



GREEN HERITAGE

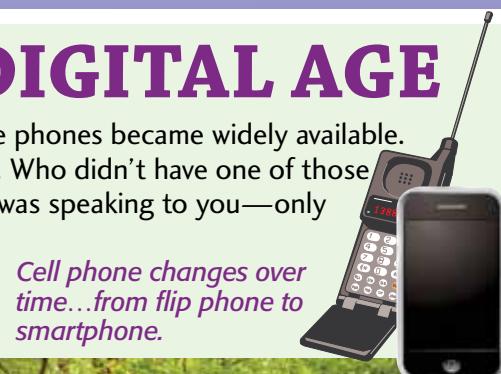
The Newsletter of Monmouth County's Open Space, Parks & Recreation Agency

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OUTDOOR FITNESS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

It was the mid 1990s, the era of the PalmPilot and BlackBerry®, when the first mobile phones became widely available. This new technology presented some very interesting, even amusing, new challenges. Who didn't have one of those strange encounters in the store or office where you answered a person you thought was speaking to you—only to realize they were on the phone with someone else?

Just a few years later, by the early 2000s, half the population had cell phones. Here in the parks, the 'alien' sound of a phone ringing in the woods was strange to us at first; so was listening to a person have (what seemed like) a conversation with him/herself. New mobile phone owners had not yet learned to modulate their voices to the quiet outdoor setting. Moreover, cell reception in those early days was not ideal, especially in the woods. Remember those famous "Can you hear me now?" commercials. Compared to the muted sounds of nature, it didn't take much for a person talking on a cellphone to attract attention. That was, until we all grew more accustomed to this new technology, including its presence in more remote locations.



Cell phone changes over time...from flip phone to smartphone.



If a cell phone rings in the forest, and no one is around to hear it...

Mid-2000s: Cell Phone Use Takes Off

Cell phone use exploded in the mid-2000s, signal coverage grew stronger (no more yelling into the phone on the trails) and they were no longer a novelty in the parks. Even so, some people remained ambivalent about taking their new phones with them out on the trails. *Wasn't that the point of being outside in the first place—to get away from the noise and distraction?* Perhaps you were among the visitors who paused for an uncomfortable moment of indecision before locking the car door: *Should I bring the phone with me, or leave it in the car?* Of course you hoped to relax and unplug during your park visit, but couldn't help but wonder: *What if someone needs to reach me?*

Some outdoor enthusiasts prefer to remain unplugged while out in the parks; others like to stay connected.



By 2007, nearly 75% of American adults owned a cell phone, yet the parks remained on the 'shortlist' of places where people made a conscious effort not to use them; along with church/religious services and movie theaters/other performances. Some outdoor enthusiasts wondered why anyone would need a cell phone on a trail in the first place (if they had one, they wouldn't dream of bringing it with them). We got along



By the mid 2000s, cell phones were everywhere—including the parks. There are at least two people talking while sunbathing at Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park in this photo, and others while out on a paddle boat in Turkey Swamp Park, and walking the paved trail at Dorbrook Recreation Area.



just fine for all those years BEFORE cell phones were invented, what's so different now? But others grew very attached to their new devices and began to carry them all the time, including time spent outdoors. Only a few of the very stoutest souls had the desire (or strength) to leave their phones behind, or even just turn them off for a few hours. Fewer still resisted the urge to purchase a cell phone altogether.

2007 & Beyond: Texting & Smart Phones

As manufacturers added—then perfected—an array of addictive new features, our casual relationship to our phones grew into a full-blown love affair. By late 2007, texting had surpassed talking as the preferred mode of communication. Many found the limited, direct, and non-interruptive nature of a text a refreshingly easy alternative to the full-on commitment of a phone call.

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Walking the dog or walking with a friend, it's quiet and easy to "talk" via text on a cell phone.



Deep Cut Gardens (you may notice that's an iPod in the second photo, a common pre-cursor to the cell phone for many children.)



The cellphone camera helps us capture somber moments like the 9-11 Memorial Ceremony at Mount Mitchill Scenic Overlook, or delightful ones such as beautiful plants and flowers at Deep Cut Gardens (you may notice that's an iPod in the second photo, a common pre-cursor to the cell phone for many children.)



Expanding features helped make the cell phone an indispensable part of our lives. Runners connect for some music.



Having a cell phone with you—even if you plan not to use it—can provide a sense of security while enjoying the outdoors. Although, there are still many park areas without cell reception.



It's hard to tell if this mom is pulling out her phone for a photo or a text—maybe both!

Enjoying the Outdoors with Technology

For some park visitors, the cell phone is both a security feature and a path to freedom. That same cell phone which may feel like a nuisance to the person who really just wants to "unplug," provides a liberating sense of security to a person new to the outdoors, someone who would never consider a long walk on a remote park trail, unless they could stay in touch with family, the office, or the pet-sitter. Even though there are still some park areas without cell reception, having a mobile phone can help visitors feel safer while embarking into unfamiliar territory.

Beyond their original use as a tool to stay in touch, cell phones are now a MUCH bigger part of the outdoor experience. They allow us to capture every novel sighting (a rainbow! a sunset! a squirrel!), and post it to Facebook, Instagram, or Pinterest, or

This was particularly true among young users who, in some cases, wouldn't even answer their cell phones anymore (responding only to texts). This trend forced the technology-reluctant to begin texting also, or risk getting cut off from communicating with young people altogether (in some cases, their own kids). In terms of cell phone use in the parks, the texting revolution was a much quieter development.

Also in 2007, the iPhone was introduced (the Android with competitive features came a few years later). The effortless touchscreen technology and massive new capability for music and photography—not to mention social media, wi-fi and all those new apps—sealed the deal. We were now completely smitten with our phones, even if we didn't want to talk or text.

By 2014, over 90% of American adults had a cell phone (and nearly 60% of all cell phone users had smartphones). There is no longer any question about the role of the cell phone in our lives. We take them with us everywhere, especially the outdoors, and grow nervous or alarmed if we realize the phone is not on us or somewhere nearby.

tweet about it, not to mention texting or emailing friends directly. We can map our exact location in the woods (that friendly blue dot will follow us as we go) while listening to a custom music soundtrack or podcast as we run or hike our favorite trail. We can also get up to the

minute weather forecasts, bird sightings, kayak launch sites—even bathroom locations—all very useful when outdoors.



There isn't a phone app or equivalent yet (that we know of) to replace the birder's binoculars or the astronomer's telescope. This birder still has her cell phone in her pocket while out in Thompson Park (as does the Park System Naturalist.)

Outdoor Recreation Devices Replaced by the Smartphone

- Watch/Stopwatch
- Camera/Video
- Pedometer
- Radio/Walkman/iPod
- Compass/GPS Unit
- Mobile Astronomy
- Birdsong-Species Identification



Among Park System race participants, fitness trackers have become a given. During the 2015 E. Murray Todd Half Marathon, many wore tracking devices on their wrists, in addition to their phones.

Fitness Trackers: The Marriage of Technology & the Outdoors

Recently, we also began tracking our biometrics: heart rate, steps taken, miles, speed, and calories burned while outdoors, with tracking devices strapped to our wrist or chest and linked to our phones, of course. The latest generation of trackers have sensors that measure UV light and acceleration and for extreme sports enthusiasts, physics such as altitude, airtime, speed and rotation. No doubt, by the time this is published even more features will have been added.

Will these wearable fitness trackers eventually be replaced by the phone as well? It's not yet certain...although the SmartWatch looks like it might be a candidate. Despite the incredible array of new devices available to enhance the outdoor experience, the forests and trails have again grown very quiet. While we can do just about anything now with our phones out in the woods, talking seems to be least among them.

Get Your Golf Game In... NEW - SUNRISE & SUNSET 9-HOLE OPTIONS



9-Hole Rates. Tee off on the back nine for the first 90 minutes of the day on weekends and holidays. 9-hole rates are currently available at Howell Park and Shark River.



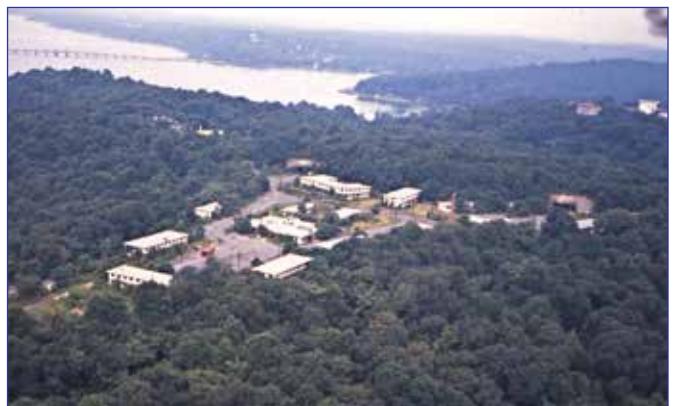
9 Hole Plus. Play 9-holes (or more) starting at 4pm. This discounted rate, which includes a golf cart, is available 7 days/week at Howell Park, Shark River, Charleston Springs and Pine Brook. Walk-ins welcome; Golf Cards are not required.

WWII ERA HISTORY COMES ALIVE AT BATTERY LEWIS

On March 30th amidst much fanfare, a 68-foot long, 120-ton, 16-inch caliber World War II era gun barrel was delivered to Battery Lewis in Hartshorne Woods Park. Built in 1942, Battery Lewis was once a key component of the Navesink Military Reservation for the defense of New York harbor. After World War II, the guns at this site were removed, but Battery Lewis and the smaller Battery 219 (which held a 6-inch caliber gun) nearby are still standing today, along with a stand-alone Plotting-Switchboard Room and four Fire Control Stations.

About the Battery

Battery Lewis is a 600-foot long casemented battery, consisting of two 16-inch caliber gun emplacements connected by a corridor housing ammunition storage and power rooms.



Aerial view of Navesink Military Reservation at Hartshorne Woods Park overlooking the Navesink River (1970). If you consider the site a "Y-shape" with a wide base, the two gun casements of Battery Lewis are at the tips of the arms, covered in trees. The two towers (upper right) are part of the radar installations from the Highlands Air Force Station.



The two gun casemates on either side are connected by a 600-foot long corridor.



A close-up of the exterior of the recently restored gun casemate canopy.



The original 16-inch gun inside the canopy at Battery Lewis.



View from atop Battery Lewis to the Navesink River, the direction the original guns were facing.

The 16-inch caliber gun was the largest coastal defense artillery built in the US during this era, and Battery Lewis is the only remaining gun battery of this size in New Jersey (there are others, but they are smaller).

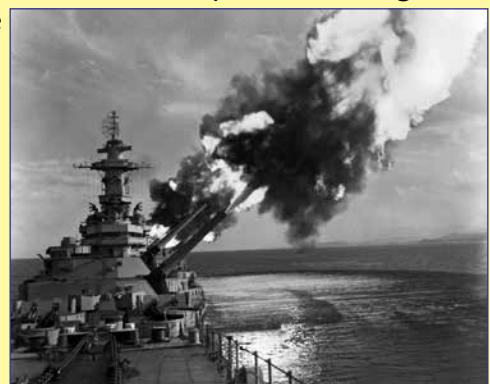
Battery Lewis is the only 16-inch gun battery in the state of NJ.

Constructed of steel and thick reinforced concrete covered with earth, Battery Lewis was designed to withstand battleship and aerial attacks. The 60-foot long barrels were able to fire 2,100 lb. armor-piercing projectiles to a range reaching just offshore near Point Pleasant Beach (south) to the east end of Long Beach, New York (north).

Our Gun Source:

The USS New Jersey (BB-62) – “The Big J”

- Iowa-class battleship launched December 7, 1942
- Original guns removed and replaced in 1954 (and held in Navy storage)
- Earned more battle stars for combat action than the other three Iowa-class battleships (USS Iowa, USS Missouri, USS Wisconsin)
- Only US battleship to provide gunfire support during Vietnam War
- Earned 19 battle and campaign stars for combat operations during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Lebanese Civil War, and service in the Persian Gulf
- Decommissioned in 1991 (after 21 years in the active fleet)
- Donated to the Home Port Alliance in Camden, NJ and began her career as a museum ship October 2001



Guns firing on the USS New Jersey, 1953

Restoring the Gun Battery in Phases

In 2013, the Park System began planning the restoration of Battery Lewis for interpretation and public visitation. The first phase of work completed was restoration of the two concrete canopies and wing walls for each casemate.

The second phase of construction includes repairs to the interior 600-foot long battery corridor and powder storage rooms, and will begin this summer.

Phase three involves constructing a properly-sized pedestal in the casemate for permanent display of the gun barrel. This last part is expected to be finished by 2016. When the restoration is complete, visitors will be able to walk from one end of the battery to the other, explore various rooms, and learn through exhibits and guided tours about Battery Lewis and the historic coastal defenses of the United States.



Exterior canopy restoration



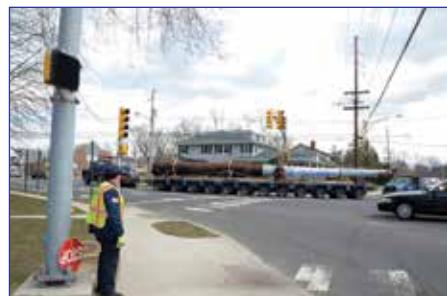
Interior restoration



This site beneath the canopy will eventually house a pedestal for the 120-ton gun barrel.

Finding (and Moving) a 120-Ton Gun

Originally mounted on the USS New Jersey during World War II and donated by the U.S. Navy to the Park System for permanent display, the gun barrel traveled by rail from Norfolk, Virginia to Red Bank. There, it was offloaded to a truck and transported to Hartshorne Woods Park. Once restoration of the gun barrel is complete, it will be moved to its permanent display location in the battery casemate.



History on the Move.

Hundreds of excited County residents gathered along the travel route to watch the gun travel at 20 mph from the rail yard to its temporary position next to Battery Lewis in Hartshorne Woods Park.



Planned Exhibits

The Friends of the Parks continue to raise funds for the Battery Lewis exhibits. They will focus on the park's military past and interpret Battery Lewis at three locations on site:

- three rooms off the main corridor
- at the gun barrel display
- in the parking lot (where visitors first encounter the site)

To complement the exhibits, a section of the steel ammunition service (the overhead trolley) inside the battery will be reconstructed. The Battleship New Jersey Museum is donating 16-inch projectiles for display in Battery Lewis.



NAVESINK MILITARY RESERVATION (NMR) AT HARTSHORNE WOODS

- 1919 - Army installs 12" mortar battery on the Highlands south of Twin Lights
- 1941 - Navesink Highlands recommended as a "natural fortress" by Harbor Defense of NY site board
- 1942 - Govt. purchased 224 acres from Hartshorne family for NMR
- 1943 - NMR Constructed (Battery Lewis, Battery 219, and related facilities)
- 1948 - Army deactivates the batteries
- 1950 - Air Force converts NMR to a radar facility (Highlands Air Force Station)
- 1958 - Army establishes NMR as Highlands Army Air Defense Site (HAADS), a missile control facility to defend New York.
- 1974 - Army deactivates HAADS
- 1984 - Park System acquires NMR for Hartshorne Woods Park

Deep Cut Gardens Home Gardener

152 Red Hill Road
Middletown, NJ 07748

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

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER: STARTING A GARDEN IN JULY

Diane Allen, Park Horticulturalist

In a perfect world, a garden would be prepared in spring, or, better yet, the previous autumn. But in the real world, we face constraints of all kinds: space, sunlight, time, energy, funds, and wildlife—just to name a few. One of my own was a large oak that needed to be taken down, having lost most of its canopy during Superstorm Sandy. Garden preparations were postponed to allow for a planned spring tree removal, but when that fell through (and so did subsequent attempts) I decided to break the rules and start my garden late in order to avoid going into garden withdrawal.

An Independence Day Garden

Fourth of July weekend was my start date. It helps to have all materials and tools on hand, and I made sure one of my young adult sons would be available to cut the lumber to size, since anything more powerful than a blender or sewing machine makes me nervous. Please remember that it is now the law to “Call Before You Dig”, allowing at least three business days for a free utility markout. Call 811 or 800-272-1000, or request the markout online at www.nj1-call.org (they’re even on Facebook and Twitter).



My vegetable garden at planting time (July 1), and just weeks later (August 27).



Although this raised bed vegetable garden was late, it was relatively inexpensive, easy to plant, removable if needed—and, it produced well into November.

This garden would have to be somewhat temporary in view of the impending tree removal, and not too labor-intensive or costly. It also needed to be easily removed, if necessary, and replaced.

An Easy, Raised-Bed Garden

A 10 x 11 foot area not shaded by neighboring oak trees was selected as the site. To keep out ground-hogs, I installed a 3-foot coated, welded wire fence around the perimeter, secured to six metal fence posts (above, right). To keep out the rabbits, I added an additional 18" layer of chicken wire around the bottom. A section of metal fencing with a clever post-and-ring installation design (below, left) was repurposed into a gate, again with chicken wire so the bunnies don’t squeeze through.



Gate detail



Close-up of bed construction.

Then, I laid out untreated pine 2x10s around the inside perimeter to form the raised beds. Wooden stakes were used to hold the boards in place outside, while the soil held the boards in place inside. The beds were 2.5 feet wide, making it easy to reach to the back to maintain and harvest.

After removing sod from the planting area, I filled it with soil from two other garden beds (which were now shaded by the ever-widening canopy of other oaks). I mixed in some homemade compost, some purchased mushroom compost, plus a sprinkling of organic fertilizer. **Late planting note:** If this was spring or fall, I would have layered newspaper or cardboard over the sod (instead of removing it), then topped it with garden soil. But I knew these plants would have some catching-up to do and wanted to be sure they didn’t run into any obstacles.

Tripod design (for the climbing vines).



Vegetable Planting Strategy

At last—it's time to plant! This garden was inspired by some of the lovely "potager" or kitchen garden designs I'd seen in books in our Horticultural Library. It was going to be aesthetically pleasing as well as productive. Just for fun, I painted the garden stakes cobalt blue. I made tripods for the climbing vines (primarily, the beans) by placing three stakes firmly in the ground, then securing them at the top with an overturned terra cotta pot.

- Taller plants such as asparagus and tomatoes are located along the northern side so they don't block sun of smaller plants (the asparagus was part of an older bed).
- Seedlings Planted: Sweet bell peppers and a few chile peppers, Ramapo tomatoes, a grafted 'Big Zac' tomato, 'Rosa Bianca' and 'Ichiban' eggplants, purple cabbage and one each, cucumber and cantalope vines to train up the wire perimeter fencing.
- Direct Seeded: Scarlet runner beans (mostly for the hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies), pole beans, lettuce, mixed field greens, bush beans, and zucchini.
- Herbs Seedlings: Genovese and purple basil (by the tomatoes), thyme (edging the north bed), oregano (flanking the grafted tomato) and lovage just inside the gate.

In the center, an herb tower holds rosemary and sages (top tier), parsley and oregano (second tier), chives and annual flowers (bottom tier). A bale of straw spread in the walkway made a nice cushy surface while eliminating weeds, mud and dust. Shredded leaves left over from



Herb tower at planting time and in late August.

autumn were used as mulch for the garden beds.

Finally, I planted some annuals and perennials (milkweed, zinnias, iris, obedient plant), just outside the garden on either side of the gate, and some in the garden beds (nasturtium and marigold) to help attract beneficial insects, and for aesthetic reasons. Tiny beneficials and bees loved the garlic chive flowers, so they were allowed to remain until they began to go to seed.

This garden proved to be a delightful spot – my "zen space" – with such positive energy... which I ended up really needing, since the subsequent fall/winter tree removal plans also fell through. Perhaps that tree just isn't meant to come down yet.



Milkweed



Eastern swallowtail butterfly caterpillar on the lovage.



Ramapo tomatoes



Scarlet runner beans



Pole beans



End of the Season: In late November, I cleaned out the garden and replanted with garlic, elephant garlic and shallot cloves (not visible) for harvest next June. The purple cabbage will come out soon and the thyme edging the bed will over winter to be pruned back in spring.

GARDENING COMFORTS

It's peak season in the garden. It's time to enjoy the abundance of blooms, produce, and the songbirds, butterflies and fireflies. However, there are still chores to be done: irrigation to supplement rainfall, weeding, harvesting vegetables and fruit, and deadheading flowers (unless you plan on saving the seeds, of course). Here are a few tips for a safer, more comfortable gardening experience:

- Try to do your garden chores early or late in the day. It's better to harvest those herbs, veggies and cut flowers during the early hours anyway.
- Remember insect repellent and sunscreen (I keep both right in my gardening bag).
- Your plants aren't the only ones that need to be kept well hydrated – tuck a bottle of cool water into your gardening bag for yourself, too.
- Wear a hat and gardening gloves and try not to lose track of time spent in the sun; know your limits and take breaks in a shaded area as needed.
- If you don't already have one, consider one of those cooling scarves – they really do help!
- Gardening chores can be physically demanding. Take a few moments to do some gentle stretches before and after gardening.



Now sit back and reward yourself with a tall glass of something cool and refreshing. While you're admiring the results of your work, you're bound to notice "holes" in the garden that need to be filled, or candidates for division or relocation. Jot these down in your garden journal for action when the time is right.

Lavender-Infused Iced Tea

8 tea bags

1½ teaspoons culinary lavender

Sweetener of choice (optional)

Bring 2 quarts of water to a boil. Add the tea bags and lavender and steep 5 minutes.

Remove tea bags and strain tea over ice into heat-proof pitcher. Add sweetener if desired.



Cucumber Water

1 cucumber: washed, sliced, unpeeled (set aside 6-7 slices for decoration)

2 quarts water

5 mint sprigs (set aside 2 for decoration)

½ lemon, washed, sliced, unpeeled

Reserving some for decoration, add cucumber slices, lemon slices and mint sprigs to approximately 2 quarts water.

Steep in the refrigerator for an hour to several hours. To serve, remove cucumber and lemon slices and mint, add some ice and the reserved fresh mint sprigs and the cucumber and lemon slices. Other fruits, such as strawberries, oranges or lime, may be substituted, and quantities and steeping time adjusted to your taste.



Daylily Day at Deep Cut Gardens

Saturday, June 27, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

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

Jersey Shore Rose Society 44th Annual Rose Show

Saturday, September 19

See the many varieties of our national flower. Information on the selection and care of roses. Free garden tours. Watch as roses are prepared for exhibition (8 a.m.-10 a.m.); entries will remain on exhibit for the public after judging is complete at 12:30 p.m. Don't forget to cast your vote for the arrangement you feel should receive the People's Choice award. Free Admission/Free Parking

Bonsai Day

Sunday, September 13, 12 p.m.-4 p.m.

The Deep Cut Bonsai Society and Deep Cut Gardens invite you to enjoy the bonsai experience! See demonstrations and exhibits and talk to the experts. Visit Deep Cut Gardens' Jane Scott bonsai collection. Free Admission/Free Parking

The Great Fall Perennial Plant Swap

Saturday, September 26

Plant Intake: 8:30 -10 a.m.

Exchange: 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

It's the gardening event of the season! It's fun, free & easy. Bring your plants in 1-qt, 1-gal. or 2-gal. containers and trade them in for different plants of the same size. Houseplants may also be exchanged, but no annuals, please. Please label all plants. Call 732-671-6050 for more information.



IT'S TIME TO...



July ✓

- Take note of any gaps in your garden, which plants you will want to divide in the fall or next spring.
- Check plants for insects/disease and use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for dealing with problems. (Visit the Deep Cut Library to learn more.)
- Apply/replenish mulch to conserve water and suppress weeds.
- After bloom has finished, dig and divide irises, lily of the valley, Oriental poppies and bleeding hearts.
- Water thoroughly before and after transplanting container-grown plants.
- To keep vegetable gardens producing, harvest ripe produce regularly and ensure plants have 1" of water weekly. Water deeply, early in the day, and try to keep water off the leaves.
- Start seeds for fall crops: beans, peas, summer squash, cabbage family.
- Keep lawns at least 3" high and do any watering in the morning, deeply, and less frequently, for a stronger, healthier lawn.
- Consider donating extra produce from the vegetable garden to a local food bank.

August ✓

- During dry spells, water your compost bin to keep it active; it should be about as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
- Fertilize late summer and fall flowers. Give your roses their last feeding of the season by Labor Day.
- Plant transplants of cabbage-family crops and sow late crops of radishes, beets, lettuce, kale, spinach, and turnips into September.
- Order spring-flowering bulbs for planting and forcing.

September ✓

- Fertilize lawns late this month. Now is the best time to reseed or renovate.
- After mid-month, leave some spent roses to produce hips and induce dormancy.
- Plant spring-flowering bulbs in groups or drifts for best effect next spring. If rodents have been eating the bulbs, sprinkle grit or gravel in the hole when planting.
- Acclimate houseplants to lower light before bringing them indoors this month.
- Remove diseased foliage from perennials, before it is hidden by autumn leaves.
- Harvest herbs for freezing or drying early in the day. Dig and pot some to grow inside through the winter in a cool, sunny spot; allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings.
- September sown spinach covered with 6-12" of lightweight mulch after two light frosts has a good chance of surviving winter and providing you with an early, delicious and tender crop come spring.
- Don't forget Deep Cut's Fall Perennial Plant Swap, September 26.



A cucumber just starting to grow underneath its flower (seen in a July container garden).



A visit to Deep Cut can be refreshing, during the hot, hazy days of August.



The Plant Swap is a great opportunity to learn more about perennials.

CORNER

NATURE

“SEAGULLS”: SCAVENGER PIRATES OF THE SHORE

Sam Skinner, Senior Park Naturalist

Common, noisy and always at the beach, “seagulls” are rowdy, unabashed pirates that steal food from each other. They will quickly raid unguarded picnic treats and the bolder ones have been known to rip a morsel right out of an unsuspecting beach diner’s hand. These clever birds will also drop clams and mussels onto boardwalks, piers, and parking lots to let gravity break the shells, so they can get at the tasty morsels inside.



A pair of noisy herring gulls doing what they do best.

A Gull, By Any Other Name...

There are about 22 species of gull that breed in North America. Ornithologists (who study birds) work diligently to classify gulls, yet their taxonomy is still undergoing regular modification. The NJ Birds Record Committee officially recognizes 19 species of gull in our state, five that are common to our area (see box). Monmouth County gulls can be found along the shore, around inland lakes and reservoirs, at shopping malls and in our landfills. Rarer sightings include: black-headed gull, iceland gull, california gull, sabine's gull, little gull, ivory gull, glaucous gull and ross's gull.

5 Common Gull Species of the Jersey Shore

Great black-backed gull (All Year)

Herring gull (All Year)

Ring-billed gull (All year)

Laughing gulls (March-Summer)

Bonaparte's gull (Winter)

Telling One Gull From Another

Distinguishing a particular species of gull can be a real challenge because they undergo several plumage changes as they develop. Their plumage can also change annually for breeding, as adults.

The Kodak Gray Scale value (0-white to 17-very black) for overall back and wing shades is used to describe the color of adult gulls. In order to identify juveniles, it is essential to know the different stages of plumage during development. Even so, identifying a juvenile gull can be very complicated, even for the most experienced birders.

These gulls will look very different as adults, but look very similar as juveniles.



Characteristics that help identify gulls include:

- size
- head color (white or dark)
- bill size, color and shape
- eye color and color of orbital ring around the eye
- wing color (upper side and underside), leading and trailing wing bars
- tail color, tail band color
- leg color



Some Notes About Nesting

Gulls may nest as a single pair, a few pairs, or in a large noisy colony—sometimes with other species. In spite of the possible crowd, it's very difficult to spot a gull's nest or very young chicks because both are well camouflaged. The nest is often far removed from human and predator traffic out on an island, sandbar or dune and hidden in the grass or among the leaves of low plants or short vegetation. It may also be found next to a log, bush or rock which can provide a windbreak and a visual screen. (Bonaparte's gull, the exception here, nests in conifer trees.) Commonly, the nest is a shallow scrape or depression in the ground (10"-20" diameter) lined with twigs, grass, etc. with another depression in the middle for the eggs. Usual clutch size is one to four spotted eggs, which incubate for around 20-30 days before hatching. Chicks, who are born a fuzzy, mottled-brown color stay close to the nest, fiercely guarded by their parents, until they are almost adult size and ready to fly or fledge.



The nest of a GBBG
Photo Credit: Banangraut
(Commons.wikimedia.org)

Great Black-Backed Gull: King of Gulls

The great-black backed gull (GBBG) is the largest in the world, 31" from bill tip to tail. It has a 63" wingspan, and weighs about 5.5 lbs. A year-round resident of our area, the GBBG can often be seen perching above other gull species.

The GBBG in breeding plumage has a white head; the upper side of the wings and back are black (Kodak Scale 13-15); and the breast, belly and underside of the wings are white. It has pink legs and a massive, yellow bill with a large red spot with a black spot nearby.



GBBGs eating habits are legendary. They will eat just about anything, including mussels, fish, bird eggs and chicks, and even adult birds such as Atlantic puffins, herring gulls, terns, ducks and migrant songbirds. One GBBG was observed chasing a migrating hawk into the sea and then devouring it. GBBGs scavenge carrion, dead fish, and trash and will steal food from other birds.

Herring Gull: Grey & Pink Legged

Robust in size (but noticeably smaller than the GBBG), the herring gull is also found year round in our area. It is about 26" from bill tip to tail, with a wingspan of 57" and weighs 2.75 lbs.

Herring gulls are noisy, opportunistic feeders. They may dive from a height and catch small fish in their bills or paddle along the surface and dip their heads onto unsuspecting prey. They will prey on birds and mammals; fish, invertebrates, garbage and carrion are also part of their diet.



The herring gull in breeding plumage has a white head, grey upper side of the wings and the back (Kodak Scale 4-5). The underside of the wings are white with black tips.

The ring-billed gull (breeding plumage) is a smaller version of the herring gull, but with a black beak ring and yellow legs .

Ring-Billed Gull: Grey, with a Noticeable Ring

The ring-billed gull is thought to be our most populous gull. Besides beaches and bay fronts, they are familiar sights around shopping mall parking lots and agricultural areas. They range far inland more often than other gulls. Historically a winter visitor, in the last 50 years there's been a steady increase in ring-billed gulls year-round.

The medium sized ring-billed gull is 21" long with a wing-span of 46" and weighs 1.5 lbs. It is a graceful, aerobatic flyer and can cruise along at 40 m.p.h.

Ring-billed gulls can thrive on virtually any available food source. When plentiful, fish will compose most of their diet but they will also eat earthworms, insects, small mammals, grains and refuse. Some depend totally on food from agricultural areas, foregoing fish almost completely.

Laughing Gull (Summer Only): You'll Know One When You Hear One

Laughing gulls, named for their distinct cackle, visit March through the end of the summer. This medium sized gull is 17" long, has a wingspan of 47", and weighs just 13oz. With its distinct black head, it looks different than other area gulls.



In breeding plumage, the laughing gull has a slate black hood and eyes with distinct white crescents. Its back and upper wings are dark gray (Kodak scale 8-9), the wing underside is white turning gray then black at the tip. The bill and legs are red.

Laughing gulls have a very broad range of food. They eat many invertebrates, including earthworms, snails, crabs, crab eggs, and insects. Fish, squid berries, garbage and of course handouts from beachgoers are also on the menu.

Bonaparte's Gull (Winter Only): Delicate With a Dark 'Ear Spot'

This small bird breeds in Canada and visits only during winter. Just 15" long, with a wingspan of 31" this gull weighs 8 oz. Unlike other area gulls common to this area, we seldom see the Bonaparte in breeding plumage.



Also unlike other gulls, these small birds seldom scavenge at garbage sites. They have a much more restrictive diet, comprised mostly of insects in the breeding grounds and small crustaceans, marine worms, other invertebrates and small fish in coastal areas.

In non-breeding plumage the Bonaparte's gull has a white head, neck and underside. The upper parts are pale gray (Kodak Scale 5-6) and there is a distinct dark ear spot just behind the eye. In flight, there is a white leading edge on the wing, the tips are black. The bill and eyes are dark.

Gulls may seem plentiful now, but during the late 1800s many populations were decimated as their feathers and eggs were a hot commodity. Passage of the Migratory Bird Act in 1918 helped the gulls rebound to become the ever-present and entertaining shore species they are today.



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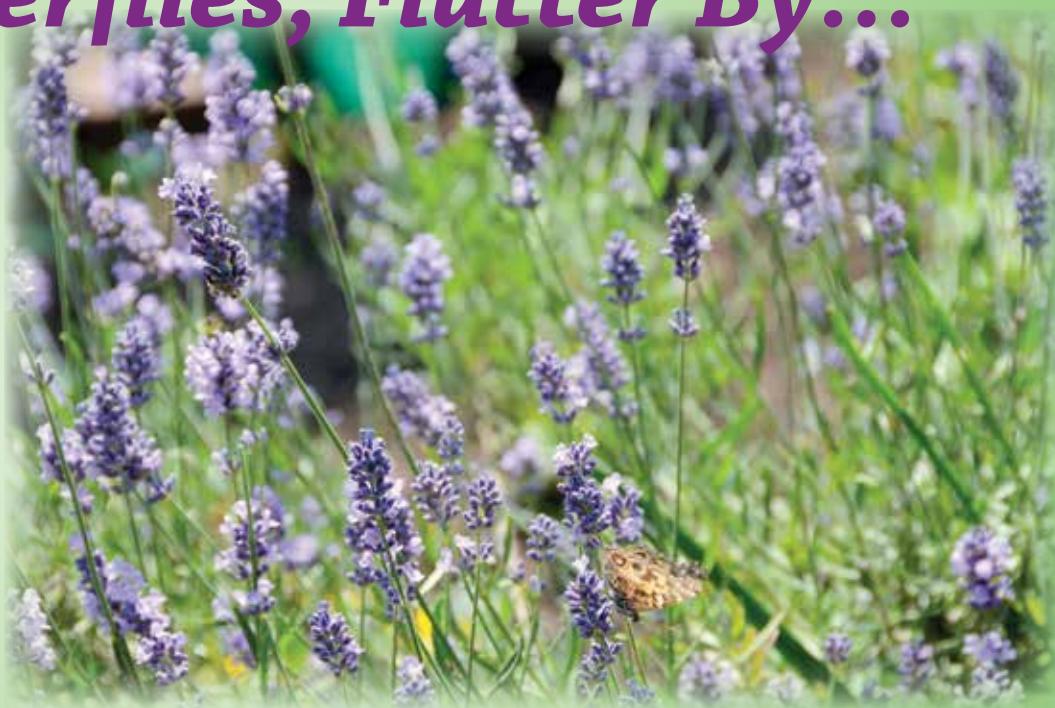
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Find the 'American Lady' in this patch of lavender (Deep Cut Gardens, June)



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