

Walks Available at Adkins Arboretum

Seasonal Walks

Spring Ephemerals are Fleeting

Here today and gone tomorrow. Come in March to see the spring beauties, bloodroot, and Jack-in-the-pulpit that disappear by April. Come in April to see the trout lilies, sassafras, paw paw, and spice bush blooms that disappear by May. Come in May to see the May apples, tulip trees, and mountain laurel that disappear by June. Learn about the butterflies, animals, and birds that depend on these plants' blooms, seeds, and leaves. This is a magical, mystical time to visit our arboretum.

Earth Day

Today we celebrate our planet, the bountiful source of beauty, wonder, and wisdom. We hope that participating in this walk will reinvigorate your understanding of and commitment to your unique role as a steward of this wonderful "blue marble."

Green Ferns are Cool

Summer is the time to seek respite from the heat. The shy ferns hidden in the woods beckon us to seek them out. Some ferns are evergreen all year, while others only appear for a short time. Come discover these cool treasures under the tall pines, by the flowing steams, or even along the quiet meandering trails.

Summer in the Wetlands

Wetlands are beautiful, presenting a sometimes peaceful, sometimes dynamic face. They also perform vital functions, providing great value to humans and an incredible array of wildlife. On this walk, we'll explore how plants and animals exhibit interesting adaptations to this wet and challenging environment.

Sunny Meadows, Bluebirds, and Dragonflies

Meadows are homes to birds and other animals, and our two meadows are spectacular in fall. Many native grasses are at their blooming best, and the monarch butterfly's favorite plant is showing its fluffy seeds. Not to be outdone, the goldenrod is waving its feathery blooms and seeds. Discover why most of the plants really are underground and thus take kindly to burning every three years to maintain the meadow's beauty.

Dazzling Fall Color

Why do we see such beautiful color when the weather turns cool? Learn why we are fortunate in this area to have trees that turn from green to red, yellow, orange, or purple. Color also depends on temperature, rainfall, and length of day. This is nature at its colorful best. Come and see us from mid-October to mid-November.

The Forest is Alive in Winter

When we look at a forest in winter, the first impression may be that it's asleep or even dead. Far from it! Winter is the perfect time to explore details we might miss earlier in the year when the green carpeting and drapery hide things from our sight. Plants and animals have to make significant adaptations to survive—and even thrive—in this harsher environment. We'll explore how all the pieces fit together into a community that is still quietly active as it awaits its spring reawakening.

Winter Trees

Winter cold and dryness present significant challenges to trees, which must adapt to survive these harsh conditions. On this walk, we'll examine the four adaptive strategies that form the basis for trees' survival. Along the way, we'll learn tricks for identifying certain tree species that no longer sport their summer leaves. Keep your senses alert, as we never know what treasures may be revealed in the seemingly sleeping forest.

Year-Round Walks

Edible and Useful Plants

On this walk, we'll look at native plants with a history of human use, from a time when grocery stores and their bounty of food were much harder to come by. The weeds that we pull from our gardens in innumerable quantity are sometimes the very plants our ancestors searched for on a foraging trip. We will be foragers of the mind today, spying out our plants of interest and learning the properties that make them uniquely valuable to a native forager.

Making a Killing, Making a Living: Adapting to Habitat Challenges

Ecology is the study of how different organisms fit and work together to create a viable community within the limitations imposed by local conditions such as soil, water, and light. Each part contributes to the overall, but there can also be competition among both species and individuals. How plants and animals adapt to succeed in these challenging and sometimes shifting situations is a fascinating lens through which to appreciate the Arboretum's various habitats.

Woodland Architecture

Every habitat is the expression of interactions between conditions (soil, water, light) and organisms (plants and animals). The study of this interaction is called ecology. On today's walk, we'll examine the various "systems" of the woodland habitat using the model of a house: the walls and ceiling, heat and light regulation, water and waste management. By the end of this walk, you'll be able to describe how the woodlands' intricate elements work together to make a complete habitat.

Adkins' Native Plant Demo Gardens

This short walk around the Arboretum's demonstration gardens provides an opportunity to delve into a variety of native plants that participants can use in their own gardens. We'll emphasize the many benefits of gardening with native plants and try to answer questions about suitability of plants for different conditions.

Transitions: How Becoming!

We've all heard the adage that the only constant thing is change. Indeed, nature and the world around us are dynamic, never staying the same for long. During today's walk, we'll look at many examples of how life and nature around us are in a constant state of *becoming*. Keep your eyes—and ears and nose—alert to note examples of your own. You'll never look at nature the same!

Nature and Underground Railroad

This walk views the Arboretum's native landscapes through a historical lens. The objective is not to recreate the experiences of those who were enslaved and who sought freedom—that is beyond our ability. But we can explore how local habitats, land use, and history came together and helped create this heartbreaking element of our national experience. We are all still part of this story and the ongoing journey of seeking understanding.

Pollinator Q&A

Birds and bees do it. Even breezes in the trees do it. That's right: they pollinate the plants on which the rest of the living world depends. During today's walk, we'll look at many examples of how plants get pollinated, along with the complex relationships necessary to keep this crucial process humming along. Keep your eyes – and ears and nose – alert to note examples of your own.

Parking Lot Alive!

In 2017, Adkins Arboretum began a significant upgrade to the old visitor parking lot. Not content simply to repave and add plantings, the Arboretum saw this as a bold opportunity to develop and demonstrate water conservation and runoff control techniques that would be both effective and aesthetically pleasing. We'll take a short walk around our "new" facility for an in-depth exploration of these innovations.