadow:** cut back to 50% (leave clippings)
- **All plants:** Remove dead and damaged limbs. Avoid unnecessary pruning before winter.
- **Lilacs:** Remove any new suckers growing outside the grove's intended boundaries to maintain its shape.

Deep watering (mid- late-November)

Done after the plant is dormant for winter but before ground deep freezes (mid-late November roughly) on a day that's above freezing when the soil isn't waterlogged. In general, clear mulch and debris 6-12" from base. Use soaker hose or drip irrigation and water slowly (if there's pooling or water running on the surface slow down). Ground wants to be moist, not wet: dig holes and use moisture gauge to confirm depth of watering. Replace/add mulch afterwards (2-3" minimum; 4" for young plants), leaving 3-6" unmulched around base.

- **Rhododendrons:** 5-10 gallons, 8-12" deep applied under the canopy only, avoiding the crown and the base.
- **Lilacs:** 10-15 gallons, 12-18" deep watered at dripline (the outer edge of where the plant's leaves shed water).
- **Magnolia:** 15-20 gallons, 18-24" deep watered at the dripline and slightly beyond. If already saturated with water, be careful not to overwater / waterlog.
- **Chestnuts:** 20-30 gallons, 18-24" deep, starting at the dripline and extending outwards 1-2'. If already saturated with water, be careful not to overwater / waterlog.

Fall amendments

Add amendments as needed based on winter testing and summer observations.

- **Grass:** Add thin layer (¼") of compost (early October).
- **Chestnuts:** Add 1-2" compost extending 3-5 feet outwards from base, and kept 6-12" away from base.
- **Lilacs:** Add 1-2" compost extending 3-5 feet outwards from base, and kept 6-12" away from base.

Fall mulching + plant cold protection (After deep-watering in late November)

To protect younger or delicate plants from getting damaged by the cold.

- **Meadow:** Add thin layer of leaf mulch or compost.
- **Walkways & Paths:** Mulch to 3-4" depth.

- **Rhododendron (young):** Wrap small plants in burlap, and add mulch until 4" thick, 3-6" away from base.
- **Rhododendrons (mature):** Add mulch until 2-3" thick, 3-6" away from base.
- **Chestnuts (until 4-6" trunk thickness):** Install 4-5' mesh guards around the trunks to prevent potential deer browsing or rubbing, even if damage hasn't been observed yet. If present, make necessary repairs. Add mulch until 4" thick, keeping mulch 3-6" away from base.
- **Magnolia:** Add mulch until 2-4" thick, 6-12" away from base.
- **Lilacs:** Add mulch until 2-4" thick, 6-12" away from base.

Winter cleaning & inspection

Clear beds of non-mulch (trash, parts of the plant) and inspect for pests, diseases, and nutrient deficiencies; walk the land and make notes of needs for the upcoming season.

- **Chestnuts:** Check for fungal diseases, pests, or nutrient deficiencies.
- **Magnolia:** Insure trapped water is drained and problem areas freed of debris.

Winter soil testing

Testing soil in preparation for spring amendments. If a test one year shows deficiencies, those same plants are testing again the following year until the deficiency is righted regardless of their normal testing rhythm.

- **Grass, Meadows, Bushes, and Forest:** Test one of these Habitats each year, taking a sample in multiple locations across the area.

- **Rhododendrons:** Test pH and nutrients every 2-3 years.
- **Chestnuts:** Test pH and nutrients every year.
- **Magnolia:** Test pH and nutrients every 2-3 years.
- **Lilac:** Test pH and nutrients every 2-3 years.

III | REPEATING TASKS

2X/month—if needed

Walkways and paths: Mulch walkways that are not Grass, hand-pulling any weeds that have grown. Spring – Fall.

Grass: Mow when Grass areas get around 6” down to 3-4”, including Walkways and Paths that are Grass. Hand pull weeds when mowing and move outdoor furniture around to avoid bald spots or weed growth. Spring – Fall.

Meadow: Remove trees and non-wildflower or non-grass species. If seeded with Meadow Mix, remove all non-Meadow Mix species. Spring – Fall.

Bushes: Remove non-bush species.

Buildings: Maintain 3’ cardboard and mulch buffer around them. Remove encroaching plants except on stonework, including branches from above.

VI | OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Gutter cleaning

Clean the gutters once in the spring and once in the fall.

Tool & equipment maintenance

Maintain the necessary tools and equipment to do the grounds position.

Spring & fall land sweeps

To go over all parts of the land for trash and tidying, and to see it all once before the seasons turn over.

V | PLANT INFORMATION

Information about what types of soil, moisture, nutrients, and so forth each plant likes plus any other applicable notes.

Rhododendrons like a pH between 4.5 and 6.0, in well-draining but moisture retaining soil, with high organic content for a drainage-loving plant. Ideal soils are explained as loamy, with a balance between sand, silt, clay, and organic matter. They like their soil to be moist, but not waterlogged, and like balanced macronutrients with emphasis on nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (with the addition of iron and magnesium for acidic soils).

Chestnuts (*Castanea dentata* × *Castanea mollissima*?) like well-draining sandy soil that retains moisture well, has high organic matter content, and has pH between 5.5 and 6.5. They love sunlight, and are drought resistant due to the depth of their taproots, although consistent watering in their early years is important for the taproot to get established. Watering wants to be deep. Trees need 15-30' separation for proper pollination and air flow to reduce fungal disease chances. Extra care should be taken towards disease and pest management: early detection is key.

Magnolia tree (*Magnolia X soulangeana*)

Magnolia's like well-drained, slightly acidic (pH 5.5–6.5) soil that's rich in organic matter. They like consistent moisture—water deeply during dry spells—and full sun. They need regular pruning to maintain air flow and canopy health.

Lilacs

Lilacs typically grow 8–15 feet tall and 6–12 feet wide, and have a shallow, spreading root system that extends well beyond the canopy. They can send up suckers (new shoots) from their roots. They like Slightly alkaline (pH 6.5–7.5), well-drained, loamy soil, and deep, infrequent watering during dry periods. Full sun is required for optimal flowering, which can be aided by phosphorus supplements.

VI | HABITAT TYPES

Road

Anywhere that cars regularly go, including the driveway, parking areas, and cul de sac.

Walkway

Main routes people use to access the buildings. Walkways are Grass unless they pass through Meadows or aren't able to regrow as fast as it gets destroyed by use. In these cases mulch with cardboard and woodchips.

Path

Secondary routes people use to move around Lupinewood.

Grass

Areas where people can sit and walk and play on grass, with a goal of as much biodiversity and pollinator plants as possible while retaining a surface durable enough for people to play on.

It's important to shift our thinking from grass being a built surface to grass being a diverse habitat that requires care beyond mowing like everywhere else on the land.

To maintain, Grass requires aerating when over compacted, light fertilization in the spring and fall, the addition of new grass seeds, the pulling of invasive weeds, and occasional watering when droughts get bad.

Grass mix

Grasses (50%)

- 2 parts Creeping Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*)
- 2 parts Fescue (*Festuca trachyphylla*)
- 1 part Perennial Ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*)

Low-Growing Flowering Plants (30%)

- 2 parts Common Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
- 1 part Self-Heal (*Prunella vulgaris*)
- .5 part Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)
- .5 part Blue-Eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*)

Clover (20%)

- 2 parts White Clover (*Trifolium repens*)

Meadow

Areas for tall grasses, where bushes and trees are removed but the grasses aren't cut. While possible to walk through, these areas are meant to reduce mowing work, concentrate areas for recreation on the land, look beautiful, and create more biodiverse habitats.

Meadow is intentionally seeded by killing preexisting growth through covering the earth for long enough that it dies, and then adding compost and freshly seeding the meadow mix. Additional seedings and removal of unintended species in the early years is necessary.

Meadow mix

Grasses (20%)

- 1 part Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)
- .5 part Purpletop (*Tridens flavus*)
- .5 part Side-oats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)

Flowers (80%)

- 1 part Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
- 1 part New England Aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*)
- 1 part Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
- 1 part Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
- 1 part Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)
- 1 part Lanceleaf Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*)
- 1 part Wild Lupine (*Lupinus perennis*)
- 1 part Joe-Pye Weed (*Eutrochium maculatum*)

Bushes

Preexisting non-trees and non-grasses that we maintain as areas.

Forest

Wooded area that we encourage to stay that way.

Buildings

Every building on the land.