

Nature Series



The Monmouth County Park System has two environmental centers dedicated to nature education. Each has a trained staff of naturalists to answer questions, and a variety of displays, exhibits, and hands-on activities where visitors of all ages can learn about area wildlife and natural history.

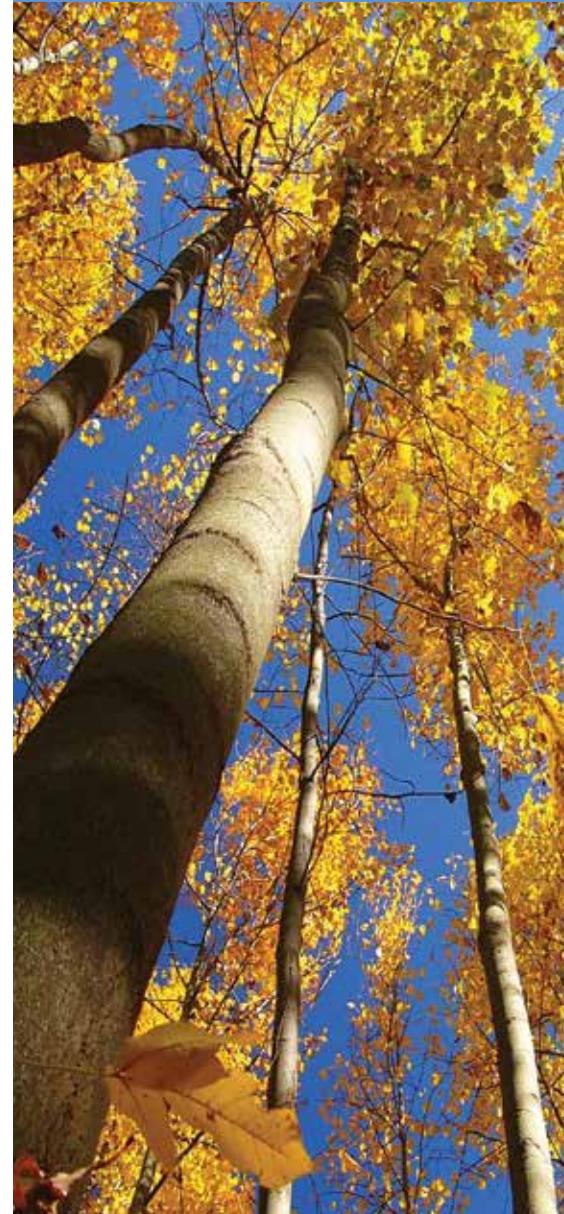
The **Huber Woods Environmental Center**, on Brown's Dock Road in the Locust Section of Middletown, features newly renovated exhibits about birds, plants, wildlife and the Lenape Indians. Miles of surrounding trails offer many opportunities to enjoy and view nature.



The **Manasquan Reservoir Environmental Center**, on Georgia Tavern Road in Howell specializes in wetland species. The center has many water-related displays and exhibits to learn about local plants and wildlife. The 5-mile perimeter trail is a great place to explore and enjoy nature.



Trees of Monmouth County



The parks of Monmouth County are the perfect place to observe and enjoy trees throughout the year. Forested areas have cooler temperatures in the summer, and offer vivid colors during autumn. In winter, the woods offer peaceful solitude and in spring-time, life bursts forth from the trees.

Monmouth County Has Two Major Types of Forest

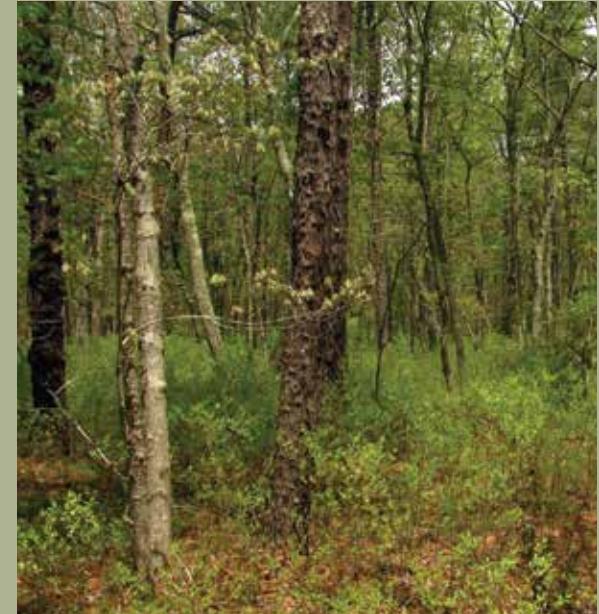
A Mixed Oak Forest is found in areas where the soil is rich and can hold moisture. Located in the northern sections of the county with hilly terrain, look for Mixed Oak Forests on the trails of Hartshorne Woods Park, Holmdel Park, Huber Woods Park, Tatum Park, and Clayton Park. Predominant trees are the Red, Chestnut and Black Oak mixed with beech, ash, hickory and maple species.

Mixed Oak Forest



The northern fringe of the Pine Barrens reaches into southern Monmouth County; Turkey Swamp Park, Shark River Park, and the Manasquan Reservoir are excellent locations to observe a Pine Oak Forest. Here, the defining feature is sandy soil that does not retain moisture or nutrients. Pitch Pine is the predominant tree with its thick, plate-shaped bark, mixed with different types of oak.

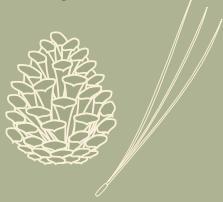
Pine Oak Forest



Inside this guide you will find leaf, needle, fruit and bark identification characteristics for common species found in both Mixed Oak and Pine Oak Forests. Use it to begin learning about your favorite trees. Consider also the two soil types discussed, and the different shrubs and flowers found nearby. For a full appreciation of each tree, try to observe it at different seasons throughout the year.



Pitch Pine
(*Pinus rigida*)



Needles of the Pitch Pine come in 3's and the thick tile-shaped bark is easy to recognize.



Sweet Gum
(*Liquidambar styraciflua*)



Look for the star shaped leaves of Sweet Gum at Turkey Swamp Park and Weltz Park; don't miss the spiny, brown fruits.



White Oak
(*Quercus alba*)



White Oak can be found in all of the Monmouth County Parks. Look for the rounded leaf lobes.



American Beech
(*Fagus grandifolia*)



The American Beech, with its distinctive smooth grey bark, can be found along the trails of Holmdel Park.



Black Oak
(*Quercus velutina*)



Look for Black Oaks among the Pitch Pines at Turkey Swamp Park.



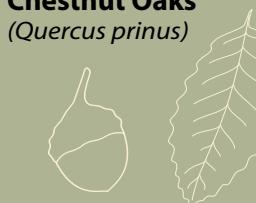
Red Maple
(*Acer rubrum*)



Visit Perrineville Lake Park in the autumn to see vibrant Red Maple leaves. Note the coarsely toothed, 3 (to 5) lobed leaf.



Chestnut Oaks
(*Quercus prinus*)



Elliptical leaves are a tell-tale sign the oak is a Chestnut Oak; look for this tree in Hartshorne Woods Park.



Black Birch
(*Betula lenta*)



Black Birch twigs smell of winter-green, bark of young trees may have distinctive horizontal lines. Male fruit (catkin) show in photo, female fruit shown in drawing.



Sassafras
(*Sassafras albidum*)



The twigs and leaves of the Sassafras are aromatic when crushed; look for trees with mitten-shaped leaves (could also be oval or tri-lobed) at the Manasquan Reservoir.



American Chestnut
(*Castanea dentata*)



Once the most common tree of the east, today's chestnut only grows to sapling size due to blight; sprouts develop from tree stumps, but die before bearing fruit. Look in the forest understory along the trails.



Red Oak
(*Quercus rubra*)



Red Oaks grow throughout the parks and are easily spotted by the pointy bristles on the leaf tips and lobes. This is the State Tree of New Jersey.



American Holly
(*Ilex opaca*)



Visit the Holly Trail at Tatum Park in the winter when the shiny green leaves and red berries are most obvious.



Black Gum
(*Nyssa sylvatica*)



Look for the Black Gum or Black Tupelo in early fall when its smooth-edged oval leaves turn bright red. The bark is blocky and grey; the berries are blue.



Norway Maple
(*Acer platanoides*)



This invasive, non-native species competes with other trees for resources, and can sprout inside (and destroy) adjacent shrubs. Look for this large, fast-growing tree in many parks and neighborhoods.



Tulip Poplar
(*Liriodendron tulipifera*)



Named for their showy flowers in May and June, you can't miss these extremely tall trees (over 100 feet) at Thompson, Tatum and Holmdel Park.
Front cover photo.



White Ash
(*Fraxinus americana*)



Identified by its compound leaflets and the diamond shaped furrows in its bark; the White Ash can be seen in Thompson Park.