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Newsletter

Preserving and Protecting the Historic Princeton Nursery Lands

Old York Cellars response to the RFP: When the Mapleton Preserve was preserved, the Management and Use Agreement between South Brunswick Township and the State of NJ stipulated that the two large warehouses



on the property would have to be razed if plans for their preservation and use weren't implemented in 10 years (that date was Dec. 2015).

Large warehouse at Mapleton Preserve. Photo By Zeete - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>

However, both South Brunswick and the State agreed with the Mapleton Preserve Commission (MPC) and Princeton University that the buildings were essential to the cultural landscape and should be preserved if at all possible. To this end, the Township and the State worked with the Mapleton Preserve Commission to issue a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) for redevelopment of the property. [see www.fpnl.org and click on RFEI/RFP in the header] to see if there were any parties interested in the use and rehabilitation of the warehouses in a manner that is economically viable, sympathetic to the historical character of the Preserve and its cultural landscape (including buildings) and compatible with the public use of the Preserve and adjacent park areas.

A single response was received from Old York Cellars, which also responded to the subsequent Request for Proposal (RFP) with a plan to redevelop the property as an agricultural-based food and/or beverage and events space. They proposed a winery in the Small Warehouse Complex and use of some of the fields to grow grape vines, fruit trees and produce. They also proposed renovation of the large warehouse complex for commercial use, which may include a full-service restaurant; craft brewery and/or craft distillery; and retail shops. A farm market, nursery and construction of multiple new buildings "inside" the fence was also proposed, along with restroom facilities, parking and development of a "streetscape" to make the property more functional and visually appealing.

Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands has mixed feelings about this proposal. It offers a chance to preserve the historic buildings on the Princeton Nursery Lands, but there is concern about the potential impact on the Village of Kingston, the D & R Canal State Park and the surrounding environs, and the extent of the project, which proposes significant development beyond re-use of the buildings, in order to help support the cost of restoration. Access to the fields and trails should still be open, but the nature of the place would change as a result of the proposed development. It remains to be seen if OYC is willing to scale back the proposal and enter into negotiations with the Township and State. If discussions proceed, there should be an opportunity for local feedback and questions about the proposal in 2019. Stay tuned.

Nursery News: National Register Designation: Princeton Nurseries Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on 28 August 2018. It had previously been included in the NJ State Registry, but Federal designation allows access to federal historic preservation tax credits, which might be important if the property is to be developed.

Shots from some of our 2018 events



Some volunteers at our 2018 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service this January



Stephanie Fox points out monarch butterfly caterpillars in the butterfly garden at the FPNL scavenger hunt



One of the Animal Ambassadors visiting the Preserve this fall from the Mercer County Wildlife Center

A fungus among us :

This year's Kingston Greenways Association Fall Foliage walk was the Mapleton Preserve. Very few leaves had changed color, but we found a rich array of mushrooms.

Here is a sampling.

Thanks to Tari Pantaleo for the photos



Tiny, shiny and yellow



A dog stinkhorn. The brown slimy stuff is spores. Yes, it smelled as bad as it looks.



A Lacquered Polypore fungus growing on the kousa dogwood.



A handsome clump of unknown mushrooms found growing in the bamboo grove.



Remnants of an earth ball (Scleroderma species). Photo by T Pantaleo

Notes from the field -Bamboo, Not Just For Pandas: Many of you who have visited Mapleton Preserve have seen the large grove of bamboo plants as you parked or exited. Those lucky enough to have participated in our work days or clean ups may have helped us to cut them, and wondered, what exactly IS this anyway?

The short answer is, bamboo is a grass. This is easily deduced by its spreading rhizomes and its rather astounding growth rate. But unlike most of the world's grasses, bamboo does more than feed grazing stock or stabilize soil or beautify; it forms a part of human culture on almost every conceivable level!

As anyone who has suffered from the threatened wrath of the "Headmaster's cane" or grinned at children clashing stems, (or "culms" as they are botanically known), weaponry is a common use for bamboo. From early ersatz barrels for crude projectiles to prized, carefully created martial arts implements, the unique suitability of bamboo has lent itself well to these arts. Bamboo shoots are used in a variety of cuisines, but they need some preparation before they can be consumed. When eaten raw, bamboo contains a toxin that produces cyanide in the gut, so before eating, the fibrous exterior of the shoots must be cut away and then the shoots need to be boiled. Unless you are a panda, that is. Bamboo is universally appreciated as their only food.

Scaffolding supporting many a project around the world is often bamboo; the tensile strength of the stems permits light, robust and cost effective support. It is made into flooring, paper and sheets - since it is so prolific, the material undeniably has some marvelous possibilities [though the world is probably not ready yet for a bamboo bicycle, thank-you].

Bamboo has many symbolic uses, meanings and associations exist across several religions and cultures. Bamboo is revered, and appears in lore and mythology. It sometimes is planted as a gesture to repel evil spirits around a significant location. Perhaps there is something to that. If you plant an aggressive strain such as the one that has taken hold in the Mapleton Preserve, its rampant growth and relentless spreading might not repel evil spirits, but will repel the growth of everything else. Not a recommended variety.....(But a wonderful source of fishing poles). Tony Dorrian

Membership Renewal Appeal: 2018 is drawing to a close - that means that it is again time to **renew your membership with the Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands for 2019** (or join us for the first time). [If you were waiting for someone to ask you to join, please consider this your invitation].

Since we solicit renewals and donations only once a year, we urge you to join or renew your membership in the Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands TODAY. For those who are new to FPNL, our programs are generally free and open to the public. Your donations will be used for speaker and program fees, tree and trail upkeep, as well as the newsletter. **This year, we are offering a free FPNL tote bag for all donations of \$40 or more.** Please visit our website at www.fpnl.org to join or renew using either PayPal or by downloading a membership form. Please give as generously as you can.

Coming up

Thursday, November 22nd 10-11:30 am - Thanksgiving Day Walk:

Join FPNL President Karen Linder for our annual Thanksgiving morning walk, as we look for natural things to be grateful for and search for signs of what our local wildlife is having for Thanksgiving dinner. This 10 am program will begin at the Main Office for the D&R Canal State Park, 145 Mapleton Road, Kingston. Suitable for all ages. **Open to all, but preregistration IS requested. Call 609-683-0483 to reserve a spot.**



Sunday, Dec. 16th, Audubon Christmas Bird Count (BIRDERS TAKE NOTE!)

The Kingston segment of this year's Audubon Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by the Kingston Greenways Association, begins at 7:30 AM to catch the "early birds". We will bird until noon, when we take a break for lunch at the Palace of Asia on Rt 27 in Kingston Center. The group then continues with the count in the afternoon. You can join us for morning, afternoon, or both. If interested, give Karen Linder a call (609-683-0483) for more info. **We would particularly appreciate the help of experienced birders for this event, but novices are also welcome.** It is a great way to build your skills and get to know the Nursery Lands better.

Tuesday, January 1st, 2019, Noon - 2 pm: First Day Hike:

Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands invites everyone to a First Day Hike in the Mapleton Preserve on Tuesday, January 1, 2019, at noon. **Exercise your New Year's resolution to walk more, or make new friends on this easy 1.5 mile loop hike through the Mapleton Preserve.** We know you will want to sleep in a little, so the walk will not start until noon. It will begin and end at the Mapleton Preserve/D&R Canal State Park Headquarters at 145 Mapleton Road in Kingston. Dress for the weather, whatever it is. The walk is free and all are welcome. Socialize after the walk over cocoa. For more information, visit www.fpnl.org as we get closer to the New Year.

Monday, January 21st, 2019, Noon to 3 pm -

Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service work session in the Mapleton Preserve: We will be clearing small trees, brush, vines, and trash. Come spend a winter afternoon outdoors with us, and discover the special joys of stewardship! Bring saws, clippers, loppers and rakes. Work gloves, sturdy shoes, warm clothing and hats are a must. All are welcome. Call 609-683-0483 for more information, or if you would like to involve a group to help.

TBD in Feb. 2019, 1-4 pm "Barking up the right tree" - Tree ID using bark and buds:

This walk in Mapleton Preserve will focus on the underappreciated beauty and variability of trees in winter. If you take the time to look carefully, they can be identified without their leaves, using clues found in buds, fruits, leaf scars, branching patterns and bark. Let's try our hand at it, using field guides and keys. Dress for the weather. \$10/person for materials, members free. Preregistration required (609-683-0483).



The dogwood, a tree known for its distinctive "bark".

Volunteer opportunity - would you like to help create a "bamboo art" event in 2019? What would that look like to you? Call Karen 609-683-0483 to chat.



Stay up to date. As always, you can find information about FPNL and the Mapleton Preserve at our website. www.fpnl.org but here is a newsflash.

Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands now has a Facebook page too! 'Like' us to stay current on all the happenings around the Mapleton Preserve and events hosted by FPNL! Our new page is a source of information, maps, current and historical photos, and a place to ask questions and post your own photos and videos of your experiences at the Preserve! **Find us online at @FPNLnj**

Finally, a word of gratitude and a fond farewell for departing FPNL trustee Gwen Southgate. For many years, Gwen served as secretary for the organization, a cheerful registrar for our events, kept our mailing list up to date, and did the mail-merge needed to create our newsletter address labels. She will be sorely missed!