



Summer 2009

STONY KILL ALMANAC

By and About
Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center

Calendar of Events Inside

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www.dec.ny.gov

WILD ABOUT HERBS

By Emily Brandenburg, SCA Americorps
Member

When thinking of herbs, the first that come to mind are culinary and aromatic herbs, like basil and lavender. *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines an herb as "a plant or plant part valued for its medicinal, savory or aromatic qualities."

Herbs may grow wild or be cultivated. Many native wild plants have long traditions of medicinal or culinary use by Native Americans. With more than 1,000 acres and a variety of habitats, Stony Kill abounds with wild herbs in addition to the numerous cultivated herbs in the herb garden maintained by the Verplanck Garden Club at the visitor center.

Many plants growing in the forest are beautiful to look at and also contain medicinal qualities, some strictly folkloric and others supported by scientific research. As with any medicine, what works in properly prepared small doses can be harmful—even deadly—if too much is used or if it is used improperly. An extract from mayapple, shown above, has been used to treat cancer. The only part of the plant that is safe to eat is the ripe fruit. This fruit, sometimes called a "ground lemon," can be made into a tasty jelly. Violet flowers and leaves, at left, have been used to treat respiratory ailments. They have also been used as a fragrance in perfumes and in cough syrup.



Mayapples are found in the woodlands at Stony Kill. Learn more about native plants at programs in June and July (see program listings).



For more information, attend our upcoming programs on wild flowers and herbs, or visit Stony Kill's on-site library.

Violets are just one of the many spring wildflowers visitors to Stony Kill enjoy seeing.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
David Paterson, Governor Pete Grannis, Commissioner
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PUBLIC PROGRAMS

All programs are approximately 90 minutes long unless otherwise noted.

We welcome people with disabilities to all of our programs. Call ahead, 845-831-8780, ext. 300, to let us know your specific needs, and we will be happy to accommodate you.

JUNE

Muller Pond Ramble

Saturday, June 6 at 10:00 AM

In honor of National Trails Day, enjoy a leisurely walk alongside a pond, through patches of woods and in open fields.

Life of the Hudson

Saturday, June 13 at 10:00 AM

Join a Stony Kill naturalist at Little Stony Point in Cold Spring and use a seine net to find out what's swimming in the river today. Call 845-831-8780 for more information, including directions.

What's Buggin' You?

Saturday, June 20 at 10:00 AM

Whether they are eating or pollinating our crops and gardens, insects play fascinating and important roles in our lives and in natural ecosystems. We'll use sweep nets in the meadow to find insects and take a closer look at them.

Herbs Everywhere!

Saturday, June 27 at 10:00 AM

Learn how herbs have been used for centuries to season our food, heal our ills and more. Join us for a tour of Stony Kill's herb garden and a leisurely walk in search of wild herbs like baneberry, jewelweed and wild geranium in bloom along our forest trails.

Nature Discovery Encourages Kids to Get Outside After School

Discover nature at Stony Kill's weekly after-school program for children 5-12 years old and their caregivers. The Nature Discovery Series is offered from 4:00 to 5:00 PM every Thursday through June 25. This program features fun, stimulating, outdoor experiences in Stony Kill's woods, including animal tracking, scavenger hunts and environmental games.

JULY

Summer Wildflowers

Saturday, July 11 at 10:00 AM

Help us search for wildflowers in bloom as we take a leisurely ramble on one of our wooded trails. Soapwort, Joe-Pye weed, moth mullein and milkweed are just a few we might encounter.

Wild Fruits

Saturday, July 18 at 10:00 AM

What edible and non-edible wild fruits can we find growing along the paths and grounds of Stony Kill? Join us as we wander along looking for these gifts of summer.

Fireflies!

Saturday, July 25 at 6:30 PM

Make a firefly "lantern" and learn the fascinating story of bioluminescence and how fireflies use it to find a mate or a meal.

AUGUST

Summer at the Farm Pond

Saturday, August 1 at 10:00 AM

Discover the teeming, mysterious life of a pond, where below the surface, it's a sunfish-eats-dragonfly-nymph-eats-mosquito larva world!

Midsummer Night's Walk

Saturday, August 8 at 7:30 PM

Experience the forest at night the way nocturnal wildlife does, using senses other than sight to guide you. We'll "sugar" for moths and call for owls.



Listen for barred owls on our midsummer night's walk.

Butterfly Festival

Saturday, August 15 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Live butterflies, monarch caterpillars and chrysalises, insect games and crafts will all be happening at the Stony Kill Butterfly Festival. Come view local species and learn about the life cycle of the monarch butterfly. Stroll through the garden to view the plants that attract butterflies. Walk inside our enclosed screen tent and have these beautiful insects land on your finger. Marvel at the variety of size, shape and color. During a small, end of the day ceremony, we will release our local butterflies back into the sky.



Tiger swallowtails, like this one, may be seen at the Butterfly Festival on August 15.

Online Family Newsletter *DEC Outdoor Discovery*

Visit www.dec.ny.gov/public/43355.html to read DEC's biweekly online outdoor newsletter for families. Each issue introduces readers to a seasonal environmental or nature topic, suggests a related activity and lists family-friendly events at DEC's environmental education centers. Subscribe for free, and have the newsletter e-mailed to you!

A Look Ahead to September: Each Week Features a Different Hike to Celebrate Hudson Valley Ramble month

Saturday, September 5
Verplanck Ridge Ramble

Saturday, September 12
Freedom Trail Adventure

Saturday, September 19
Bull Hill Hike

Saturday, September 26
Sierra Trail Saunter

Wilderness Skills Seminar

Saturday, August 22 at 10:00 AM

Shane Whitefeather of Mountain Scouts Survival School will present a hands-on introduction to skills such as tracking wildlife, making cordage and starting a fire without matches, demonstrating the methods used by Native Americans of this region.

Birds of the Grasslands

Saturday, August 29 at 10:00 AM

Join a Stony Kill naturalist in search of savannah sparrows, bobolinks, bluebirds, meadowlarks and more.

ATTENTION READERS - This is the final issue of the printed *Almanac*.

As we make an effort to conserve resources and reduce mailing costs, we are discontinuing printing the *Almanac*. Instead, we are offering an online newsletter by expanding our web pages to include regular updates of news and notes from Stony Kill. Our web pages already include up-to-date program descriptions. To receive regular e-mail notifications of upcoming programs and invitations to visit the web pages when news is updated, please sign up at <http://lists.dec.state.ny.us/mailman/listinfo/stonykillalmanac> and follow the easy instructions. Paper copies of our program descriptions will be available for pickup at the Manor House at Stony Kill Farm. Back issues of the *Almanac*, including this issue, are in PDF format at www.dec.ny.gov/education/1841.html for you to read or download and print.

NEW YORK STATE Conservationist

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