

August/September 2026

The ParkNextDoor magazine



DAYS TO HOLD ON TO

LOOK INSIDE FOR: COOL WALKS FOR HOT DAYS, TEN THINGS TO DO BEFORE SUMMER ENDS, CAVES IN THE PARKS, FLOWER PHOTOGRAPHY, PARKticipation!, SUMMER READS, FOREST ART, BIRDING HOTSPOTS, AND MORE!



Greetings, Everyone ~

Where has the time gone? It's hard to believe August is already coming to a close. This was going to be a full summer issue, but, well, life happens. For personal reasons, my priorities required changes this spring and summer. So, an August/September issue it is. I truly hope you will find it useful.

There are plenty of hot and humid days to come. A perfect reason to get outside and enjoy *A Cathedral Of Trees*. Step onto a woodland trail and feel coolness surround you. If you're looking for ideas to cap off the summer season, *Ten Things To Do Before Summer Ends In Wisconsin* has got you covered.

Our spotlight park this issue is *Cherney Maribel Caves County Park* in Manitowoc County. It's a perfect nature destination for a day trip. Caves, beautiful walking trails, birds, rivers, and more.

Love flowers? Summer blooms will hold on for a while yet. Grab your camera and step out with a *Focus On Flowers*. Location ideas, and a few composition ideas are offered.

Have you heard of *The Park People of Milwaukee*? I was able to join them for an event in early June. Read about it, and learn more about their program in *Exploring Greenfield Park With The Park People Of Milwaukee*.

I've been feeling nostalgic about visiting my grandparents cabin as a child. The climate has changed quite a bit since then. Maybe you can relate to *Past, Present, Future*.

In the spring issue I profiled *Root Down Wisconsin*, and their native plant sale. I did attend, and am thrilled with the plants I purchased. I do a quick recap in *Native Plant Sale*. It's not too late to hang out in the garden with a good book. *Summer And Books Are A Perfect Mix* has six ideas for you.

The *Forest Exploration Center* has opened its second annual *All That Trees Provide* art exhibition. The exhibit will be open, free to the public, into the fall.

Fall migration is on the horizon. A perfect opportunity for *Birding Local*. Take a look at our list of *22 Locations To Add To Your Fall Migration List*, grab your binoculars, and go birding.

The coming change of season is the perfect opportunity for a quick road trip. *September Adventures* has some scenic suggestions. Looking to go apple picking? *An Apple A Day* can satisfy. Prefer a sunflower field? *Bold & Beautiful* can help.

Lastly, in honor of back-to-school season, I've written a short essay on *What I Did On My Summer Vacation*. I wouldn't call it adventurous, but it was what I needed.

If you're new to [TheParkNextDoor Magazine](#), please know all back issues are linked on the website. They are free, and can be downloaded to your devices, if you wish. There are plenty of features in previous issues that are still relevant. Feel free to share as well.

If you're looking for a new park, nature preserve or trail to hike, check out the [website](#) for more than 300 options.

Wisconsin has so much beauty to offer us. Step outside. Make the most of it. After all, these are days to hold onto.

Kimberly



A traveler, singer, novice photographer, humane gardener, and nature lover. Documenting and sharing the beauty that is Wisconsin since 2014.

Cover photo taken at
Ellison Bay Bluff County Park - Ellison Bay
© theparknextdoor@outlook.com

What's Inside

Is it hot, or is it just me? Either way, a walk beneath **A Cathedral Of Trees** should do the trick. Here are 15 beautiful spots to help you beat the late summer heat.

Stumped for something fun to do before the season changes? From beaches to boardwalks and observatories - **Ten Things To Do Before Summer Ends In Wisconsin** can help.

Ever explored a natural cave? There are several of them in our spotlight park: **Cherney Maribel Caves County Park**, in Manitowoc County.

Take a photo walk with **A Focus On Flowers**. We've got location and composition tips to help you capture the beauty of what's in bloom.

Get to know *The Park People of Milwaukee*, and their *PARKticipation!* program. Details are found in **Exploring Greenfield Park With the Park People Of Milwaukee**.

Ever heard of the *windshield phenomenon*? It's a real thing. **Past, Present, Future** considers the question "where have all the insects gone?"

I added to my garden this summer with purchases from a local **Native Plant Sale** at *Root Down Wisconsin*. Absolutely worth it!

Take a little time to relax with a good book. **Summer And Books Are A Perfect Mix** offers six titles to consider.

Add some art to your day with a walk at *Forest Exploration Center*. **All That Trees Provide** has the details on the second annual trail art exhibit.

Get ready for fall migration. **Birding Local** offers *22 Locations to Add To your Fall Migration List*.

What comes after August? **September Adventures**. From day trips to long weekends, we've got several great ideas to make the most of the transition from summer to fall.

Apples are always delicious, but fall is apple harvest season. Make the most of it with **An Apple A Day**. If sunflower fields are more your thing, **Bold & Beautiful** will point you in the right directions.

Sometimes trips and holidays just don't fit the moment. **What I Did On My Summer Vacation** explains why staying home, for me, was the best choice.

If you're new to the magazine, check out **All Back Issues Available** and keep exploring Wisconsin.

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A CATHEDRAL OF TREES

Hot summer days speed by in a flurry of activity as we try to make the most of the short season here in Wisconsin. Family vacations, festivals, weddings, county fairs, sporting events, farmers markets and more keep the calendar full.

When the chaos of your world gets to be too much, head for a cathedral of trees nearby.

Something about a tree lined trail beckons. No matter the season. But in summer, the green leaves rustle in the breeze, providing delicious shade and cooler temperatures. A relief from the heat of an open, sunny sky.

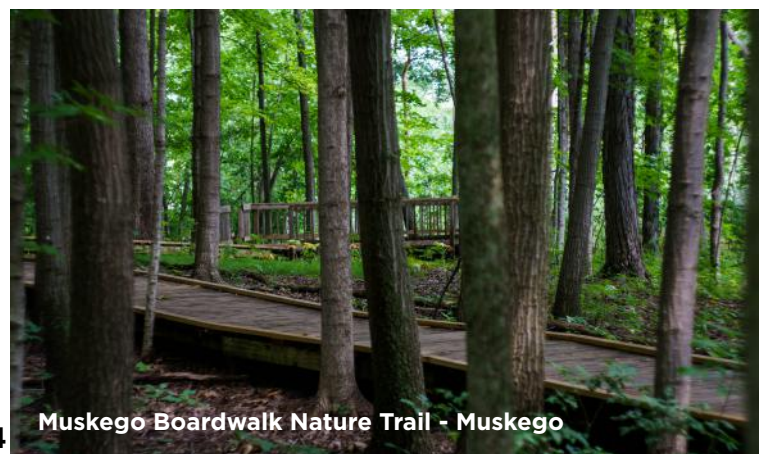
No matter where you live in Wisconsin, there's a cathedral of trees waiting to give you respite. To offer you a quiet walk, a chance to clear your mind, cool the skin, stir your soul.

Whether it's a simple ten-minute stroll in a neighborhood park, or a longer hike in a nature preserve or state park, the comfort of trees, the protection of the canopy above, the sound of birdsong ringing out from the branches, offers a break from what ails you.

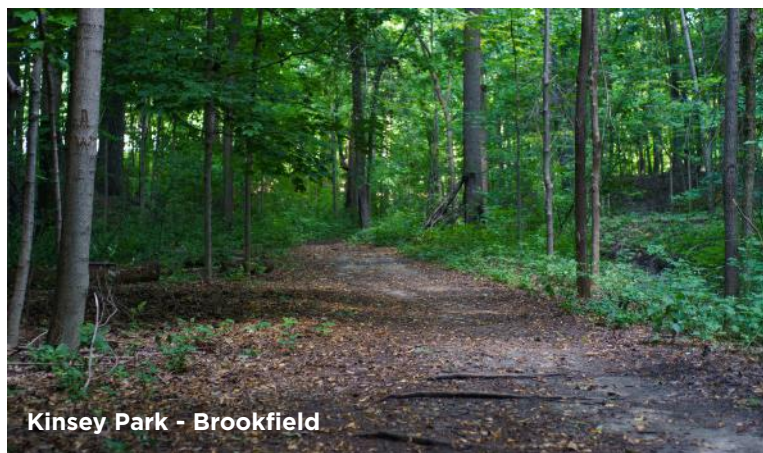
Go solo, or with family or friends. Either way, you're bound to find some moments of tranquility to sustain you. Here are 15 peaceful spots for your consideration.



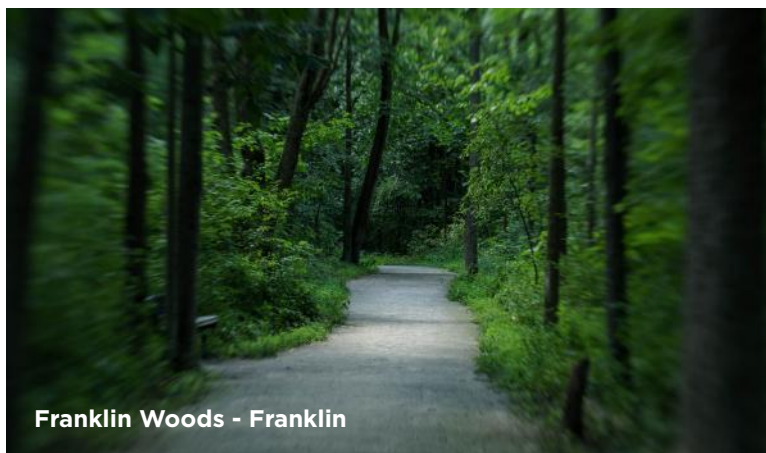
Pukaite Woods - Mequon



Muskego Boardwalk Nature Trail - Muskego



Kinsey Park - Brookfield



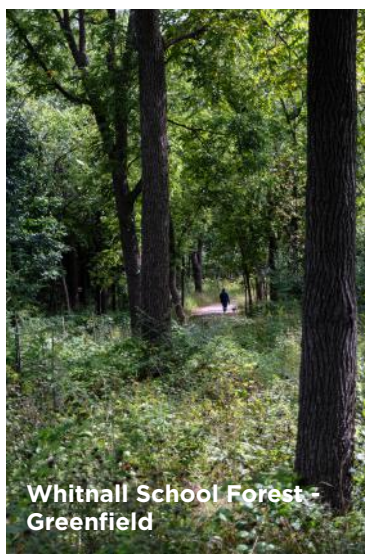
Franklin Woods - Franklin



Jean McGraw Memorial
Nature Preserve - Kenosha



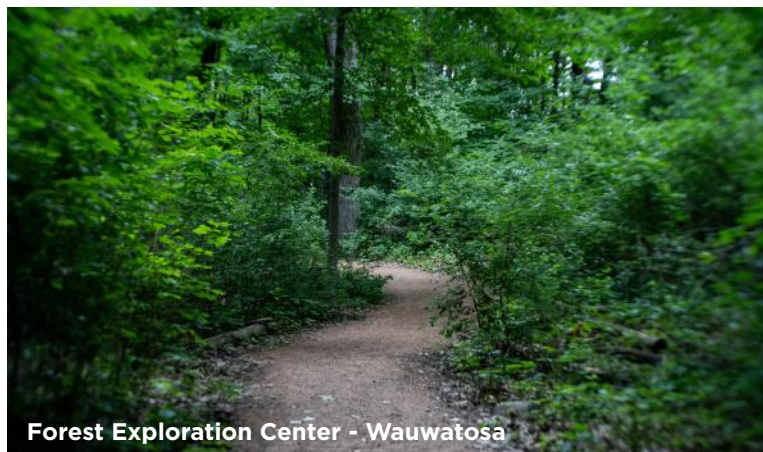
Quaas Creek Park -
West Bend



Whitnall School Forest -
Greenfield



Deer Creek Sanctuary -
New Berlin



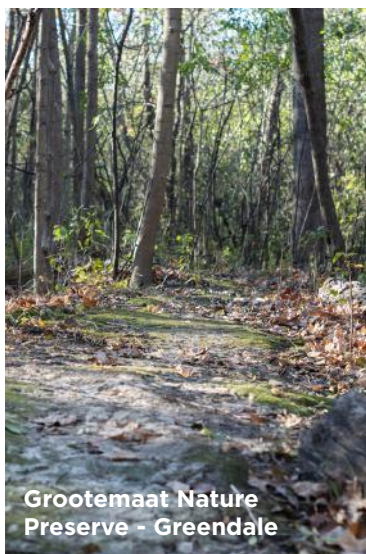
Forest Exploration Center - Wauwatosa



Highland Woods - Mequon



John S. Garman Nature
Preserve - Waterloo



Grootemaat Nature
Preserve - Greendale



Greenfield Park -
West Allis



Sanctuary Woods -
Wauwatosa



Ten Things To Do Before Summer Ends In Wisconsin



Walk the boardwalk, and experience a sunset at Horicon Marsh.



Visit a sculpture park.



M. Schettl Sales - Sculptures and Oddities - Oshkosh



Bobrowitz Sculpture Garden & Art Studio - Colgate



James Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden - Town of Wilson



Learn about the history of space exploration at Yerkes Observatory in Williams Bay.



Visit a local flower farm and pick your own bouquet.



For The Love Of Flowers Farm



Roots & Stems Flower Farm



The Flower Bee Farm



Spend an afternoon at Lakeshore State Park in Milwaukee.

Located along the lake, adjacent to the SummerFest grounds. Walk, run, or bike along paved trails and wildlife habitat.

A new pollinator habitat was planted in June, 2026. Over 2,000 plants were planted by volunteers to create habitat for migrating butterflies and more.



Treat Yourself to Adrian's Frozen Custard in Burlington.

It's a quick road trip, and so worth it. Yum!



Take In A Labyrinth Garden Earth Sculpture in West Bend.

Enjoy beautiful blooms, and a peaceful walk through a labyrinth of flowers located in Regner Park.



Visit one of Wisconsin's many lavender farms.
For Love Of Lavender has the details.



Photo courtesy of Forest Exploration Center

Take in a walk at ***Forest Exploration Center*** in Wauwatosa, and enjoy an art exhibit, too!

Two local artists are featured in the second annual outdoor exhibition themed "All That Trees Provide". Artist *Mary Patscot Rocha's* painted works are featured, along with *Patrick Zettel's* photography.

The exhibit displays are presented along the Community-Curated Spur Trail and will be on display into the fall season.



The Elegant Farmer - Mukwonago



Sanfelippo's Farm Center Market - New Berlin



Support Local Growers

Visit Your Local Farmers Markets, Apple Orchards, and Farm Stands.

Travel Wisconsin
provides an extensive list
of farmer's markets
across the state.





SANFELIPPO'S

City Center Market

home of the

NEW BERLIN FARMER'S MARKET



Cherney Maribel Caves County Park is 75 acres along the West Twin River, north of the village of Maribel. Featured are mountain biking trails, picnic areas, a children's playground, and lots of hiking trails. The hiking trails traverse woodland terrain, as well as along the ledges and ridges of multiple naturally formed caves and rock formations, and along the West Twin River, culminating in a stunning view of the spring fed waterfall that empties into the river.

These majestic rock formations are part of the Niagara Escarpment that makes its way from Wisconsin all the way to Niagara Falls. These are some of the most viewable portions of the Escarpment that I have seen in the state. The surrounding trails are well plotted out, scenic, and, other than a few sets of stairs from the upper to lower portions of the park, are easily walked. The trail leading from the River Trail to the Spring Waterfall is very rocky (and wet), however, so be aware. Good hiking shoes will be worth the wear.



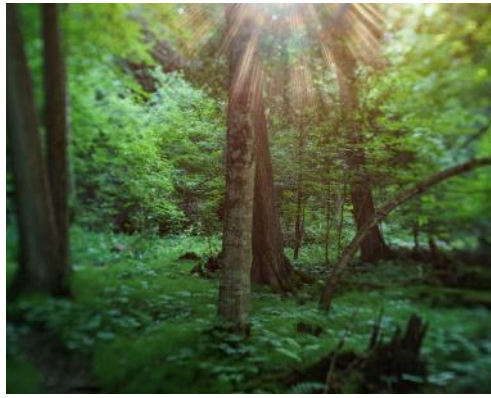
At present, there are 10 caves. Some are open daily to the public. Most require crawling. The largest cave (standing is possible) is New Hope Cave. It is generally open one day a month for guided tours. This is the largest excavated cave open to the public, with ceiling heights now up to nearly 14 feet. Groups of 10 or more can schedule tours by appointment.

New Hope Cave is home to four species of resident bat populations (which explains why the mosquitoes seemed pretty quiet as we walked the trails). For more detail on the caves, their history, access, and more, check out the video produced by Coolest Coast on YouTube.



You'll find lots of woodland and trailside beauty here. Ferns, mosses, and other unique plant life grow along the rocky outcrops.

Maidenhair horsetail grows in woodland areas, and many native wildflowers, including Jewelweed, and Figwort (something I had never seen before), sustain lots of happy pollinators along the trail.



The park is also a great birdwatching spot. Great Crested Flycatchers, Blue Jays, and Cedar Waxwings are a few of the birds we spotted here. Nesting American Eagles are also near by, though we did not glimpse them during our walk. Migration season should be excellent here. The fall colors should be spectacular as well.



There are two pavilions, with restrooms, available for rental between April 1 and October 31. The park does not provide maintenance during the winter months, so no plowed roads, etc.

Park Season and Hours: April 1st to October 31st, Dawn to Dusk
Dogs permitted, On-leash.
Location: 15401 County Road R, Maribel, WI (Manitowoc County) *For more information, [click here](#) and [here](#). [Park Map](#).*

A FOCUS ON FLOWERS



French Marigold's are an elegant flower in any garden.



Summertime in Wisconsin brings the perfect opportunity to wander outdoors and photograph the nature around us. The brilliant colors of flowers blooming, seed pods forming, bees gathering pollen at a flowers center, grasses swaying in the wind. And, of course, the added bonus of seeing dragonflies, bees, butterflies, grasshoppers and more as they work away or rest on a flower petal.

No matter what type of camera you use - smartphone, point-and-shoot, digital, film - now is the time to capture some of summer's beauty. Try shooting from different perspectives and angles. Zero in on small details. Get extra close, or down low. Have fun with it.

Summer travels fast, so get out there, snap some beauty, and make some memories. Not sure where to go? Start in your yard, your neighborhood. Your local parks, state parks, town squares with gardens, community gardens, a flower-laden patio at a favorite coffee shop. Let your creativity bloom.

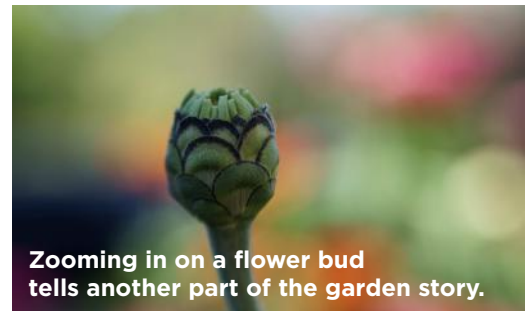
Need more ideas? Here are a few style perspectives and location favorites to try.



Cosmos are buzzing at Eugster's Farm in Stoughton.



Woodland Sunflower brightens up Jacobus Park in Wauwatosa.



Zooming in on a flower bud tells another part of the garden story.



Ferns are abundant at Spruce Lake Bog in Campbellsport.



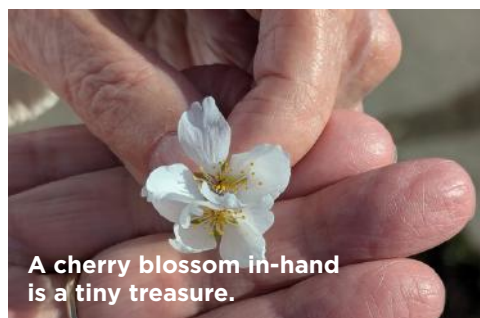
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail on a blooming zinnia is a fun close-up.



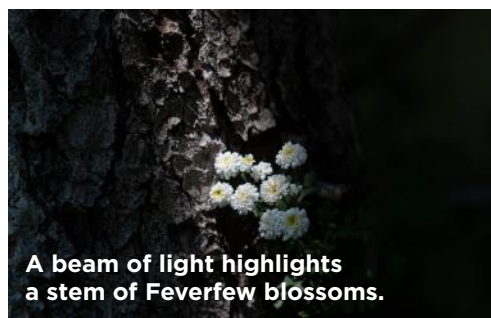
Jewel weed at Lion's Den Nature Preserve in Grafton.



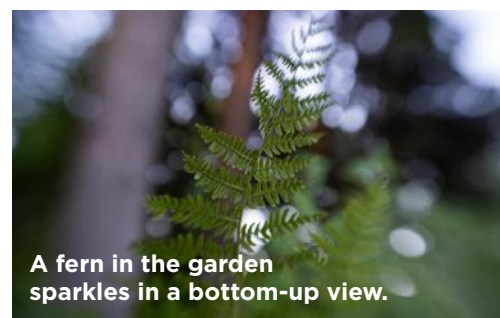
The gardens at Honey Creek Park in West Allis are always colorful.



A cherry blossom in-hand is a tiny treasure.



A beam of light highlights a stem of Feverfew blossoms.



A fern in the garden sparkles in a bottom-up view.



Bluebells bloom at Kinsey Park in Brookfield



Closed Bottle Gentian in flower at Wehr Nature Center.



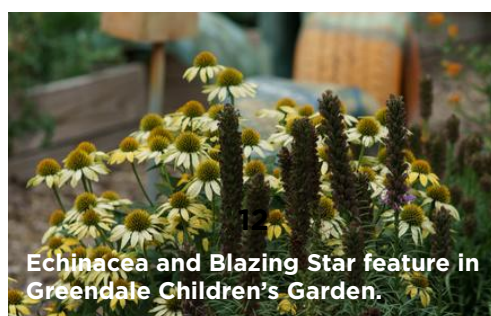
Cabbage butterfly perched on birds-foot trefoil at Ben Hunt Prairie in Hales corners.



A juvenile Katydid spotted on a garden daisy.



A young grasshopper looking cozy on a large dahlia leaf.



Echinacea and Blazing Star feature in Greendale Children's Garden.



All sunflowers are beautiful, especially with a little sunlight peeking through from behind the petals.

Exploring Greenfield Park with The Park People of Milwaukee

On June 13 I joined with members of The Park People of Milwaukee to celebrate their PARKticipation summer kickoff party. The festivities took place at one of my favorite local parks - Greenfield Park, in West Allis. They invited me to lead a photo walk in the park, so a small group of us took to the woodland trails. Cool and green on a hot, sunny day.

We talked a bit about shooting from different perspectives - from below, getting close-up, highlighting the environment around us. Mostly we just walked the winding trails, took photos, and appreciated the beauty of the woods and each others company.

Returning to the festivities we cheered on the bicyclists headed off on a community bike ride with members of the Milwaukee Recreation organization. Then it was on to some yard games, snacks, beverages, and a bit more socializing with other park loving people.

The Park People of Milwaukee is a non-profit organization that works to support volunteer Friends groups, who work to preserve and protect Milwaukee County Parks. Most recently, a *Friends group was founded for Greenfield Park*.

The PARKticipation program encourages residents to explore Milwaukee County Parks, and offers events and prizes to participants from season to season. *Read on for more details.*



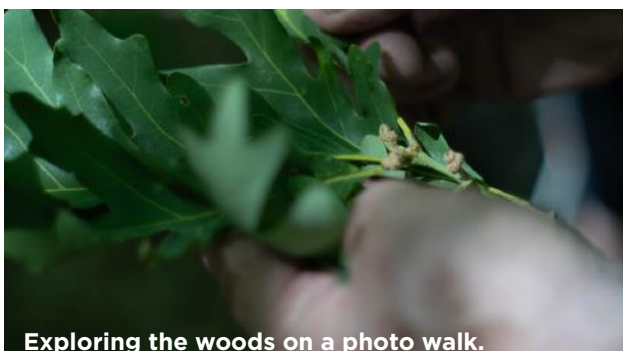
The Park People setting up for some fun.



Signing Up to enjoy our parks.



Cyclists ready to ride.



Exploring the woods on a photo walk.



The latest friends park group.



A few lawn games.!

Get The Scoop On PARKticipation!

PARKticipation encourages residents to explore Milwaukee County Parks

PARKticipation, a program offered by The Park People of Milwaukee County (TPP), is a fun way for people to engage with Milwaukee County Parks (MCP), sparking wellness, curiosity and connection.

PARKticipation features a digital app that can be downloaded to any mobile device, regardless of operating system. The app displays actions that can be completed at any Milwaukee County Park. These actions are grouped into five categories:

P - Pictures (take photos of items listed in the category)

A - Activities (low-impact exercises and observation opportunities)

R - Relaxation (chances for rest and rejuvenation)

K - Knowledge (develop awareness of what MCP and their partners offer)

S - Seasonal fun (special activities geared for the time of year)

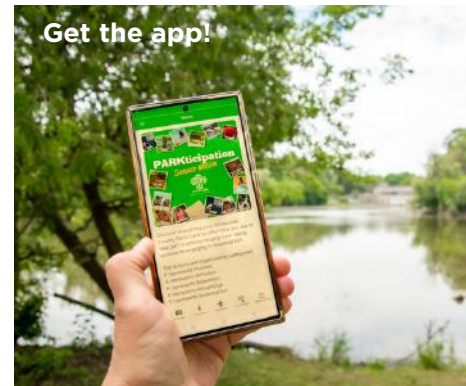
For every action that is completed, users are asked to click or tap that action's square to check it off. Users who complete five or more actions in the app are entered into a grand prize drawing. The grand prize for the summer program is a \$100 gift card from The Pasta Tree Restaurant & Wine Bar, Milwaukee.

TPP is also partnering with Milwaukee Recreation on three of the actions in the app: walking, yoga and biking. App users can choose to complete these actions with Milwaukee Recreation or entirely on their own. Completing PARKticipation actions through Milwaukee Recreation is free but registration is required. Users can register at <https://milwaukeeerecreation.net/en/Programs/Wellness-Events.htm>. For more information, contact Milwaukee Recreation at 414-475-8180.

The PARKticipation app is free and can only be downloaded from TPP's website at <https://parkpeoplemke.org/get-involved/parkticipate/>. It is not available through the Apple Store or Google Play.

To qualify for the grand prize drawing, five or more actions must be completed by Saturday, August 29, 2026. The winner will be notified by email.

Get the app!



PARKticipation is sponsored by The Pasta Tree Restaurant & Wine Bar, Milwaukee Recreation, and Milwaukee County Parks.

The Park People was founded in 1977 with a mission to support volunteer Friends groups through fiscal sponsorship, and to encourage community stewardship of parks, park improvements, park engagement, and long-term park viability. In addition to the PARKticipation program and sponsorship of Friends groups, TPP hosts the Oak Leaf Discovery Tour, Weed-Outs (invasive plant removals), Trash-Outs (park cleanups), and oversees the park bench and tree donation program for Milwaukee County Parks.

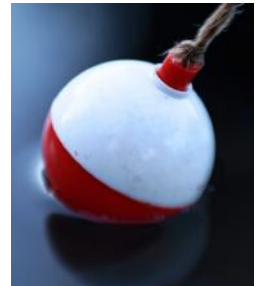


Past, Present, Future

Summer can be a very nostalgic time. The older I get, the more I reflect, as summer comes around. Remembering free wheeling days of summer when I was just a kid. I grew up in St. Paul, during the late 60's/early 70's. During summers, on weekends mostly, our family would make the drive to Amery, Wisconsin, where my grandparents had a rustic cabin on a lake. To a kid of 7 or 8, it seemed like it was a world away, though it was only about an hours drive.

I loved being there among the wildflowers, and the old white ash, balsam, birch, sugar maple, and red oak trees. I recall waking in the cool of the early mornings to the sound of American Robins singing, to the sound of the waves lapping at the boat dock. My uncle would rake the bottom of the lake along the shore and the dock so we could wade in and swim. Once in the water there I rarely wanted to come out. The water was clear enough we could stand in it and watch perch swimming quickly past our feet.

I used to fish from that dock, watching the bobber go under water, thrilling to the bend in my fishing rod, reeling it in. Most often it was sunfish, sometimes perch. Sometimes we kept it for eating (though I'm not a fish eater), most often I wrestled up enough courage to hold the fish in my hand to release it from the hook and put it back in the lake.



On the drive home I would close my eyes and see that bobber dancing on the surface of the water, then plunge under. I haven't fished in decades, but I can still recall the thrill of it. The peace it can bring, too.



In the evenings the fireflies lit up, dancing among the trees and the wild grasses and flowers that lined the dirt road to the cabin. The air was clear, as was the sky. Stars appeared after dark in numbers I could never imagine seeing from our home in the city. Like magic.

Once back home, evidence of our trip to the woods, to the cabin and the surrounding wilderness, was evident. There crusting over the grill of the family car, and gunked in bits on the windshield were the remains of thousands of bugs.

Moths, mosquitoes, flies, beetles. All met their demise in collision with wind, speed, and heavy moving machinery. It took a little elbow grease and a lot of soap and water to clean them off, but it was a small price to pay for weekends away.

A lot of soap and water, and a little elbow grease were needed to clean away a mass of windshield bugs.

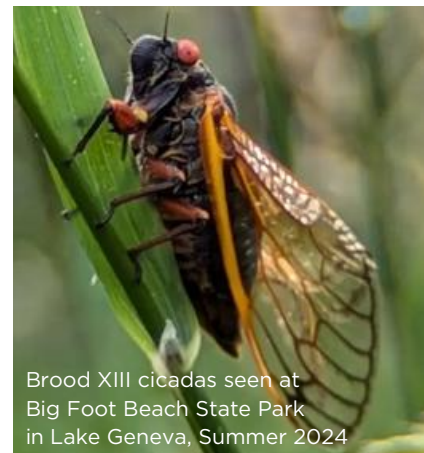




Driving the back roads is different now.

Fast-forward several decades, and here I am wondering *When was the last time I had to clean a multitude of bugs from my windshield?* I can't even recall. And this, in fact, makes me sad. I spend a fair amount of time driving to parks and preserves out in the wilder spaces of Wisconsin, and I rarely come home having to clean my windshield of anything more than leaves and dust anymore. Which begs the question, *Where have the bugs gone?*

"Entomologists call it the windshield phenomenon." So says Gretchen Vogel, in an article she wrote for Science.org back in 2017: *Where Have All The Insects Gone?* In it she explains how there have been ongoing studies by entomologists in Germany, since the 1980s. Their tracking showed a decrease, within three decades, of nearly 80% in the number of insects in the 100 nature reserves studied. That is a sobering statistic. The studies show that a decrease in insects of all kinds means a depletion in food sources for other animals. Birds, for example. Which leads to declines in their species, and on and on.



Brood XIII cicadas seen at
Big Foot Beach State Park
in Lake Geneva, Summer 2024

What is causing this loss? The usual suspects, of course. Over development, loss of habitat, pollution, pesticides, climate change. The research continues in an effort to find out more. But it doesn't bode well for the future of the planet, for humans and all other living creatures. *So how can everyday people make a difference?* How can we find hope. Create a better chance for the generations coming along behind us?



I'm looking to conservationists and gardeners for inspiration. To the idea of preserving existing, and building new, prairies, and forests. Restoring wetlands, woodlands, and wildflower fields.

And to the idea of adding native plants and trees to our existing gardens, no matter how small, in an effort to increase the food and shelter sources for our birds, bees, butterflies, and everything in-between.

In the state of Wisconsin alone we have an abundance of conservancy organizations that have taken up the task of preserving our existing wilderness, and restoring it as well.

Gardening organizations and clubs offer information on how to add natural habitat to even the smallest of yards. They provide details on what plants, shrubs, and trees can benefit the wildlife and ecosystems they need to survive, maybe even thrive again.

Community gardens have sprung up in cities and towns, rural and urban. Planting fruits and vegetables for personal sustenance, and to benefit the community at large; insects, animals, and humans alike.



Finding hope for the future from a local perspective, there are lots of organizations that can provide guidance to make a difference at a more personal level. Something as simple as carving out a bit of space in your yard for native bird and pollinator friendly plants can help. Avoiding pesticides on your lawn makes a huge difference. If you don't have a yard, but have space for a planter or two, plant natives and pollinator friendly plants in those. Every little bit can make a difference.

Volunteer for a clean-up or weeding day at one of your local parks or preserves. Join a community garden where you can learn along with others how to plant and grow produce, flowers, and other plants. Following is a list of organizations and websites that might be of help.

Together we can preserve the magic of fireflies, and more, for future generations.



The Wild Ones organization is helpful to gardeners aspiring to add native plants.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

[Homegrown National Park](#)

[Wisconsin Pollinators](#)

[National Wildlife Federation](#)

[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)

[Wild Ones](#)

[Home Gr/own Milwaukee](#)

[Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin](#)

[The Gardens Network](#)

[Monarch Joint Venture](#)

[Urban Ecology Center Community Gardens](#)

[The Nature Conservancy, Wisconsin](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources](#)





Gardening is hard work. Rewarding work. Even joyous work. Being outside, adding beauty to your surroundings, can be extremely satisfying. It offers both mental and physical health benefits. It provides shelter and sustenance for scores of wildlife - birds, bees, butterflies, and so many more. Humans, too! But it can be intimidating,

Gardening with plants native to your region not only benefits local wildlife, but it reduces the amount of labor and watering needed over time. Most native plants, once established, can weather heat waves and droughts better. Some even thrive on the heat. But getting started with native plants can be overwhelming.

Starting from seed often requires cold weather stratification, and if you don't sow seeds at the right time, you can scatter those seeds into oblivion. A good alternative is to purchase already growing plants, but finding them at the big box stores is not often easy.

Enter native plant nurseries. Our spring issue featured a profile of **Root Down Wisconsin**. A fledgling native plant nursery started two years ago by Andy Plamann, in Wauwatosa.



Andy and his family have put a world of hard work into starting native plants from seed, and offering them for sale to the public.

I attended their second annual sale on June 6, and was not disappointed. I found several plants that I truly wanted to add to my garden. I've planted them in and they are all doing really well. And the best thing is, they'll come back even stronger next year!

I was thoroughly impressed with the variety, the health of the plants, and the way they were marked and organized. It's so gratifying to support a local business, too!

I'm definitely planning on adding more of them to my garden in the future.



A peek at the winter jug sowing process.



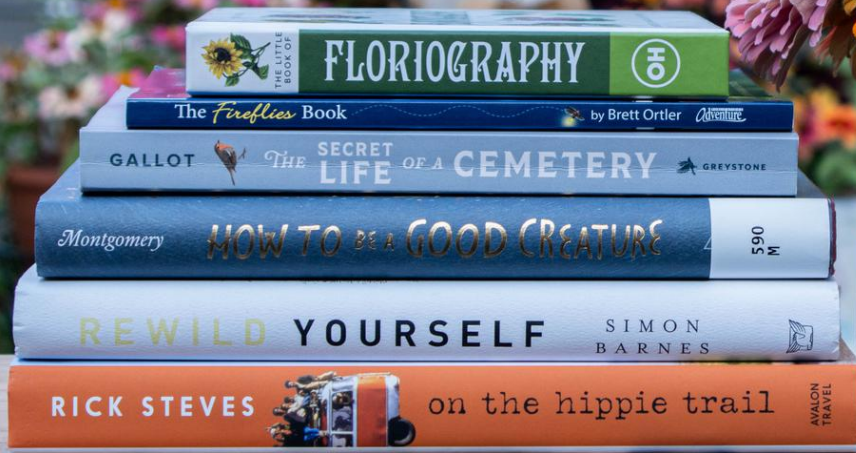
Tagged and ready to be planted.



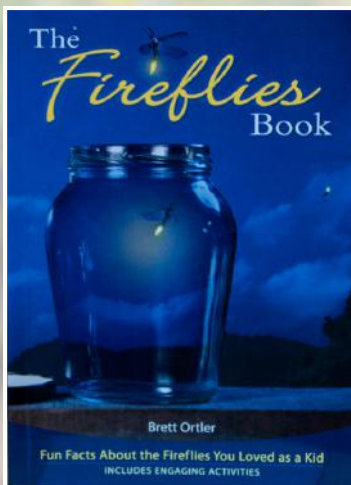
Andy was planning a few pop-up sales during the summer months, and still offers plants for sale/pick-up on the website.

They have a selection of seeds for sale, too. Checkout both the [website](#) and Facebook page for updates.

SUMMER AND BOOKS ARE A PERFECT MIX



Don't let summer fade away without taking some time to relax with a good book. This selection of six titles encompasses the magic of fireflies, blooms and their meanings, connecting with the wilds of nature in your own backyard, a tour of a Parisian cemetery, and the youthful tales and adventures of a worldly travel writer.



The Fireflies Book

by: Brett Ortler

Published by: Adventure Publications, 2014

If you love the magic of seeing fireflies light up the yard and garden in summertime, you'll appreciate *The Fireflies Book*. It's filled with a wealth of information and fun facts about fireflies. From identifying different firefly species and flashing patterns, to how, and why they glow.

This family-friendly guide includes projects and activities you can engage in together, along with information on how to keep them glowing in our habitats for generations to come.

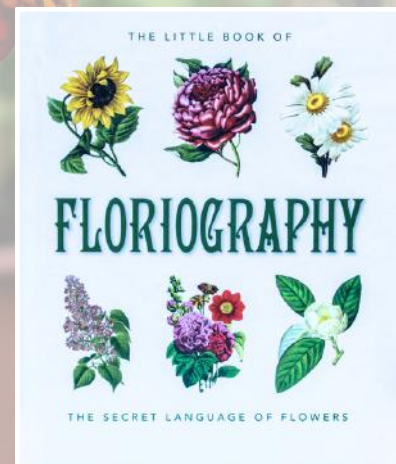
The Little Book of Floriography

Compiled and written by: Chloe Rodes

Published by: Orange Hippo!, 2023

If you're a gardener, a lover of flowers, or know someone who is, this mini guide to *The Secret Language Of Flowers*, is a fun treasure to add to your gardening library.

This pocket-size hardcover book will entertain you with the rich history, symbolism, and cultural significance of some of your favorite blooms. Includes illustrations, meanings, and origins of each flower.





How To Be A Good Creature

A Memoir In Thirteen Animals

by: Sy Montgomery

Illustrated by: Rebecca Green

Published by: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018

If you've ever truly connected with any living creature of the animal kingdom, you know how deeply these relationships affect us. Understanding the world of creatures like dogs, horses, emus, pigs, and more, is a part of Sy Montgomery's journey as a writer, journalist, and environmentalist. Here she details the more personal side of her experiences. Honest, heartbreaking, and inspiring.

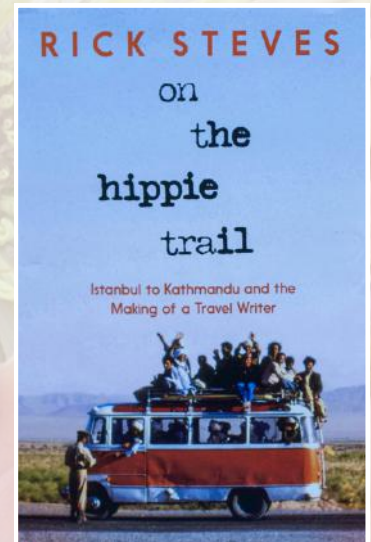
On The Hippie Trail

by: Rick Steves

Published by: Avalon Travel, 2025

Rick Steves is a long-respected world traveler and travel guide writer. His knowledge comes by way of experience. And lots of it. In this book, Rick Steves shares a travel journal from his youth. In 1978, at 23 years old, a piano teacher by trade, he began a trip from Istanbul to Kathmandu. Journal in hand, he set off for adventure, and eventually became one of the most well-known travel writers and television travel show hosts.

At the end of the trip he packed the journal away for decades. During the pandemic in 2020, he dug it out, started reading through it, and decided to turn it into his next book. It's a travel journal and a time capsule in one.



The Secret Life Of A Cemetery

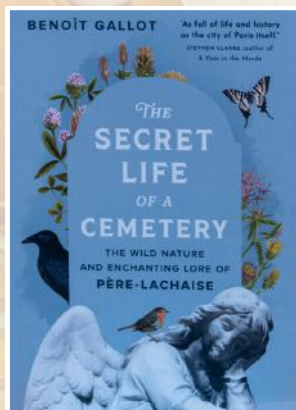
The Wild Nature and Enchanting Lore of Pere-Lachaise

by: Benoit Gallot

Published by: Greystone Books, 2026

Birdwatchers know that cemeteries can be birdwatching hotspots. Turns out they are hosts to plenty of other wildlife as well.

Imagine being the caretaker of one of the most famous cemeteries in Paris. One where they are returning the surrounding habitat back to nature. Native plants, trees, birds, and wild foxes roam the same spaces tourists and mourners do. History, nature, art, pop culture, and Paris. Fascinating!



Rewild Yourself

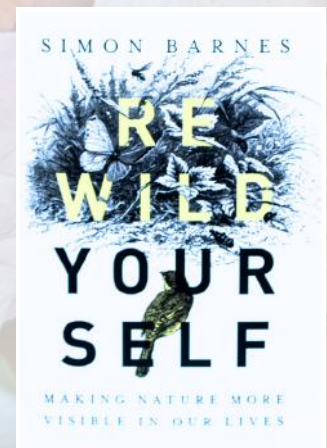
Making Nature More Visible In our Lives

by: Simon Barnes

Published by: Pegasus Books Ltd., 2019

There's a backyard naturalist in all of us. It just takes a fresh way of noticing to set it free. Simon Barnes has provided a how-to-guide of sorts, to help us to see better the natural world around us. He calls it magic. I don't disagree.

In 23 short chapters, he'll show you how to recapture the magic and awaken your senses to the wilderness we already live in.





All That Trees Provide

An Exploration of Art & Nature

The second annual Community-Curated Trail Spur Exhibition opened on Saturday, August 15 at the Forest Exploration Center in Wauwatosa. Artists Mary Patscot Rocha and Patrick Zettel joined with visitors for a meet and greet to celebrate the exhibition. Mary Patscot Rocha's painted works are featured, along with Patrick Zettel's artful photography. Both celebrate, in their own way, the value that trees and forests add to our everyday lives. The exhibit will be on display into the fall, and is free to the public.

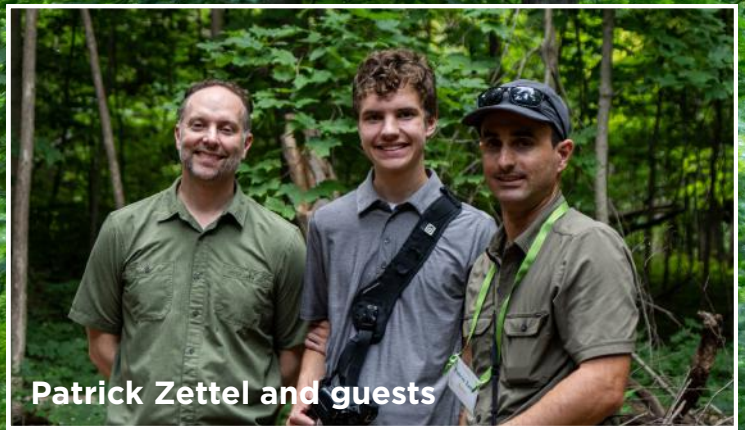
Location: 1800 Forest Exploration Drive, Wauwatosa

Dogs welcome, on-leash only

Hours: Open Daily, Dawn to Dusk



Mary Patscot Rocha and guests



Patrick Zettel and guests



Art by: Mary Patscot Rocha



Art by: Patrick Zettel





BIRDING LOCAL

22 LOCATIONS TO ADD TO YOUR FALL MIGRATION LIST

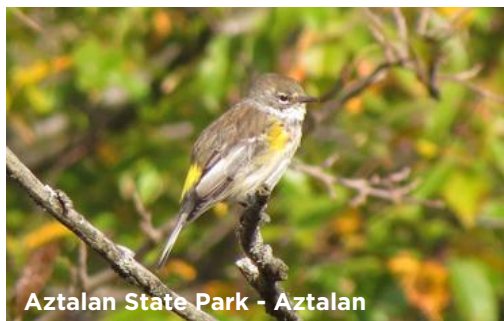
I've been birding local for at least 15 years now. In that time I've come to know tried and trusted nearby spots for some "after-work" birding, And spots a bit further from the Milwaukee area worth a longer drive. Birding is always a welcome respite from the hustle of daily life. It teaches you to slow down. To listen. To breathe. To appreciate, and be amazed.

Someone recently asked for some ideas on where to go. With fall migration on the horizon, it seemed like a good time to put together a list to share.





Wadewitz Nature Camp -
Village of Rochester



Aztalan State Park - Aztalan



Sauk Creek Nature Preserve -
Port Washington



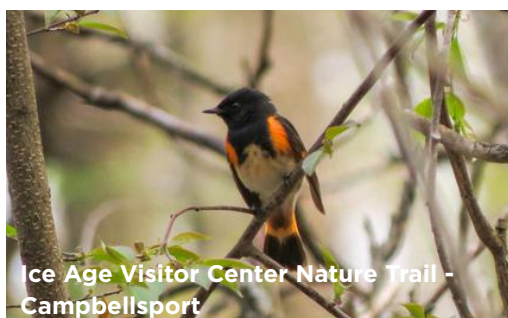
Pheasant Branch Conservancy -
Middleton



Badertscher Preserve + Muskego



Van Der Brohe Arboretum -
Two Rivers



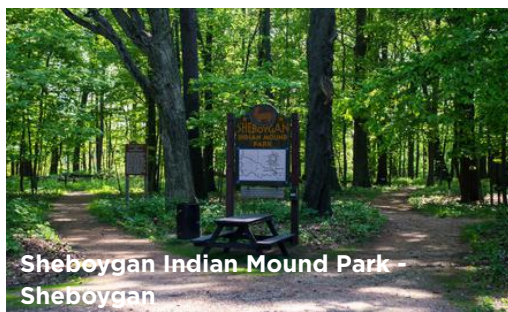
Ice Age Visitor Center Nature Trail -
Campbellsport



Forest Beach Migratory Preserve -
Port Washington



Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy -
Williams Bay



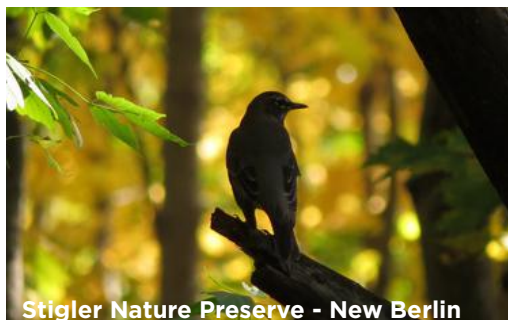
Sheboygan Indian Mound Park -
Sheboygan



Cudahy Woods State Natural Area -
Cudahy



Havenwoods State Forest - Milwaukee



Stigler Nature Preserve - New Berlin



Washington Park - Milwaukee



The Ridges Sanctuary - Baileys Harbor



Scuppernong Springs Nature Trail -
Eagle



Ledge County Park - Horicon



Schmeekle Reserve - Stevens Point



Summer doesn't truly end until September 22nd, with the advent of the autumn equinox. It's one of those transitional times of the year where almost anything goes. Heatwave, cold spell. Who am I kidding, that's Wisconsin every month of the year these days. Be that as it may, September is a great month to get outside and savor summer's farewell, and the onset of fall.

It's a great time to take a quick road trip, too. Crowds are smaller, traffic less congested. Flowers are still blooming, but the leaves are starting to shift. If the heart of summer was a whirlwind, August and September are the calm after the storm. Whether it's a long weekend, or a day trip, these are days to hold onto.

Marinette County



Journey to Marinette County for a wealth of waterfalls, lakes, hiking, fishing, scenic overlooks, amazing autumn color and more. Shown above: Strong Falls, Goodman Park, Dave's Falls, and backroads lined in fall color.

Door County



When it comes to Door County, there's so much natural beauty to choose from, you can't really make a bad choice. Here are just a few of nature's best in *The Door*: Potawatomi State Park, Cave Point County Park, Peninsula State Park, and The Hardy Gallery.

Wisconsin Dells



The Dells, as it is often called, is a family-friendly vacation spot year-round, but especially in summer. Come cooler days, though, it's natural beauty beckons. Above: Devil's Lake State Park, Natural Bridge State Park, and Baxter's Hollow State Natural Area.

Stevens Point



Stevens Point is the home of UW-Stevens Point, well known for its Natural Resources and Conservation educational programs. There are plenty of natural resources to enjoy as well. Shown here: Green Circle Trail, Stevens Point Sculpture Park, Schmeekle Reserve.

A Niagara Escarpment Tour



The *Niagara Escarpment* travels over 230 miles northeast through Wisconsin. These gorgeous rock formations are highlighted in several parks and along nature trails from the southern Kettle Moraine Forest to Door County.

Shown here: Oakfield Ledge State Natural Area, and Ledge County Park.

Washington County



Less than an hour from Milwaukee, Washington County offers a scenic drive, and plenty of parks and trails to explore.

Shown here: Lizard Mound State Park, Ridge Run County Park, and Quaas Creek Park.

An Apple A Day...

Late summer and autumn harvest season in Wisconsin includes apples. Lots of apples. So many varieties arriving on the scene as the days and weeks go on. Jersey Mac, Zestar, Ginger Gold, McIntosh, Honeycrisp, and so many more. I recently picked up some fresh Jersey Mac apples from Patterson's Orchard and Farm Market in New Berlin. So tasty!

Whether you prefer to make an event of it and visit an orchard to pick your own apples, or buy them from a local grower or farmstand, there's sure to be one near you. Check out the [Wisconsin Apple Growers Association](#) for a list of orchards throughout the state. Here's a short list of growers in Southeastern Wisconsin.



Ela Orchard - Rochester



Old Homestead Orchard - Franksville



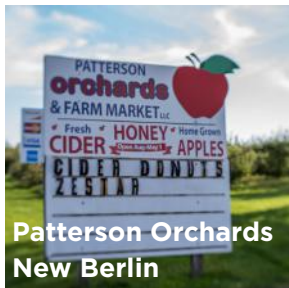
Basse's Taste of Country - Colgate



Eugsters Farm Market - Stoughton



Gierach Orchards - Mequon



Patterson Orchards New Berlin



Elegant Farmer Mukwonago



Weston's Antique Apple Orchard New Berlin



Apple picking fun!

Tasty Apple Treats





BOLD & BEAUTIFUL

It's hard to resist the bold, cheerful charm of a sunflower in bloom. In recent years, sunflower farms and fields have become a late-summer, early autumn destination for the masses. People thrill to wander up and down the golden paths, taking family photos, selfies, and close-ups of the blooms as rows and rows of them rise up against a bright blue summer sky.

Sunflower season can vary farm to farm, but, no matter where you live in Wisconsin, there's bound to be a sunflower farm near you. I've assembled a list of locations in Southeastern Wisconsin, and within a couple hours drive as well. The list changes a bit year to year, but there are always plenty of offerings.

BASSE'S TASTE OF COUNTRY

August 29-30, Sept. 4-7, 11-13

Apple & Sunflower Fest

3190 County Line Q,

Colgate, WI

LANNON SUNFLOWER FARM

September Sunflowers Blooming

U-Pick Sunflowers and More

W204 N8525 Lannon Rd.,

Menomonee Falls, WI

GIERACH ORCHARDS

See Facebook for updates

Pick Your Own Sunflowers

9616 W. Bonniwell Road,

Megun, WI

KOHLER FLORA FIELDS

Sept. 4 - Nov. 1, Fri-Sun

1271 Highland Drive

Kohler, WI



THOMPSON FARM

Mid-August - September 7

7825 144th Avenue

Bristol, WI



BUSY BARNS ADVENTURE FARM

Visit Website for Dates

Sunflower Days At The Farm

W7675 US Hwy 12,

Fort Atkinson, WI

OLD HOMESTEAD ORCHARD

Sept., see Facebook for updates

Sunflower Fest

7814 Raynor Avenue,

Franksville, WI

CENTRAL WISCONSIN GREEN BAY AREA

HELENE'S HILLTOP ORCHARD

September 5-27

Sunflower Experience

N1189 Quarter Road,

Merrill, WI

PUMPKIN HOLLOW

Pumpkin Hollow Facebook Page

230222 Marathon County H.,

Edgar, WI





What I Did On My Summer Vacation

Time and time again I learn the same lesson. As much as I desire to adventure to new parks and preserves, to experience new forests and trails, it is the ones close to home that sustain me. As life takes unexpected turns, I once again needed to remain close to home over the summer. Two members of my family had extreme medical events late this spring. Thankfully, we were able to get each of them to the hospital in time, and both are well on the road to recovery. I am shook, but I am also beyond grateful to have been so lucky.



So, while I had lists of places to explore this summer, I made the decision, partly out of necessity, partly for my own health, to remain close to home. While navigating a full calendar of medical appointments, etc., I was able to just dig in (pun intended) to our backyard garden. After all, there was plenty of work to be done (and plenty more to do).

Having recently recovered from shoulder surgery, I can say that I'm pleased with the amount of work I've been able to do. It's encouraging to look out at a little less chaos. Flowers are blooming, new native plants are installed and thriving, the pollinators are plentiful, butterflies regular visitors, and more. It's a habitat well suited to wildlife, and our own little sanctuary in the city.

Spending time at some of my favorite local parks as well gave me a chance to step out of my bubble, to appreciate the nature at hand. A walk through the woods at Kinsey Park, or around the lagoon at Greenfield Park helped to calm my nerves.

Wandering the walking path at Jacobus Park, the trails at Forest Exploration Center, or checking out what's happening on the Root River Parkway, allowed me to do a little birding, and get out my camera for some photo walk fun, too.



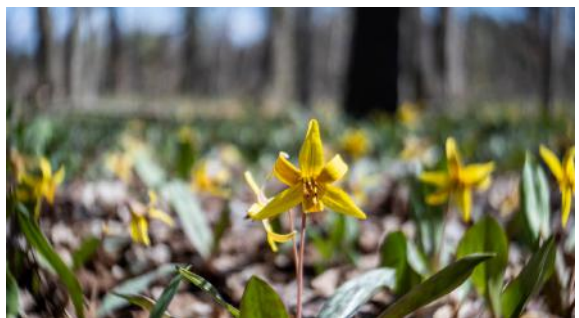
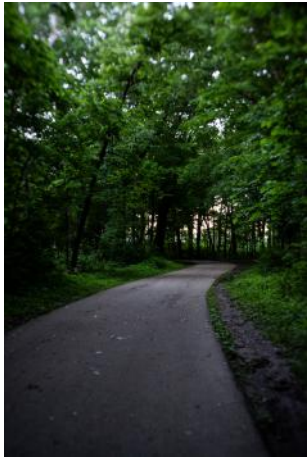
A Palm Warbler spotted at Kinsey Park.

← Jul 31 • West Allis, Wisconsin, US		
0:00		
	Blue Jay	🔍
	American Robin	🔍
	Northern Cardinal	🔍
	Northern Flicker	🔍
	Northern House Wren	🔍
	American Goldfinch	🔍
	Song Sparrow	🔍
	House Finch	🔍



Patterns circle the trees in a freshly mown picnic area at Greenfield Park in West Allis.

Our local parks offer plenty of scenic views, wildflowers, walking space, and wildlife. Birds, deer, red squirrels, baby ducks, nesting woodpeckers, and more. Walk the trails, find a bench, have a seat, take a moment to breathe. Nature is here for you.





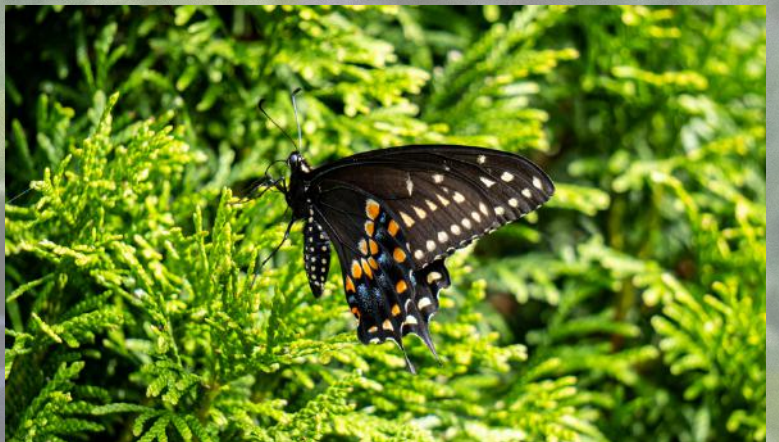
Spending more of my free time working on the garden included taking on new tasks like early seed starting. I've much to learn, but I did have some successes. A garden evolves over time. Most of us don't have the funds, the energy, or the time to make big changes all at once. And that's okay. What I think might be perfect today, may not seem so in a new gardening season. So, bit by bit. Seed by seed.

This year I added several native plants purchased from [Root Down Wisconsin](#), and direct sowed lots of zinnias, cosmos, and dahlias for the pollinators, and sharing bouquets. I also shared the yard with several wild visitors including: a red fox, grasshoppers, hummingbirds, butterflies, dragonflies, katydids, robins, chipmunks, and juvenile crows, just to name a few! Borne of challenging times, the moments I spent in the garden are now days to hold onto.





*A garden is as unique
as the gardener who tends it.*



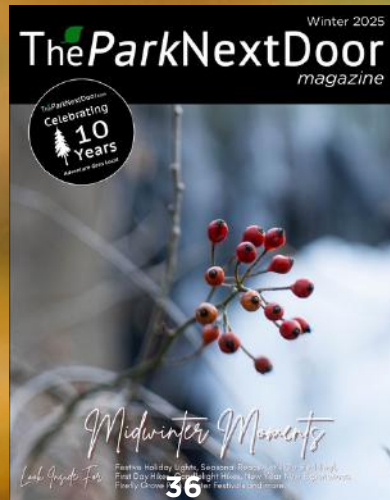
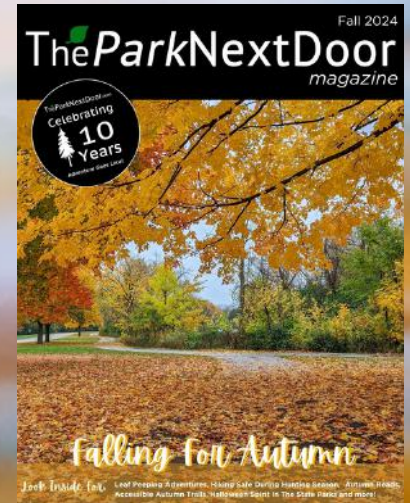
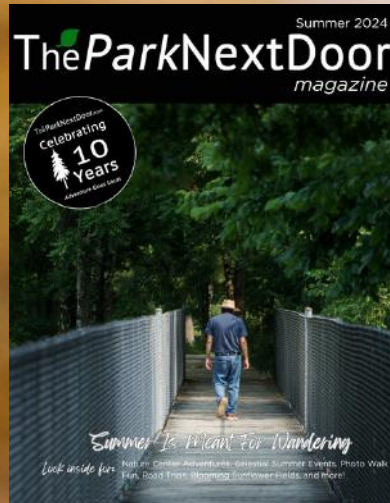


Exploring the local parks, state parks, nature areas,
and other bits of wilderness in Wisconsin.

All Back Issues Available Online

TheParkNextDoor

magazine



ART FOR YOUR WALLS FROM THE PARK NEXT DOOR

If you're a Wisconsin nature fan, you can decorate your walls, phone case, home decor, or stationery with images from the parks, nature preserves, and trails of Wisconsin featured on The Park Next Door.

Fine Art America is the world's largest art marketplace and print-on-demand technology company.

They have been helping artists sell wall art, home decor, apparel, and other products since 2006, and are home to hundreds of thousands of artists, photographers, graphic designers, illustrators, and iconic brands.



Want to support local artists in your area? They have a search feature to do just that! You can visit my online shop to see the current offering of images and custom products.

You can find my shop at: <https://1-kimberly-mackowski.pixels.com/>

Simple Ways To Support The Park Next Door And It's Purpose

Sign up for the website newsletter. I generally send out one email per month. Occasionally, if there is something special to share, I may send another, or send it a little earlier than usual if content warrants it. I know how overwhelming a full inbox can be. [Sign up here.](#)

Feel free to **forward/share** the monthly emails with like-minded friends and nature enthusiasts. And remember, if you do subscribe, to open the emails. If they don't show as open, eventually the service suspends the email address.

Share your discoveries. If you've visited a local park or preserve that isn't yet on the website, let me know. I'd love the opportunity to check it out, and share it, too.

Share a favorite feature, blog, or location listing. If a specific feature page, blog, or location tickles your fancy, please share it with friends, or on your social media feed. Every little bit of exposure helps.

Follow The Park Next Door on Instagram for updates on everyday explorations and happenings. [@theparknextdoor](#)



Thank You for your support,
and for your love of our parks and preserves.

