

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard – Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Spring, 2008

Volume 5, Issue 1
Calendar of Events
Please call the hosting organization for reservation information.

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

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

Sat., April 12, 3:30-4:30pm **Introducing Your Child to Nature.** All ages. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve New Hope, PA. (215) 862-2924. Fee for non-members.

Tues., April 29. 4-5:30pm **Wonder Walk** Kids grades 2-5. BHWP. New Hope, PA. (215) 862-2924. Fee for non-members.

Sun., May 4. 1-2pm **Nature In Your Neighborhood.** Kids 4-7 years old. Morris Arboretum. Philadelphia, Pa. 215-247-5777. Fee

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Colors from Nature

With Easter coming fast, many of you will be breaking out the vinegar to mix with the boxed egg dye, but why not try using nature's color palette for your canvas this year?

There are many plants both wild and store bought that will give you subtle hues only found in nature. Yellow, orange, blue, pink and green pastels, soft and subtle can be found with a surprising number of common plants.

Start with clean, white, hard boiled eggs. I've found blown eggs are frustrating to submerge and raw eggs are just begging for disaster.

For these recipes, you'll need about 1 cup of white vinegar per gallon of water unless noted. Bring everything to a boil, reduce heat and simmer 30 minutes. Let cool slightly, strain and put in your eggs.

Orange: Onion skins. The local
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Shad Run

Most of us have watched the spectacular scenes from Alaska where huge grizzly bears fish for salmon making their way upstream to spawn, but many don't realize we have our own version of the salmon right here in the mid-Atlantic.

Each spring, millions of 1.5 to 2.5 foot American shad leave their salty home in the Atlantic Ocean and make their way to major eastern rivers such as the Delaware. What drives them is the instinct to reproduce.

Shad, like its western counterpart, the salmon, is an

anadromous fish. It lives in salt water, but lays eggs in fresh water. Two other anadromous fish are the alewife and the American eel.

During the shad run, which usually takes place near the second week of April, thousands of these fish can be seen splashing near the surface of the Delaware.

Males fertilize the eggs as the females lay them. The eggs then sink to the bottom of the river. Spent and emaciated adults then make their way back to the ocean, but only about five

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Sat., May 17. 8-9:30pm **Walk in the Moonlight.** Families. Join us for a leisurely walk through the Preserve as the sun sets. BHWP New Hope, PA. (215) 862-2924. Fee

Thurs., May 22. 10-11am **Toddler Walk.** Kids ages 18-36 months with adult. Buttinger Nature Center. (609) 737-7592. Fee

Fri. June 6 10-11am. **Toddler Walk.** Kids ages 18-36 months with adult. Buttinger Nature Center. Pennington, NJ (609) 737-7592. Fee

Tues., June 10. 4-5:30pm **Wonder Walk** Kids grades 2-5. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. New Hope, PA. (215) 862-2924. Fee for non-members.

Thurs.. June 12. 4-5pm **Animal Coverings.** Kids age 4 and up. Watchung Library 908-561-0117 Free but reservations are needed.

Literature Corner

Looking for a great book series for you kids? Check out the "Whose Been Here" books by Lindsay Barrett George. There's "In the Woods," "Around the Pond" and "In the Snow".

For the older set (8 and up), my kids have loved the "Guardians of Ga'Hooole" series by Katherine Lasky about a society of owls.

We're on the Web

www.naturebytheyard.com

Colors (continued)

produce manager will be thrilled if you take the skins from the bottom of the bin.

Pink: Chopped beets.

Blue: Red Cabbage. Sounds weird, but it's true. When you remove the egg from the dye bath, it will look pink, but as it dries, it turns robin's egg blue. (My son Aaron fussed about the smell of this, so beware of gagging children!)

Yellow: Willow leaves. Strip young leaves from the switches. Add enough water to cover and

replace the vinegar with 2 tablespoons of alum. **Note: Do not eat the eggs dyed in willow leaves.**

Green: Steep eggs in the willow bath for 15 minutes then in the red cabbage bath for 15 minutes. Ta-da!! A lesson in color mixing!

Though they can't compete with the chemical colors of the boxed brand for vibrancy, nature's colors are muted, soft and calm. Something we can all use a little more of in our lives.

Shad (continued)

percent actually survive to return the following year. The eggs hatch about a week later and the tiny fry (baby fish) live among the marshy edges through the spring and summer.

By fall, the youngsters are about five inches long and are able to migrate back to the ocean where they'll spend the next 4-5 years maturing.

Along the banks of eastern streams and rivers, a shrubby tree is getting ready to shine as well. Named for its aquatic

parallel, the American shadbush *Amelanchier sp* is nearly invisible most of the year, but comes out of hiding at about the same time the shad return to the Delaware.

With its white five-petaled flowers and smooth gray bark, the shadbush is a light the other flowering shrubs follow into spring. The small red apple-like fruit appear in June and are eaten by over 40 species of birds as well as skunks, foxes, raccoons, bears and squirrels.

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.