

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard – Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Autumn, 2007

Volume 4 Issue 3

Calendar of Events

Please call the hosting organization for reservation information.

Sun. Sept. 16 4-5:30pm
Family Wonder Walk
Families are invited to walk the preserve grounds as we search for signs of early fall. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve (BHWP). New Hope, PA (215) 862-2924. Free for members. Admission for non-members.

Tues. Sept. 18 10-11am.
Toddler Walk Kids ages 18-36 months with adult. Buttinger Nature Center. Pennington, NJ (609) 737-7592. Fee

Tues. Sept. 18 4-5:30pm
Wonder Walk Kids grades 2-5. BHWP. New Hope, Pa (215) 862-2924. Free for members. Admission for non-members.

Thurs. Sept. 20 10-11am
Nature Story Hour Kids 3-6. BHWP. New Hope, PA (215) 862-2924. Members free.

Thurs. Oct. 18 10-11am.
Nature Story Hour Kids 3-6 years. BHWP. New Hope, Pa. (215) 862-2924. Members free. (continued)

Nature Inside Out

The much anticipated book, **Nature Inside Out** is finally coming to print!! What a strange feeling it was to send it off to the publisher. Here was this task that required my attention: constant editing, re-writes and spell checks. Then suddenly, it was gone. What would I do with my time? A small voice (ok, a very small whisper) was saying "Start another book. You need something to do." "Are you crazy? (louder voice). Let's get

this one on the shelves first, then we'll talk." Getting started on this path took many years. I was intimidated by the process and worried that no one would read it. I used all the usual excuses. It took a friends' simple message to get me started. She said, "Just do it." (This was long before Nike started using it as a slogan.) And so I did. And did again, and again and again.

(Continued on back page)

Witch Hazel

There's no black magic associated with this often overlooked shrub, but Witch Hazel *Hamamelis virginiana* is a hotbed of activity all year round. Begin your seasonal pilgrimage in the fall for a real show stopper. After you've enjoyed the reds, oranges, yellows and purples of the other forest plants and trees, witch hazel offers other reasons to return to the woods. Unlike most of the flowering shrubs in the mid-Atlantic, Witch Hazel blooms after the leaves have dropped in late fall or early winter. Look for

spidery yellow petals borne along the zigzag twigs. Come back later in the winter, when the woods are quiet with snow, and look for the seed capsules. These containers have taken almost a full year to mature, so they are last year's blooms, not from the flowers you visited earlier in the fall. Each contains one or two seeds that resemble black rice. When they are ripe, the capsule contracts, ejecting the seeds with an audible snap as far as 30 feet! Your next visit may be in the spring as the leaves emerge.

(Continued on back page)

Sat. Oct. 20 6-7:30pm. **Walk in the Moonlight.** Families. Join us for a leisurely walk through the Preserve as the sun sets. BHWP (215) 862-2924. Fee

Thurs. Oct. 25 10-11am. **Toddler Walk** Kids ages 18-36 months with adult. Buttinger Nature Center. (609) 737-7592. Fee

Wed. Nov. 28 10-11am. **Toddler Walk.** Kids ages 18-36 months with adult. Buttinger Nature Center. Pennington, NJ (609) 737-7592. Fee

Looking for something to do with your kids this fall? Create a collage of leaf rubbings. Collect leaves. Place them top side down on a hard surface and cover them with newsprint paper. With the side of a crayon, gently rub back and forth over the leaves. An image of the leaves will appear. Dark colored crayons work best, but don't rub too hard and try to rub in a side-to-side motion, not circular.

Read *Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf* by Lois Ehlert or *Leaf Jumpers* by Carole Gerber.

Then go outside and jump in a pile of leaves!!!!

We're on the Web

www.naturebytheyard.com

Nature Inside Out (continued)

So for those of you who have supported me through all these years (seven to be exact)—encouraging me, egging me on, cheering for me—a huge thank you. And, if I may be so bold, I'd like to ask for your continued support by requesting that you buy the book and ask friends, neighbors and teachers to buy it, too. Can I be that shameless? Yes, I believe I can. **Nature Inside Out: A Leader's Guide to Nature Education Programs** will be

available sometime in September. You can buy it through the publisher at www.iuniverse.com, through amazon.com or you can order copies (note the plural =)) through me. **Nature Inside Out** is 134 pages of exciting and educational program ideas on using the outdoors as a teaching tool. It makes a great teacher gift, or use it at home to discover nature with your kids. A steal at \$17.95. Thank you for your continued support.

Witch Hazel (continued)

Witch Hazel leaves are asymmetrical, where the base of the leaf meets the petiole or leaf stem.

In summer, there's a party going on atop the leaves of witch hazel. Aphids, small plant-sucking insects, lay their eggs on the bottom surface of the leaves. This invasion causes an unnatural growth pattern on the top of the leaf, resembling small pyramids. These "witch hat" galls are nurseries for the developing aphids.

Those of you who are gardeners know that where there are aphids, there are ladybugs. Ladybug beetles hunt and eat aphids by the hundreds. The adults' voracious appetite is surpassed only by their larva, which bear no resemblance to their parents. Juvenile ladybugs look more like tiny black and white lobsters. They gobble up the aphids and make them disappear like, well.... magic.

About Our Organization...

Nature By The Yard was started in January, 2001. We offer fun, hands-on nature education programs for schools, scouts, camps, libraries, birthday parties, garden clubs, nature centers, wildflower preserves and other organized groups. We also provide

workshops for teachers on using the schoolyard as a classroom tool as well as offer advice and expertise on designing school yard habitats. For details on our services, visit www.naturebytheyard.com or call Pam at (609) 610-6292.