

PLANTS OF THE CHESTER CREEK TRAIL

FOREWORD

Prior to March of 2020, I was aware of the Chester Creek Trail, but had never stepped a foot on it. As a youth, I had spent hours of my young life walking the railroad tracks that it now had replaced. When all the protocols rolled in upon us regarding battling against the Corona virus, the one that seemed to be able to save my sanity was the one that allowed us to participate in outdoor activities. So with a desire to take advantage of that, I headed to a parking area along Mount Alverno Road. From the parking lot, I had a choice of going either north or south. Not knowing if I would enjoy this activity, I chose the shorter trip south to Knowlton Road.

Once upon the path, I found myself surrounded with folks of all types taking advantage of its multi-use purposes. Cyclists raced by me, skateboarders skated by, runners ran by me, and numerous people were fast walking and fast talking. Many were wearing ear buds or blue-tooth devices, singing quietly to them selves or blurting out one-way conversations. The attention of many was focused on the screens of their cell phone. Along the way, I noticed many whose lives now revolved around their Fit-Bits and counting their steps or watching their times. I found myself to be an oddity, a person that was simply walking leisurely along listening to the birds and looking at the flowers. If anything, I was an impediment to the progress of others in their personal pursuits.

After several days of trail utilization, I found that for me just dwelling on watching the paved walkway in front of me had become very boring. I had to do something to rescue my experience, if I wished to continue the healthy pursuit of exercise. So, I decided to put my natural history background to use and create an inventory of the plants that surrounded the 2.9 miles of black pavement. So, I walked through the changing seasons expectant every day of what new plant would reveal itself to me.

With time, I became a recognizable entity on the trail with my binoculars around my neck, my plant guide on a pouch attached to my belt, and my hand filled with specimens requiring more than field identification. I found people to be curious as to what I was doing. Word soon traveled up and down the trail, and folks began stopping to ask me about flowers they were spotting despite their faster travel speeds. By the end of October, I had decided to provide this guide for other curious path participants, so that they would not need to find me on one of my daily journeys. It consists of three lists. One list follows expectant time of the plant being in bloom, a second list relies upon into what category a particular plant is categorized, and a third is based on the color of its blooms, if it has them. Keep in mind that is but the accumulation of one person's observations. I admit that I might have missed some plants. I hope you enjoy being able to use my guide and hope it helps satisfy your curiosities.

SOURCES

As no one can possibly retain the knowledge of all the various characteristics that are necessary to identify any natural species, I had to consult numerous sources of information to supplement, what I had previously filed away in the corners of my brain. Here then is a list of them that you can utilize to check up on me.

Wildflowers of Northeastern/North-central North America by Roger Tory Peterson
And Margaret McKenney

Newcomb's Wildflower Guide by Lawrence Newcomb and Gordon Morrison

Trees and Shrubs by George A. Petrides (Peterson Field Guides Series)

The Shrub Identification Book by George W. D. Symonds and A. W. Merwin

The Tree Identification Book by George W. D. Symonds and Stephen V. Chelminski

Bark by Micharl Wojtech

Grasses, Sedges, Rushes by Lauren Brown and Ted Elliman

Ferns and Fern Allies by John T. Mickel

Aquatic Plants by G. W. Prescott