

2024

FRIENDS
GUIDED

WILDFLOWER HIKE



hike



Richfield
HERITAGE
PRESERVE



FRIENDS OF
Richfield Heritage Preserve

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Friends of RHP is a non-profit advocacy group promoting Richfield Heritage Preserve. Follow us on social media. friendsofrhp.org.

SPRING WILDFLOWERS ARE IN BLOOM

EXPECT TO SEE AN EARLY SHOWING OF SPRING WILDFLOWERS MID-APRIL TO MID-MAY.

Take our self-guided loop trail hike (under 2 miles) to get the best view of the Preserve's spring ephemerals and enjoy many other nature sightings along the way. Meet your virtual guide, plant ecologist Jennifer Windus, on the south side of The Lodge (formerly Gund Hall), located at 4374 Broadview Road, and follow this wildflower hike on your smartphone, or download it and print a copy.

Jennifer, retired from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (Natural Areas & Preserves, Wildlife) will show you, using the included photos, how to identify wildflowers. Watch your step on the first mile – which follows the Buckeye Trail through one of the most scenic sections of this 336-acre park. Midway, notice Kirby's Mill on the Lower Lake before returning along the second half of the trail – a wide gravel roadway passing old campsites and picnic pavilions – and more wildflowers!

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Richfield Heritage Preserve is a 336-acre public park with a diverse range of habitats including mature hardwood forests, wetlands, meadows, prairies, and planted conifer stands. This unique park contains many creek valleys and wooded hiking trails as well as 2

lakes. When you visit, you are welcome to use picnic shelters, go catch and release fishing, go horseback riding and explore around the historical buildings. Did you know it's official that this is an important place? RHP is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district – the Camp Crowell Hilaka Historic District. Discover the rich local history, found within beautiful natural areas, that awaits your personal adventure. Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve is currently raising funds to restore the historic Kirby's Mill.





Start your DIY spring wildflower hike at the park kiosk and head left toward the Upper Lake and the Buckeye Trail.

• X



Head left towards the main road.

Clear your head and begin to focus on nature. Tune into the sounds of the native birds around you. You may hear chickadees, kinglets, towhees, and the distinctive drumming of a woodpecker.



Along the roadside, there is a nice display of **common ragwort**. This spring wildflower is in the aster family. The bud starts out purple and then produces small blooms in clusters of yellow – like a field of sunshine!



Take a deep breath - you are outside enjoying the fresh air!
Veer to the right.



This is a slow growing, mature hardwood tree – **shagbark hickory**. Bats have been known to make their homes beneath this shaggy bark.



Enjoy the full view of the Upper Lake, the boat-house, and the metal bridge. **Turn left** at the trail entrance marked with the Buckeye Trail sign. Follow these signs – you are on the right path!



An early sign of spring at RHP is fields of green **skunk cabbage**. Did you know it is not even a cabbage? It is a wildflower that produces its own heat. The big, beautiful, bright green leaves are a welcome contrast to all things brown of winter.



Marsh marigold is a spring wildflower that is a member of the buttercup family. It's also known as kingscup or simply called "gold" by English poets.



Thanks again to our wildflower hike host Jennifer Windus from Ohio Invasive Plants Council.

ECOLOGY OF SPRING WILDFLOWERS

Native spring wildflowers begin emerging from the ground once the cold winter weather disappears. The temperature of the soil beneath the leaf litter begins to warm up and stimulates the wildflowers to grow. Above them towers a canopy of trees which have only budded and have not begun to leaf out. There are many symbiotic relationships starting when early insect pollinators visit the spring wildflowers as they bloom. Spring wildflowers do not bloom for long – sometimes only for a week or two – and their impressive flowers disappear as the trees begin to leaf out and the forest floor becomes more shaded.





Small winding tributary on the Buckeye Trail.
Did you know that RHP is in the east branch and
the headwaters of the Rocky River watershed?





Germinating **acorns** turn red when they are about to burst open – sprouting a sapling oak tree.



Nature is so beautiful when you take the time to notice.



Clever robin (females are the usual homemakers) made her nest at the very top of a rotted tree trunk. This could be a male robin with his dark rusty colored breast as well as darker wings and tail feathers. If you are focused on wildflowers, you could easily miss this delightful hidden treasure.



Fields of green at RHP! Cabbage anyone?



Pussytoes is a fast-growing groundcover that spreads by runners. It is deer and pest resistant as well as disease proof. It can be found on the hill of the gas cut near the Buckeye Trail.



View the bridge in the distance built by Boy Scouts as an Eagle Scout project. Follow the trail marker and cross at the gas cut.

We believe now, more than ever in today's complicated world, that all people need a quiet place to connect with nature.



Spicebush is a shrub in the laurel family and grows in the understory of a rich woods. Migrating thrush and insects feed on it.





Yes, you are still on the
correct trail.

“And into the forest I go,
to lose my mind and find
my soul.”

- John Muir

“In a cool solitude of trees
Where leaves and birds a music
spin, Mind that was weary is at
ease, New rhythms in the soul
begin.”

- William Kean Seymour



Squaw root – also known as American bear corn or cancer root – emerges in late spring in small clusters on the forest floor and resembles small pinecones with scales. It is a parasitic plant, and its hosts are the root systems of trees found mainly in the red oak family. This odd-looking plant is not damaging to the tree, and Native Americans used it for its medicinal properties.



Rue anemone –
from the buttercup family, it loves rich flood plains. Some small bees collect the pollen and take it to provision their nests, while flies consume pollen at the flower.



Long-spurred violet's natural habitat is acidic mesic forests. Notice the slender spur and the upper petals have dark violet streaks.



Yes, you are still on the right trail if your eye spies the **large boulder** down in the creek valley.



...fallen **tree snags** benefit a healthy forest by introducing direct sunlight which activates the dormant seeds below the soil and sparks new plant growth. Snags provide habitat, nesting, and food by supplying insects and fungus for many bird species and small woodland mammals.



Shown is a **white trillium** growing among the ramps – also known as wild leeks – which are state listed as “at risk”. Ramps are spring ephemerals that unfurl and cover the moist forest floor like green carpeting. They emerge before the trees leaf out. They are actively fixing carbon through photosynthesis – which is stored in the bulb – and in early summer, the plant sends up a flower stalk.



Foamflower is a colony forming perennial which spreads by runners. When blooming, you will notice many tiny white flowers. This plant prefers to grow along streams, creek banks and trails. Deciduous hemlock forests, seasonal floodplains and seeps are rich in foamflower.



Beech, is another hardwood tree, of which we have many, and they are quite beautiful.

Beech Leaf Disease – BLD is threatening our forests. This hardwood tree is essential to native Ohio wildlife. BLD is caused by a fungal infection. You can spot the infected trees by the appearance of curled or withered leaves.



Jacob's ladder – from the phlox family – is a bell-shaped bloom in clusters with 7-17 compound leaflets arranged to resemble a ladder. They are 8-15 inches high. Bloom has white stamens and light bluish-purple petals. Named after the bible story about Jacob, who dreamed of a ladder reaching heaven. Loves shade, well-drained moist soil, spreads by seed, and can grow in large patches.



Large-flowered bellwort

A beautiful pale yellow bloom is reminiscent of a ballerina's twisted dancing skirt. This drooping ephemeral has leaves with a hairy underside – and the plant can reach up to 18 inches tall. Small native bees provide pollination, and ants disperse its seeds.

Unfortunately, deer love to forage these delectable beauties.



Close to the Oxbow area – marked on the illustrated map and located in the creek valley of the Buckeye Trail – there are many **spring seeps** where the wildflowers grow.





Ramps are spring onion plants that like it in wet, rich woodland soil.



As you wander down the Buckeye Trail, you will come upon the humble Cook's Cabin – built in 1937 – nestled among the spring wildflowers. You will be surrounded by a stand of weeping hemlock trees that may share some words of wisdom with you. If they could talk, they might say, "The purest form of environmentalism is preservation of an old rustic cabin in the woods. It is a reminder of a simpler past – which brings us pure joy today that lightens our load – and is a symbol of a more sustainable future."



Woodland ferns are a place of rest for insects, amphibians and our eyes.



Photo by Chris Naizer

Partridge berry is a tiny vine in the evergreen family that has a white bloom in early summer. Historically it has been known as a method for treating yellow fever.



Eastern hemlock is a long-lived conifer that likes shade. A glorious large tree, its bark has been used as medicine for a wide range of ailments.



Spring beauty – this tiny bloom can be pink to white in color and closes its petals at night!



Cutleaf toothwort – there are 32 species in Ohio. In the mustard family, this flower is an important early nectar source for native pollinators.



White (unopened) trillium next to a mayapple.



White trillium, in the lily family, is also known as the wake robin. The blooms start out white and slowly turn to pink as they age. This exquisite beauty is our state's official wildflower. It was selected because trillium exists in all 88 counties.



Yellow trout lily – notice the pair of brown-spotted green leaves and lemon yellow flowers with six tepals.



Oxbow area – soak in the forest through all your senses, notice the stream meander, drink in the beautiful reflections in the water and inhale the woody smell of the hemlock trees that surround you. Tune in and listen to the quiet sounds of the forest to ease your mind and free your soul.



American elderberry, also known as common elderberry, is a deciduous shrub with spring-blooming, large bright white flower clusters and small dark berries which are toxic (when raw) to humans, dogs, and cats. This plant grows along stream banks, likes full sun, and has shallow roots that grow in a matt-like pattern. It's also known for its culinary qualities.



A beautiful cluster of **rue-anemone** which like rich floodplains to dry uplands. A tea prepared from the roots was once used to treat diarrhea and vomiting.



Purple cress – from the mustard family, it's found in rich wooded areas and is somewhat hairy.



White baneberry, also known as doll's eyes for its white berries, is an herbaceous plant. This plant is toxic for humans, but birds can feast on the berries with no problems.



Hepatica – It is one of Ohio's earliest spring species and is so delicate in appearance, it can warm the heart of all who see it. Its light fragrance promises that springtime is near. The flower is an important energy source for the earliest spring insects. The petal color varies in a single colony from white, to pink, to purple and blue.



Turn left to hike back up the main road (on the red loop trail) and head towards Mable Smith; or for a longer hike, turn right to see the Kirby House and Kirby's Mill – currently being restored by the Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve



Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) love dappled sunlight and form vast colonies in rich floodplains, stream terraces and low-lying damp woods. Also called coughwort, these plants are dependent on long-tongued bees (bumblebees) for pollination.



... You are now walking past **Garfield Hall**. Please find and read the historical interpretation sign that you are approaching.



Coltsfoot is one of the first wildflowers to bloom in the NE Ohio spring. It is not native to Ohio but is naturalized in many places.



Broadleaf toothwort, also called crinkleroot or pepper root. This rare wildflower is an herb with pungent scaly or toothed roots.



Common dog violet is our most familiar woodland wild violet.



Early meadow-rue, also known as quicksilver weed, has petalless flowers that have yellow to greenish drooping filaments that look like graceful tassels.



Christmas fern – like an evergreen, it remains green year-round.



Bloodroot is an ephemeral whose petals often fall in one day. The root makes a red juice which has been used for dye.



Bloodroot (leaf) is an early spring bloomer; the way the plant emerges from the soil is fascinating to see. The unopened leaf swaddles the bloom as if to protect it from the chilly morning air. The shape of the leaf and its showy veins are captivating as they resemble an intriguing hoof of some unknown creature from an Avatar movie. Remember not to blink or you will miss the bloom!



Photo by Clive Fetzer

Jack-in-the-pulpit is an unusual name for a woodland plant. In the spring, it sends up a beautiful chalice-shaped flower which is said to resemble a preacher at the pulpit. The bloom ranges in color from striped, maroon to green. The green plants are located in rich, moist deciduous woods and floodplains.



Mayapple grows in colonies and spreads by its roots – called rhizomes. The bloom resembles an apple blossom and appears underneath the very recognizable umbrella-like leaf.



Wild geranium is a long bloomer (April-June) which frequents in the shady understory at the Richfield Heritage Preserve. It grows in rich moist soil and flood plains. This plant has many beautiful lobed leaves and is also called cranesbill because of its seed pod – which is shaped like the bill of a crane.



Photos by Beth Sanderson

Downy yellow violet is the second most common violet in the state. Ants disperse the seeds of this species and many other violets.

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VALUE OF NATIVE PLANTS

All our wildlife and insects depend on native plants for survival, as they are the building blocks of our native biodiversity. Flowers provide nectar and pollen for many insects. A wide range of animals have an intricate relationship with native plants, depending on them for habitat, food, and reproduction (as host plants in which to lay their eggs). Richfield Heritage Preserve has a rich diversity of native plants that should be protected and managed. The Preserve also has an abundance of non-native, invasive plants – particularly in the northern portion – for which we are implementing a plan to control so as to encourage the native plants to prosper.

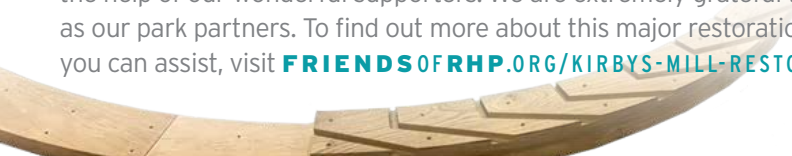
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WHEN YOU DONATE TODAY...

YOUR CONTRIBUTION WILL SUPPORT RESTORATION OF KIRBY'S MILL

A primary focus of the Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve is to raise funds to restore the iconic Kirby's Mill. Built by inventor James Kirby in 1922 to generate electric power, the innovative design was based on an older grist mill technology adapted to work with a low flow stream. Once restored, the mill will showcase the technology of energy production. Its picturesque setting will make the mill an inviting gateway for learning about science and engineering. Work on the mill will be completed in stages as the anticipated \$500,000 total needed is raised. To date, the mill has received a new roof, custom windows, restored mill wheel and wheel pit as well as safety screening around the water wheel. This was accomplished with the help of our wonderful supporters. We are extremely grateful to them as well as our park partners. To find out more about this major restoration effort and how you can assist, visit [FRIENDSOFRHP.ORG/KIRBYS-MILL-RESTORATION](https://www.FRIENDSOFRHP.ORG/KIRBYS-MILL-RESTORATION)



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