

Donation Corner

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Putt-ing through the Ages



Putt-ing through the Ages is Back

By: John Gladden, Communications Coordinator

Wind your way through a swamp forest, explore the depths of an ancient ocean, traverse a glacier and acquaint yourself with Ohio's prehistoric peoples -- all without leaving the warm surroundings of Buffalo Creek Retreat.

The popular mini-golf course, Putt-ing through the Ages, returns this winter to Medina County Park District. This free, family-friendly activity takes players on a journey through Ohio's geologic history, offering a fun learning experience for all ages on a course created by the park district's interpretive services staff and talented volunteers.

Putt-ing through the Ages is open noon to 7 p.m. December 27-31 during holiday break week -- making it a perfect activity for kids who are home from school. The course will be open on weekends from January 5 through February 25. Hours are noon to 4 p.m. on Fridays, noon to 7 p.m. on Saturdays, and noon to 4 p.m. on Sundays.

Buffalo Creek Retreat is located at 8708 Hubbard Valley Road in Guilford Township.



This year at Green Leaf Park, native wildflowers exploded in bloom in an area that once was mowed grass, creating a stunning view for visitors and a rich salad bar for birds and insects.

On the west side of Chippewa Lake, Spetz said the park district has planted a warm-season grass mix on 61 acres formerly devoted to row crops. The grasses potentially still can be harvested as a hay crop but with the added benefits of limiting runoff, improving the soil, and creating natural habitat.

Finally, the park district's restoration efforts help show homeowners how they can be part of the solution to problems such as algal blooms and the alarming decline in pollinators -- and usually save themselves significant time and money spent on fertilizing and mowing grass. The biggest obstacle is overcoming society's vision of what a yard or park should look like, said Spetz.

"We're so accustomed to seeing landscapes mowed down into a green carpet -- basically an extension of the indoors brought outdoors," he said. "So when you stop cutting an area people remember seeing mowed with nice, clean, straight lines, they think you're not taking care of it. The irony is that the exact opposite is true: You're restoring biodiversity. Our hope is that people will see what we're doing in the parks, discover the value in it, and want to do it themselves."

Native Plantings Help Restore Biodiversity

By: John Gladden, Communications Coordinator

Fall is both harvest time and planting time at Medina County Park District.

Natural resource staff and volunteers have been busy collecting seeds from native grasses and wildflowers -- species like pickerelweed, bur-reed, arrowhead, cardinal flower, blue vervain wingstem and others -- then planting them in sites around the park system where natural habitats are being restored.

"Collecting seeds by hand is about the only way many of these species can be collected, so they are expensive to buy," said Natural Resource Manager Jim Spetz. "We save a considerable amount of money by hand-collecting some of the seeds ourselves."

Areas identified for restoration often are former agricultural fields and mowed turf. Lawns and farm fields usually grow one thing -- grass or crops. Nature's goal, however, is diversity. Returning a palette of native plants to the landscape is important for many reasons, Spetz said.

First, native plants attract native insects. Most of us are familiar with the fact monarch butterflies rely on milkweed to survive. The natural world is filled with relationships just like that one. Goldenrod, for example, often mistaken as an allergen, provides critical late-season nourishment for native bees and migratory butterflies when most other wildflowers are on the wane. Spetz said Ohio has no fewer than 22 different species of goldenrod, and the seed mixes used by the park district often incorporate multiple varieties.

"By having lots of different species of wildflowers, you also have lots of different species of insects that are connected to those wildflowers and that evolved alongside them," he said. "Those insects are the forage base for all the different types of songbirds we like to watch. Some of us may not like insects, but if we like songbirds, then we ought to like insects because we can't have one without the other."

At Green Leaf Park, visitors can see a 2015 prairie restoration project just beginning to hit its stride. This year, native wildflowers exploded in bloom in an area that once was mowed grass, creating a stunning view for visitors and a rich salad bar for birds and insects. There's more to come, since some species, like compass plant, take up to three or four years to establish themselves before flowering. Similar restorations are currently underway at the entrances to River Styx Park, Krabill Shelter, and Allardale.

Another benefit of restoration is native plantings help absorb and filter water that might, otherwise, run off lawns and farmland causing erosion and carrying fertilizers into waterways. This is especially important in the Chippewa Lake watershed which has experienced toxic algal blooms fed, in part, by nutrients flowing into the lake.

Volunteer Opportunities

The park district utilizes a large group of volunteers each year to help with the operation of the parks. Many park programs and facilities exist due to volunteer efforts.

We can use your time and talents in a variety of areas. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Mary Beth Clausing at 330-239-4814 or volunteercoordinator@roadrunner.com.



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