



MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

GREEN HERITAGE

The Newsletter of Monmouth County's Open Space, Parks & Recreation Agency

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Monmouth County's "Best Idea" Turns 50



Part of the charm of the first county park at Shark River was—and remains—this pond. Constructed by the federal SCS (Soil Conservation Service) using their dragline-equipped crane, it is a good example of how “borrowed” labor and equipment helped the Park System get off the ground in the early years. The pond is shown in 1961, 1967 and today.

PARKS PROVIDING NATURE NEXT DOOR SINCE 1960

It all began with acquisition of a 24-acre parcel of land leftover from construction of the Garden State Parkway in Neptune. Monmouth County's Freeholders and Planning Board had been talking about forming a parks department throughout the 1950s, but at that time the county was still very rural and the idea of setting aside land for open space was not an obvious one.

In the 1950s when the county was still very rural, the idea of setting aside land for open space was not an obvious one.

Plus, the county had what was thought to be plenty of recreation options—beaches and boardwalks, fishing and swimming holes, etc.

That started to change in 1961 when that leftover parcel opened as Shark River Park and, featuring just a modest picnic area, attracted almost 6,000 visitors during its first year!

The county knew it was onto something. Operating with borrowed staff and hand-me-down equipment, the fledgling Park System managed to acquire land and establish some of its most iconic properties within its first few years: Holmdel Park (1962), a nationally ranked cross-country running site and one of the area's most visited parks; Turkey Swamp (1963), now the county's largest park and one of few with campgrounds in Monmouth County; Howell Park (1967), the county's first golf course; Longstreet Farm (also, 1967), the county's first historic site and an absolute favorite of many area families with small children; and Thompson Park (1968), the Park System's Headquarters with its historic buildings, playground, tennis courts, soccer fields, meadows, trails, program facilities, and lake.

Continues next page



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WE'VE COME A LONG WAY

Today, the Park System has its own staff and equipment, which it needs to manage more than 35 county parks on nearly 15,000 acres of property, as well as the many unique, highly popular and free recreational facilities established over the past 50 years.

Today, the Park System manages over 35 county parks on nearly 15,000 acres, and more than a dozen specialized recreational facilities.

These include the Skateplex (2006) at Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park (1982); the Sprayground (2004) at Dorbrook Recreation Area (1985); the 5-mile perimeter trail, Environmental Center (with nesting bald eagle pair), and boat rentals at the Manasquan Reservoir (1990)—now the Park System's most popular site with over 1 million visits per year; or the new Off-Leash Dog Area (2008) at Wolf Hill Recreation Area (1997) that was installed in response to requests from area pet-owners who wanted a safe place to let their dogs run free, to name just a few.

Fifty years is an important milestone and a good time to take a look back at how some of the Park System's classic recreational features—the playgrounds, ponds (mostly man-made), sledding hills, gardens, architecture, and landscape—have taken shape through the years.



1967



Today

Acquiring land is only one part of the park story; acquiring old buildings often means there will be some work (or demolition) required before the park can be opened and enjoyed by the public. These photos of the barn complex at **Longstreet Farm** from 1967 and today tell a good part of that site's extensive restoration story.



1968



Today

One of the things people have said they enjoy about county park facilities is that they feel safe. Providing a secure atmosphere requires both manpower and equipment. For instance, do you know what happens if a fire occurs in a remote part of the park where there is no fire hydrant? Rangers respond with this special truck outfitted with its own water tank, pump and hose reel.

The sledding hill at **Holmdel Park** in 1979 and today. The hill looks more or less the same, but note how the sleds have changed. They used to be metal and wood, today they are plastic.



1979



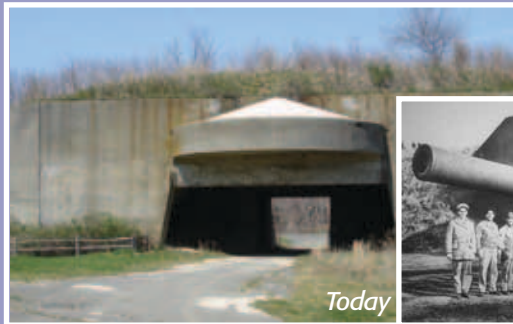
Today



In 1985, the **Hilltop Playground** at **Holmdel Park** had a few simple features made of wood, set in a sandbox alone in this field. That same playground, recently renovated, features modern ADA accessible safety and design elements—a cushioned surface made of recycled tires, plastic composite play structures designed to stimulate certain skills. The whole set-up is positioned amidst the trees and there are walkways and sitting areas.

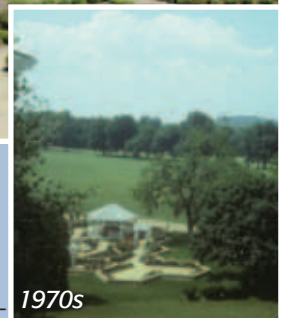
Today, **Hartshorne Woods** is a large, heavily wooded park known for its trails and scenic overlooks of the Atlantic Ocean and Navesink and Shrewsbury Rivers. Built years ago, a portion of the site was a military installation. The Rocky Point Section housed buildings and equipment during WWII as a US Army Coastal Artillery Battery in the 1940s, and as the US Air Force Air Defense and Highlands Army Air Defense Site in the 1950s. Battery Lewis, a concrete encasement used to protect heavy artillery, is

shown here in the 1940s, and as it is today.



One critical mission of the Park System is to protect the county's natural resources as well as provide the public with opportunities to enjoy these resources. This role is fulfilled, in part, by Naturalists. The Park System's first full-time naturalist was hired in 1966; by the 1970s there were 5, and today there are 10 (two were unavailable for this photo). They help monitor park wildlife and habitats, conduct almost 900 nature education programs in the parks and area schools each year, provide tours, staff the environmental centers, and answer all kinds of questions from a curious public.

You might not expect that a beach park would need much work before the public could use it, but **Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park** has undergone significant structural and landscape rehabilitation. Aside from the US Army Corp of Engineers ongoing beach replenishment efforts along New Jersey's coast, the Park System removed pilings leftover from old bulkheads and moved this Activity Center further away from the beach in order to build protective dunes (pictured right, covered with grass). The dunes now serve as habitat for the endangered Piping Plover and Least Tern, and the Activity Center has been joined by a Visitor Pavilion, playground, and maintenance building (not pictured).



The Park System is the third largest landowner in the county (next to the state and federal government) and managing so many natural resources is not without its "natural" challenges. Through the years, water has caused damage—from trail and beach erosion to floods—and so has wildlife. One unfortunate casualty was the Rose Garden at **Thompson Park**, which finally succumbed to the effects of grazing from a rising deer population in the late 1970s. Happily, the garden was re-opened in 2008 at a more protected location—the fenced-in parterre at **Deep Cut Gardens**.

Getting There: Trails For Community Connections

Paved and unpaved trails were identified as the two most frequently used park facilities in the Monmouth County Park System's 2008 Citizen Opinion and Interest Survey.

Paved and unpaved trails are the two most frequently used facilities in the Monmouth County Park System.

That's consistent with the most recent National Survey on Recreation and the Environment in which walking was one of the six most popular individual activities. Another national survey included four trail uses among the top ten outdoor activities by participation: walking for fitness, running/jogging, bicycling, and hiking.

The popularity of trails can probably be explained in part by their low cost to the user (free admission, no equipment needed, etc.), the fact that they do not require developed skills, and that they can be enjoyed alone or with others. Providing attractive and diverse trail opportunities for the residents of Monmouth County is a Park System priority. In addition to the 22-mile Henry Hudson Trail—a paved, linear trail that runs from Atlantic Highlands to Freehold Borough, the Park System maintains another 100 miles of paved and unpaved trails throughout its many parks.

STATE IDENTIFIES TRAILS AS A WAY TO CONNECT COMMUNITIES



As the recently published 2009 New Jersey Trails Plan Update points out, trails are more than recreation facilities. Developed and endorsed by both the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and the NJ Department of Transportation, the State Trails Plan embraces trails as alternative transportation corridors.

The State embraces trails as alternative transportation corridors.

This update breaks new ground by talking about trails serving a transportation function, as well as describing issues related to the supply of trails, levels of maintenance, shared use conflicts, information availability, and funding.



Visitors can walk, or ride, on the paved trail at Thompson Park, Lincroft.

One of the Plan's seven vision themes is "Trails for Community Connections." In this vision, trails are no longer a recreation destination, but the route to other destinations. Integrated with sidewalk and street networks, a system of trail corridors connects people to neighborhoods, retail centers, schools, workplaces, transit stations, and parks.

Trails can connect neighborhoods, retail centers, schools, workplaces, transit stations, and parks.

Providing trails as a safe and inviting transportation alternative can help reduce the number of car trips and associated reliance on fossil fuels, and increase physical activity improving fitness and health.

NEW TRAIL SYSTEMS WILL REQUIRE THOUGHTFUL CHANGES

Reinventing trails as part of the transportation infrastructure will be a challenge. Planning at every level—municipal, county,



Wall Township's Route 18 Bike Path is a local example of a trail facility serving a transportation function.

and state—has traditionally paid little attention to bicycle/pedestrian facilities and trails. If discussed at all, trails are typically included as part of a specialized parks and recreation plan, not as part of the comprehensive plan. This is unfortunate, since comprehensive plans generally have more money and can require right-of-way dedications to promote the implementation of trails. What's needed is a fundamental change in our cultural and governmental view of trails. Also, coordination between multiple jurisdictions is critical to the design and implementation of a useful, functioning linear trail system.

The partnership of the State Departments of Transportation and Environmental Protection that created this updated 2009 Trails Plan, and its vision of trails for community connections, is an

important first step. Strong public support for expanded pedestrian, bicycle, and trail facilities can make the vision a reality.

For more information about the State Trails Plan visit the Department of Environmental Protection website, www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/natural/trail_plan.htm.

For more information about Monmouth County Park System trails visit our website, www.monmouthcountyparks.com.

Winter Warmth & Wisdom



This winter, as you plan (and dream) about your garden, be sure to stop by the library at Deep Cut Gardens in Middletown for a bit of warmth and wisdom. Titles both factual and inspirational abound.

You might begin with practical matters and consult a book of garden layouts, such as *Backyard Design* and *35 Garden Blueprints*. You can copy a ready-made plan or make one of your own. Then, move on to choosing the actual plants. For this, *What Plant Where?* and *The American Horticultural Society's Northeast Regional Guide* will be of great use. Just steps from the book shelves are an array of seed and plant catalogs, so you can order what you need!

Where can you go from there? Detailed how-to books will help you build fences, walkways and ponds. Or, browse through *The Captured Harvest* for nature craft ideas. Books on wreath-making and flower arranging will be useful for your upcoming holidays.

Maybe you aren't really a gardener but you still love gardens! You can easily spend an hour or two with *Every Garden is a Story* or *The Gardener's Life*, two beautiful books which celebrate the world of gardening with anecdotes, sketches and biographical tidbits. Or, for the ultimate picture book, pick up *Van Gogh's Gardens* which intersperses the artist's paintings with photos of the plants that inspired them.

Whatever your interest, your visit to Deep Cut Gardens and its library is sure to be a welcome respite from the gray days of winter.

Home Gardener



As an adventurous diversion from the winter foliage of Monmouth County, the Home Gardener would like to take you "on vacation" to Costa Rica this issue. Deep Cut Gardener Randy McHaney will be your guide...



Rancho Naturalista. Note the beautiful mountains in the background, and the landscape.



Above: Sooty-capped Bush-tanager. This friendly bird likes high altitudes and is found here near this volcano and only a few other places. Costa Rica has over 700 species of bird, but some people visit just to see tanagers which come in a variety of bright colors.



Fruit of the cacao (cocoa) tree. This 6-12" pod sprouts from the trunk of the tree; inside there are 20-60 beans.

The Land Of White Towers

Randy McHaney, Senior Gardener

I've always wanted to visit Costa Rica because the geology, flora and fauna fascinated me. So when my brother and sister-in-law suggested a trip there last February, I was totally on board. Our first destination—after landing in San Jose (the capital) and following a bumpy 4-hour drive on bad roads—was Rancho Naturalista in the Cartago Province, a tropical premontane rain forest famous for its custom, guided bird watching. Costa Rica has 11-13 "zones of life" based on altitude, temperature, etc.; and the term premontane refers to the zone we visited 2,000 meters above sea level with a constant temperature of about 75° F.

This is about as remote a site as one can find on earth...or at least as remote as I had experienced. It was almost entirely inaccessible. We had to travel up winding, cobblestone roads to reach the hacienda which overlooks the spectacular valley of Turrialba. In the distance sits Irazu, the area's most recently active volcano. This region is called the "land of white towers," a term coined by Spanish Explorers in 1569 to describe the steam rising up from various volcanoes.

MICROCLIMATES, BIRDS & VOLCANOS

Costa Rica is the most bio-diverse place on earth. It has more than a dozen distinct microclimates and contains 4-6% of our planet's flora and fauna within a landmass that only accounts for 0.01 to 0.03% of the earth's territory.

Even though it has many climates, the one I found in the central valley was still a great surprise— it was not at all the steamy tropic I had imagined. The nights were cool, and the air was clear and fresh.

One of our first visits to Irazu National Park, gave me an opportunity to test out my photography skills. Usually, getting a good bird photo can be difficult, but not at this site. This small perching songbird actually followed me around for a while. I think it was interested in the grapes I was eating. The birds here seem to have learned how to "work" the tourists and are very obvious about it, but not in an obnoxious way. I was just standing there and when I looked down...there it was.

This visit also included a journey to the Irazu volcano. Loosely translated, this name means hill of trembling and thunder. It last trembled and thundered in 1994 when an explosion to the North side of the crater collapsed into the Sucio River bed below. (NOTE: At over 11,000 feet above sea level the sun can be quite intense. If you ever plan a trip to a volcano, be sure to pack sunscreen. I didn't and got a painful sunburn.)

WHERE A GOOD GUIDE IS LIKE A "ROCK STAR"

The Hacienda where we stayed attracted a host of interesting people, a few at a time since there were only 15 rooms. Some visitors took to bird watching in the most serious way, but that's bound to happen at a famous birding destination. We were introduced to a very good guide to show us around. Good guides are like rock stars in Costa Rica, yet they are still relatively inexpensive. You can spend as little as ten dollars a day, but my brother (an avid birder) was so impressed by our guide's vast knowledge of birds that he ended up tipping quite a bit more.

SURVEYING THE LAND: A GARDENER'S DELIGHT

The temperature in Costa Rica is generally nice, though stormy conditions do occur and the terrain can be tough. To get to know the landscape better we visited a few more of the many large national and local parks. In fact, a large percentage of Costa Rica's land is used for the National Parks Service. The rest, especially in the Turrialba region, is used for agriculture. This is a good thing, since just about anything will grow in Costa Rica.

Coffee is a popular Costa Rican crop for export. This evergreen, a four-foot shrub native to Africa, grows well on



Irazu Volcano

the steep, stony hills. Coffee is a high-maintenance crop; shrubs need to be pruned, weeds must be controlled, and of course, the crop must be harvested. At the same time, many of the coffee plantations sat very high and on very steep cliffs; some looked almost vertical.

BOTANICAL STUDIES & CENTERS

The intellectual heart of the valley was the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center, which offers graduate studies in all aspects of natural resource management. The center's policies and developments are worked out in large farm plots nearby. The cocoa (cacao) tree is studied here, along with the palm and other tropical plants that show promise for the economy.

In particular, the cacao tree (*Theobroma cacao*, see photo left) is an important plant. Its use can be traced all the way back to the Aztecs, who exchanged the seeds like money. The value of cacao is not only the delicious chocolates they produce; pharmaceuticals and cosmetics are also derived from the seeds. This 20-foot tree is well adapted to

Costa Rica since it requires large quantities of water and grows best in an area with only slight fluctuations in temperature.

Next-door is Jardin Botanico with its wide collection of ornamental plants popular for export. Most of these plants find their way into large commercial buildings; in the United States you can often find them in malls and atriums.



Turrialba Valley. Many of the area's agricultural fields were once rainforest.

Usted Esta Aqui (You Are Here)

There was a vital spirit, harmony and relaxed quality that came over me when I stepped onto the grounds of the Bougainvillea Hotel in Santo Domingo, a sprawling community just a few minutes north of San Jose, our last stop on the way to the airport heading home. The beautiful tropical gardens draw you in, but it is the friendly atmosphere that makes you want to stay.

It might remind you of a palace garden, but it is much more. It is a hotel with a mission and an association with some very prestigious environmental organizations, including the National Institute of Biodiversity and Tirimbina Biological Reserve. Ecotourism and social responsibility are the politics of Costa Rica, a country in transition, but that's of little consequence to me here and now at the Bougainvillea. Only the aesthetics matter and they scream "bravo."



The landscape at Bougainvillea



Bromeliads

On tank-type Bromeliads, the leaves form cups which the plant uses to collect water. The water is then absorbed as the plant needs it. Many of these plants have beautiful foliage and that alone is reason enough to grow these lovelies. Brightly colored flowers and bracts may also appear in summer and last for many weeks, depending on the species. These make very nice seasonal houseplants and will last for months.

Yucca is a genus of 40 species, all woody and evergreen. They prefer dry, well-drained locations such as deserts and plains. None are hardy in the Monmouth County area except one, Adam's needle (*Yucca filamentosa*), a popular landscape plant here in New Jersey. This photo shows a giant Yucca, species unknown.



Giant Yucca



Lucky Bean Tree

Lucky Bean Tree (*Erythrina caffra*) is native to South Africa and can grow up to 60 feet after many years. This specimen is probably about 30 years old and the intense red flowers, along with its fissured bark, are magnificent.

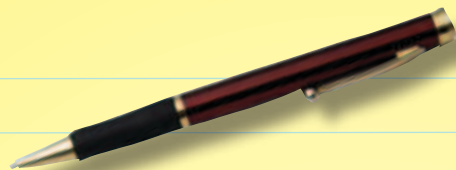


Thunbergia mysorensis

Thunbergia mysorensis is a woody, evergreen vine from India that can grow up to 20 feet. The red and yellow flowers grow in pendant racemes of approximately 7 inches. The annual Black-eyed Susan vine grown in our Northeast is one of its relatives.

It's Time To...

January ✓



- Throughout winter, check for winter mulches and plants displaced by the weather and replace as necessary. Gently remove snow from evergreens to prevent damage.
- Don't forget the birds – fresh water is essential; seeds and suet will provide nourishment as natural food supplies dwindle.
- Start a garden journal; it will prove to be an invaluable asset.
- Increase humidity around houseplants by setting plants on pebble trays or grouping them together.
- Plan for the 2010 growing season – browse the catalogs, narrow your wish list, sketch out plans, and make up your seed list.

February ✓

- Take care of your garden tools; cleaning and oiling now will have them ready for spring and add years to the life of your equipment.
- If winter seems to be dragging, remember Deep Cut's display greenhouse is open year round, filled with orchids, succulents and houseplants. Peak orchid flowering season is January-March.
- Turning the soil in your vegetable and annual beds now will expose insect eggs to foraging birds and the ravages of winter. Next month you can add well-rotted manure or compost if not done in the fall.
- Keep foliage of houseplants dust free and stay on the lookout for insects. Feed any that are actively blooming or showing new growth.
- For a taste of spring, force branches of flowering trees or shrubs, or pot up some paperwhite narcissus – these will bloom within 3-4 weeks and don't require the chilling period most other bulbs require.
- Test leftover seeds for viability by placing several between moist paper towels or coffee filters and keep warm and moist.

March ✓

- Prune trees and shrubs for health and beauty. Fertilize, if not already done, after soil temperatures have reached 40° F, but before new growth begins. Apply dormant oil spray on a calm day above 40°.
- This is a good time to repot and fertilize your houseplants.
- Indoors: start seeds for broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, lettuce, parsley, peppers and tomatoes.

- Weather is uncertain, so be cautious about uncovering beds. Clean up the garden gradually, removing leaves and winter mulch in layers rather than all at once.
- Don't work the soil until it will form a ball that crumbles when pressed with your thumb.
- If not done in the fall, get a pH test and apply lime if needed.
- Divide and transplant perennials as needed; fertilize established ones when new growth appears; pot up extras to bring to the Deep Cut Spring Perennial Swap in late April.
- This is a good time to take note of any areas of poor drainage.
- Outdoors: direct-sow seeds for cool crops like peas, beets, Swiss chard, lettuce, and seeds of cold-tolerant annuals.
- Visit a flower show. The MCPS runs bus trips to the New Jersey Flower Show. Check our website or the Directory for dates and times.



Garden team volunteer Jim Henry prunes the Smoke-bush at Thompson Park's Visitor Center. This very special tree is well worth a visit to the park in June when it is covered in tufts of pink, fur-like blooms.



NATURE CORNER

:A meadow in August at Thompson Park, Lincroft

Meadows As Modern-Day Lawn And More

Janet Ryan, Park System Naturalist

For gardeners, winter is a time to dream and plan...

What if, this year, I try something different with my lawn? Meadows, for some, are becoming the new lawns. But exactly what is a meadow and why would anyone prefer a meadow to a lawn?

A meadow is an ecosystem composed of native grasses and a great variety of flowering herbaceous (non-woody) plants.

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By their very nature, meadows provide food, shelter and nesting places for a great diversity of animal life. Meadows also do not need regular mowing and require less water and no fertilizer. Plus a meadow can be stocked with a variety of different plants instead of just one type of grass, for color and variety. Keep in mind that meadows are constantly changing as new seeds blow in or are carried in by animals.

MEADOWS: AN EARLY STAGE OF PLANT SUCCESSION

A meadow is an early stage of plant succession ("ecosystem development") whereby one group of plants is replaced by another group of plants, eventually leading to a climax plant community, such as a forest.

In this process, areas that have been disturbed, such as former farmlands or vacant lots, will first grow annuals and

non-native plants. Next, the perennials will move in (they develop more slowly than the annuals) along with grasses, followed by softwood trees such as pines, and finally hardwood trees. Ultimately, the trees will shade out the sun-loving plants, such as those which thrive in a meadow.

NOT ALL MEADOWS "SUCCEED"

Not all meadows go on to the next stage of plant succession. A meadow may persist when it is subjected to certain natural conditions or disturbances that prevent the growth of woody plants. The plants of our coastal meadows here in Monmouth County are conditioned by the ocean; dune grasses, prickly pear, seaside goldenrod, sea lavender and beach pea, have to be able to withstand salt spray. Alpine meadow plants have to be able to tolerate frigid temperatures and high elevations. Plants in prairie meadows must be able to endure drought and fire.



Black Swallow butterfly on Cardinal flower

Meadows may persist when subjected to natural conditions that prevent the growth of woody plants, or when artificially maintained.

Meadows can also be artificially maintained so that they remain meadows, offering gardeners with an alternative to the traditional lawn.

MAN-MADE MEADOWS

While natural meadows do not need to be watered, fertilized, or frequently mowed, man-made meadows are not entirely maintenance-free. But with a bit of effort, especially in the first year, a beautiful, colorful meadow-garden, teeming with wildlife, and a delight through all the seasons, can be created.

THE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

can help you pick the right wildflowers and grasses for your location. You may also wish to visit the library at Deep Cut Gardens in Middletown to do some research or speak with a horticulturalist.

(NOTE: One Park System ecologist highly recommends Doug Tallamy's book, *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens* If you are looking for a species list, this book provides great explanations about the relationship between native plants, insects and birds. It is available at the Deep Cut Library.)

• SOME SUGGESTED MEADOW PLANTS INCLUDE:

Aster, New England,	Aster, Small White
Bedstraw, Fragrant	Bee Balm
Bergamot	Black-eyed Susans
Blazing Star	Boneset
Butterfly Weed	Cardinal Flower
Campion, Bladder	Coneflower, Purple
Coreopsis, Lance-leaved	Goldenrod
Ironweed	Joe Pye Weed
Little Bluestem (a grass)	Lupine, Perennial
Milkweed, Purple	Phlox, Woodland Blue
Primrose, Common Evening	
Strawberry, Wild	Sunflower, Tickseed
Sunflower, Woodland	Switchgrass
Vetch, Purple	Wood-Sorrel, Yellow
Yarrow, White	

HERE ARE SOME MEADOW-MAKING TIPS:

- Pick the right location. A meadow should have morning sun and at least six hours of sunlight a day. It should be near a water source, such as a hose, for watering while it is getting established.
- Remove other vegetation. Control weeds prior to planting. There are thousands of seeds in the soil that germinate at different times. It might take a whole year to kill them off. You can pull them up or smother them with mulch.
- Till the soil. Loosen the soil to prepare for seeding.
- Pick the right seed mix for your location. A meadow should include native grasses and wildflower species.
- Sow your seeds in the spring or fall, but keep in mind that seeds need a period of cold before they germinate.
- In the beginning, you will need to water your meadow until it is established.
- And, for the first few years, you will need to weed your meadow. Learn to distinguish between the wildflowers and the weeds.
- Do NOT fertilize! Weed-growth is often boosted by fertilizers.
- Cut your meadow annually to discourage growth of woody plants. Do this in the spring (so wildlife/insects may use the meadow as an overwinter habitat). It is best to use a scythe because the meadow plants need to be cut high. If this isn't possible, set your lawnmower to maximum height



Tatum Park, Middletown features mowed paths and field edges so that visitors can enjoy the meadows up close.



Left: Cicada, close-up Above: July meadow at Crosswicks Creek Greenway, Upper Freehold

Anyone who has strolled through a meadow by day in late summer is familiar with its “song,” but who are all those “fiddlers” and “percussionists?” Those making the “zip, zip, zip, zee-e-e-e-e-s” are male grasshoppers rubbing their hind legs against their forewings or abdomen. A sound made by rubbing two structures together is called “stridulation.” And what are the lyrics to those grasshopper songs? They’re calling the female grasshoppers to them (and telling other male grasshoppers, “Keep away!”).

The raspy buzzing sounds that come from the trees at the edge of the meadow are the large-eyed male

cicadas which make their “music” in a different way. By contracting and relaxing their tymbal muscles, they make a clicking or drum-like sound. Their hollow abdomens amplify the sound, making them some of the loudest creatures on earth.

On a summer’s eve, the male crickets, also in the trees at the edge of the meadow, chime in with their chirps. Crickets make their sounds by stridulation just as grasshoppers do, but they do it in a different way. They raise and rub their left forewing against the hind edge of their right forewing which has a thick scraper. Count the number of chirps in 15 seconds, add

40, and you’ll know the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit.

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First Park System Manatee Sighting Monmouth Cove Marina, Port Monmouth August, 2009



Manatee

While your first thought about a site like the Monmouth Cove Marina might NOT be wildlife habitat, that's exactly what it is. Like many special use areas—Deep Cut Gardens, East Freehold Showgrounds, or the Crosswicks and Manasquan River Greenways—the Marina and adjacent waterways provide many different species with resources to breed, feed or just rest.

This manatee paid the marina a quick visit last summer. It is shown here floating on its back; that's his face it in the upper left corner. Though most commonly associated with warmer waters, like those in Florida, manatees are not uncommon in NJ and are spotted here each year, according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Often mistaken for a large seal or walrus, this slow-moving, friendly and gentle mammal weighs about 800-1,200 lbs.