

CLOSTER NATURE CENTER NEWS

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

By the pond on Ruckman Road

April, 2025

April 2025 Programs and Activities:

Lights Down, Stars Up: Lecture Presented by DarkSky International April 25th, 2025 8 pm at the cabin

Stephen Mariconda, an environmental advocate with DarkSky International, discusses light pollution and its environmental impact in New Jersey. Light pollution disrupts ecosystems, harms wildlife, obscures the night sky, and negatively impacts human health. Learn about eco-friendly lighting and advocate for policies that reduce light pollution in North Jersey and beyond.

Stay after the lecture for some star-gazing if the sky is clear!

Register to attend at closternaturecenter.org/events

Admission by Donation: Members, \$5...Non-Members, \$10

Annual Soup Supper

April 27th 5-7 pm

Our beloved Soup Supper, a 40+ year tradition, invites members and friends to savor unlimited samples of delicious soups donated by favorite local restaurants. Enjoy them with fresh breads from Balthazar Bakery and Buon Gusto. This family-friendly event is a tasty way to support our cause. Come hike along scenic trails, followed by a relaxing dinner and live music by the pond.

\$15 Adults, \$5 Children, \$10 for Nature Center Mugs

Cute Kid's Quote:

A five year old girl was telling me about her little brother and I asked how big he was. She held up her hand and spread her thumb and index finger about an inch apart and said "this big!"

-Marc Gussen

Naturalist's Notes:

With April on the way comes the seasonal rebirth of the forest. While our native plants are revving up for a good start to another glorious spring, one of our non-native invasives is ready to do its early April take-over of the forest floor. Garlic mustard, or *Alliaria Petiolate*, is a Eurasian biennial wildflower that has more than just taken up residence here-- it all too often forms a complete monoculture in our northeast forests.

It is able to do so well here because it is armed with a couple of traits that let it out-compete our native spring wildflowers. First off, it gets up early!

Garlic mustard can often produce its first leaves even before spring officially starts, and be a foot tall before our natives get going. This timing, combined with that fact that it produces copious amounts of seeds in the summer often means that it can completely blanket areas of the forest without competition from other wild flowers and trees.

In addition to the early head start and over-the-top seed production it lives up to its name - Garlic Mustard. It smells and tastes like a combination of garlic and mustard. While these scents might be delicious to us humans, they deter herbivores, not just deer and rabbits but everything that eats plants leave it completely alone. You won't find missing leaves, holes in leaves or even fungus – Garlic Mustard is free to take over with no natural controls.

This is why each spring we round up volunteers to get out into our forest and reclaim what the garlic mustard takes. Visit our web site for more information about invasive species, how they negatively impact our forest and what you could help do about them.

See you on the trails...Marc Gussen, Naturalist

Summer Program Registration Now Live!

CNC Classes

Spring and summer adventures await! Registration is now open for our exciting children's programs. Let your kids explore, learn, and have fun with hands-on activities and outdoor discoveries. Don't miss out – register now!

After-School Nature Classes (Pre-K4 to 6th Grades)

Spring Semester and Session I Registration Open!

4-weeks of classes per session

April 8th to May 8th

Tuesdays- Pre-K4 and Kindergarten - 3:45 pm to 5:00 pm

Wednesdays- 1st- 3rd grades - 3:45 pm to 5:00 pm

Thursdays- 4th-6th grades -3:45 pm to 5:00 pm

Non-members: \$120

Members: \$144

Register for the full 8-week Spring Semester for a 10% discount!

Semester Weeks: April 8, 22, 29, May 6, 13, 20, 27, June 3

Register at : register.communitypass.net/closter



Spring Break Nature Program (Pre-K4 to 6th Grades)



**Registration
Open!!**

4 Days of Nature Exploration and Discovery!

April 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th

1st - 3rd grade: 9:00 am - 10:30 am

PreK 4- Kindergarten: 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

4th - 6th grade: 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

1st - 3rd grade: 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm

PreK 4- Kindergarten \$96 for Members / \$120 Non-members

1st to 6th Grade \$120 Members / \$144 Non-members

**Can't make all four days? Email our Naturalist to
make accommodations for 1, 2, or 3 day
attendance: naturalist@closternaturecenter.org**



**Register on Community Pass:
register.communitypass.net/closter**



Summer Program **REGISTRATION NOW OPEN**



Our popular Summer Program is returning for the 2025 season

**We offer 4-day weekly sessions, with 2-hour classes for ages 4-6
and 3-hour classes for ages 7-14.**

Ages 4-6: \$105 for Members / \$125 Non-members

Ages 7-14 \$160 Members / \$190 Non-members

**See our Summer Program section on our webpage for the full
schedule and more information, or [click this ad!](#)**

Please Register on CommunityPass

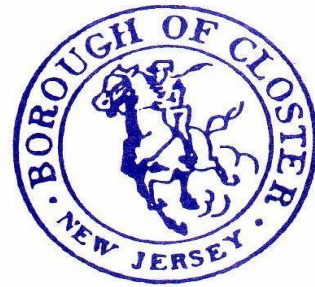


Update on Our Reforestation Initiative

In the last 2 months, we have seen incredible progress made in our Reforestation Initiative as our newest deer enclosure (a fenced area to protect young native plants from deer) was finished and an initial planting was completed within its fences. Work began on the 2nd one-acre large enclosure in January of this year. First, diseased and damaged trees were culled to make room for the fencing and new plantings and to open up the canopy so that the young native plants could receive the sunlight they need to thrive. Next, members of our trail crew and staff from Bradbury Landscaping placed locust wood posts around the perimeter of the area and affixed eight-foot tall mesh fencing to them. Finally, at the end of March, over 200 native plants were planted within the enclosure, such as Swamp White Oak, American Holly, Witch Hazel, and others! The planting was completed with the combined efforts of the CNC trail crew, volunteer work crews from Veolia, Bradbury Landscaping, and the Cresskill Highschool Environmental Club. The generous funding that made this project possible came from the sponsors listed below.

There is still much work to be done to ensure a healthy and resilient forest, but with the erection of the enclosure and the completion of this planting, we have taken a valuable step towards restoring a sustainable reserve at Closter Nature Center. Thank you to all our supporters and volunteers!

The Mayer Family Foundation



**BRADBURY
LANDSCAPE, INC.**



The Secrets of Skunk Cabbage

By Ryan Yamani, Student Naturalist

The skunk cabbage is up! Can Spring be far behind?

This very common resident of the Closter Nature Center, *Symplocarpus foetidus*, is a plant that grows within marshes and wetlands in the northeastern areas of North America and our marshy wetlands forest offers it a perfect environment. The dark purple leaves that surround the yellow flower can heat the space around the flower up to 70 degrees Fahrenheit, so it is able to bloom in late winter and early spring, even when weather and soil are cold and little else has started to push up.

It is not a cabbage eaten by a skunk, and it is most definitely not a skunk in a cabbage! But its scientific name tells the tale—the name is a combination of the Greek words *symploce*, meaning “connection”, and *carpos*, meaning “fruit”, and the Latin word *foetidus* meaning “foul smelling”. They have large leaves blooming with reddish-purple coloration with yellow flowers containing fruit hiding under the sturdy covering. When mature, skunk cabbage flowers give off a foul odor similar to rotting meat. While unpleasant to us, pollinators are attracted to that specific smell.



Skunk cabbage pushing up through icy water along the Orange trail.

Although its name and scent might repel some, this plant has many beneficial roles throughout the ecosystem and for humans. Among the many environmental benefits. Skunk cabbage’ strong roots keep the wet soil together, preventing erosion and providing stability. Skunk cabbage leaves provide food for snapping turtles, black bears, wood ducks, ruffed grouse, ring-necked pheasants, and bobwhite quail, while bears, elk, muskrats, and other animals eat the roots of this plant.



It takes a careful look to spot skunk cabbage at this stage of development.

In addition to the benefits to the natural environment, skunk cabbage also plays a medicinal role can for humans. Many Native Americans used it to treat respiratory diseases, rheumatism, nervous disorders, dropsy, and other ailments. Other cultures use the roots of skunk cabbage to treat asthma, headaches, seizures, toothache, and as a dressing for wounds.

Skunk cabbage may not seem like much when you catch a view of it on the trail, but it's actually quite an important plant in wetland environments. Despite its unpleasant smell, it serves essential roles like preventing soil erosion and providing food for various animals. So, next time you encounter that distinctive odor in the marshes, remember, it's

the scent of a plant doing its part to support the ecosystem and, potentially, offering healing benefits to those in need.

Ryan Yamani is a senior at Bergen County Academies.