Briar Bush NATURE CENTER

Become a Member and Receive:

- 20% discount on programs
- Early registration for summer camps
- Invitations to members-only events
- Facility rentals for your celebrations
- 10% discount in the Nature Shop
- Participate in ANCA Reciprocal Program and visit nature centers across the nation
- And more!

Briar Flyer

Newsletter and Calendar

www.briarbush.org 215-887-6603 January – April 2024

Facility Hours Update

Business Hours:
Monday - Friday: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Briar Bush facilities may be closed due to construction beginning January 2, 2024. We hope to complete the project and return to regular use on or before April 1, 2024, but please check our website or call for changes.

Thank you to our funders: PA DCNR, Abington Township, and all the members and supporters of Friends of Briar Bush, and thank you for your patience during this important enhancement!

Normal Visiting Hours:
Daily: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Admission:
Briar Bush Members: Free
Abington Residents: Free
Others: Pay what you can

Winter & Spring program guide starts on page 4.

The Dede Long Nature Museum, Griscom Bird Observatory, and pond will be closed on New Year's Day and Easter Sunday. Trails are OPEN dawn to dusk.

Briar Bush Is Getting a Major Makeover!

Mark Fallon
Director

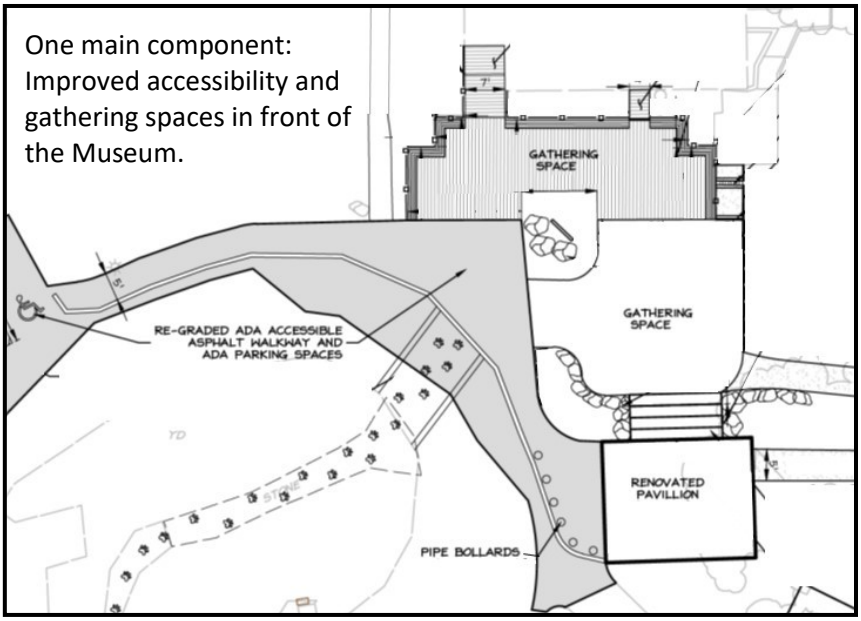
Dear Briar Bush Members, Supporters, and Friends,

I am so pleased to announce this January, with funding assistance from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), through the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund, we break ground on an exciting project. Focused on enhancements in safety, access, and wildlife habitat, improvements include an accessible trail to the Griscom Bird Observatory, renovated program pavilion, expanded gathering spaces, and streetscape improvements. We will expand a rain garden and add thousands of native plants to increase biodiversity and mitigate stormwater.

Work will begin in early January 2024. Abington Township will execute all labor with additional funding from DCNR and Friends of Briar Bush. The improvements are the culmination of a master planning process that began in 2016 through a previous grant from DCNR.

(continued on page 2)

One main component:
Improved accessibility and gathering spaces in front of the Museum.

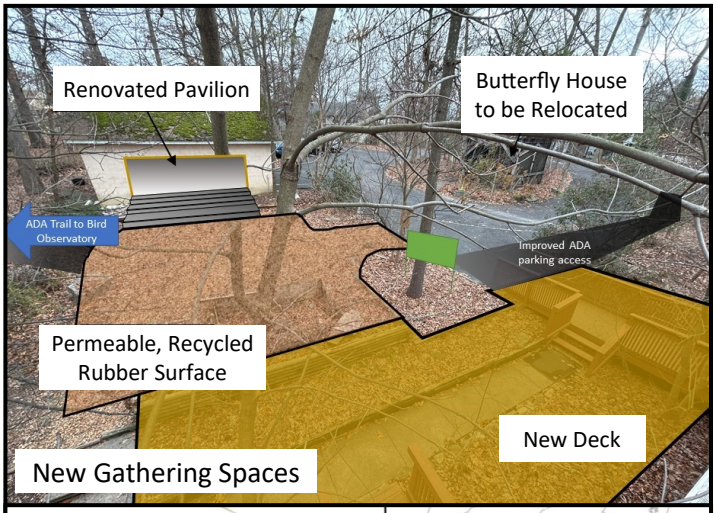


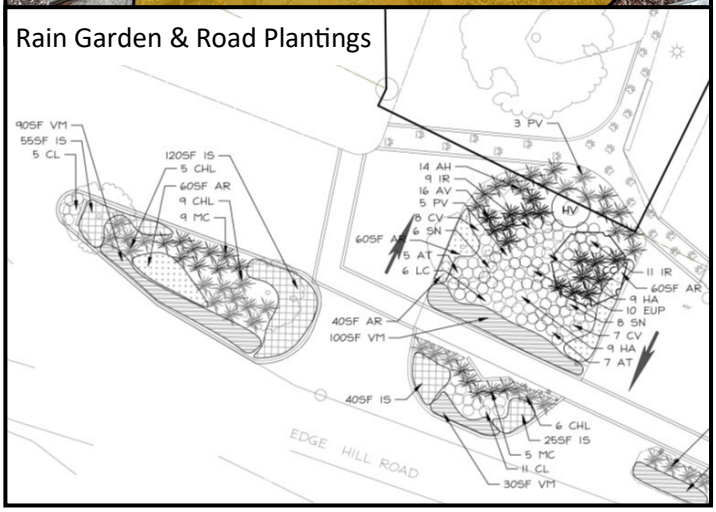
Briar Bush News and Information

Participants in the Briar Bush master plan joined design sessions alongside Briar Bush staff and provided hundreds of public comments culminating in the current design priorities. The new amenities will benefit the community by allowing people of all abilities to access the Griscom Bird Observatory and Dede Long Nature Museum, as well as the new pavilion and front porch. Moving the current butterfly house, which is seasonal in use, out of the center of the parking area will make the parking and drop off areas much safer. At the entrance, replacing trees (many ash trees already dying from invasive Emerald Ash Borer) with native perennials will vastly increase native pollinator habitat and maintain much needed, safer sightlines for entering and exiting. New signs and lighting will allow visitors, new and old, to find us more easily.

With an expected completion date of May 1, 2024, the Museum will likely be inaccessible for up to eight weeks from January to March, leading to some park-wide closures and canceled or relocated programs.

Thank you for your support and patience during this exciting time, and thank you to all who have been involved in getting us here!





Feather Our Nest 2023 was a Success for All Seasons!

On September 29, 2023, the Friends of Briar Bush (FOBB) hosted our 33rd Feather Our Nest Gala and Auction (FON), *A Night for All Seasons*. Seasonally themed décor, culinary delights, and games set the backdrop for the important question the Briar Bush staff wanted to answer: which season is nature's best? In the end, there was no contest as it's not the individual seasons but the relationship between them that makes the world a special place.

With the help of an extraordinary amount of businesses, organizations, artisans, and participants, FON 2023 raised over $44,000! All funds raised directly support keeping Briar Bush Nature Center a special place for *everyone* in our community to visit and learn about nature. Thank you to all those who helped make The Friends of Briar Bush 33rd Feather Our Nest Gala a success!

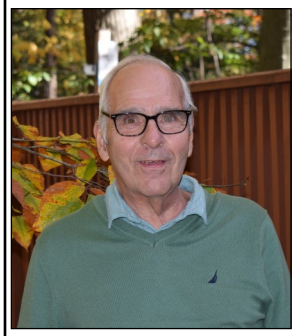
Many thanks to all of our FON 2023 Sponsors for making this year's event a Seasonal Sensation!

Special thanks to the Friends of Briar Bush Board Members for their dedication to FON and the FOBB mission.

View a complete list FON 2023 Sponsors and more pictures of the FON 2023 event at: www.briarbush.org/fon2023-event.

Briar Bush News and Information

New Board Member



Dale Reiser

Dale spent over 30 years as a certified EPA and PADEP environmental consultant bringing hazardous and contaminated properties and industrial facilities into compliance. Dale discovered many artifacts during his time on job sites and found himself intrigued when he found antique glass bottles. This curiosity developed into a hobby and he now owns an extensive collection of over 400 unique bottles. Dale retired in November 2021.

In June 2022, just six months later, Dale began a new adventure volunteering at Briar Bush working on multiple facilities and grounds projects. Since then, Dale has worn several volunteer hats including handyman, trail guide, community events representative, fundraiser, and, now, Friends of Briar Bush Board Member. He is very involved with Briar Bush's partnership with Abington School District's A.C.T.I.V.E. Academy, a program designed for young adults, ages 18-21, with IEPs. He loves impacting the lives of these students and helping them learn new skill sets as they transition into their independence after high school.

Staff News

Dan Hicks, Part-Time Environmental Educator

In the Fall of 2023, Dan brought his Eagle Scout background and vast experience in outdoor education to the Briar Bush team. He earned his BS in Earth Science with a focus on stream ecology from the University of Arkansas preparing him to launch into environmental education at Ozark Natural Science Center, a residential science center focused on research with water quality and wildlife ecology. His experience includes capturing and banding Northern saw-whet owls, monitoring timber rattlesnake populations and keeping track of benthic macro invertebrates throughout the year as creek conditions change. When he's not sharing his passion for the environment, Dan can be found fishing from a kayak on Neshaminy Creek, playing music, or spending time with his family cooking healthy meals here in Abington, PA.

Volunteer at Briar Bush Nature Center

Briar Bush could not accomplish its goals without the help of dedicated volunteers. Learn more about the variety of opportunities and make your mark at BBNC.

Board of Director: The Friends of Briar Bush is seeking Board of Director candidates with backgrounds in community leadership, business, finance, non-profit management, and education.

Community Engagement: Briar Bush attends many events throughout the year. This opportunity includes representing Briar Bush while sharing information about our organization and programs, and engaging table visitors with artifacts and nature based activities.

Interested in a BBNC volunteer opportunity? Email volunteer@briarbush.org.

Did you know? *You can donate some or all of your Required Minimum Deduction from your IRA tax-free to the Friends of Briar Bush as a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). Consult with your financial advisor to find out more about this charitable giving opportunity.*

Programs for Children

Most programs require registration for participants ages 2+. Children under 2 years of age are free of charge.
Please review all program information at the time of registration including program location.
To register, visit www.briarbush.org. Questions or need help registering? Call 215-887-6603.

Magic Mornings for 2-5-year-olds with Adult

Temporarily at Crestmont Clubhouse

Program will return to Briar Bush Nature Center when construction is safe for participants.

Hey, toddlers! Bring your favorite adult to join a Briar Bush educator for walks, animal encounters, activities, and more! Each week features a new theme, which repeats throughout the week. Register for one day per week. Visit our website for the full schedule.

Day: January/February - MOST Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays
March/April - MOST Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays
Time: 10:30am-11:30am
Location: Jan/Feb - Briar Bush Nature Center
Mar/Apr - TBD Pending Construction Progress
Cost per Participant: $12.50 | Abington Resident: $11.25 | Briar Bush Member: $10.00
Add'l. Child (Same Household)**:** $7.50 | Abington Resident: $6.75 | Briar Bush Member: $6.00

Nature Pioneers for 4-6-year-olds

Temporarily at Crestmont Clubhouse

Program will return to Briar Bush Nature Center when construction is safe for participants.

Children are invited to join us on their own for age-appropriate activities, walks, animal encounters, and more! Each week features a new theme, which repeats throughout the week. Register for one day per week. Visit our website for the full schedule.

Day: January/February - MOST Thursdays
March/April - MOST Wednesdays or Thursdays
Time: 1:00pm-2:30pm
Location: Jan/Feb - Briar Bush Nature Center
Mar/Apr - TBD Pending Construction Progress
Cost per Participant: $15.00 | Abington Resident: $13.50 | Briar Bush Member: $12.00

School's Out, Get Outside! for Grades K-5

Temporarily at Crestmont Clubhouse

Program will return to Briar Bush Nature Center when construction is safe for participants.

When school is not in session, students can spend a day with Briar Bush exploring the outdoors, meeting animals, making crafts, playing in nature, and more. Visit our website for the full schedule.

Day: Select Holidays and In-Service Days
Time: Half-Day Session - 1:00pm-3:30pm|Full-Day Session: 8:30am-3:30pm
Location: Crestmont Clubhouse, 2595 Rubicam Avenue, Willow Grove, PA 19090
Cost per Participant:
- Half-Day Session: $30.00 | Abington Resident: $27.00 | Briar Bush Member: $24.00
- Full-Day Session: $75.00 | Abington Resident: $67.50 | Briar Bush Member: $60.00

After-Care Sessions are ONLY available when the program is located at Briar Bush.
After-Care sessions are from 3:30pm-5:30pm and cost $12.00 per participant.

Programs for Families

Most programs require registration for participants ages 2+. Children under 2 years of age are free of charge. Please review all program information at the time of registration including program location. To register, visit www.briarbush.org. Questions or need help registering? Call 215-887-6603.

Snow Moon and StarLab
at Crestmont Clubhouse

Join a Briar Bush educator for a night of full moon fun! Explore the night sky and search for animal constellations projected in our StarLab inflatable planetarium. Then, head outside and learn how to use a telescope to view the full Snow Moon.

Date: Friday, February 23, 2024
Time: 7:00pm-8:30pm
Location: Crestmont Clubhouse, 2595 Rubicam Avenue, Willow Grove, PA 19090
Cost per Participant: $12.50 | Abington Resident: $11.25 | FOBB Member: $10.00

Briar Bush Annual Festivals!
at Briar Bush Nature Center

Everyone is invited to Briar Bush's annual festivals to enjoy a variety of activities including guided hikes, animal encounters, games, crafts, and more! Registration is not required.

WinterFest 2024
CANCELED DUE TO CONSTRUCTION

EarthFest 2024 - Save the Date!

Celebrate Earth Day with us and see what's new!

Day: Sunday, April 14, 2024
Time: 1:00pm-4:00pm
Location: Briar Bush Nature Center
Cost: FREE

Programs for Adults

Most programs require registration.
Please review all program information at the time of registration including program location.
To register, visit www.briarbush.org. Questions or need help registering? Call 215-887-6603.

Great Backyard Bird Count
at Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust (PERT)

Birders of all skill sets can join a Briar Bush educator for the annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). This inter-organizational effort between the *Cornell Lab of Ornithology*, *National Audubon Society*, and *Birds Canada* launched in 1998 to help scientists better understand global bird populations before annual migrations. It was the first online citizen science project to collect wild bird data and display the results in near real time. A Briar Bush educator will lead the Count and familiarize participants with Merlin Bird ID and eBird.

Participants are not required to stay for the full length of time. Please bring binoculars and dress for the weather. Hot chocolate will be provided.

Date: Saturday, February 17, 2024
Time: 1:00pm-4:00pm
Location: PERT, 2955 Edge Hill Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006
Cost per Participant: *FREE*

A Journey to Backyard Biodiversity
at Crestmont Clubhouse

In March 2021, BBNC Educator and native gardening nerd Katie Fisk bought her first house and began converting the outdoor space from a typical suburban yard to a wildlife oasis. Follow her journey of the bumps and successes she's had along the way and learn how you can begin your own native gardening journey.

Date: Saturday, March 9, 2024
Time: 10:30am-11:30am
Location: Crestmont Clubhouse, 2595 Rubicam Avenue, Willow Grove, PA 19090
Cost per Participant: $8.00 | Abington Resident: $7.20 | FOBB Member: $6.40

Edible Plant Walk
Location TBD

Get a taste for the bounty of your own backyard! Join us on a walk along the trails to rediscover plants that people have used for centuries as food and medicine. Discover how to identify, ethically harvest, and prepare edible wild plants. After the walk, taste samples of pine needle tea and more!

Date: Saturday, April 27, 2024
Time: 10:00am-11:00am
Location: TBD Pending Construction Progress
Cost per Participant: $8.00 | Abington Resident: $7.20 | FOBB Member: $6.40

Summer Camp 2024

Registration is required for Summer Camp Programs. To register, visit www.briarbush.org.
Please review all program information at the time of registration. Questions or request a brochure?
Contact Melissa Eldridge, Director of Programs, at melissa@briarbush.org or call (215) 887-6603.

Play! Learn! Discover!

Summer is a time when learning and play go hand-in-hand. Briar Bush Summer Camps give your child the opportunity to experience the wonders of nature through scientific discovery, interpretive hikes, animal encounters, games, crafts, nature play, and more!

Seedlings Half-Day Camps for Ages 4-6
AM & PM session options each week!

Saplings Full-Day Camps for Ages 6-7
All day fun at Briar Bush!

Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 8-9
Regional field trips each week!

Full-Day Travel Camps for Ages 10-12
Regional field trips each week!

Overnight Camp for Ages 11-15
Tent camping at Hickory Run State Park!

Summer Camp Aide Program for Ages 13+
Have fun while building leadership skills and earning service hours!

Scan the QR Code or visit www.briarbush.org for more information including:

* Summer Camp 2024 Brochure
* General Summer Camp FAQs
* Sign Up for Camp Emails
* Summer Camp Financial Aid
* Summer Camp Handbook
* Details about Each Camp Group

Briar Bush
NATURE CENTER

1212 Edge Hill Road
Abington, PA 19001

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Share your Briar Bush story with us!

The Friends of Briar Bush
Welcoming you to a world of wonders for 50 years!

The older we get, the more anniversaries we collect.
At Briar Bush, we can celebrate at least three:

- 1908, when Florence and Everett Griscom first came to live on the property and create their wild bird sanctuary, which Florence called "my briar bush."
- 1962, when a group of concerned community members, calling themselves the Friends of Briar Bush, convinced Abington Township's commissioners to purchase and protect the former Griscom property.
- 1974, when the Friends of Briar Bush (FOBB) became an officially recognized nonprofit organization.

That's right - FOBB is 50! Thanks to all the members and supporters over five decades, this small, beautiful patch of woods has become a vibrant hub for education, introducing the wonders of nature to thousands of people every year. To help us celebrate, we would LOVE to hear your Briar Bush story! You can use the link below, email us, share on Facebook, call, or drop by and speak with Mark Fallon or Karen Foster. We look forward to hearing your amazing memories we know this special place and its special people have created.

Happy 50th, Friends of Briar Bush!