

Treat Mother to a Rewarding Walk Through a Wildflower Preserve

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PEQUEA — Far away from the hustle and bustle of most of Lancaster County, there is a quiet, beautiful wildflower preserve that beckons. It is a place of unequalled natural beauty, and it's free. You may not be able to give this "gift" to your mother on Sunday, but the beauty of it is that it will be available throughout the year.

Shenk's Ferry Glen Wildflower Preserve is a part of Pennsylvania Power & Light Company's Lake Aldred Recreation Area, and it is well worth the trip to southern Lancaster County to enjoy its beauty. Just the drive through the countryside to Shenk's Ferry revives your spirits. Once there, you can just let the peacefulness of the area take over.

Kathy Giegel, consulting naturalist with PP & L, leads walks through the preserve, but it can be enjoyed on your own just as well.

To enjoy the special beauty of this natural place, it is best to plan a leisurely walk. The trail is easy, so old or young alike will have no trouble. A stream moves through the wooded area, adding to the sense of serenity.

The walk itself can take as little as 45 minutes, but for those really interested in becoming attuned to their surroundings, it could take over two hours. Set your own pace and just enjoy.

Kathy points out that each day there are different flowers, so it's worth more than one visit. Now spring flowers are in full array, but beginning in June, the fields and

hills will take on a different look as summer flowers take over.

If you would like to learn while you're enjoying the slower pace and the solitude, Kathy suggests that you take a wildflower identification book along. If you find something especially intriguing and don't have a book, she suggests making a sketch of it and checking when you return to civilization.

Many books have keys to help with identification of plants, but Kathy notes that the shape and color of a flower are the starting point in identifying any wildflower. The leaves can also help make a positive identification possible. Kathy suggests carrying a small book on the trail, but there are some very complete thicker, heavier books available.

She notes, "Don't be afraid to ask someone you meet on the trail. Most people will be glad to help identify a plant or may have an idea about what something may be."

Kathy said that one school class visited the glen with identification books in hand and managed to identify over 70 different plants as they walked the trail.

Kathy also pointed out that soil and weather can affect the appearance of a plant and its flowers, thus making identification a little more difficult.

The most important part of taking a wildflower walk is to "take your time," Kathy reminds visitors. "A wildflower walk should not be rushed. Enjoy the beauty."

Sundays are the fullest days for



Kathy Giegel, consulting naturalist with Pennsylvania Power and Light Company, stoops to examine more closely a wildflower found on a walk through the Shenk's Ferry Wildflower Preserve near Lake Aldred recreation area. Kathy points out that shape and color are the two most important ways to identify an unknown flower.

the Wildflower Preserve, so if you can find time in your schedule, a weekday may offer a quieter walk.

The variety of flowers to be found in this secluded glen is amazing, but it does take some close searching among the plants. Kathy notes that as the season goes on more weeds are growing and it is harder to find the flowers.

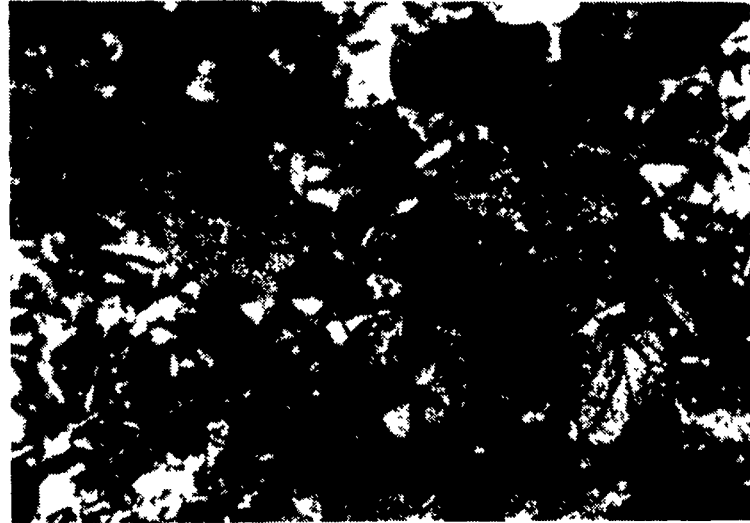
Kathy said there are four kinds of violets to be found in the woods. Deep blue ones and white ones can be found in abundance. Kathy pointed out that on the white ones the bottom petals have black veins, which the bees like because they use it as a runway to guide them directly into the nectar.

Masses of Virginia bluebells greet the visitor, and Kathy explained that they were first found in colonial America in what is now Massachusetts. Much earlier it was known as Northern Virginia; hence the name.

On sunny days, the hillsides are filled with "spring beauties" which feature a root system that is capable of spreading rapidly.

Each plant has some beauty, and Kathy pointed out, "Even dandelions have some good about them. The flowers are prized to make wines, the juice from the stem is said to cure liver problems and the leaves are good for salads."

As hikers go along the trail and



The unusual characteristics of the Jack-in-the-pulpit can be seen here. Upon close inspection the flower which forms the "jack" can be identified in his "pulpit."



Trilliums abound along the trail and can easily be identified because of the three petals.



The solitude of the Shenk's Ferry Wildflower Preserve can be felt somewhat in this picture with the fields and stream. Blue Phlox cover the banks on both sides of the stream. Peace and quiet are not disturbed on this beautiful sanctuary.

look over the hilly slopes, their eyes are treated to fields of blue phlox. These are also known as Wild Sweet William, and make a lovely carpet across the hills in this deep wooded area.

Mayapples were in abundance, and the buds were just about to burst forth on some of the plants. Sometimes the buds were hidden by other foliage, so visitors will need to look closely to find the flowers as the weeks progress.

Wild geraniums were just beginning to be seen, with beautiful flowers and the familiar greenery which denotes geraniums.

The small group which hiked last week included several "eagle eyed" walkers who could spot interesting flowers along the way. Some investigation and discussion was required to make identification. Hepatica was one little known flower they found. Kathy noted that it is a rare plant and was once endangered. She said it is often mistakenly confused with spring beauty.

There were true Solomon seals and false Solomon seals, with the differences noted in each. Jack-in-the-pulpits were in abundance with their unusual shapes. A kidneyleaf buttercup was identified, as was golden ragwort, goldenseal, corydalis, cut-leaved toothwort, and saxifrage. Among the more common plants identified were sedum, chickweed, wild strawberries and lamb's ear.

Kathy will be at the Preserve on Sunday afternoon, May 18, beginning at 1 p.m., as well as Thursday mornings, May 15 and May 22, at 10 a.m. Anyone interested can meet at the Shenk's Ferry parking area, located one mile north of Pequea off Shenk's Ferry Road. For more information, call 284-2278.

Give your mother (or yourself) a long-lasting treat this year. Take the time to enjoy the solitude and unusual beauty of Shenk's Ferry Glen Wildflower Preserve. It's free and requires no appointment. Most importantly, it is sure to refresh your spirits — as often as you take the time to visit.

Homestead Notes