

## **A Bald Eagle Display, Ponds, Trails and Turtles at the Hunterdon County Arboretum**

Spring is here, and the Arboretum is bursting with color. An arboretum is defined as a living museum comprised of trees, shrubs, and plants that are observed and studied for educational purposes. This 73-acre site, once a commercial nursery, was established by George Bloomer in the 1940s. The Administration Building was constructed in 1953 by Mr. Bloomer as his nursery office and residence and are now the offices of the Hunterdon County Division of Parks & Recreation

Throughout the Arboretum you will see a variety of trees, shrubs, annuals and perennials, including both native and non-native species. The Arboretum also contains approximately 20,000 square feet of display gardens. The gardens were created for educational purposes. They are also a great place to appreciate nature, meditate, or have a snack. Picnic tables are located throughout the area. In 1997, a deer fence was installed to protect most of the gardens from browsing. Please be sure to close the gates behind you.

The centerpiece of the gardens is a renovated 1893 two-level cedar gazebo. Behind the gazebo is an arching trellis with rose bushes. To the rear of the gardens, a smaller gazebo and a photo bridge are accented by bright-berried hollies, blooming rhododendrons, and a frog-laden pond with a fountain. Popular for wedding ceremonies and photo sessions, both gazebos can be reserved by contacting the Parks office at (908) 782-1158.

The trails here cover two miles of flat terrain through a network of ornamental tree and shrub plantations. They are marked by orange squares, and offer good hiking, and, in winter, cross-country skiing. The Outer Loop Trail is an easy flat 1.1-mile loop. It winds through fields, tree plantings, wetlands, a stream, and along a pond. The Discovery Trail is a short trail, here Cedar trees were one of the first plants to colonize this field habitat. The Memorial Trail cuts through a field where deer love to graze. This trail is very wet in spring or after heavy rains. The Dogwood Trail, as its name suggests, dogwood trees are prevalent along this trail. Their beautiful pink and white flowers bloom early in the spring, and the bright red fruits provide a good source of food for birds in the fall and winter. Also of note are the large yews that were planted along this trail.

There is also a Boardwalk/ Wetland Study Area, named for the late naturalist, Vincent Arbraitys. This area is rich with a diversity of wetland plants such as skunk cabbage, cattails, and ferns. The Two-Line Trail is named after a small woodland amphibian called the Two-lined Salamander. The deciduous and evergreen woods you will walk through on this trail make it obvious that this was once a nursery, since the trees are planted in rows!

There is a Wizard Walk in the fenced garden which involves stops geared toward children, including animal hiding places, a discovery box, and a castle.

When you finish in the garden come inside and admire our Bald Eagle mount, up close. You can also visit with our new Black Bear mount who is standing on his hind legs to get a better look, you will be able to observe what small eyes bears have! We also have several entertaining, spoiled turtles, including Spotted turtles, Box Turtles, a Painted Turtle (who has his own fish) and our newest resident a 25-year-old (big) Red Eared Slider, named REPY which stands for Research Every Pet (before buying.)

We offer Recreation & Environmental Education classes, basketry programs, art classes, canoeing, bird trips, van trips, hikes, nature programs, and other recreational activities which are

led by park staff. Lectures, nature walks, camping skills, merit badges and craft programs for groups are also available.

Visit our website for more details at [www.co.hunterdon.nj.us](http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us), click on Parks & Recreation. The Arboretum is wheel chair accessible and offers a paved path into the garden to the main gazebo. The Arboretum is located at 1020 Highway 31 North, Lebanon 08833 (Clinton Township). It is five miles north of Flemington and five miles south of the Town of Clinton.