

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard — Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Spring, 2011

Volume 8, Issue 1
Calendar of Events
Please call the hosting organization for reservation information.

Twinleaf Award #2
Nature Detectives.
Sat. Feb. 26 3:30-5.
Adults and kids over 10 or under 10 and adult can work as a team. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. 215.862.2924. Fee

Waking Up From Winter Wednesdays.
Mar. 16-Apr. 6.
3:30-5pm. Historical Society of Princeton. Updyke Farm. All ages. 609.921.6748 ext. 100. Fee

Toddler Walk. Mar. 24. 10-11am Kids ages 18-36 months with adult. Buttinger Nature Center. Pennington, NJ (609) 737-7592. Fee.

Natural Egg Dyeing
Sat. April 2 1-2pm.
Historical Society of Princeton. Updyke
(continued)

Taking a Lichen to You!

I was walking in a park I've never visited before with some colleagues who work there and one of them pointed out a lichen growing on a tree outside the nature center. She said up until a few years ago, there were no lichens in the park. Hmm. How could that be? How did she know? Light bulb over head! A topic for Nature Niche!
I'm sure all of you have seen lichens, unless you never left the city, but perhaps mistook them for a moss or fungus.

They are usually light green and grow on trees, rocks, really anything. Some grown in lacy patterns that remind me of the doilies my grandmother used to put on furniture.

Lichens are a combination of an algae and a fungus that grow together in a symbiotic relationship. The fungus offers moisture and a place for the algae to grow. The algae photosynthesizes to make food which the fungus consumes.

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Taking Notice

I've been very frustrated by humans lately. Seems that we are growing less and less nice. When I pick my kids up from school, it is gridlock because no one wants someone else to get in front of them, but if they don't let someone out, the rest of us can't get in. Makes me sad I know this doesn't seem like a topic for Nature Niche, but it got me thinking about being nice to the environment. Basic respect for other living and non-living components of our habitat. How can we be nice to the planet if we aren't nice to each other or ourselves for

that matter.

I've decided to take a few steps back and rethink what I want people to take away from my programs. Yes, I still want them to know certain butterflies only lay their eggs on certain plants. I still think it is important that kids today learn the difference between fruits and vegetables (fruits contain seeds). But if they come away with just noticing the butterfly or looking at their cucumber a new way and noticing it contains seeds, (yes, it is a fruit!), then that is ok too.

(Continued on back page)

Farm. 609.921.6748
ext. 100 Fee

Twinleaf Award #3

Spring Ephemerals. Sat.
April 9 3:30-5. Adults
and kids over 10 or
under 10 and adult can
work as a team.
Bowman's Hill
Wildflower Preserve.
215.862.2924. Fee

**Ecology of the Mid-
Atlantic** Tues. April 12-
June 7. 9:30-11:30.
Home-school kids ages
8-14. call or email me
for more information.
609.610.6292. Fee

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

Toddler Walk May 9
Kids ages 18-36 months
with adult. Buttinger
Nature Center.
Pennington, NJ (609)
737-7592. Fee

**Twinleaf Award #4
Birds** Sat May 21 3:30-
5. Adults and kids over
10 or under 10 and adult
can work as a team.
BHWP. 215.862.2924.
Fee.

We're on the Web

<http://naturebytheyard.com>

Lichens (continued)

The reason my colleague was remarking on the return of the lichen, was because they are extremely sensitive to air pollution. They can actually be used as air quality indicators. Lichens grow in three forms— crustose, foliose and fruiticose; each of which is progressively more sensitive to poor air quality. Crustose is most common around here and is flat and well, crusty. Foliose is leafy looking and fruiticose is almost shaggy. It is difficult to find

fruiticose lichens where there is any industry since they are for the most part, intolerant of air pollution.

So good news for Bristol, Pa. The lichens are returning. You can all literally breathe easier. Aren't you now wondering if there are lichens growing in your habitat? Why not go out and take a look.

To see some lichens found around here, go to <http://naturebytheyard.com>. Click on the nbty blog button.

Notice (continued)

What I really want people to do is notice their surroundings. Be mindful of where they are in time and space. I truly believe once we begin to notice the subtle things in nature that are happening around us, we will be more incline to want to learn about it and in turn, have a stronger desire to protect it. To be nice to it.

Nothing pleases me more than someone saying to me after a walk "Huh, I never noticed that before." Music to my ears

because that tells me next time they encounter it, they will already have a connection.

So take notice. Notice when you come home from work and realize it is still light. Notice the first time you hear a cricket chirp in the evening or the first bird song. Notice the lichens, the swelling buds on the maple trees or the first warm southern wind. Let these small miracles make you smile. And keep that nice feeling with you. We all need a little more nice.

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 <http://naturebytheyard.com> or call Pam at (609) 610-6292.