



Briar Bush
NATURE CENTER



Summer Camp Handbook

Table of Contents

Welcome	1
Summer Camp Staff	2
Camp Policies and Procedures	3
Camp Offerings and Schedule	3
Staff-to-Camper Ratio	3
Refund/Cancellation Policy	3
Extended Care	3
Camper Drop-Off	4
Camper Pick-Up	4
Late Fee Policy	4
Behavior Policy	4
Detailed Itinerary	5
Field Trips	5
Medical	6
Illness	6
Accommodations	6
Allergies	6
Medications	6
Poison Ivy / Ticks	6
Clothing	7
Sunscreen / Insect Repellant	7
Food / Water	7
Personal Items	7
Summer Camp Preparation Checklist	8

Briar Bush Nature Center

Summer Camps

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 look 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 programs. Enclosed, you will find useful information on camp policies and procedures. 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 at (215) 887-6603 or email Melissa Eldridge, Program and Summer Camp Director, at melissa@briarbush.org. We look forward to seeing you and your child this summer!

Melissa Eldridge
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Briar Bush Nature Center
(215) 887-6603
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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 counselors lead Seedlings Half-Day Camps for Ages 4-6 and Saplings Full-Day Camps for Ages 6-7. Our seasonal camp counselors 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 counselors throughout the summer. Their dedication to our camp program, 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 call (215) 887-6603 to speak with Melissa Eldridge, Program and Summer Camp Director.

Briar Bush Nature Center

Camp Policies and Procedures

Camp Offerings and Schedule

Briar Bush Nature Center offers a variety of weekly Summer Camps for different age groups. Please look below for the correct camp schedule. Camps require advanced registration.

Camp	Start Time	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-to-Camper Ratio

Our Summer Camps have small groups to ensure a high-quality program.

- Seedlings Half-Day Camps – 1 Counselor + 2 Camp Aides : 6 Campers
- Saplings Full-Day Camps – 1 Counselor + 2 Camp Aides : 12 Campers
- Full-Day Camps for Ages 8-9 – 1 Counselor + 2 Camp Aides : 12 Campers
- Full-Day Camps for Ages 10-12 – 1 Counselor + 2 Camp Aides : 12 Campers
- Overnight Camp for Ages 11-15 – 2 Counselors + 2 Camp Aides : 10 Campers

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 refunds will be issued within 14 days of the program start date.

Extended Care

Before Care is offered from 8:30am-9:30am and After Care is offered from 4:00pm-5:30pm. Registration for Before and/or After-Care is required prior to the scheduled camp week. 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.

Camper Drop-Off

A carline drop-off will be implemented. Drive down the parking lot and stop at the garage to check-in with camp staff.

Camper Pick-Up

It is policy for our staff to check photo IDs at pickup. Be sure to complete the [Briar Bush Nature Center Summer Camp Medical and Pick-Up Consent Form](#) on our online registration system. Please respect the appropriate pick-up times.

Late Fee Policy

A fee of \$5.00 will be charged for every 15 minutes you are late to pick-up.

Behavior Policy

Camp participants are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior at all times. The following guidelines have been developed in order to provide all those involved in Summer Camp with a safe and enjoyable experience. A caring and positive approach will be taken regarding discipline. Camp Staff will reinforce appropriate behavior through positive reinforcement, firm statements, and redirection of activity.

Listed below are the disciplinary procedures for campers who are exhibiting inappropriate and unacceptable behavior. Examples of those behaviors are listed below. This is not an extensive list. Depending on the severity of the behavior, a particular step may be skipped.

	1st Offense	2nd Offense	3rd Offense
Level 1	Redirection	Verbal Warning	Loss of Privilege / Removal from Activity / Discuss with Parents at End of Camp Day
Level 2	Verbal Warning	Loss of Privilege / Removal from Activity / Discuss with Parents/Guardians During or at End of Camp Day	Removal from Camp Day / Meeting with Parents/Guardians
Level 3	Removal from Camp for the Remainder of the Camp Day / Meeting with Parents/Guardians	Removal from Summer Camp Program	

Behavior Policy Cont.

Levels of Offense

- **Level 1**
 - Disruption of camp activities
 - Misuse of property
- **Level 2**
 - Disregard/disrespect/defiance/non-compliance toward staff, program, regulations, etc.
 - Inappropriate gestures/language
 - Bullying program participants, volunteers, staff, etc.
 - Bullying is defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated or has the potential to be repeated, over time.
- **Level 3**
 - Endangering the wellbeing of self, program participants, volunteers, staff, or animals
 - Aggressive physical contact including hitting, kicking, etc.
 - Consistent bullying including aggressive verbal, social, or physical behavior.

Detailed Itinerary

A detailed itinerary, including daily topics, activities, and special instructions, will be e-mailed two to three weeks prior to each camp. Review it carefully to ensure your camper is prepared for each camp day.

Field Trips

Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 8-9 and Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 10-12 may take

daily field trips to various places of interest during the camp week. These places will be listed in the Detailed Itinerary. Camp counselors drive Briar Bush's 15-passenger vans, while the Camp Aides help make the ride enjoyable for the campers by playing games, reading stories, telling



jokes, etc. All passengers are required to wear seatbelts. If your child requires a booster seat, please indicate this on the medical form or contact Melissa Eldridge, Program and Summer Camp Director. *Saplings Camps for Ages 6-7* may walk to Highland Elementary School to utilize the playground and field.

Medical

After camp registration, please complete and submit the [Briar Bush Nature Center Summer Camp Medical and Pick-Up Consent Form](#) on our online registration system. A medical form must be completed for each camper before the start of camp or they will be unable to attend. Only one form is required for the camp season. If there are changes to the medical form, please contact Melissa Eldridge at melissa@briarbush.org.

Illness – If your child isn't feeling well, please keep them at home and report the absence. If your child isn't feeling well at camp, we will notify you and early pick-up may be necessary.

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. Please note that while our staff participates in trainings relating to various cognitive and behavioral disabilities, staff members are not behavioral intervention professionals or ABA certified. If you would like to discuss further, please contact Melissa Eldridge, Program and Summer Camp Director.

Allergies – Campers will eat together during snack and lunch periods, interact with the Briar Bush museum animals, and explore the forested land on Briar Bush property. Please indicate all of your child's allergies on the medical form.

Please note that we are not a nut-free facility.

Medications – Dispense any required prescription or over-the-counter 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.

Poison Ivy/Ticks – While exploring in nature, campers may encounter poison ivy and/or ticks. Our staff is knowledgeable in locating both hazards and how to treat them, should your child come into contact. We will do daily tick checks during camp, but *please check your camper for ticks when they get home.*



Clothing

Campers must be appropriately dressed for camp. Avoid sending your child to camp in open-toed shoes. We find that closed-toed sandals work well, as they dry easily. Campers *will* get dirty, so please dress them in clothing and shoes you do not mind getting wet and/or dirty. **Your child must bring a backpack with an extra set of clothes and shoes.** Also, campers should be appropriately dressed for the weather. Camp can still take place outside on rainy days, so your child should come prepared with a rain jacket when necessary. Special clothing requests, if any, will be included in the Detailed Itinerary.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellant

Apply sunscreen and insect repellant to your child before arriving at camp each day. If you need to apply it to your child at Briar Bush, please do so outside the Center as the products may irritate the animals. Your child may reapply sunscreen and/or insect repellant during the camp day.

Food and Water

Reusable water bottles are required for every camper, as we refill water bottles repeatedly throughout the day. Campers participating in Half-Day Camps are required to pack a snack while campers participating in Full-Day Camps are required to pack many snacks and a lunch. Lunches cannot be refrigerated or microwaved.

Personal Items

We strongly recommend that campers leave their personal items such as games, toys, electronics, etc. at home. These items almost always get lost or broken during camp. If your child insists on bringing a personal item to camp for use in Extended Care or for a special instance, please speak with the camp counselor. Personal items, unless permitted by the camp counselor, will not be used during camp hours. Briar Bush Nature Center is not liable for lost, stolen, or broken personal items.

Briar Bush Nature Center

Summer Camp Preparation Checklist

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

- I've completed the [*Briar Bush Nature Center Summer Camp Medical and Pick-Up Consent Form*](#).
- I've read the *Briar Bush Nature Center Summer Camp Handbook*.
- I've read the Detailed Itinerary for my child's camp.
- My child and I understand the potential consequences of misbehavior.
- I understand that my child will most likely get wet and/or dirty during the camp day. I will send my child in with clothes and shoes that are appropriate for camp.
- My child is prepared for the camp week. In a backpack, my child has:
 - an extra pair of clothes and shoes,
 - a rain jacket,
 - a reusable water bottle,
 - one snack (Half-Day Camps) / many snacks (Full-Day Camps),
 - a lunch (Full-Day Camps),
 - sunscreen and bug spray for reapplication, and
 - medication (if needed).

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