

SUMMER DISCOVERY WALK

Take a walk this summer!

Spending time in nature has been shown to improve both physical and mental well-being. Summer is



an ideal time to enjoy these benefits with the warmer weather bringing vivid and vibrant growth around us, full tree canopies above us and a burst of wildlife activity. Whether it is in a forest, park or conservation area, or just a small green space in your neighborhood, get outdoors to appreciate the interconnectedness of nature and the critical role that trees and green spaces play in maintaining healthy environments for all living creatures.

“Summer has a flavor like no other: always fresh and simmered in sunshine.” - Oprah Winfrey

Before you go out.

Consider bringing a camera or smartphone and or a notebook and pencil to record your observations

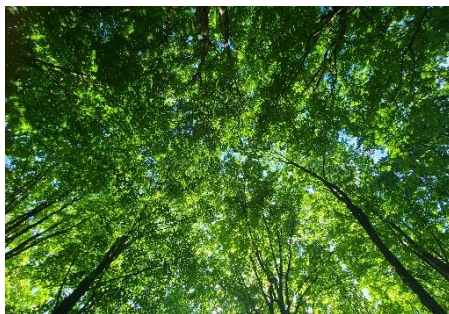


along the way and any ideas or questions you might want to follow up on. Dress for comfort, safety, and the weather. Bring along some water (preferably in a reusable bottle) and a snack or two. Consider also investing in hiking boots and/or trekking/hiking poles if you plan to hike a challenging trail. And remember to protect yourself from the sun, and from ticks, when out in the woods or brushy areas.

“In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks.” – John Muir

As you walk, thank the trees around you.

Summertime is the perfect time to thank the trees around us for the many benefits they provide. Trees



help sustain life by absorbing carbon dioxide from the environment releasing oxygen in exchange, the very same oxygen we need to breathe! Trees also have summertime-specific benefits. In the hot summer heat, trees act as “nature’s air conditioning” helping to cool the environment around them. Leaves block the direct sunlight, providing us with shade, and, through a scientific process

called “transpiration”, release very small water droplets into the air that lowers the surrounding temperature. In urban spaces, even a single tree can be helpful, cooling down the air by 1-2°C at ground level! Trees also help prevent soil erosion and flooding by retaining water in their roots when the rain pours down during summer thunderstorms.

“A sweet breeze and a patch of shade are the loveliest gifts on hot summer days.” - Angie Weiland-Crosby

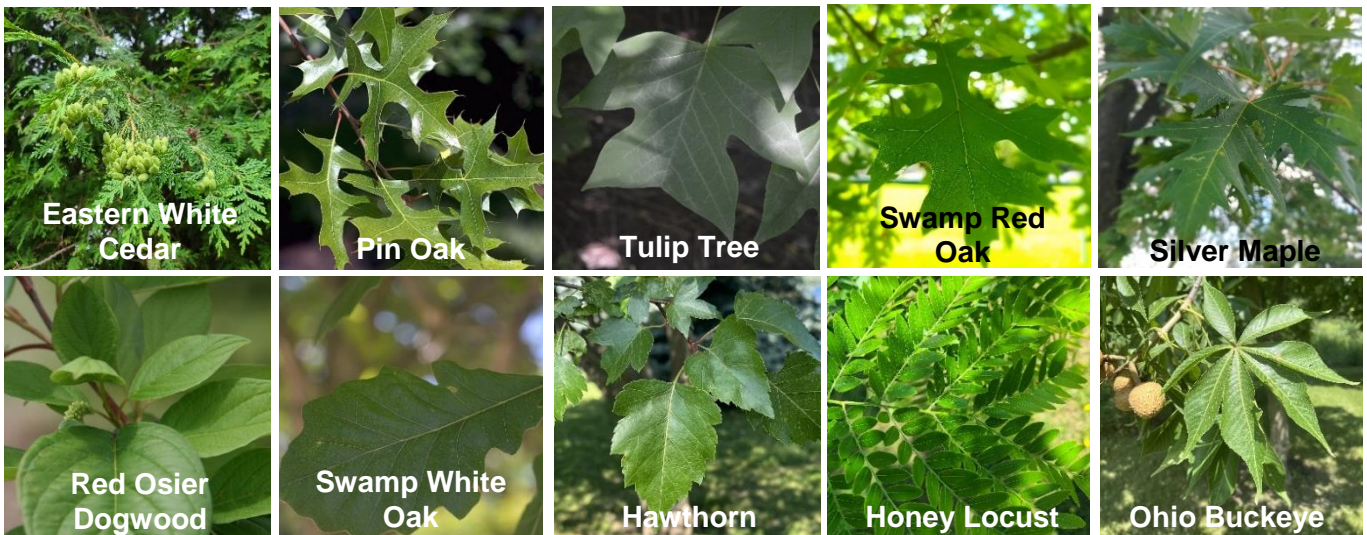
Walk quietly in the forest and you may even see a deer.

Trees also play a crucial role in the growth and survival of wildlife, especially in the summertime when they are flourishing. Trees provide food and shelter and, just like humans, wildlife need clean drinking water, especially important in the summer. Trees help provide this by filtering out harmful chemicals from water via their root systems. The health of certain aquatic species also depends on this process to have clean water to live in. Check out this [interesting study](#) from MIT about the potential use of trees as a low-cost solution for filtering water! Then there are the pollinators, many of which are most active during the summer months. Trees provide them with food and a place to rest, and in return, they help those plants that depend on pollination to reproduce to grow and flourish!



“Deep down at the molecular heart of life, the trees and we are essentially identical.” – Carl Sagan

See if you can spot these trees by their leaves this summer!



Listen for the crickets.

Did you know you can get an approximation of the temperature (°C) on a hot day if you can hear crickets? To do so, count the number of chirps in 25 seconds, divide by 3 then add 4. Another interesting thing...when you hear crickets in a field notice the consistent interval between chirps. Chances are you are hearing many crickets all chirping in synchronization, a phenomenon not just reserved to crickets! Listen to an audience at your next concert. People may not all start to clap at the same time, but subconsciously they will eventually conform to the same rhythm.



“The rhythms of nature – the sounds of wind and water, the sounds of birds and insects – must inevitably find their analogues in music.” – George Crumb

Take in the beauty of the summer blooms.

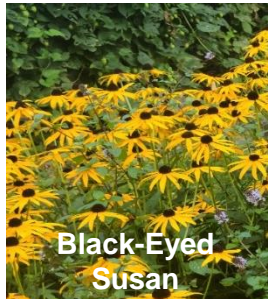


Whether it's a garden perennial, a wildflower, or a shrub or tree that flowers in the summer, summertime is awash with vibrant colours! More importantly, it is also awash with the nourishment pollinators such as bees, butterflies, hoverflies and hummingbirds need to survive, by way of the nectar within the blooms, blooms that even offer a resting place sometimes! And, did you know that the most likely colours to attract bees are purple, violet and blue? And...several

studies have found that some flowers sweeten their nectar when they sense a pollinator approaching!

*"I can feel a sunshine stealing into my soul and making it all summer, and every thorn, a rose."
- Emily Dickinson*

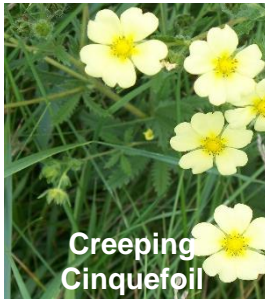
See if you can spot these wildflowers and flowering shrubs on your walks this summer!



**Black-Eyed
Susan**



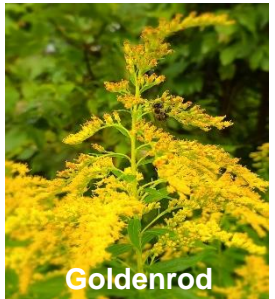
**Purple-Flowering
Raspberry**



**Creeping
Cinquefoil**



Wild Strawberry



Goldenrod

Be an environmental steward.



As you walk, observe the nature around you. Are familiar plants or trees, or animal populations behaving differently, or are there obvious signs of sickness or disease? Are you seeing a new species, or do you suspect an invasive species? Is a stream higher or lower than expected, or dried up? Does it seem that a riverbank is more eroded than before? Taking photographs and journaling your observations over time, and keeping up to date

with news about changes in weather patterns or extreme weather events can help you gauge if what you are seeing is a real "change". Also, even if you are not sure, reporting your observations can be useful to local governments, organizations and scientists involved in environmental protection. Check out the ways to report issues you see or concerns you have, whether it's to your municipality, a dedicated hotline or via a smartphone app such as those available from [iNaturalist](#) or [EDDMapS](#).

*"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."
- Jane Goodall*

Wishing you a Happy Summer from the ACER team!

For additional ACER Discovery Walks, please visit our [Exploring the Outdoors](#) Resource Collection!