



Hunterdon County Arboretum

HUNTERDON COUNTY DIVISION OF PARKS & RECREATION

Mailing Address: PO Box 2900, Flemington, NJ 08822-2900

Office Address: 1020 State Highway 31, Lebanon, NJ

Telephone: (908) 782-1158

Fax: (908) 806-4057

E-mail: parks@co.hunterdon.nj.us

Website: www.co.hunterdon.nj.us ("Parks & Recreation")

Office Hours: Monday to Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

Mission Statement: The Hunterdon County Division of Parks and Recreation is dedicated to preserving open space and natural resources, providing safe parks and facilities, and offering educational and recreational opportunities, all contributing to an enhanced quality of life for present and future generations.

Accessibility Statement: It is the policy of the County to provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities upon advance notice of need. Persons requiring accommodations should make a request at least two weeks prior to program attendance.

(Revised 2/2017)



Self-Guided Nature Hike



Introduction

The Hunterdon County Arboretum, once host to a thriving nursery business, is now 73 acres of interesting and diverse plant life. The widely varied habitats are home to many species of wildlife.

This self-guided trail winds through most of the Arboretum. You will encounter field, pond, wetland, evergreen forest, and deciduous forest habitats. Numbered trail markers correspond with the numbered descriptions within this guide. The trail begins at the entrance to the gardens behind the office. If you are here during office hours, make sure you also come inside to see live and taxidermied animals and nature exhibits, and learn about the programs we offer.

This guide was created in 1998 by Emily Amon,
Hunterdon County Chief Park Naturalist.

Updated in 2010 by Laura Kroon, Park Naturalist.

Updated in 2015 by Emily Anne Granger, Seasonal Naturalist

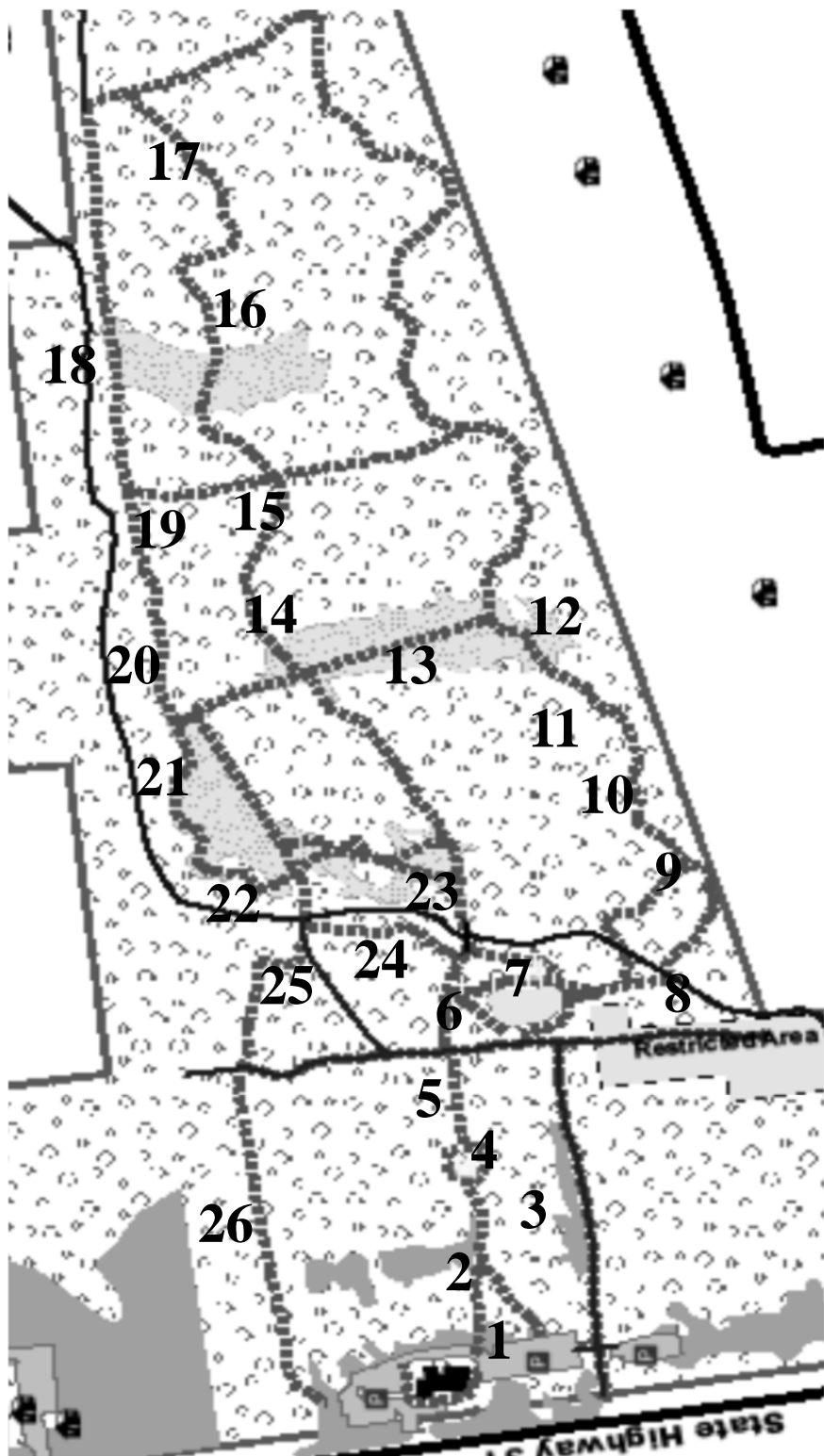


“Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit.”
~ Edward Abbey

Feel free to keep this or return it for someone else to use.

This self-guided nature trail was developed as a means of helping people become more aware of the natural features of the environment around them. It is our hope that anyone who walks the trail might learn or discover something new along the way.

Thank you for visiting!!!



1. Welcome to the Hunterdon County Arboretum! The start of this self-guided tour will take you through the formal garden area. As you can see, the garden is surrounded by an eight-foot high fence to protect the unique plants in this area from deer. The County Parks erected the fence in 1997 to avoid continuous damage. Please be sure to pull the gate closed behind you!



2. To the left of the path sits the Alphabet Herb Garden. Each of these commonly found plants give off wonderful smells and can be used as spices in the kitchen. Mint is especially prevalent here and can be identified by rolling the stem between two fingers. If the edges are square instead of round, it is a safe bet that the plant is some species of mint.

3. Katsura trees have heart-shaped leaves with a distinctive “cotton candy” aroma in the autumn. During the different seasons, the leaves can display many different colors from blue-green to purple-pink. These Asian trees are very hardy in the cold and can withstand extremely low temperatures.



4. The gazebo you see in our garden was built in 1893, making it over 100 years old! It is the oldest original two-story gazebo in New Jersey. It was moved to the Arboretum in 1978 from the Deats estate, which was located near the Lipton Tea Factory in Readington Township. John Deats was known for the Deats plow, which was patented in 1829. The Deats’ farm was also the first home in the area to have a telephone.

5. Before you leave the enclosed area, take a quick detour to your left to visit the compost display near the picnic area. Here you can see various techniques of turning kitchen and yard waste into productive soil. This is beneficial for keeping waste out of landfills, as well as producing a rich, organic fertilizer to use on garden or house plants.

***** Please remember to close the garden gate *****

6. Right before you reach the pond, look in the big oak tree on your right. You'll see a hairy vine clinging to the tree. DON'T TOUCH!! That's poison ivy. If you are sensitive to it, you can get the itchy red rash at any time of year. Although poison ivy is poisonous to people, birds love to eat the white berries in fall and winter. It is one of the first plants to change color in the fall, turning a beautiful crimson red. The three leaves associated with poison ivy are actually three leaflets, or sections of the same leaf. Poison ivy can grow on vines, as plants, or even in bushes!



7. The pond attracts many types of wildlife. Frogs are abundant in spring and summer. Deer tracks can sometimes be spotted in the mud or snow along the edge. Bats like ponds because of the abundance of insects and lack of trees to interfere with their echolocation. A bat house was put up on a tree by the pond (directly above the sign). We want to encourage bats to live in this area to help keep

the mosquito population low. Since the winter of 2006, many bats have become affected by white-nose syndrome, a disease that causes bats to come out of hibernation when it is still too cold for the insects they eat. Because scientists are still learning about this disease that causes drops in populations, it is important to have homes for bats and monitor their numbers. Ask in the office for information to help you make a bat house for your home.



*****Follow path around pond, enter boardwalk via second entrance*****

*****Cross over Photo Bridge and turn right*****

24. Do you recognize this shrub from a certain time of year? You are currently standing in a holly grove. Holly branches are commonly used as decoration around the Christmas season. The plant produces brilliant red berries which many birds rely on as a food source despite the fact that they are poisonous to people. CAREFUL!!! The distinctive, sharply pointed leaves remain on the plant all year long and provide a splash of green in a winter landscape. Holly plants can range from small bushes to medium sized trees.

*****Continue straight on path*****



25. Take a look at the trees around you. Do you notice anything about them? All along our trail system, many trees can be spotted with light fungus-like patches. These spots are the symbiotic relationship between an algae and a fungus called lichen. In a symbiotic relationship, two or more organisms join together to form a common bond in which each entity benefits itself and the other species. In the tundra, caribou and reindeer will live off lichen as a food source.

“Lichen are fungus that have discovered agriculture.”

-Trevor Goward, Naturalist and Lichenologist

26. New Jersey's state tree is the Northern Red Oak which is found abundantly throughout the Arboretum trails. Many, you will find, stand in rows that were left unattended when the nursery was closed. These massive trees can be identified by the long, grey “ski-trails” or flat ridges running the length of the bark of the tree. Acorns, which various critters rely on as a food source throughout the whole year, are produced by oaks. In particular, gray, red, and flying squirrels will collect the acorns as nutritious meals! You may be able to find leftover pieces on the ground. Close your eyes and listen! Maybe you can hear a squirrel munching nearby!





20. This is the stream along which the sycamores grow. This is an unnamed tributary of the South Branch of the Raritan River. Streams are focal points for wildlife activity. They provide water and homes for a variety of animals, including many species of insects. Most of these insects live in the stream as larvae or nymphs (young insects). They leave the stream when they become adults, and may become food for animals such as birds, bats, and dragonflies. The type of insects that live in streams

can also be a clue to the amount of pollution in the water, as many species cannot tolerate a lot of contaminants.

*****Stay to the right to follow the Self Guided Nature Trail.*****

21. On either side of this trail you will see milkweed plants in the field. They are named for the milky sap, or latex, that is produced when the leaves are broken. This is toxic to many animals, but the monarch butterfly lays its eggs on this plant, and the caterpillars ingest the toxin and use it for their own defense. After flowering, the plant produces large seed pods, which contain hundreds of brown seeds with white parachutes to aid in seed dispersal. These seed pods are still visible well into the winter.



22. The giant swamp white oak seen here is over 300 years old, one of the oldest trees on the property. Prized for their striking white bark, these trees tend to stand out in the landscape. Various birds, insects, and other wildlife use oaks as home and food.

*****Follow Discovery Trail straight to the Photo Bridge*****

23. Sweet gums are very unique trees considering their star-shaped leaves and prickly seed pods. These native trees get their name from the dried sap which is the only edible part of the plant. Despite the name, the gum isn't so sweet, but according to the *Encyclopedia of Edible Plants of North America* it may contain antiseptic qualities. The bark may also be soaked to make medicinal tea!



8. In 1988, a boy scout helped the Arboretum staff build a boardwalk for his Eagle Scout project. It was named after a local naturalist and former county freeholder, Vincent Abraitys. The wetlands that the boardwalk wanders through are a very important ecosystem to plants and animals that can survive only in this environment, such as ferns and frogs. Some of these unique plants are often used to prevent erosion or to restore stream banks. Wetlands act as an important filtration for our water sources (rain, streams, runoff) as well.

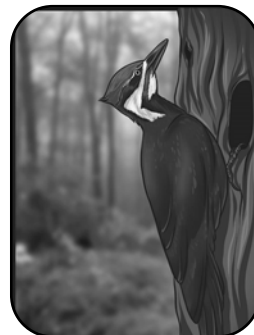
9. As you reach the fork in the boardwalk, you will see a large tree ahead of you with a great deal of turkey tail fungus growing above head-level. This is a type of shelf fungus, which means that it grows parallel to the ground. If you see a fallen log with turkey tail on it, you can tell if the fungus started growing before or after the log fell over by the orientation of the fungus.

*****Turn right at the fork in the Boardwalk*****

10. Along this area of the boardwalk look around for skunk cabbage, a plant that thrives in wet areas. This plant gets its name from its foul odor. It blooms in early spring, and is able to come up early because it produces heat. Skunk cabbage has been recorded to be 27 degrees warmer than the outside air. The odor, warmth, and reddish color of the plant help attract carrion flies, which pollinate the flowers. The purple spikes visible in winter are the flowers, and the plant grows large green leaves in summer. Bears love skunk cabbage!!!



11. Dead trees are a valuable resource to wildlife. It is suggested that a few dead trees are left per acre of forest to ensure a healthy, balanced ecosystem and to provide animal shelter! The holes are from woodpeckers searching for insects. Examine the tree to your left. Large oblong holes indicate they were made by a Pileated Woodpecker, the largest in Hunterdon County. Several, small holes in rings around the tree suggest that Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are in the area. Who was here?



12. Near the end of the boardwalk, look right to see the cattails. Cattails are another characteristic plant of freshwater marshy areas. Historically, people had many uses for cattails. The downy seeds were used for stuffing in quilts and pillows. The leaves were woven into mats and seats. The seed heads were used as torches. The young shoots were eaten like asparagus and the immature flower spikes were boiled and eaten like corn on the cob. The root was made into flour.



***** Turn left down the Memorial Trail *****

13. Here, in this open field, you will find wildflowers of many varieties. In the early spring, wild asparagus grows. It is edible when the sprouts are young! The roots of wild carrot (Queen Anne's Lace) are also edible in the early spring. As the spring wears on and turn into late summer, Goldenrod will populate this area. Asters of all sorts will show pretty petals in hopes of drawing attention of pollinators. Mountain mint will also make an appearance. As you can imagine, this is a very valuable spot for food and shelter for all sorts of wildlife from birds to insects to humans!

***** Turn right up Two-lined Trail *****



14. Look at the massive grape vines in this area. Grape vines don't climb the same way as poison ivy vines. Grape vines use tendrils, slender curly extensions, to cling to the tree to help them grow higher. Poison ivy climbs in a different way, clinging to the trunk of the tree and branches out as it grows. A cut grape vine can give you a large amount of potable water in a survival situation. Don't try it here!

15. On the left side of the trail notice the trees with thick bark. Give them a squeeze. If you noticed, the trees are soft and squishy just like a cork. These are Amur cork trees from eastern Asia and were once used to produce corks. There are a few stands around the park! Can you find them?



16. In this open area of the trail, multiflora rose bushes have taken over. They are a non-native invasive plant that replaces native plants by growing more aggressively than them. In the fall and winter the rosehips that grow on these shrubs are eaten by birds, although they are not as nutritious the fruit of native plants. In winter, often this area is filled with white-throated sparrows. Listen for their distinctive call, "Oh Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody."

17. Once again the habitat on this trail has changed. In this section there is an evergreen forest. Feel the soft, mossy ground. This forest is quiet because there are no leaves to crunch beneath your feet. The layers of the forest are easily seen here. The forest floor is the first, the shrub layer and understory are next, and finally the canopy tops it off. Take a minute to listen. Keep an eye out as well for chickadees, who sing their name, "chick-a-dee-dee-dee."

***** Turn left onto Outer Loop Trail *****

18. On the right side of the trail look at the big sycamore trees. Their beautiful, mottled bark, becoming almost white towards the top of the tree, makes them easy to identify. You also may find their huge leaves on the ground, even into winter. Sycamore trees are commonly found along streams. From here you cannot see the stream that these trees are next to; you'll have to wait until stop #20.

19. Look at the ground. Do you see any strange looking fruit? Standing tall at this trail crossing is a Black Walnut Tree. Known for the nuts produced by this tree, it is a favorite for many local animals and humans, too! The fruit that encases the seed, or nut, is a bright green when young but once ripe it will become a yellow-black. Careful! A brown-black dye will seep from the mature fruit if handled, staining your hands for quite a few days (it was used for dyes by early inhabitants of this area). Now, take a leaf and break it up in your hands. Do you smell that? Most parts of this tree are very pungent, especially the leaves!

