

UUCGT Nature Guide - May, 2020

Now this is just a friendly way of enjoying some of the things we might see as we follow this path around the building. I am not an expert and there are many members of our congregation who could give us a much better guide. But this is a beginning and is open for discussion and correction. But one thing is clear: enjoy the walk around, see things you may not have noticed before, and then come back in a few weeks, or a month, and see the changes. This guide follows the numbers as you walk. Please leave the numbers where they are, but pick up any trash you might find. Thanks! Let's begin ---

#1 - Notice all the multiply divided leafy ferns sprouting everywhere. When I first looked weeks ago, these were just beginning to unfurl. Now maybe you can see it as a fern. It is our famous native *bracken fern*. It has been here for centuries and dinosaurs ate a version of it millions of years ago. You will see this fern all over the world except in Antarctica. Look for it, call it by name, *bracken fern*, and let it become your friend.

#2 - *Eastern white pine* is also native to this area and most of the northern and eastern United States. It is the state tree of Michigan. In New England area, it was used by the early settlers from Europe to rebuild the masts for their sailing vessels. The needles come off in small bunches. Count the number in the bunch. There are five needles per bunch and five letters in the word 'white'. That makes it easy to remember.

#3 - This is a *red pine* tree. If you look closely at its needle bunches, there are only two per bunch. Also the needles are often longer than the white pine and not as "soft" looking or as soft to the touch.

#4 - Here is the memorial to Arline Howe. It is a place to stop and rest, appreciate, meditate, all under this giant *red oak*. How long has this tree been here? A very long time. It was here when this was an orchard and before you and I. There is also a *common buckthorn* here and a group of three small trees: *sugar maple, ash, and black cherry*.

#5 - *Viburnum* bush. Let us watch it grow.

#6 - This is a *red spruce*. There are several as we follow along the path. Its needles are not in bunches like the pine, and are shorter, sharper pointed. Sharp is a good description and the 's' can remind you of its name, *spruce*.

#7 - Here is a pretty leaved bush. It is a *witch hazel*. Let's watch for the unusual flowers and see if they appear in the fall.

#8 - *Bloodroot* is one our spring wildflowers which seems to be generally lacking from these little woods. The big leaf is like a baseball mitt and when the plant has its white blossoms, the leaf cuddles it in its mitt. The flower was white but is gone and maybe you see the seedpod. The leaf will remain for a little while. Native residents used the juice found in the stem to paint their faces red. Please do not pick these few plants to see their reddish juice in the stem. If you pick them, there won't be as many next year. Thanks!

#9 - Is a young *black cherry*

#10 - Look to the right and down for this little evergreen tree. It will grow larger and its flat needles when crushed smell restful and sweet. It is the *balsam fir* tree. There are several small ones here. Enjoy but do not squeeze too many needles to smell them.

I am saddened that there are not more native wildflowers here. In asking around, I understand this used to be an orchard. Maybe the ground got too stamped down or too many pesticides applied. I do not know. I hear someone planted the *bloodroot*, so that we can enjoy them. If they have maintained themselves, returning every year, maybe other wildflowers might sometime grow here, too.