MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

GREEN HERITAGE

The Newsletter of Monmouth County's Open Space, Parks & Recreation Agency *Vol. 46 No. 1 Spring 2012*

GREEN & GROWING:
New Park Underway At Big Brook

For a map of Big Brook Park and directions, visit monmouthcountyparks.com

Attention Marlboro, Manalapan, Holmdel and Colts Neck–Did you notice the new entrance sign to Big Brook Park on Route 520? For some, that sign may be the first clue that a 415-acre county park is in development at the site.

Big Brook Park, named for the body of water that runs along its edge, was first established when the county purchased a 379-acre tract of land across the street from the former Marlboro Psychiatric Hospital. The land had been used as an agricultural facility (with a dairy farm, piggery, and plenty of farm buildings, structures and crop fields) to feed the hospital tenants. More recently, the county acquired another 36-acre parcel that is leased back to the YMCA's Camp Arrowhead.

View the big sky at Big Brook in summer.

Fields of tall grass at Big Brook feature mowed paths and field edges for access.

Continued, next page

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Two Major Attractions at Big Brook Park

1. Access to the Henry Hudson Trail. A 0.9 mile paved trail connector now attaches Big Brook Park to the South Section of the Henry Hudson Trail which then travels another 5 miles from Big Brook Park to Freehold. A new parking lot and kiosk with trail map will show you the way.

Located just off Big Brook's new parking area, these Henry Hudson Trail signs point bicyclists, walkers and equestrians in the right direction.

Runners and walkers frequent the Henry Hudson Trail at Big Brook.

2. Birds & Butterflies. The rolling fields of grass and plants at Big Brook are not only picturesque, they provide a continguous field habitat for nesting bird species. In fact, New Jersey Audubon (www.njaudubon.org) lists Big Brook Park a critically important site for breeding, wintering and migrating birds, and for native bird populations. These field habitats also attract plenty of butterflies.

Park Naturalists have reported sighting the White-throated Sparrow (pictured in winter) at Big Brook Park.

The Northern Bobwhite is among NJ Audubon posted sightings at Big Brook. This small rotund fowl, 8-10", is in the quail family. Note the white stripe on brow and neck of this male.

The Cooper's Hawk is a commonly sighted bird. Note the banded tail.

The Cabbage White (front) and Clouded Sulfur have both been seen in May.

Estuary Program Receives EPA Grant

An estuary is a coastal site where fresh and saltwater meet. The resulting brackish water, often bordered by a peninsula, marsh or island, is especially nutrient-rich, attracting a large number of regionally important species. Our local Hudson-Raritan Estuary, found within the Raritan Bay-Sandy Hook Bay complex, is no exception.

Seasonal Park Naturalist K. Dasenbrock meets with students alongside the Monmouth Cove Marina inlet at Pew's Creek to discuss how water pollution impacts wildlife in and around Raritan Bay.

In the Bayshore Region of Monmouth County, freshwater from the Hudson and Raritan Rivers, as well as many local creeks, mixes with the saltwater of the Atlantic Ocean to make the brackish waters of Raritan-Sandy Hook Bay. However, when you combine this abundant wildlife habitat with stressors from the highly populated urban/suburban human habitats nearby, you get a unique set of challenges.

For this reason, Park Naturalists were delighted to receive a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2010 to develop educational programs for local students and teachers, which were held in and around Bayshore Waterfront Park in spring and fall of 2011. Look for a detailed write-up of this important program in the next issue of the Green Heritage.

It's Time To Enjoy The Parks, By Night

Moon over the Manasquan Reservoir

When someone asks, "What should we do tonight?" the common response is not usually to visit a park, but 2012 is different. The Monmouth County Park System is offering a series of special evening programs under the theme, ***"Let's Meet Under the Stars,"*** to celebrate the wonders of the parks at night. If you, your friends, or family ever wanted to get out for some outdoor fun by starlight or moonlight, this is the year to do it.

For a hike, try ***Full Moon and Folklore of the Bay***–a guided lantern tour of the Seabrook-Wilson House and its beach where people for more than 200 years have beach-combed, fished, and searched for sharks, pirates, rum-runners, and other ghastly groups. Or, learn g-astronomy with ***Twilight Treats***, featuring a delicious after dinner treat, a talk and a walk around Huber Woods Park Environmental Center during *Apple Pie & Constellations* or *Cupcakes & Earth Day*. If your nighttime interests lie within your own garden, check out ***Planting by the Moon*** to find out if popular nighttime garden lore is just superstition or if they really work. Visit monmouthcountyparks.com and click on "Program Registration" to see ALL the evening programs available this year.

CONGRATULATIONS 2011 MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE GRANT RECIPIENTS

On December 8, the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders awarded the maximum grant amount they were eligible for to each of 13 municipalities who applied for 2011 funding. While there were fewer applications than in prior years, the quality of the applications was high and the grantees are spread throughout the county.

Since inception of this program in 2003, over 116 grants have been awarded by the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders, and 43 of the County's 53 towns have been awarded more than $20.2 million for local park acquisition and improvements.

Would Your Town Benefit From a Parks Grant?

This annual competitive matching grant program is funded by the County Open Space Trust Fund. Each municipality may file one application a year, is eligible for up to $250,000, and is responsible for a minimum of 50% of the total eligible project costs. State-designated Urban Aid Communities are responsible for a minimum of 25% of the total eligible project costs.

Applications for the 2012 round of county grants will be mailed to each Mayor, Clerk and Administrator in May; a September 19, 2012 deadline is anticipated. For more information, visit the Monmouth County Park System's website at www.monmouthcountyparks.com and click **Municipal Open Space Program** in the "About Us" section. If you have questions or would like assistance with the application process, please call the Program Administrator at 732-842-4000, ext. 4472.

Residents of the following towns can now look forward to these Open Space and Recreation projects in the future:

Fair Haven	Fair Haven Field Improvements (Development)	$250,000
Hazlet	Natco Lake Trails Project	$200,000
Keansburg	Collins Field Tennis Courts (Development)	$80,000
Long Branch	Troutman's Greenway Park Improvements Phase 1 (Development)	$208,000
Marlboro	Geoghegan Ballfield (Development)	$250,000
Millstone	Historic Thomas Baird Homestead (Acquisition)	$250,000
Neptune Township	Three Park Playgrounds (Development)	$239,000
Oceanport	ADA Compliant Restroom/Snack/ Storage Facility (Development)	$150,000
Red Bank	Bellhaven Park Improvements (Development)	$239,000
Spring Lake Heights	Ocean Road Park and Allaire Road Park Improvements (Development)	$188,000
Union Beach	Scholer Park Phase 4 (Development)	$142,000
Upper Freehold	Reed Park Field (Development)	$250,000
Wall	Regional Bike Path Phase 3 (Development)	$157,000

Long Branch's Troutman's Greenway Park (outlined in red) will give city residents use of this waterfront site.

Millstone Will Use $250,000 To Preserve A Piece Of History

A 7.5 acre farmstead and a five-bay center hall Greek Revival home (circa 1836) are all that survive of what was once a 500 acre farm owned by the Baird family. It is located, fittingly, on the road that bears their name. This charming remnant will be permanently preserved as township open space, thanks to the foresight of Millstone officials and with financial support from the Monmouth County Municipal Open Space Grant Program.

This scenic landscape of the 7.5 acre Baird farmstead, once part of a 500 acre farm, is now preserved.

Millstone has already completed two other Municipal Open Space Grant projects. The 148-acre Lee Farm was acquired as a recreation site with a 2006 grant, and a 2009 grant supported the purchase of a 22-acre addition to that property, now known as Millstone Park.

This year's application was Millstone's first for a historic structure, and only the third for the County's grant program. Grant money can be used for the purchase or improvement of a historic property, provided it will be or is owned by the municipality and is only used as a public park or open space.

> *"This grant program helps towns embark on creative projects that they could never accomplish on their own… [and] will bring us one step closer to preserving a true historic treasure. We are fortunate that the Board of Chosen Freeholders recognized the importance and value of this project."*
>
> *–Millstone Mayor Nancy Grbelja*

Located across Baird Road from other municipal open space and the Township Middle School, the Baird farmhouse is one of the best remaining examples of its type in Millstone. The home retains its original floor plan and other notable historic features including pine plank floors, a kitchen hearth with a bake oven, and a front door with pilasters, four-light transom and sidelights. Thomas Baird, for whom the farmstead is now named, was one of the original founders of the Monmouth County Agricultural Society in 1853 and served on the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders from 1860 to 1862.

View of the house (circa 1836) from Baird Road. Note the front door, an original architectural feature.

Agricultural Resource Center Planned

Millstone will use the house and grounds as a cultural resource center to "memorialize" New Jersey's legacy as "an agricultural pioneer and leader," according to Millstone officials. Planned displays include a farm equipment museum, beehives, heritage rose garden, herb garden, children's butterfly garden, and vegetable garden. Tentative seasonal activities include honey harvesting, cider pressing, sheep sheering, candle making, composting classes and planting programs. A non-profit Friends group has been organized to fundraise for the care and maintenance of the property and to coordinate activities.

Deep Cut Gardens
Home Gardener

152 Red Hill Road
Middletown, NJ 07748

GS Parkway Exit 114, to Red Hill Road
732-671-6050

Twelve Months Of Blooms (Yes, It's Possible!)

Diane Allen, Staff Horticulturalist

Hellebore at bloom in the snow

With peak bloom season just around the corner, who wants to think about the leaner months? Sure, there is some striking foliage, colorful barks, and even intriguing branching habits to admire in the winter months, but there's just something about a flower.

With a little planning however, gardeners can enjoy twelve months of blooms, outdoors, without ever leaving New Jersey! In doing so, you will also be extending the buffet for insects and birds. The focus here is on the more challenging months – late summer through early spring.

Welcome Fall & Winter with Flowers

As summer winds down, the heat, humidity and scarce rainfall have induced the garden, well as the gardener, to slow down. Some plants, however, are just coming into their own and many will carry you well into autumn's cooler days.

Japanese Anemone

Nodding Ladies Tresses (spiranthes)

The 4-5' tall spikes of **Black Cohosh*** *(Actaea racemosa)* glow in the afternoon sun, brightening partial shade and adding vertical interest. The leaves of the cultivar 'Hillside Black Beauty' will be deep maroon in full sun and greener in shade.

Japanese Anemone 'Whirlwind' is at peak bloom, and **Turtlehead*** *(Chelone)* charms in either white or pink. You can easily see how the plant acquired its common name!

Turtlehead (chelone)*

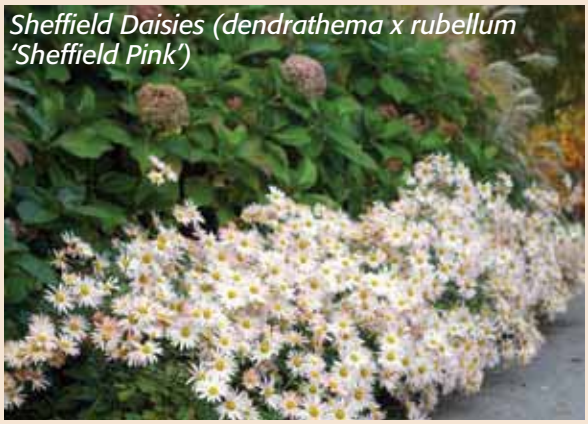
Nodding Ladies Tresses* *(spiranthes)* prefers a moist, shady location. A late-summer ephemeral, after the fragrant blooms have died all traces of this native terrestrial orchid will disappear until the following summer. **Toad lilies** *(tricyrtis)* are a beautiful complement to aging hydrangea blossoms. Happy in partial to full shade, the flowers will hold up well into and through crisp fall days. These last two perennials are best appreciated up close, so site them accordingly.

***plant is native to our region**

Black Cohosh (Actaea racemosa)*

Toad lilies (tricyrtis)

When the bright hues of deciduous trees announce autumn's arrival, **Sheffield Daisies** *(dendrathema x rubellum 'Sheffield Pink')* are hitting their peak. Their color and texture provide an excellent contrast to the bold foliage and dried flowers of hydrangea and graceful ornamental grasses. **Autumn crocus** *(colchicum)* will pop up among fallen leaves like a surprise. Almost as an afterthought, their own leaves will follow in early spring, long after the blooms have disappeared.


Sheffield Daisies (dendrathema x rubellum 'Sheffield Pink')

Autumn crocus (colchicum)

Iris('Immortality')

Tall Bearded Iris have been the mainstay of many a June garden, but October? Plant breeders have developed a limited variety of reblooming irises that will come back for an encore performance.

Camellia

Camellias and witch-hazels will provide blooms before or after you've rung in the New Year, depending on the variety. Our native **Witch-hazel*** *(Hamamelis virginiana)* will open its lemon-yellow flowers late November into December, after having dropped its leaves. Other varieties will usually start blooming in March and flower colors range from pale yellow to orange to deep red.

Witch-hazel colors*

*Witch-hazel**

Heath blossoms

Just as we are preparing for the holidays and the inevitable snows, the tiny flowers of **Heath 'Mediterranean Pink'** *(erica x darleyensis)* are beginning to open. Unfazed by the cold, and even layers of snow, they will stay long enough to greet crocus and tulips. Closely related to heather, heath is a bit less fussy about site conditions. Like heather, there are many cultivars with distinct growth cycles, providing a wide range of bloom times.

Usually blooming in February when flowering quince buds are swelling, **Snowdrops** *(galanthus)* have come into bloom as early as late December in our area. Don't let the demure nodding of the blossom deceive you – this is one tough flower! It will stand by you through ice and snow as you await spring's thaw and sunny daffodils. Unlike most bulbs, snowdrops are best divided when the foliage is still green.

Snowdrop

Hellebore

There are several varieties of **Hellebores** *(helleborus)*, with slightly varying bloom times, colors and forms. Most begin to bloom in late February to early March and remain undaunted by the changeable weather until finally fading as the welcome warmth of spring hints at the summer to come.

Plantae Non Gratae

Here's a guide to help do your part to avoid invasive species when purchasing or exchanging plants this spring. The New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team (www.njisst.org) has compiled a "Do Not Buy" list you can print out and take with you. Better yet, laminate it and keep it in the glove compartment, as you never know when you might need it! The web site also has full information about the organization and a wealth of information about a variety of invasive species (some might surprise you) and how they contribute to the degradation of our ecology.

DEEP CUT SPRING EVENTS

Earth Day Celebration

Sunday, April 22, 2012

12-5pm

The flowers are back in bloom. Discover the park's floral beauty, hidden places, and native plants. Find out, too, how to become an earth-friendly gardener and ways to compost.

The Great Spring Perennial Plant Swap

Saturday, April 28, 2012

10am-2pm

Bring perennial plants in 1-quart, 1-gallon or 2-gallon sized containers and exchange them for perennials of the same size. You may also exchange extra vegetable and herb seedlings, but no ornamental annuals, please.

Open House

Sunday, June 10, 2012

10am-3pm

A day of horticultural delights for the family – free guided tours, lectures, demonstrations, activities for children, gardening advice and more.

Volunteer Drop-in Days

Wednesdays and Saturdays

9am-12noon

April 11 – October 31, 2012

Stop in to assist in the park on these dates and times. New volunteers always welcome Call 732-671-6050 for information.

You don't really need a reason to stop by! Deep Cut is open every day of the year. There is always plenty to see, but spring is an especially popular season.

Park Ranger Marcia Floden with volunteers Susan Halley, Lois Lyons, Alexa Dubrowsky and Werner Aelich tend the newly planted annuals.

It's Time To...

April ✓

- Work compost and manure into beds as soon as soil is friable. Visit the Home Composting Demo Site at Deep Cut to learn more.
- Watch for weeds and pull them as they appear.
- Prune roses when the buds begin to swell.
- Cut back ornamental grasses, red twig dogwoods and blue mist shrub almost to ground level.
- Before plants get too large, divide those that are crowding their neighbors and set out supports where needed.
- Set out hardy annuals such as pansies, violas and alyssum. Harden off plants started indoors or under cover.
- When applying granular fertilizer, do not contact plant foliage – it will burn.
- Overseed lawn; prepare poor spots by loosening soil. If using pre-emergent weed-killer, use early this month.
- Most annual and perennial seeds can be started late this month.
- Check out Deep Cut Gardens Perennial Plant Swap on Saturday, April 28, 10am-2pm. It's fun, free and an opportunity to meet other gardeners. You can also exchange vegetable & herb seedlings.

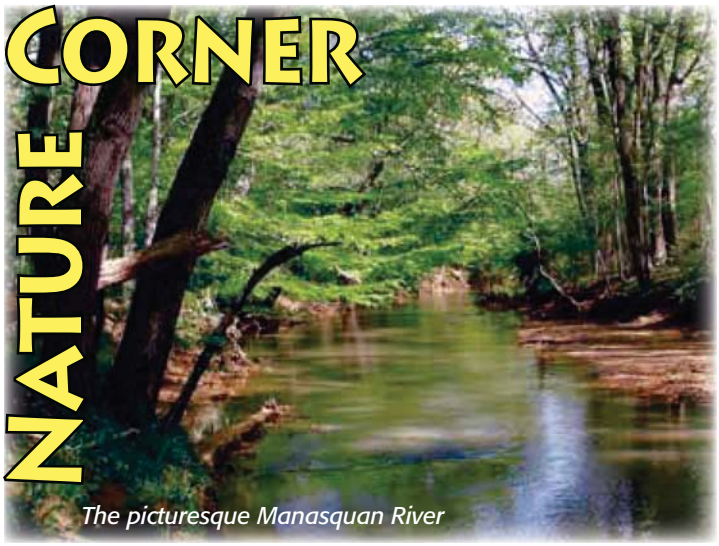
May ✓

- Prune spring-flowering shrubs as soon as flowering is finished.
- Leave bulb foliage until it has died - green foliage is making food for next year's bloom.
- Chemical controls will be ineffective against grubs now; wait until Mid-July or August.
- Wait until the soil warms to transplant tomatoes and peppers.
- Transplant well-hydrated seedlings on a cloudy day or provide temporary shade. Pinching off flowers and buds now will encourage a stronger root system.
- Remove any finished cool weather crops to make room for warm season vegetables.
- Direct sow seeds outdoors for basil, beans and other warm-weather plants.
- Mulch plants to conserve moisture, stabilize soil temperature and reduce weeds.
- Acclimate houseplants to outdoor conditions and keep them in light shade.

June ✓

- Continue to plant warm-weather flowers, vegetables and herbs. Water thoroughly before and after transplanting and mulch well with organic mulch.
- Check squash vines for borers and remove any you find.
- Keep after plants that need staking, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, tall annuals, dahlias and lilies.
- Save the date for the Deep Cut Gardens Open House, Sunday, June 10, 10am-3pm. Free garden tours, lectures, demonstrations, activities and more.

Save the Date! June 10 is the Open House and also happens to be an excellent time to view the Rose Garden.



The picturesque Manasquan River

HUNTING WILDFLOWERS AT THE MANASQUAN RIVER GREENWAY

Venture into this remote part of the County Park System in Howell during spring and a great reward awaits you. Manasquan River's verdant floodplain is habitat for the most abundant and diverse array of native spring wildflowers in Monmouth County.

The Manasquan River can be accessed at five different sites in Howell: Howell Park Golf Course, Haven's Bridge Rd., Southard Ave., Ketchum Rd., and West Farm Rd. Further downstream in Wall Township several points of access can be found in Allaire State Park. For maps/directions, visit monmouthcountyparks.com.

Start at Howell Park Golf Course

More than a golf course, Howell Park is a multi-faceted natural resource that incorporates part of the Manasquan River floodplain. As you enter the course on Preventorium Road, you will cross an old iron bridge. Look to your left– that's where you'll begin your adventure. Park in the paved lot and walk back to the river.

At the corner of the bridge head downstream along whatever trail the fishermen have created. There won't be any trail markers, foot bridges or boardwalks; the river itself decides what can or cannot exist along its banks and just about every year the Manasquan cleans house. The following items will come in handy: rubber boots camera, binoculars, field guide, water bottle and cell phone. And don't worry about getting lost. The river will always be within sight; when in doubt simply follow it upstream.

Skunk Cabbage Leads the Parade

First stop for the wildflower lover is a mid-winter trip to view the **Skunk cabbage** in 'bloom.' It is able to emerge early because millions of years ago, it figured out how to use stored food from the year before to send up a conical brownish-red hood called a spathe, and bio-chemically generate heat (almost 20°C warmer than its surroundings) to melt through ice and snow. The spathe covers the spadix, a club-shaped structure with petal-less, foul-smelling flowers that attract certain flies (for pollination).

Skunk Cabbage spath in mid-winter. Barely visible inside the bottom one is the flower bud, it eventually wilts as the plant sends up stalks that unfurl into large green leaves, pictured below.

Skunk Cabbage plants along the Manasquan River floodplain in April.

Other than the devout botanist, the pleasure of finding skunk cabbages in mid-winter will probably suffice as a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

From "Beast" to Beauty

One species everyone enjoys is the **Spring Beauty**, a delicate plant with sparkling, white and pink 5-petaled flowers. A few may bloom along the Manasquan in late March, but you'll need to wait for a warm, sunny day (they only open in sunshine) in mid-April when they carpet the riverbank.

Spring Beauty

The Gentleman Wildflowers

Another mid-April blossom, the **Dutchman's-breeches**, is difficult to find these days at Howell Park. A more reliable site is further downstream within nearby Allaire State Park. It is recognized by its fern-like leaves and delicate, pantaloon-shaped flowers drooping along an arched stem. Home gardeners may note a resemblance to its cousin, the bleeding-heart. According to some sources, Dutchman's-breeches has poisonous parts which can cause minor skin irritations if touched.

Dutchman's-Breeches

The curiously named **Jack-in-the-pulpit**, is another April bloomer. Here the spathe forms a "pulpit" that wraps around the preacher and spadix "Jack," who holds the flowers. Look for two variants: plain green and purple striped.

Jack-in-the-pulpit, green

Jack-in-the-pulpit, striped

A Wrongly Named Flower

Field guides call the plant below **Trout Lily**, named for the pattern of the leaf which resembles the sides of the brook trout. When it blooms in late April, you may notice many plants without flowers. This species takes 8 years to mature and produce a blossom, and the effects of erosion along the Manasquan probably prevent a good many from reaching that age. Some field guides call this flower "Dog-toothed Violet," and that's since its 6 large, curved, yellow petals are most definitely the features of a lily.

Trout Lily

A Flower with Secrets

If any spring wildflower could be described as "secretive" it would be that of the **Wild Ginger**. To see the flower, you must first locate its large, heart-shaped, velvety leaves and part them. Even then, you still might not see the purple-brown flower which lies close to the ground, often obscured by debris. The aroma and flavor of the plant resembles ginger, but it's not related to the real ginger. **A word of caution: do not taste-test as chemicals from wild ginger may be carcinogenic.**

Wild Ginger leaves

Wild Ginger flower

Easy Wildflowers to See

No words of warning accompany the **Wild Geranium**, a lovely 2 foot tall perennial or the **Golden Alexander**, a parsley family representative that's equally prominent in mid-May. Both can usually be found within a few feet of the iron bridge.

Wild Geranium

Golden Alexander

Source: www.biosurvey.ou.eduokwildgoldenalex.html

Wherever your adventures take you please be sure to note where public access begins and ends. And, as always, if you make any interesting or unusual nature discoveries within your Monmouth County Parks, we always appreciate learning about them.

GREEN HERITAGE

805 Newman Springs Road, Lincroft, NJ 07738-1695

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PARK SYSTEM

Spring is here and this issue is all about the blooms. Plus, there's a new park underway, learn which towns were awarded grants for park projects in 2011…and hear news about a grant of our own!

CALLING ALL TALENTED GARDENERS:

Compete To Win This Year!

If your marigolds have mojo or you grow the sunniest sunflowers, why not enter this year's Home & Garden Competition? There are dozens of categories to compete in from annuals to bulbs to container plants, and more…

In 2011, the Best in Show for the Garden Competition was awarded to this giant artichoke flower.

Monmouth County Fair

Wednesday July 25-Sunday July 29

Call 732-842-4000, x4312 to receive your 2012 Home & Garden Entry Details in June by mail. Or, visit us online for a list of last year's winners (click on Activities/Monmouth County Fair/2011 Fair Competition Results).

VOLUNTEER WITH THE PARKS

Pruning Team Training Workshops begin soon.

Apr. 10; 9-12 noon
Apr. 19; 9-12 noon
Thompson Park
Visitor Center,
Lincroft
(ages 14 & up)

Call 732-842-4000 x4283 or visit online to register (click About Us/Volunteers in Parks/ Calendar)

Volunteer Rori Davis removes a vine from inside a shrub at Dorbrook.

Visit www.monmouthcountyparks.com