



MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM GREEN HERITAGE

The Newsletter of Monmouth County's Open Space, Parks & Recreation Agency

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A STILL LIFE AT HISTORIC WALNFORD

One lovely benefit of visiting a park is the restorative effect that a few hours of peace and quiet can provide. There are among the county's 39 parks a few special sites with an atmosphere naturally conducive to stillness and reflection. One of those is Historic Walnford, a beautifully preserved estate in Upper Freehold.

What Makes This Historic Site So Relaxing?

Visiting Walnford is like being transported to another place and time. Tucked away in the rural, westernmost tip of Monmouth County, this site has some physical distance from the dense concentration of development in eastern parts of the county. Getting away from all the malls, stores, gas stations, billboards, and traffic lights can be a refreshing change. The diminishing visual clutter eases visitors into a more peaceful state of mind.



A simple, naturally tranquil setting.



The scenery is lovely, even during early spring before the trees leaf out.



Picturesque white picket fences surround the Waln house and grounds.



Welcome to Walnford; visitors enter through a corn crib.

Scenic vistas surrounding Walnford have been carefully preserved to maintain the pastoral landscape. Wherever you look, the view is green and soothing, with no discordant architecture. The nearest house is at the foot of a long driveway, the parking lot remains unpaved, and quaint, white picket fences surround the estate.

Visitors enter the site through a charming corn crib (housing ears of corn for the gristmill) and emerge into a rustic array of elegant buildings. Many look and smell of old wood—their primary construction material—and there are minimal modern features such as electronics or vehicles on site. More than a dozen historic structures (including a cow barn, carriage house and wagon shed) have been thoughtfully preserved, inviting visitors to imagine what day to day life was like in the past.

As for sound, there is very little of that, too. In fact, visitors often comment on the 'quality of quiet' at Walnford. When people step into a setting that features such stillness, with only the tinkling of a nearby creek and perhaps light wind rustling through the leaves, it is hard not to notice.

A Mill For All Seasons...

Historic Walnford is open every day of the year. The site's signature bright blue gristmill operates for demonstrations weekends from April through November.



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Walnford is situated along Crosswicks Creek

For some visitors, all this peace and quiet requires a bit of adjustment. Those accustomed to constant stimuli can find the serenity a little unsettling at first or feel put out because there are no convenience stores, fast food establishments or even vending machines nearby. But if these quotes from Walnford's comment book are any indication, they are soon won over by the site's deeply relaxing qualities.

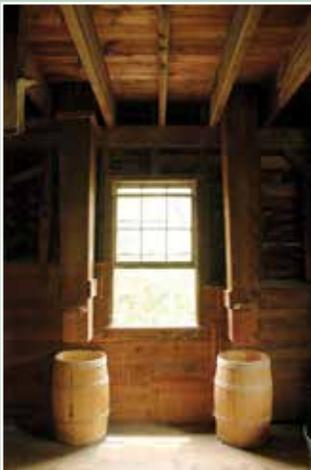
What a beautiful place! · Just lovely! · We never tire of this trip back in time · What a great place—this made our weekend! · Awesome! · Can we live here? Magnificent tour (and we are only at the entrance)! · Lovely setting · Charming park! Absolutely delightful!! · Thank you!!! · I love this place! · A hidden treasure! · What a gem! · History Rocks! · Great—helps history come alive! · Wonderfully historic! A step back in time! · Heaven on Earth—Inspirational! · Breath-taking! · Absolutely divine! So peaceful! · Relaxing · Unforgettable! · Stunning! · Wow! Best Ever!

Where a Picture is Worth 1,000 Words

The term 'still life' actually comes from the world of art, where it often refers to a picture that has both refined lighting and purposeful composition. At Walnford, these conditions are present naturally, and so it is through the photographer's lens that some of the site's lovely and peaceful interiors are shown best.



Inside the Waln house; before indoor plumbing



Grain storage
barrels in the mill



Millworker
aprons

A REASON TO CELEBRATE... **BLUEBELL FESTIVAL, APRIL 14th**

Following damage from Hurricane Irene in 2011, the gristmill is formally re-opening for demonstrations just in time for bluebell season! These beautiful, trumpet-shaped flowers may or may not make their appearance in time for the re-opening, but that's the unpredictability of nature—there will be other flowers to see and things to do!



Bluebells, an iconic field flower of early spring.



Stairs in the Waln home



Old tools



An old bedroom



Trunks in the attic



A flower arrangement in the parlor



A bucket and a wooden bin in the carriage house

Not Always So Quiet...

Walnford's early period as a former mill village housing 50 people was not quiet at all. It was once a bustling center of commerce, and later, a center for agricultural activity. It wasn't until the 1900s that it took on the genteel characteristics of Colonial Revival estate that people see today.

Quilts of Character Exhibit at Historic Walnford March 1, 2013 - February 15, 2014



Small Section of Indigo Blue Wax Resist Quilt circa 1770-1803.

Some quilts are decorative and commemorate a special event, while others are just plain and warm, but all quilts have a unique design.

Visitors are invited to view and enjoy six selected quilts of character covering two different periods of history, the 1770s-1800 and the 1860s. All were hand-made using different techniques and different materials, but, for the most part, made by parties unknown.

COUNTY'S SANDY FRAUD TASK FORCE OFFICE OPENS IN PARK

The Park System is providing office space for the county's new **Superstorm Sandy Fraud Task Force** at the Bayshore Activity Center. The office is staffed by the Monmouth County Prosecutor's office 2 days a week to protect county residents from improper business practices by home improvement contractors. Staff will investigate complaints, pursue fines or prosecute those who commit crimes. Residents can also access tips about "red flag" situations and other helpful information.

- **Visit in person:** Tuesdays 9am-12:30pm and Thursdays 2pm-4:30pm.
- **Visit online:** www.sandyfraud.com
- **Call:** 855-SANDY39 Monday-Friday 9am-7pm

From Route 36, take Main St. in Port Monmouth to Port Monmouth Rd.
(GPS: Use 719 Port Monmouth Rd, 07758.)

View of Bayshore Activity Center entrance from Port Monmouth Rd.



Andrew S. Fried
Task Force Coordinator



COUNTY GRANTS HELP FUND 16 LOCAL PARK PROJECTS

On December 13, the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders awarded grants to sixteen Monmouth County municipalities who applied for 2012 funding under the Municipal Open Space Grant Program. This annual competitive matching grant program is funded by the County Open Space Trust Fund. Since 2003, 48 of 53 towns in Monmouth County have been awarded almost \$23 million for local park acquisition and development projects.

Have a Project in Mind for Your Town?

Applications for 2013 grants will be mailed to each Mayor, Clerk and Administrator in May. A September 19, 2013 deadline is anticipated.

For more information on the program and copies of the current application form and Policy and Procedures Manual, visit the Park System's website www.monmouthcountyparks.com and click on Municipal Open Space Program under the "About Us" button. If you have questions or would like a hard copy of the Manual, please contact the Program Administrator at 732-842-4000, ext. 4472.

FREEHOLD WILL USE \$135,000 GRANT TO RENOVATE PARK WITH DRAINAGE ISSUES

Veteran's Park is a 7.7 acre park that opened in 1952 to honor Freehold Borough's veterans of World War I, World War II and the Korean War. Unfortunately, the park is located at the lowest point in the neighborhood and is unusable throughout much of the spring and summer because of poor overland drainage. Grant funding will be used to rebuild the park so it can become a year round focal point of community activity.

This will be Freehold Borough's first Municipal Open Space Grant Program project, and improvements will be implemented in two phases. Current grant funding Phase I includes installation of an underground drainage system which will improve year-round usability of the park.



Grass field picnic shelter and playground at Veteran's Park

2012 County Open Space Grants

Little Silver	Parker Homestead Restoration (Development)	\$250,000
Millstone	Historic Baird Homestead Restoration (Development)	\$183,000
Sea Girt	Baltimore Park Improvements (Development)	\$100,000
Englishtown	French Property (Acquisition)	\$95,000
Howell	Van Schoick Property (Acquisition)	\$98,000
Avon-by-the-Sea	Volunteer Park Improvements (Development)	\$100,000
Neptune Township	Jumping Brook Ballfield Improvements (Development)	\$250,000
Asbury Park	Springwood Avenue Park and Recreation Area - Phase 2 (Development)	\$250,000
Ocean	Poplar Village Site (Acquisition)	\$85,000
Deal	Roseld Avenue Park Improvements (Development)	\$150,000
Neptune City	Memorial Park Beach Improvements (Development)	\$206,000
Freehold Borough	Veterans Park Redevelopment - Phase 1 (Development)	\$135,000
Long Branch	Lake Takanassee Bank Stabilization (Development)	\$250,000
Highlands	Snug Harbor Beach Access (Development)	\$23,000
Tinton Falls	Traditions Site (Acquisition)	\$250,000
Holmdel	Ackerson Indian Hill Park Improvements (Development)	\$100,000

An underground drainage system will mitigate flooding so residents can use the park year-round.

Phase I also includes improved, ADA-compliant access to the park, a new exercise trail with fitness stations, renovation of the picnic shelter and a tot lot, as well as new benches, bike racks and drinking fountains. This redesign will, hopefully, draw local residents to this often overlooked park.

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The Veteran's Park revitalization is the first project of the local Youth Council. Created in 2012 with sixteen middle and high school students, the Youth Council helps young people acquire a greater knowledge of American government through active participation. With the help of the Borough Engineer, the Youth Council developed a park plan and budget for improvements. The Borough Council will match the county grant with a bond ordinance.

"I'm really proud of the accomplishments of the Youth Council. Their first meeting was an open discussion of issues that impact Borough youth, and recreation was identified as the most important issue. Veterans Park was identified as a park that needed help, and the Youth Council worked with the Borough Engineer to create the amenities that should be included in this project."

—Freehold Borough Councilman Jaye Sims

\$250,000 GRANT TO RESTORE DAMAGED HABITAT AT LONG BRANCH LANDMARK

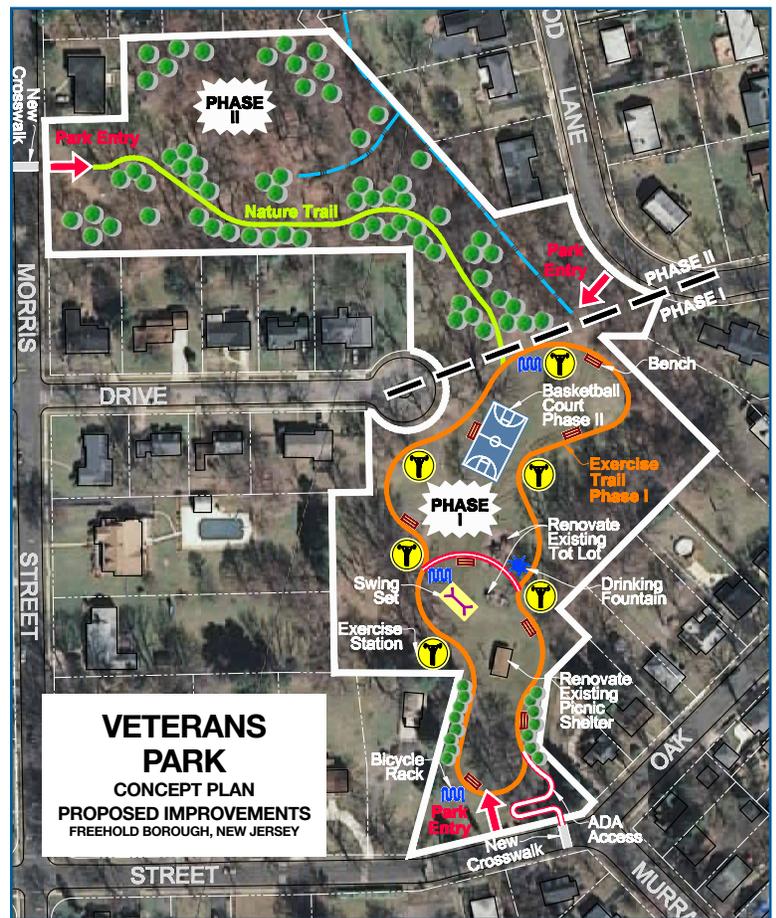
Lake Takanassee is a 22.46 acre park that provides a vital link between the Atlantic Ocean and the Whale Pond Brook Watershed. It suffers from eroding bank conditions and invasive plant growth. Over the past several years, these conditions have attracted a large population of geese which, in turn, has reduced use of the park by local residents and native wildlife. Unprecedented tidal flooding caused by Superstorm Sandy created even more damage. The Bank Stabilization Project around Takanassee Lake is the first step to restore this property.



Lake Takanassee in Long Branch

"We are very grateful to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for awarding this grant to stabilize and restore the shoreline of Lake Takanassee, one of the most active outdoor areas in the City. Hurricanes Irene and Sandy have taken a severe toll on the shoreline in the area and the commitment of this kind of County Open Space money will be a great help to the City in its recovery efforts."

—Long Branch Administrator, Howard Wooley



Concept Plan for the 7.7 acre Veteran's Park in Freehold.

This will be Long Branch's third Municipal Open Space Grant Program project. The goal for this part of the project is to remove invasive vegetation, reproduce the lake bank with natural fill material, and stabilize disturbed areas with beneficial plants that are native to the area.

Stabilizing the lake slope will create new habitat for songbirds, waterfowl and shore birds.

The slope stabilization is intended to create new habitat for songbirds, waterfowl, and shore birds, as well as amphibians and turtles.

This is the first natural habitat restoration project to receive funding from the county grant program. When restoration work is complete, Long Branch will move forward to create a scenic walking trail and improve the streetscape.

THE EXQUISITE PEONY

The peonies that were a mainstay in my grandmother's garden are making a comeback ... and with good reason. Long-lived, low-maintenance, deer-resistant and fairly adaptable, they provide luxurious green foliage in the garden throughout the growing season even after the exquisite and sometimes fragrant blossoms have faded. And, they produce interesting seed pods in fall if you care to leave them to mature.



Peonies are an excellent component of a mixed perennial border, such as this one at Buck Gardens in Far Hills, NJ.

The genus consists of approximately 40 species of herbaceous perennials and deciduous shrubs native to Europe, East Asia and Western North America. Of the four types of peonies - herbaceous, woodland, tree, and intersectional, — at least one is bound to be suited for your garden.



A close-up view.

Conditions & Planting Times

Although peonies tolerate a wide range of conditions, the one thing they cannot tolerate is “wet feet” — waterlogged soil. They will perform best in a moist, well-drained soil rich in organic matter, in the neutral to slightly alkaline pH range (6.5-7.5). Peonies are not only extremely cold hardy, they require a winter chill below 40 degrees in order to flower.

Different peony types require different conditions. Herbaceous (the most common type) and intersectional peonies will be at their best in full sun but will tolerate some light or dappled shade. Woodland peonies, as their name implies, perform best in the dappled shade of deciduous trees. Tree peonies will tolerate full sun, but will benefit from some light shade in the afternoon and will perform very nicely in dappled sunlight.

The ideal planting time for bare root stock is late fall through spring; container-grown plants can be planted at any time. Since peonies resent being moved, correct siting and soil preparation is highly recommended and they will thrive for generations. They are very sensitive to planting depth, so be sure to carefully follow the planting directions that come with your peony.

Peonies require little fertilizer, but will appreciate some compost worked into the soil. If you wish to fertilize, use a low-nitrogen or a balanced fertilizer in spring when stems are 2-3” high.

Flower Power

Flower forms for most types of peony range from 'single form' to very full 'double form', except for woodland species, which are always single. Flower colors range from white through shades of pink to purple and deepest red, cream, coral, light green and multicolored. While there



Here is a 'single form' peony. Note minimal rows of large petals. Photo courtesy of K. Gagan, Peony's Envy.

are many yellow-flowered tree and intersectional peonies, yellow herbaceous peonies are rare. Woodland peonies are always either pink or white.

Did you notice the vase of peonies in a photo from a previous story in this newsletter? If not, you may like to go back and take a look.



A 'Japanese form' peony from the author's garden. Note the center.

Herbaceous Peonies—“The Most Common”

This is the **best-known** type of peony. Ranging in height from 2-3 feet, they bloom for 7-10 days from late spring into early summer, producing some of the best cut flowers available. Most will need support for the heavy blossoms. These plants die to the ground each winter. Remove spent flower stems down to the first set of true leaves. In fall, cut stems to within three inches of the ground and discard, do not compost them.



The ‘double form’ peony has a noticeably fuller shape from the multiple rows of petals. Photo courtesy of K. Gagan, Peony’s Envy.



A fuchsia-colored herbaceous peony growing at Deep Cut Gardens.

Woodland—“A Shade-Loving Regular”

Woodland peonies are a sub-type of herbaceous peonies. *Paeonia obovata* (pink) and *Paeonia japonica* (white) make a beautiful **low-growing ground cover for shade**. Against the soft green foliage that persists throughout the growing season, the plant produces small single flowers in spring and indigo and scarlet seed pods in the fall.

Tree Peonies—“The Early Bird”

Leafing out in early April and blooming shortly thereafter, tree peonies are a beautiful compliment to other spring-flowering plants. The leaf and flower buds are surprisingly resistant to late spring frosts. Depending on variety, they range from 3-7 feet in height and may be



The tree peony ‘Feng Dan’ – the fragrant flowers on this tree peony are up to 7” across when fully open.

upright or spreading in habit. These peonies will perform best in dappled shade or morning sun and afternoon shade, and protection from heavy winds is advised. After bloom, cut stems just below the flower. In fall, allow leaves to drop naturally and remove the flower stalks that have died back to the new growth below.

Intersectional—“The Hybrid”

Toichi Itoh produced the first intersectional peonies in Tokyo, Japan by **crossing a tree peony with an herbaceous peony**, resulting in a wider range of colors, larger flowers and a longer bloom season on a plant that dies to the ground in winter. Offering an astounding range of yellows and golds in addition to the other colors, the tree peony bloom time falls between the tree and herbaceous types. Plants range from 2-5 feet high and wide.

Peony Problems: Mostly Mild

Ants are attracted by nectar on the buds and will cause no harm. Contrary to popular belief, they are not required for peonies to bloom. To prevent bringing them inside, cut the flowers while still in a tight bud, when the ants can be shaken off without damaging the flower. This also increases the vase life of the flower.

Although peonies are susceptible to a few diseases, the most common is also the least problematic: powdery mildew. Usually appearing late in the season, it is more an aesthetic issue for the gardener. Prevent this, if you must, with *b. subtilis*, neem oil, or a baking soda spray. If the fungal disease botrytis should strike in early spring, remove and discard diseased tissue and treat the plant with a systemic fungicide. Minimize the risk with good air circulation and thorough fall clean-up.

Occasionally a peony will refuse to bloom. Remember that newly planted or transplanted peonies may take 2-3 years to become established before flowering. Other causes might be too much shade, a poorly draining soil or competition from nearby trees or shrubs. Also, check to be sure the top of the tuber is no more than 2” deep, due to initial planting or the addition of mulch.



Some gardeners will go to any length to protect the delicate peony blossoms from heavy spring downpours, including use of an umbrella!

STORM-WORTHY TREES

In the wake of damage from Superstorm Sandy, many area homeowners will be making some important decisions with respect to existing and replacement trees. These trees, our 'stately neighbors,' can play an important role in the environment while conserving energy costs, providing aesthetic value and an oasis for relaxation.

Although it may be tempting to reach for the fast-growing species, especially if you have lost desirable shade or privacy screening, remember that fast-growing species usually are weaker and much more prone to storm damage.

Fast-growing trees are weaker and more prone to storm damage.

Slow-growing trees, like oaks and hickories, have stronger limbs and root systems. Assess your site and select the right species for the growing conditions.

Although tree safety cannot be guaranteed, some conditions affect the likelihood of tree failure.

- 1. Tree form** – inclusion of bark at branch unions, codominant leaders and poorly placed branches make a tree more susceptible to damage under storm conditions.
- 2. Internal decay** - the natural degradation of the tree trunk, branch or root tissue is the most common contributor to tree failure. Decayed wood has very little strength and the location and extent of decay are critical factors.
- 3. Maintenance practices** – poor maintenance practices such as mechanical damage from lawnmowers or trimmers and piling mulch several inches against the trunk may lead to internal decay.
- 4. Pruning practices** – improper pruning may encourage decay or the formation of weak branches.
- 5. Irrigation** – frequent, shallow watering can encourage shallow root systems, girdling roots and unstable trees.
- 6. Site problems** – poor or compacted soils, confined rooting area or inappropriate species can lead to a weak root system and unstable trees.
- 7. Stem girdling roots** – these are roots that may form at or below the soil level, partially or completely encircling the trunk of the tree. Over time, they literally strangle the tree, causing overall stress and creating a weak spot prone to breakage in high winds.



The mighty oak, in this case, a Chestnut Oak is a slow-growing and therefore stronger tree. It takes decades for a large tree like this to reach maturity, but planting for the future is worth the effort.



According to Doug Tallamy (Professor & Chair of Entomology & Wildlife Ecology, Univ. of Delaware and author of Bringing Nature Home), hickory trees—like the one pictured here—support 200 species of butterflies and moths.



This is an example of codominant leaders with bark inclusion. This occurs when a tree has two or more branches competing to be the central trunk of the tree. Inclusion of bark at a branch union creates a weak point in the tree.

The American Littoral Society has seen a disturbing trend over recent years where large native species such as pines, oaks, elms, sycamores and beech are being replaced with smaller, often non-native, ornamental trees. This practice reduces the habitat for native insects and the native birds that depend upon them. Furthermore, the change in overall canopy height adversely affects habitat for large birds such as owls and hawks.

It's Time To...



April ✓

- Work compost and manure into beds as soon as soil is friable.
- Watch for weeds and pull them as they appear.
- Prune roses when the buds begin to swell.
- Cut back ornamental grasses, almost to ground level.
- Divide plants that are crowding their neighbors and set out supports where needed.
- Set out hardy annuals such as pansies, violas and alyssum.
- When applying granular fertilizer, make sure it does 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.



Pansies

May ✓

- Prune spring-flowering shrubs as soon as flowering is finished.
- 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.
- Direct sow seeds outdoors for basil, beans and other warm-weather plants.
- Mulch plants to conserve moisture, stabilize soil temperature and reduce weeds.



Volunteers plant spring flowers at Deep Cut

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.
- Plants that need staking: tomatoes, cucumbers, tall annuals, dahlias and lilies.
- June 17-23 is Pollinator Week. Are your gardens pollinator friendly?



Did you know? Butterflies are pollinators, too!

Deep Cut Spring Events...

Great Spring Perennial Plant Swap

Saturday, April 27 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.



Daylily Day

Saturday, June 29, 10am-2pm

Presented by the Monmouth County Park System and the Garden State Daylily Growers. Free Horticultural advice, displays, garden design ideas.



Open House

Sunday, June 9, 10am-3pm

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



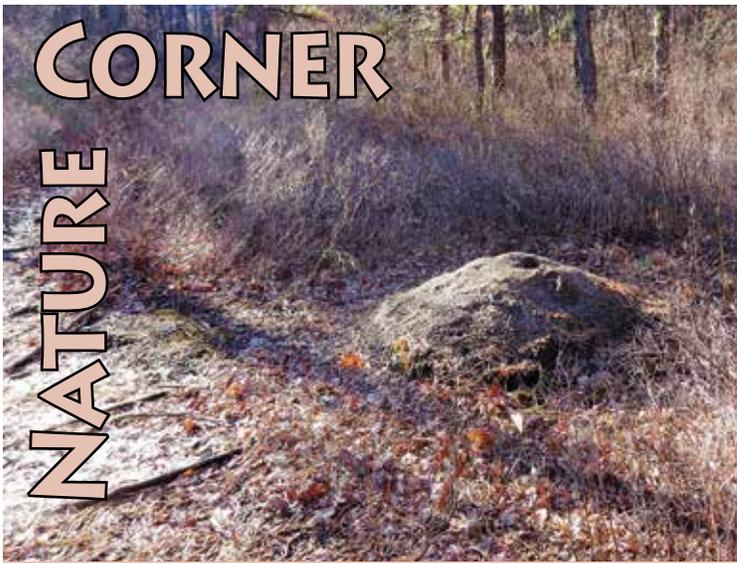
Earth Day Celebration

Sunday, April 21 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.

CORNER

NATURE



Single Allegheny Mound Ant mound at Turkey Swamp Park as seen from the Metedeconk Trail in January.

AN UNUSUAL SIGHT ON THE PATH LESS TRAVELED

Janet Ryan, Park System Naturalist

With over 8 miles of deeply wooded trails, Turkey Swamp Park in Freehold is a great place to get back into the groove of those energizing weekend hikes. But, if you venture onto one of this park's more remote trails, you just might encounter a novel scene: giant mounds of earth. As you pause to gawk at this oddity, you might also notice there seem to be fewer plants growing nearby and wonder... who built these large mounds and what happened to the vegetation?!?

There are at least half a dozen mounds, some singles and some doubles, on either side of the Metedeconk Trail, near the beginning. The trail entrance is pictured here; it is accessible from the Maintenance Road.



Small Residents in a Giant House

If you're a keen and careful observer, you'll eventually discover that little ants built these large mounds. Rust red on the head and thorax, blackish brown on legs and abdomen (they can also be just black or just red), you can see them marching up and down those giant hills, but keep your distance—they bite!

If ants are the architects, you may wonder...how? These mounds are so large and, most of the time, ant hills are much smaller. Enter the Allegheny Mound Ants (*Formica exsectoides*), named (seemingly) for the mid-range of their known area. According to ant experts—called myrmecologists—this type of ant lives throughout Eastern Canada and the United States from Nova Scotia to Georgia in undisturbed, well drained soils in woods, pastures, meadows and lawns—anywhere there is a lot of open space.



Allegheny Mound Ants at Turkey Swamp Park



Why Are The Mounds So Big?

More often than not, animals build their homes to blend into the environment and provide the ability to hide. Not these ants—their mounds stick out like sore thumbs! Some are as big as 5 feet across and stand 3½ feet high. Moreover, some mounds join up with the mounds of other colonies (call “budding”) to form “supercolonies” which can cover an area as wide as 18 feet across!

What's the advantage to that? When scientists try to figure out answers to their questions, they make observations, conduct tests and speculate based on past experience. Sometimes they don't agree, and often it takes a long time to figure it all out. Back in 1810, a scientist named Pierre Huber thought that a big convex mound would protect ants from a possible injury from the air. He also thought the cone shape would help carry water off the mound and away from the house, such as a pitched roof does. However, present day scientist Lee Townsend thinks that being underground is safer.



A double Allegheny Mound Ant mound at Turkey Swamp Park, on the Metedeconk Trail in January.

One hypothesis with some consensus is that large mounds act as solariums, providing extra surface area to be warmed by the sun. Townsend notes that the south-facing slope of the mound is usually elongated, so it can receive even more of the early springtime sunlight. More warmth in the nest when baby ants are developing means a greater chance for survival. Even though the ants excavate soil from below ground to build the mounds, most of the galleries in the mounds are above the surface. Mound tops are often covered with a thin layer of thatch.

Large Houses, Longer Colony Life?

Some Allegheny Mound Ant colonies have hundreds of thousands of ants. It may be because the huge mound itself is such an effective incubator, a huge percentage of ants will develop. But there is one important anomaly with this species that may account for the huge numbers. Whereas many ant colonies only tolerate one queen, Allegheny Mound Ants can have several queens in the same mound.

Allegheny Mound Ants can have several queens in the same mound.

In addition to multiplying the number of eggs laid, having extra queens in the same colony is a form of insurance that the colony can survive in case of the death of a queen. Some colonies can survive for 30 years.

Ant Population vs. Mound Diameter

500-3,000	6 inches – 1 ½ feet
1,000-6,000	1 ½ – 3 feet
3,000-10,000	3 – 5 feet

Source: Greenshare Factsheet. University of Rhode Island Landscape Horticulture Program. Adapted From: Lee Townsend, Entomologist, University of Kentucky College of Agriculture 2001. Available at: www.uri.edu/ce/factsheets/sheets/alleganyant.html. Accessed Jan 7, 2013.

Sparse Vegetation Around Mounds

Why are there no plants in the area on the south side of the mounds? The answer is: there would be no advantage to building a large south-facing mound to dwell in the sunshine if there were trees and other plants blocking out the sunlight. These Allegheny Mound Ants know exactly how to deal with unwanted shade. They don't need power saws, because they have their own built-in defoliant: formic acid. They bite the plant first, then, with the special nozzle at their back end, they spray out this powerful chemical into the wound.

The formic acid kills plants—including trees, which at first develop resin-filled blisters. Ants will kill vegetation in an area up to 50 feet away on the southern side. There is, however, a notable exception to this. Researchers from the

Brookhaven National Laboratory doing experiments in the Pine Barrens Community of Long Island have observed that the ants will not bother two particular species of plants, either inside the “death zone” away from the mounds or even if these plants are intentionally planted on top of the mounds. These plants are bearberry and Pennsylvania sedge.



Principal Park Ranger Skip Supczynski stands next to a triple Allegheny Mound Ant mound at Tatum Park in Middletown, during warm weather months when the nest is active. These mounds are located in a section of the park that is not open to the public.

Ouch!—The Allegheny Mound Ant Can Sting

Keep in mind, as you view any Allegheny Ant mounds, that if you create a shadow over the mound, ants will set to work biting you with their strong mandibles. Then, they will turn to spray formic acid at you, just as if you were a tree!

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PARK SYSTEM

DORBROOK'S ACCESSIBLE PAVED TRAIL

The 2.4 mile paved trail at Dorbrook Recreation Area in Colts Neck was recently renovated to meet NJ Barrier Free Provisions of the Uniform Construction Code. What that means is that the slope or flatness of the trail running

front to back AND side to side now meets recent standards for accessibility.

While many people have enjoyed access to the paved trails at Holmdel, Thompson and Dorbrook, this is the Park System's first trail to formally meet all the newer requirements. People with limited mobility, those pushing wheelchairs or strollers, or basically anyone who would like the most level trail experience possible can now do so at this location.



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