

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard – Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Summer, 2008

Volume 5, Issue 2

Calendar of Events

Please call the hosting organization for reservation information.

Toddler Walks.

June 6, July 11 and Aug. 21. 10-11am. 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 2-4. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. New Hope, PA. 215.862.2924. Fee for non-members.

Sat., June 14. 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

Sat. June 21 1-2:30pm
Insect Hunt. Families. Join me as we look for insects and allies in the meadow, examine them and release them unharmed. BHWP 215.862.2924. Fee for non-members.

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Cicadas

Don't put away that snow shovel just yet, you may need it to scoop up cicada carcass's. You're memory isn't fading. It hasn't been 17 years since the last show, but some people will see a return of the 17 year cicada in 2008.

Cicadas belong to the order Hemiptera meaning "half wing". They are commonly mistaken for locusts, but they are not locusts which are a type of grasshopper.

Cicada's come in two types.

The annual cicadas we hear and see every summer during the hot July and August days are actually 2-8 year varieties.

Their emergences are not synchronized though, so some come out every year. The other type is referred to as periodic cicadas. There are 7 species of periodic cicadas and they emerge every 13-17 years. The brood we'll see this year is one

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Companion Planting

I've had the Mr. Rogers song stuck in my head for a few days. Now that it is time to plant my garden, I've been thinking about my neighbors. A lot.

I love harvesting my own vegetables and even more than that, I love to share the fruits of my labor with my neighbors. Well, some of them anyway!

Last year, my son and I planted string beans only to come out to check on them and find they'd been nibbled to the ground by some four legged neighbor. I planted 14 tomato plants and only got to eat 3 tomatoes thanks to that same neighbor. They say strong fences make good neighbors, so now I have a five foot perimeter fence around

my raised bed garden. So far, no hooves have been set in the soil. But what about the other types of neighbors. They aren't deterred by this fence. That's where companion planting can help.

There are some plants that like to grow near each other and some that don't. Below is a short list of plants that either repel pests for something else, help the plants produce better fruit or bring pollinators in so you can enjoy the fruits of *your* labor.

Tomatoes love basil and asparagus. Beans and peas fix nitrogen from the air into the soil so they are everyone's friend except for onions and garlic.

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Mon. July 14-Fri. July 18 1-3pm
Nature in your Neighborhood Summer Camp. Kids grades 2-4 can join me as we explore all the nature that lives right in our backyard. Pennsbury Community School <www.pennsbury.k12.pa.us> Fee.

Sat. July 19 10-4pm. **Discovery Day.** Children's music, crafts, food, fun for the entire family. Drop by the Insect Safari and say hi. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. New Hope. No reservations FREE 215.862.2924

Catch the Reading Bug

Join me at one of these hosting libraries for a close look at insects and learn how they support all plant and life.

Mon. June 23 10-11am **Phillipsburg Library** 1.800.452.9182

7pm **Ewing Library** 609.882.3148

Tues. June 24 11-12 noon **Hopewell Public Library** 609.466.1625

Tues. July 8 6:30pm **Doylestown Library** 215.448.9081.

Wed. July 9 6:30pm, **Nazareth Library** 610.759.4932

Wed. July 16 7-8pm **Lambertville Library** 609.397.0275

Fri. July 18 10-11am **Hightstown Library** 609.448.1474

Wed. July 23 11-12 noon **Somerville Library** 908.725.1336

Thurs. July 24 11-12 noon **Watchung Library** 908.561.0117

Thurs. Aug. 7 1-2pm. **Monroe Twp. Library** 856.629.1212

We're on the Web

www.naturebytheyard.com

Cicadas (continued)

of the 17 year types called Brood XIV.

Periodic cicadas have red eyes and black and orange wings. The males make their characteristic sound by expressing air out of a white structure called the tymbal which is located on the side of their abdomen.

After emerging, Brood XIV will mate. Then the females will make a small slice in the twigs of trees and deposit 20-24 eggs. 6-10 weeks later, the eggs hatch. The nymphs drop to

the ground and burrow in the soil. There, they will remain for 17 years feeding on the roots of trees and molting several times until emerging again (this time in 2025 if my math is correct). They will climb to a safe place and molt one last time into a winged adult. Then the cycle begins again.

After this year you can put away the snow shovels. We're not expected to have another brood emerge until 2011. At least not the 17 year variety.

Companions (continued)

Bee Balm (Monarda) improves the growth and flavor of tomatoes as well as attracts bees and other pollinators.

Carrots are friends with lettuce, onion, radish and tomatoes but don't plant them near dill.

Chives seems to be the miracle herb driving away Japanese beetles and carrot fly as well as aphids on tomatoes. Also they deter scab if planted under apple trees and black spot if it is around roses. WOW good neighbor!

Garlic gets along with everyone.

Marigolds help keep nematodes at bay when planted with tomatoes.

Petunias repel asparagus beetles (I have to try that).

Corn is a heavy feeder and sucks the nutrients out of the soil so plant it with peas, beans or other legumes. The stalks can also double as supports for climbing beans. These are just a few pairings. Check with your local extension service or on the web for more information.

So in the immortal words of Mr. Rogers, "Please won't you be my neighbor?" I'll bring the zucchini!

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.