

CLOSTER NATURE CENTER NEWS

P.O. BOX 80, CLOSTER NJ 07624 closternaturecenter.org

By the pond on Ruckman Road

JANUARY, 2021

JANUARY ACTIVITIES:

INVASIVE BRIGADE – OPERATION MULTIFLORA ROSE

The Closter Nature Center is a magical place loaded with native plants and animals. Unfortunately, we have a problem in our preserve--an invasive species that threatens the health of our forest. Is it a venomous snake? No. Is it a deadly spider? No. It's a rose. Yes, a rose. Multiflora rose was brought to this country from Asia in the late 1800s for use as both an ornamental plant and as a "living fence". Its good looks and usefulness are quickly overshadowed by its ability to take over its habitat. Fields and roadsides are where it is often a big issue but given the right circumstances it can degrade a forest habitat as well.

For about a month in late spring and early summer this invasive is covered with small white roses. Those fruits become rose hips, the seed-bearing fruits of the rose. Some birds are fond of the fruit and spread the seeds. It grows by way of arching canes that are covered with recurved thorns that protect them from herbivores.

Multiflora rose has been spreading here at the Nature Center, and once they grow from individual stems into multi branched shrubs they can be very difficult to remove. Now is our chance! Naturalist Marc Gussen is putting together a squad of volunteers to get to work removing this plant from our forest.

Come join us for a short hike where Marc will explain the issue further, go over techniques for removing it, and then we will roll up our sleeves and get to work!

Saturday, January 9th *and* January 23rd at 1:00 PM

Please dress for the weather, and bring gardening gloves and garden clippers if you can.

Contact Marc at mgussen@aol.com with questions or to sign-up.

Let Marc know if you can bring gloves, eye protection, and pruners or loppers, so that we can be sure of having adequate equipment on hand for everyone. Participants must wear a mask during the hike and be at least 13 years of age.

CNC APPLIES FOR IMPORTANT GRANT

The Closter Nature Center is in the process of applying for a \$2,500 National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) grant. If our application is successful, it will provide needed funding for the restoration of sections within the Nature Center that have been impacted by increased use during the Covid-19 pandemic.

With the state-imposed limitations on various social, entertainment and health opportunities and the imposition of social distancing regulations to reduce the threat of infection, the Nature Center has seen a large increase in people turning to the outdoors for exercise and rejuvenation. The NEEF grant is designed to help non-profits keep up with increased traffic in these delicate ecosystems, developing additional volunteer resources, and assisting with maintenance backlogs.

CALLING FOR VOLUNTEERS: The NEEF awards are based on proposed conservation, accessibility, and maintenance projects. Funding must be used to engage volunteers in restoration and conservation projects that address the impacts of the pandemic. Key performance indicators are the number of volunteers who engage in the project, the overall value of volunteer service, the types of projects undertaken and the conservation outputs. **Anyone wishing to participate as a volunteer for Nature Center restoration projects should contact Tom Golodik (t.golodik@verizon.net).**

What Is NEEF? The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) is the nation's leading organization in lifelong environmental learning, connecting people to knowledge they use to improve the quality of their lives and the health of the planet. Congressionally chartered in 1990 as a 501c3 nonprofit to complement the work of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NEEF is a non-partisan, non-advocacy organization working to make the environment more accessible, relatable, relevant, and connected to people's daily lives. NEEF offers a variety of grants and awards to help organizations build capacity, increase diversity, and expand their work locally. Last year, NEEF provided nearly half a million dollars to educational and public land partners across the country.

Naturalist's Notes:

Aside from a handful of evergreen trees, there is not much green to be found in our forests in January. While firs, pines, and spruces color the winter landscape of the northern US, here in NJ we don't have many. The American Holly is a tree native to our area that not only provides a splash of green but, if your specimen is a female, red as well. Our holly, *Ilex opaca* can grow up to 40 feet tall, is armed with tough, leathery and spiky leaves. But unlike most trees, the holly has separate male and female individual trees. The great majority of other plants are male and female at

the same time, with each flower having male and female parts rolled into one.

The American Holly, however, is *dioecious*, which translates from Latin to English as "double house," which is the botanical term used to describe this phenomenon of separate-sex plants. The female holly trees blossom in late spring with small inconspicuous whitish-green flowers. As those flowers mature, they develop into a small bright red berrylike fruit called a drupe. These fruits start out in the fall looking tasty, but are actually hard and bitter, and are often left on the tree for months. With each passing day of freezing weather, they become more and more palatable, and are an important winter food source for many birds. In the dead of winter when things seem cold, gray, and gloomy, the holly tree stands as one of nature's gifts of brightness and beauty.

Marc Gussen, Naturalist