

ARTICLE 35. Protect Orchard House from Storm Water Runoff

Mr. Althouse moves that the Town urge the Town Manager, in consultation with the Public Works Commission and Historic Districts Commission, to take action to remedy the inundation of storm water runoff impacting Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House resulting from changes to the grading and slope of Alcott Road in 2018.

Why bring this issue to Town Meeting?

- Inform the public about a threat to a much loved National Historic Landmark.
- Facilitate discussions to spark ideas for a solution.
- Prioritize funding and resolution to halt further damage to the Orchard House landscape and initiate repairs.

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Background

- No stormwater runoff problems until the reconstruction of Alcott Road in 2018, which changed the slope of the road.
- Previously, stormwater was directed to the drainage system on the east side of the road.
- Grading changes now channel the water westward into the orchard and surrounding land.
- Stormwater causes a waterfall at the property boundary, eroding the soil along Alcott Road and creating deep ponds.

Two heirloom apple trees at Orchard House died due to flooding created by run-off from Alcott Road





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Effects of Stormwater Runoff

- Apple trees cannot survive with 'wet feet'.
- Two heirloom apple trees were killed by fire blight, a bacterial disease made worse by wet conditions.
- The planting of a native shrub border along Alcott Road is paused until runoff erosion is addressed.
- Gravel and asphalt are washing from the road into the beds and lawn.
- The ponding water blocks access across the lawn, forcing staff and visitors into a busy parking area.

Tree killed by Fire Blight



Efforts to resolve issue

- DPW was notified about this problem 2 ½ years ago.
- Multiple discussions with DPW staff onsite and in writing.
- Using our property as a storm water basin is not an option.
- Solutions proposed to date are not adequate.
- Temporary compost sock installed by Orchard House to protect the landscape is not historically appropriate.

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