



Briar Bush
NATURE CENTER



Summer Camp Handbook

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Briar Bush Nature Center Summer Camp Program

Welcome to Briar Bush Nature Center's Summer Camp Program!



Thank you for choosing Briar Bush Nature Center for your child's Summer Camp experience. Our 12.5 acres of forest serve as a rich oasis and perfect Summer Camp setting in the middle of the suburbs. We're looking forward to providing campers with memories full of excitement, new experiences, nature exploration, hands-on discovery, and all-around fun in the outdoors this summer!

This handbook serves as a guide to help better prepare you and your child for our Summer Camp program. Please review all policies and procedures before registration and again before the start of each camp week. You will also find a camp checklist to aid in preparation.

Please read this document carefully to ensure that your child has a safe, healthy, and fun camp experience.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call Briar Bush Nature Center at (215) 887-6603 or email Melissa Eldridge, Program and Summer Camp Director, at melissa@briarbush.org.

We're looking forward to seeing you and your child this summer!

Melissa Eldridge
Program and Summer Camp Director
Briar Bush Nature Center
(215) 887-6603
melissa@briarbush.org

Briar Bush Nature Center

Summer Camp Staff

We are very fortunate to have highly experienced educators who love what they do. Our Summer Camp staff pass a rigorous set of clearances, complete relevant trainings and certifications, and care about the health and safety of our campers. Staff members recognize that Summer Camp is a unique experience in a child's life and are dedicated to providing an exceptional experience for each child.

Year-round staff members lead Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 8-9 and Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 10-12 while seasonal educators lead Seedlings Half-Day Camps for Ages 4-6 and Saplings Full-Day Camps for Ages 6-7.

Our seasonal educators are typically college students or recent college graduates who are carefully selected after an extensive interview process is completed and all clearances have been passed. Their skills, character, experiences, and leadership add to the success of our Summer Camp program.



Camp Aides, teenage Summer Camp volunteers, accompany and assist educators throughout the summer. Their dedication, love of nature, and joy of working with children make all the difference in our Summer Camp program and in the life of each camper.

If you have any questions regarding Summer Camp, please email Melissa Eldridge, Program and Summer Camp Director, at melissa@briarbush.org.

Briar Bush Nature Center

Summer Camp Policies and Procedures

General

Camp Offerings and Schedule

Summer Camps are divided by age group and offered weekly with camp themes repeating two or three times throughout the summer. Registration is required.

Summer Camp at Briar Bush Nature Center is a partial summer program option. Children cannot be registered for the same theme more than once. Children registered for more than one week per theme will be removed from the duplicate week.

Please visit our website for current camp offerings and review the chart below for the schedule.

Camp	Camp Start Time	Camp End Time
Seedlings Half-Day Camps for Ages 4-6		
AM Session	9:30am	12:00pm
PM Session	1:30pm	4:00pm
Saplings Full-Day Camps for Ages 6-7	9:30am	4:00pm
Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 8-9	9:30am	4:00pm
Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 10-12	9:30am	4:00pm
Overnight Camp for Ages 11-15	Check registration for schedule.	

Staff / Volunteer to Camper Ratio

Our Summer Camp groups have a maximum capacity of 6, 10, or 12 campers. Small groups help us to ensure more individualized attention and a high-quality program.

Camp	Staff	Camp Aides	Campers
Seedlings Half-Day Camps for Ages 4-6	1	2	6
Saplings Full-Day Camps for Ages 6-7	2	2	12
Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 8-9	1	2	12
Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 10-12	1	2	12
Overnight Camp for Ages 11-15	2	2	10

Summer Camp Financial Aid

At Briar Bush Nature Center, we believe nature is for everyone. To apply for financial aid, submit an application and required materials as outlined on our website or call for a paper application.

Financial aid is determined on a rolling, first-come-first-served basis until funding is dispersed or camp spaces have filled. It is recommended to apply for financial aid before registration opens.

Summer Camp Registration

In order to best prepare for Summer Camp Registration, be sure to fully review the camp offerings listed on the website and have your camp choices ready to go.

As most camps fill at the opening of Members-Only Registration, it may be in your best interest to purchase a FOBB Membership (at the Household Level or above) to have access to registration before the general public. It is recommended to purchase a membership in advance of registration so you will just need to focus on signing waivers/policies and selecting camps at that time.

If you do not already have an account with our online registration system, create an account, purchase or renew your membership, and practice navigating the system so you are prepared for registration. However, please be aware that our camps fill VERY quickly and you may not be able to secure a camp spot even if you've purchased a membership and prepared in advance. If this is the case, join the waiting list during registration.

Refund / Cancellation Policy

If you transfer or cancel a Summer Camp program 15 days or more before its start date, you will receive an 80% refund (20% service fee). No transfers or refunds will be issued within 14 days of the program start date.

Communications

- Email
 - After Summer Camp registration, families will mostly be contacted by the Program and Summer Camp Director via email. Please add Melissa Eldridge, melissa@briarbush.org, as a safe sender in your email settings.
 - A Detailed Itinerary including daily topics, general activities, and special instructions will be emailed two to three weeks prior to each camp week. Review it carefully to ensure your camper is prepared for each camp day.

- Phone
 - Families may also be contacted by phone during the camp week. Please add Briar Bush Nature Center, (215) 887-6603, to your contacts. It is also suggested that you answer unknown phone numbers while your child is at camp as a staff member may contact you using their cell phone in the case of an emergency.

Health and Safety

Behavior Policy

Staff, volunteers, and participants deserve a safe and enjoyable camp experience. Campers are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior and follow the Summer Camp Rules as outlined in our Disciplinary Action Policy. Removal from the camp day/program is a possibility depending on the severity and continuation of unacceptable behavior.

Our Summer Camp is an inclusive program in which staff strives to accommodate campers and set them up for success. However, we may not have the capacity for all special medical, behavioral, or social support. Please reach out with questions regarding support for your child.

Please review the Summer Camp Behavior/Disciplinary Policies and Procedures included at the end of this Handbook.

Camper Autonomy / Assistance

In order to participate in Summer Camp:

- All campers must be able to communicate their needs to camp staff.
- All campers must be potty-trained and capable of using the restroom on their own.
 - If a camper has a minor bathroom-related accident and needs assistance with changing, two staff members may assist the camper.
 - If the camper has a major bathroom-related accident, parents/guardians will be contacted to assist the camper with clean-up and changing.
- All campers must be able to change themselves with minimal assistance.
 - If a camper needs assistance with changing, two staff members may assist the camper.

Medical Concerns and Considerations

The health and safety of our campers is our top priority.

- Medical and Pick-Up Consent Form
 - After camp registration, the [Medical and Pick-Up Consent Form](#) must be completed and submitted through our online registration system.

- A medical form must be completed for each camper before the start of the summer; campers without a completed form are not permitted to attend camp.
- Only one form is required for the camp season.
- If there are changes to the medical form, please contact Melissa Eldridge, Program and Summer Camp Director, at melissa@briarbush.org.
- Medical Conditions
 - If you list a medical condition on the medical form, we ask that you provide as much detail as possible.
 - If your child is being treated for a condition that is currently managed by a medical professional, you must submit an action plan provided by the medical staff.
 - If your child has food/environmental allergies, please note that Briar Bush Nature Center is a public facility and, as a result, not allergen-free.
 - Campers will eat together during snack and lunch periods and explore the facilities and grounds at Briar Bush and possibly other locations.
- Medications
 - Dispense any required medications to your child before camp begins.
 - If your child is required to take medication during the camp day, indicate your child's medications on the medical form. Your child must be able to self-administer medication.
- Accommodations
 - At Briar Bush Nature Center, we believe nature is for everyone. If your child requires accommodations while participating in the program, describe those accommodations on the medical form.
 - Our Summer Camp is an inclusive program in which staff strives to accommodate campers and set them up for success. Please note that while our staff participates in trainings relating to various cognitive and behavioral disabilities, staff members are not behavioral intervention professionals and we may not have the capacity for all special medical, behavioral, or social support.
 - Please reach out with any questions regarding support for your child.
- Emergencies
 - Camp parents/guardians must be reachable by phone throughout the camp day.
 - Please add Briar Bush Nature Center, (215) 887-6603, to your contacts.
 - It is also suggested that you answer unknown phone numbers while your child is at camp as a staff member may contact you using their cell phone in the case of an emergency.
- Illness
 - If your child isn't feeling well, please stay home and report the absence.
 - Campers must be fever-free for 24-hours before returning to camp.

- If your child isn't feeling well while at camp, we will notify you and early pick-up may be necessary.
- Poison Ivy/Ticks
 - While exploring in nature, campers may encounter poison ivy and/or ticks. Our staff is knowledgeable in locating both hazards and treating them.
 - We will conduct daily tick checks during camp, but parents/guardians must check campers for ticks at home.

Severe Weather

In the case of rain, campers will put on their rain gear and keep exploring! We seek shelter in heavy rain, thunderstorms, and excessive heat. We will contact families in the event of cancellation or early dismissal due to extreme weather conditions.

Camp Day Logistics

Camper Drop-Off / Pick-Up

A carline drop-off is implemented for Summer Camp. Parents/guardians will enter the driveway and loop around to the Pavilion to begin the drop-off process with camp staff. Drop-off will begin 15-minutes before the camp start time.

A carline pick-up is implemented for Summer Camp. It is policy for our staff to check photo ID at pickup. If you need to pick-up early or have another adult pick-up who is not on the authorization list, you must contact the Program and Summer Camp Director. Parents/guardians of campers who need assistance settling into the car and buckling up will be asked to park.

Please respect the drop-off/pick-up schedule. A fee of \$5.00 will be charged for every 15 minutes you are late to pick-up.

Camp	Drop-Off Time	Pick-Up Time
Seedlings Half-Day Camps for Ages 4-6		
AM Session	9:15am-9:30am	11:45am-12:00pm
PM Session	1:15pm-1:30pm	3:45pm-4:00pm
Saplings Full-Day Camps for Ages 6-7	9:15am-9:30am	3:45pm-4:00pm
Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 8-9	9:15am-9:30am	3:45pm-4:00pm
Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 10-12	9:15am-9:30am	3:45pm-4:00pm
Overnight Camp for Ages 11-15	Check registration for schedule.	

Extended Care

Before Care is offered from 8:30am-9:30am. After Care is offered from 4:00pm-5:30pm. Registration for Before and/or After Care is required prior to the scheduled camp week; you may register for Before/After Care at the time of registration and up until the Thursday before the camp start date. Extended Care for Overnight Camp is prorated.

Please respect the scheduled drop-off and pick-up times of Extended Care. After Care pick-up after 5:30pm will result in a late fee of \$5.00 for every 15 minutes you are late to pick-up.

Clothing and Packing List

Campers must be appropriately dressed for camp. Your child must dress for outdoor play in all types of weather - it's nature camp and we're going to get wet and dirty! Your child must wear comfortable clothing and closed-toed shoes/sandals. Flip-flops and other open-toed shoes are not permitted due to safety concerns.

Send your child to camp with a backpack complete with:

- a filled, reusable water bottle between 20oz-32oz
 - Reusable water bottles are required for every camper as we refill water bottles repeatedly throughout the day.
- many snacks
 - Seedlings Half-Day campers are scheduled for one snack period.
 - Campers in all other camp groups are scheduled for two snack periods and a lunch.
- a lunch (full-day)
 - Lunches cannot be refrigerated or microwaved.
- a full set of extra clothes
 - This includes shirt, shorts/pants, underwear, socks, etc.
- a pair of water-only closed-toed shoes/sandals
- rain gear such as a rain jacket
- a plastic bag for wet/dirty clothing
- insect repellent and sunscreen
 - Apply sunscreen and insect repellent to your child before arriving at camp each day. If you need to apply it to your child at Briar Bush, please park and apply outside of the Center as the products may irritate the animals in the Museum. Your child may reapply sunscreen and/or insect repellent during the camp day.

Special clothing requests, if any, will be included in the Detailed Itinerary.

Personal items such as games, toys, electronics, etc. must be left at home. There is a high possibility that personal items will get lost or broken during camp. Briar Bush Nature Center is not liable for lost, stolen, or broken personal items.

Activities and Field Trips

Seedlings Half-Day campers will participate in activities onsite at Briar Bush. Saplings Full-Day campers will participate in activities onsite, but may also walk to Highland Elementary School to utilize the playground and field.

Campers in Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 8-9 and Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 10-12 will participate in some activities at Briar Bush, but will mostly travel in our 15-passenger vans to regional places of interest to participate in activities such as hiking, kayaking, creek-walking, farm tours, and more. These camp groups may also visit the Crestmont Pool during the week. Specific field trip locations will be listed in the Detailed Itinerary. Fees for travel and regional field trip admission are included in the camp cost. Camp staff drive Briar Bush's 15-passenger vans, while the Camp Aides help to make the ride enjoyable for the campers by playing games, reading stories, etc. All passengers are required to wear seatbelts. If your child requires a booster seat, please indicate this on the medical form.

Campers in Overnight Camp for Ages 11-15 attend camp at Briar Bush on Monday following typical drop-off (9:15am-9:30am) and pick-up (3:45pm-4:00pm) schedules, then camp overnight at Hickory Run State Park from Tuesday through Friday. Campers are dropped-off at Briar Bush on Tuesday (9:15am-9:30am), then travel in the Briar Bush van to Hickory Run State Park. On Friday, campers travel back to Briar Bush in time for pick-up (3:45pm-4:00pm). Families will receive a Detailed Itinerary complete with a schedule, menu, and packing list at least three weeks in advance of the camp week. Fees for travel, lodging, and food are included in the camp cost.

Be sure to assess your child's interests and abilities before registering for camp as your child may not have the opportunity to sit out of certain activities. Most activities will directly relate to the camp theme, but campers can always look forward to general summer fun, animal encounters, guided hikes, pond exploration, and visiting the Bird Observatory regardless of the theme.

Special Treats

Camp staff may distribute a treat to campers, such as popsicles, at the end of each camp week. Camp families may decide to provide treats to campers for their child's birthday. If your child is unable to consume treats provided by Briar Bush Nature Center and/or camp families, please provide a substitute so your child can participate.

Briar Bush Nature Center
Summer Camp Behavior/Disciplinary Policies and Procedures

Behavior Expectations / Rules

Staff, volunteers, and participants deserve a safe and enjoyable camp experience. Campers are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior and follow the Summer Camp Rules at all times.

The Summer Camp Rules include:

1. Respect yourself, others, nature, and property.
2. Listen to your leader and follow directions.
3. Stay with your group.

Any behavior that inherently conflicts with the first rule is considered inappropriate behavior.

Accommodations / Support

Our Summer Camp is an inclusive program in which staff strives to accommodate campers and set them up for success. However, we may not have the capacity for all special medical, behavioral, or social support. If your child has one-on-one support in the classroom, we encourage that the support continues during Summer Camp. Please reach out with questions regarding support for your child.

Disciplinary Procedures

Camp staff will provide positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviors such as granting verbal praise/recognition, offering small rewards such as high-fives or stickers, awarding special privileges, etc.

Examples of inappropriate behaviors are listed below, but this is not an extensive list.

- **Level 1:** Disruptive behaviors
 - Offenses: Interrupting the educator, disrupting activities, ignoring directions, etc.
- **Level 2:** Inappropriate behaviors
 - Offenses: Disrespect toward staff/volunteers/participants/animals, defiance/non-compliance toward staff/rules/regulations, refusal to follow directions/group, inappropriate gestures/language, misuse of property, etc.
- **Level 3:** Aggressive/threatening behaviors that endanger the wellbeing of self, staff/volunteers, participants, and/or animals
 - Offenses: Hitting, kicking, shoving, pushing, bullying, threatening language, damaging property, etc.

Depending on the repetition or severity of a behavior, a particular step or steps may be skipped. Removal from the camp day or camp program as a whole is a possibility depending on the severity or continuation of inappropriate behavior. Camp fees are non-refundable if a child is removed from a camp day or the camp program.

	1 st Offense	2 nd Offense	3 rd Offense	4 th Offense +
Level 1	Redirection Verbal Warning	Verbal Warning	Loss of Privilege / Removal from Activity Notice to Parents/Guardians	Discussion with Camp Director Discussion with Parents/Guardians
Level 2	Verbal Warning	Loss of Privilege / Removal from Activity Discussion with Camp Director Discussion with Parents/Guardians	Discussion with Parents/Guardians Removal from Camp Day / Removal from Camp Program (non-refundable)	
Level 3	Discussion with Parents/Guardians Removal from Camp Program (non-refundable)			

The disciplinary procedures are described below.

- **Redirection**

- The educator will attempt to redirect the camper and inappropriate behavior by conducting verbal or non-verbal phrases/gestures, standing near off-task camper, asking self-correcting questions, involving/engaging off-task camper in an activity, etc.

- **Verbal Warning**
 - The educator will acknowledge the inappropriate behavior and demand that it stops immediately. The educator will describe the appropriate behavior that is expected and inform the camper that loss of privilege or removal from activity will occur if the inappropriate behavior continues.
- **Loss of Privilege / Removal from Activity / Notice to Parents/Guardians**
 - If the inappropriate behavior continues, the educator will remove a privilege or remove the camper from an activity.
 - Loss of Privilege may include the inability to use toys, games, or props; sitting next to a friend; etc.
 - Removal from Activity may include the inability to participate in an upcoming lesson, game, or activity.
 - The educator will record the incident and action taken. The Program and Summer Camp Director will inform parents/guardians of the incident.
- **Discussion with Camp Director / Discussion with Camp Parents**
 - If the inappropriate behavior continues, the educator will send the camper to speak with the Program and Summer Camp Director. The Program and Summer Camp Director will discuss the behavior with parents/guardians as well as the next steps moving forward.
 - The educator and Program and Summer Camp Director will record the incident and action taken.
- **Removal from Camp Day / Removal from Camp Program**
 - A Level 3 Offense or continued inappropriate behavior may result in Removal from Camp Day or Removal from Camp Program.
 - The Program and Summer Camp Director will discuss the behavior with parents/guardians as well as the next steps moving forward.
 - Refunds are not issued after Removal from Camp Day or Removal from Camp Program.

Briar Bush Nature Center

Summer Camp Preparation Checklist

Before the first day of Summer Camp, please be sure these tasks are completed:

- Complete the [Medical and Pick-Up Consent Form](#).
- Review the *Briar Bush Nature Center Summer Camp Handbook*.
- Review the Detailed Itinerary for the camp week.
- Pack a backpack complete with:
 - a filled, reusable water bottle between 20oz-32oz
 - one snack (Half-Day Camps) / many snacks and lunch (Full-Day Camps)
 - a full set of extra clothes and shoes
 - a plastic bag for wet/dirty clothing
 - rain gear
 - water-only closed-toed shoes/sandals
 - insect repellent
 - sunscreen
 - medication (if needed).

If you have any questions or concerns, please call (215) 887-6603
or email melissa@briarbush.org.