



For the enjoyment of walkers and wildlife, the farm trail is open & accessible for all, every day dawn to dusk. Please no dogs or bicycles.

The Massaro Community Farm trail is a microcosm of what can be found in the woods in our area. See if you can find here and on your walks elsewhere:

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| 1) Evidence of farming & woodland animals | (7) Garnet schist |
| 2) Cinnamon fern | (8) Quartzite |
| 3) Barberry and autumn olive bushes | (9) Hemlock |
| 4) Grape, bittersweet, and poison ivy vines | (10) Musclewood |
| 5) Yellow birch | (11) Spicebush |
| 6) Skunk cabbage | (12) False hellebore |

NOTE: Stakes 1 through 11 progress on the north half of the pink loop moving clockwise; number 12 is on the second half of the pink loop beyond the east end of the blue trail. As you continue along the pink trail, see if you can find further examples of the above. (Children might test the adults in the group.)

(1) The stone wall on the left near the beginning of the trail probably bordered one of the fields or pastures on the dairy farm owned by the Massaro family from 1916 to 2007. Also, the dead cedar trees and the invasive barberry and bittersweet found along the trail commonly succeed open spaces such as pastures. Along with deer tracks and scat (droppings), do you see evidence of other animals on your walk today – deer rubs on trees, coyote scat, etc.?

(2) Growing in vase-like clumps, the frond of this fern has cinnamon-colored spores, hence its name. Its early fiddleheads provide food for deer and other animals.

(3) Thorny barberry and silvery-leaved autumn olive, both invasive bushes, can be seen throughout the Massaro woods. While their nectar and berries provide food for birds and bees, their aggressive nature out-competes native species, making it hard for tree saplings and other plants to grow.

(4) Grape, bittersweet, and poison ivy vines are also common in our woods. The berries from these plants are eaten by woodland creatures and their leaves lend rich color to the autumn canopy. The papery tendrils seen peeling from the dark brown, shaggy bark of grape vines are used as nesting material by birds. Bittersweet's bark in contrast is lighter and speckled, its vine being the most aggressive as it tightly girdles trees. Poison ivy vine when growing on trees is distinguishable by the brown, hairy rootlets that attach it to tree trunks. Its three almond-shaped leaflets on the forest floor and in the trees can range from 1 to 12 inches; while normally green and usually shiny, they are reddish at the beginning and end of the season. (Don't touch the leaves or vine as they can cause a bad rash.)

(5) Yellow birch is distinguishable from white birch not only by its color but also by the finer fringe of its peeling bark.

(6) Often seen in wetland areas, first the purplish bloom and then the large, vibrant green leaves of this plant are a welcome sight in early spring. Because this plant generates warmth through thermogenesis, it can flower in snow and ice. Its skunk-like odor attracts small pollinating insects into the warmth of the hood-like bloom.

(7) The small, raised bumps in this metamorphic rock are crystals of garnet, Connecticut's state mineral. Because of its exceptional hardness, garnet was used for abrasive purposes, playing an important role in our state's industry through its use for grinding stones, sandpaper, saws, etc.

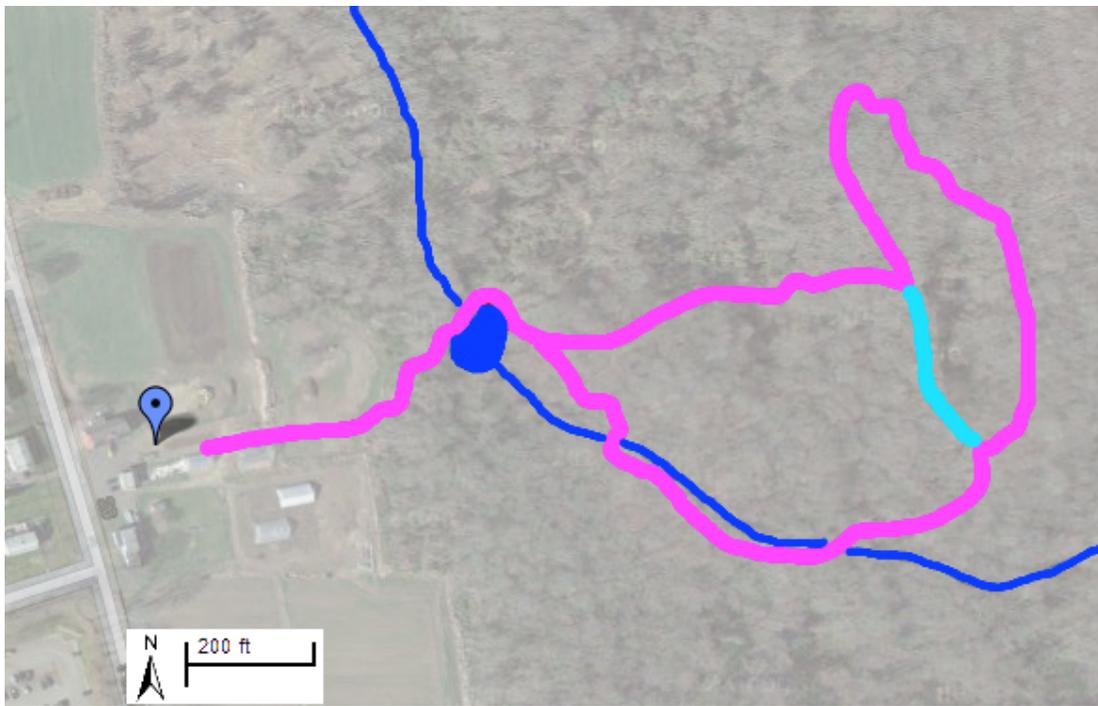
(8) When quartz sandstone recrystallizes through heat and pressure, it becomes the metamorphic rock quartzite. Its previous sandpaper-like form metamorphoses to a smooth, glassy surface, which often is moist on warm, humid days and cooler to the touch than other rocks. Quartzite is not native to our area but has been carried here and left by glaciers when they melted some 17 thousand years ago.

(9) This evergreen provides a shaded grove that is enjoyed by the summer camp children and by animals in winter seeking shelter. The hemlock is known for its pyramidal shape and delicate dark needles, which are silvery underneath. Native Americans and settlers used its tannin for dyeing leather and wool and used its inner bark and needles for tea and medicinal purposes. Today, it is an important source of wood for flooring, furniture, and pulp. While healthy hemlock can live for hundreds of years, the species in North America, unfortunately, are suffering from an infestation of the woolly adelgid insect.

(10) The small musclewood tree is named for the sinewy, muscled appearance of its smooth, grey trunk. It is also referred to as American hornbeam and ironwood and is found particularly in moist, acidic soils. Its nutlets provide food for birds and its hard wood is used for handles, golf clubs, and walking canes.

(11) Noted for the spicy, lemon fragrance of its leaves, this "forsythia of the wilds" can readily be seen in early spring thanks to its tiny, joyous yellow flowers. Its elliptical leaves vary in size and placement along the branch and its dotted bark feels like sandpaper. Early surveyors used the bush as an indicator species of good agricultural land, while the caterpillar of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly (black with blue-fringed wings) uses it as its primary source of food and the wood thrush enjoys its fruit. This delightful native bush is a member of the laurel family and is found throughout the Massaro woods as it prefers damp, shaded woodlands and stream banks.

(12) Despite being a highly toxic plant, the lush, ribbed leaves of this bright green plant serve as another herald of spring.



Please come again and enjoy the seasonal changes in the woods of Massaro Community Farm

We particularly appreciate the ongoing efforts of our local Girl and Boy Scouts in creating and maintaining this trail.

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