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WELCOME SPRING IN A COUNTY PARK

LINCROFT— Spring is in the air and there's no better place to greet it than in the Monmouth County Park System! Whether you're looking to take a swing at golf or spend the night under the stars, the Park System is the place to be. The Park System offers playgrounds, historic sites, gardens, beaches and miles and miles of trails.

As anyone who has teed off at Hominy Hill Golf Course in Colts Neck can attest, the Park System offers some of the best golfing in the area. Hominy Hill Golf Course is often rated among New Jersey's top public golf courses. The Park System's other golf courses – Bel-Aire in Wall, Charleston Springs in Millstone, Howell Park in Farmingdale, Pine Brook in Manalapan and Shark River in Neptune – allow golfers of all levels to enjoy a challenging game. Those just getting started or looking to improve their swing can sign up for any of the Park System's golf lessons listed in the Directory.

A great way to experience spring in the park is to spend the night at the campground in Turkey Swamp Park, Freehold. Campers can listen to the crickets, owls and other nocturnal creatures in the evening and explore this 2,173 acre wooded park by day. Open on April 1, the campground features tent and trailer sites as well as two primitive cabins. Per night campsite rates are \$33 for county residents and \$37 for non-residents. County residents can rent a cabin for \$56 a night while non-residents pay \$66 per night.

Perhaps the best place within the Park System to greet spring is Deep Cut Gardens, Middletown. Dedicated to the home gardener, Deep Cut Gardens features 54 acres of gardens and greenhouses that are a living catalog of cultivated and native plant materials. Gardeners and non-gardeners alike will enjoy wandering along the paths of this beautiful site and seeing spring in full bloom. Another not-to-miss spot this spring is the arboretum in Holmdel Park, Holmdel with its flowering crabapple and cherry trees.

While at Holmdel Park, stop by Historic Longstreet Farm and see what spring in the 1890s would have looked like. Staff dressed in period clothes will be busy plowing, planting and tending to this living history farm. Lovely any time of year, Historic Walnford in Upper Freehold is particularly nice in the spring when bluebells pop up along Crosswicks Creek. Make the most of an afternoon by bringing fishing gear and trying to catch catfish and shad that lurk in the water.

Crosswicks Creek Park isn't the only place in the Park System to go fishing. Fisherman's Cove in Manasquan, Thompson Park in Lincroft and Shark River Park in Neptune are some of the other places anglers can drop a line. Please be aware that a NJ State fishing license is required for all freshwater fishing for ages 16-69. Visit www.monmouthcountyparks.com for more information and a complete list of locations.

Some things are just too much fun to be limited to one or two parks. Trails, playgrounds, picnic areas, and boat launches can be found in parks throughout the county. To learn more about the Park System's offerings, visit www.monmouthcountyparks.com or call (732) 842-4000. The TTY/TDD number for persons with hearing impairment is 711. The Monmouth County Park System, created in 1960 by the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders, is Monmouth County's Open Space, Parks and Recreation agency.

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PICTURED – Deep Cut Gardens, Middletown