

6. Stonewalls - homes and storybooks

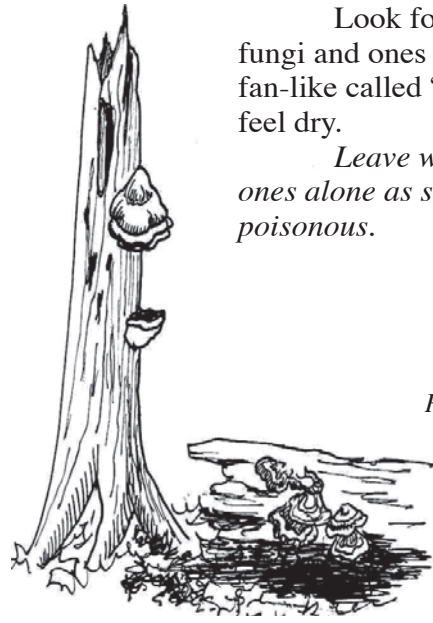
These walls tell a story, reminding us that much of this area was once farmers' fields used for crops or animals. Look closely at the lichens and mosses growing directly on the rocks. These plants can grow in nutrient poor places like rock and sand where other plants cannot.

Notice the trees growing right along the wall. Tree seeds fall into the cracks and are protected from scavenging animals such as chipmunks. Other animals also find shelter here.



7. Logs and leaves - there's life in dead things

Dead leaves are blankets for many insects and animals in winter, and food for small insects that live in fallen leaves. The leaves decay and release nutrients that help plants grow. Dead trees are homes for hole-nesting squirrels and birds, and provide food, like ants and grubs. A hollow tree is also a sounding board for woodpeckers attracting a mate. Other animals, like salamanders, live under dead logs. Many dead and dying trees are home to various types of fungus.



Look for shelf-like bracket fungi and ones that are striped and fan-like called "turkey tails". These feel dry.

Leave white and colorful ones alone as some fungi are poisonous.

Red-backed salamander



Turn right from the woods onto the bike path up the steps.

8. Man's hand - the bike path and more invaders and non-natives

When natural land is disturbed, many non-native species gain a foothold. Along the bike path. **Japanese knotweed** and **Oriental bittersweet** are abundant.

Did you know many common roadside plants are not native? *Japanese knotweed*

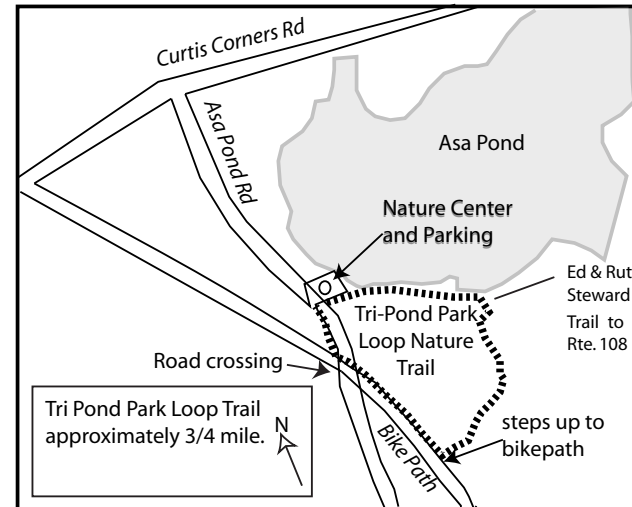
Dandelion, oxeye daisies, and Queen Anne's lace for example have become naturalized or very at home here.

Bear right back to the nature center at the road crossing.

South Kingstown Parks and Recreation and the Rhode Island Wild Plant Society hope you enjoy this area and its natural inhabitants for years to come and will help take care of it.



South Kingstown Parks and Recreation serves our community by providing enriching recreational experiences and quality facilities. The Tri-Pond Park Nature Center provides nature and environmental education programs year round for all ages. For more information contact the Nature Programs Supervisor at (401) 284-2836 or S.K. Parks and Recreation, Neighborhood Guild, 325 Columbia Street, Peace Dale, RI 02879. Tel: (401) 789-9301. www.southkingstownri.com/parksrec



The Rhode Island Wild Plant Society (RIWPS) is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of Rhode Island's native plants and their habitat.

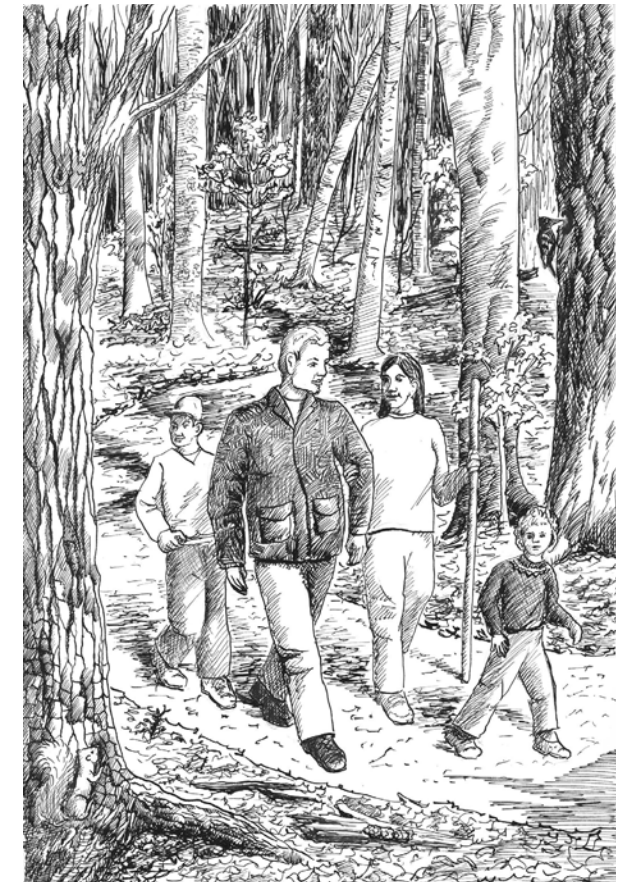
We offer regularly scheduled guided walks, a newsletter and other activities to help the public know and understand the value of our native plants. To learn more please contact us at:

Rhode Island Wild Plant Society
P.O. Box 414, Exeter, RI 02822
www.riwps.org
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The Tri-Pond Park Self-guided Nature Trail Loop

Walk, Look, Enjoy, Care



Welcome to the Tri-Pond Park Self-Guided Nature Trail Loop

- To be safe, please stay on the trail. Watch out for poison ivy - “leaves of three, let it be; berries white, poisonous sight.”

The vine with the hairy rootlets clinging to a tree, or a low shrubby plant, with shiny leaves of three is to be avoided if you don't want an itchy rash.



poison ivy

- Please do not pick or damage anything in the park.
- Please take your litter home.
- Check for ticks on returning from any outside adventure.



tick

Habitat - A plant or animal's home area

This trail leads through several habitats; wetlands, forest, open water and a stream. There are many different plants and animals, which change with the seasons. This brochure focuses on the plants and their interactions with animals, including humans, who have great impact on their surroundings.

Trail Directions:

Start at the Tri-Pond Park Nature Center. Follow the gravel road down to the dam spillway and stream. Then turn right at the stream through a wetland to a drier woods leading to the bike path. Turn right (NW) back to the Nature Center. (See map on back.)

Note: This mostly unpaved woodland walking trail is approximately 3/4 mile long.

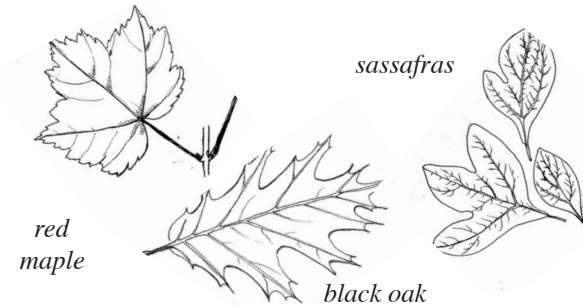
1. Families - All living things have them

Trees, like people, are individuals and have families. **Oaks, maples, sassafras** all have distinct characteristics.

The gravel path is edged with shrubs and trees. Being aware of poison ivy, feel the bark of several different trees. Can you find ones that are alike and some which are different? Are some rough, smooth, ridged or shiny?

Do your family members look a little different yet all share similar features?

Hint: Maples have opposite branches (the same way your arms grow out evenly on either side of your body), oaks have rough bark, sassafras has curvy green young branches and three types of leaves.



red maple

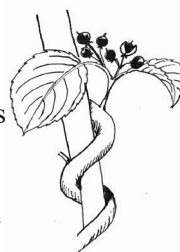
sassafras

black oak

2. Invasives - Plants that take over

Along the trail are several plants that would not normally grow in this area but that have been introduced by people. These can harm the environment because they crowd out native species upon which many animals depend.

Look for **Oriental bitter-sweet**, a woody vine climbing the trees, which wreath makers love for its orange berries, but which strangles the host plant by twining around the stem.



Oriental bittersweet

Look also for another invasive shrub with opposite branches and small tubular flowers, then red berries - the **Asiatic honeysuckles**. Smell them, they are fragrant. Their leaves come out earlier than most native plants in the spring. Birds eat the berries and spread the seed.



Asiatic honeysuckle

Please avoid buying or using invasive plants in the yard or decoratively.

3. Pond and Stream - Life seen and unseen

At the dam and stream look for the purple flowers of pickerelweed which attract many colorful dragonflies and damselflies. Their young (nymphs) live at the pond bottom and climb stems to emerge as mosquito-catching insects. Floating waterlily leaves host insect larvae and frogs and protect schools of small fish from predators. The stream too, is a nursery.



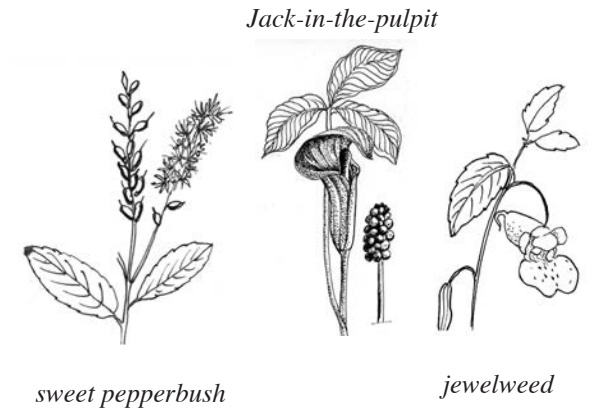
cattails, pickerel weed and water lilies

4. Wetlands - Home to moisture-loving plants

Just as people prefer certain places to live, so do plants.

When you turn right on the path notice the plants of wet areas such as fragrant **sweet pepperbush**, and **red (or swamp) maple**, Rhode Island's state tree, which is common in swampy areas. **Elderberry**, **arrowwood**, **jewelweed** and **Jack-in-the-pulpit** also grow here. Jewelweed is a hummingbird favorite, with orange flowers that hang like earrings. In Fall look for Jack-in-the-pulpit's bright red berries but do not eat them. They are poisonous.

Some wetland plants to look for:



sweet pepperbush

Jack-in-the-pulpit

jewelweed

5. Forest layers - The forest is like a four-story building

On the ground floor grow herbaceous plants such as **Canada mayflower**, ferns, and **violets** which bloom in spring and early

summer. Further up come woody shrubs like **spice-bush** and **high bush blueberry**.

The third floor consists of small trees like **dogwood** and **holly**.

These are important for birds to nest in and provide berries for them to feed on.

In the upper story, the canopy, many birds forage for insects. Squirrels, and some birds, nest here also. The shade from leaves is welcome on hot days, cooling the forest floor, reducing moisture loss. Importantly, these leaves are also making food for the tree.



Canada mayflower



blueberry



dogwood