



2014 Launching Series-Manville Kettle

At the intersection of School St. and Judson Ave., Woodbury

Planted by Two Adventuring Ladies

Hike time: 30 minutes

Hike length: Less than a mile

Introduction:

Note: This is one of the eight Launching Series letterboxes originally posted only on the Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust website when created by The Two Adventuring Ladies in the summer of 2014. It was brought to Flanders' attention that a letterboxer had posted "add-ons" to the Launching Series on both Atlas Quest and Letterboxing North America. Many of these add-ons begin by using wording identical to the Flanders Launching Series hikes. Because the posted letterboxes used the same titles as those on the Flanders website, the Two Adventuring Ladies have posted all the Flanders Launching Series hikes with new titles. All Flanders hikes will have clue sheets with the Flanders Logo and include a checklist for young hikers. We hope this helps avoid confusion. Flanders is thrilled that the trails are being discovered by so many letterboxers!

The 2014 Launching Series is a set of eight letterboxing trails created to spread the word about the family friendly properties with trails at Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust. The clues for this letterbox are written so that first time letterboxers will be successful and this positive experience will leave them eager to hike more trails and find more letterboxes. Since we expect families to be hiking with children, we have added a few questions and comments to keep everyone engaged. One of the letterboxes on each trail will contain a rubber stamp for a letter: F, L, A, N, D, E, R or S.

Additional letterboxing hikes are planned for the properties at Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust.

Flanders has created a passport to use when hiking the trails planted by the Two Adventuring Ladies. Anyone who hikes twelve of Flanders' letterboxing trails should go to the Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust office, present their passport with the twelve letter stamps from those trails and sign their Trail Name on our poster of Successful Flanders Letterboxers. They will receive a prize. The office is open Monday-Friday from 9 until 4.

The Flanders Passport and all the trails with hidden letter stamps can be downloaded at:

<http://www.flandersnaturecenter.org/letterboxing.html>

Dogs are allowed on the trails but must be leashed.

You may not see all the plants and animals that we mention. You will see many things that the Two Adventuring Ladies have not mentioned. The observations for the 2014 Launching Series were made in the summer.

We wish you good luck on your hunt.

Clues:

You will explore the habitat surrounding a glacial kettle. This kettle is a depression, now filled with water that was formed by the melting of a mass of ice detached from a glacier. This unique geological formation is preserved as part of Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust.

Wear long pants and tall socks. There is poison ivy. Mowing has helped to control it, but does not eliminate it.

Park on the grass near the Flanders Nature Center/Manville Kettle sign. (Corner of School Street and Judson Ave.)

Walk to the left of the sign and the cluster of trees behind it. Turn so that your back is to School St. Walk downhill into the field ahead of you. Keep the tree line to your left. You will be walking parallel to Judson Ave.

Notice the clusters of tall grass in the field. Each stem seems segmented – bluish or green segments alternating with reddish or tan ones. It is called Little Blue Stem and will turn a lovely bronze color in the fall. As you continue along the kettle, watch for deer prints in the soft ground.

Look up the hill and across Judson Ave. You will see a gray house. When you are opposite that house's front door, go slowly. Before you get to a stack of cut logs, the line of trees beside the kettle juts to your left. STOP. Be Careful.

On your left, where the line of trees begins to jut to the left, notice, but don't touch, the dead tree that has a hairy vine winding up the trunk. This vine is *Toxicodendron radicans*, better known as poison ivy. A chemical agent in the plant called urushiol can cause a skin irritation: itching, redness, and a rash.

Poison ivy climbs, creeps, grows as a vine, and as a small bush. The vines can be covered with coarse hair but are sometimes smooth. Poison ivy has three leaflets that are a shiny green on top and a lighter green on the underside. But don't be fooled. The leaves turn a bright red in the fall and the leaflets can be small or up to 4 inches wide. The edges, called margins, of the leaves can be toothed, lobed or entire (no indentations along edges.) Leaves can vary in shape, but are most often egg shaped. Plants can grow in open fields, in woodlands, in meadows, at the beach in sandy soil, and near wetlands. Because it can thrive in a variety of conditions, it is helpful to remember:

Leaves of three; let it be!

Poison ivy has small flowers and the fruit grows in clumps. The grayish-white berries stay on the vine through the winter and are a source of food for several bird species, especially woodpeckers. Berries and foliage are eaten by black bears, deer and rabbits.

Now, avoiding any contact with the poison ivy vine, turn to your left and approach the kettle's shore. In the corner, where the tree line turns back to your right, you will see a tree that has shiny, leathery leaves on branches that stretch downward. Its shiny somewhat elliptical leaves have smooth margins and a tiny point at the end. This is a sour gum or black gum tree - a species that can live to be over 600 years old. This is a relatively young tree. Its trunk is about 3 inches in diameter. The ancient sour gum trees can have trunks with 3 to 4 foot

diameters and be 80 feet tall. Its fruits are relished by black bears, foxes, wood ducks, robins, woodpeckers, wild turkeys and pheasants. Deer and beavers browse on the twigs and foliage.

Turn up the hill, toward the grey house on Judson Ave. As you get near the top of the hill, notice the Common Milkweed – *Asclepias syriaca*. When mature, the plants are 2 to 3 feet tall. The pale green leaves are darker on the top than on the bottom. Their pinkish flower clusters will be replaced by grey-green, warty seed pods. When the pods open, the seeds float through the air like hundreds of tiny parachutes. You will recognize the pods because they are often used in crafts. **This is an important plant.** Milkweed is home to the Monarch Butterfly larva or caterpillar. The eggs are laid on the underside of the leaves. The caterpillar eats the milkweed and is protected by it. Milkweed contains an alkaloid that is distasteful to the predators that would like to eat the caterpillar. The Monarch Butterflies migrate from as far south as Mexico. They need the milkweed when they migrate here for the summer.

Walk in the field beside Judson Ave, heading back toward your car. At the junction of Judson Ave. and School St., (between the Flanders Nature Center sign and Judson Ave.) you will come to a rain garden created by the 2013 Woodbury 7th grade and volunteers from the Earth Tones Native Plant Nursery. The Town of Woodbury, Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition and Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust contributed to the effort. The rain garden slows the water as it runs off the road, allowing it to sink into the ground instead of rushing into the kettle. Within the rain garden, you may see cardinal flowers, monkey flowers and black-eyed susan.

Rain gardens are an effective way for homeowners to prevent erosion and also to reduce pollution in rivers and streams. The Environmental Protection Agency cites run-off from driveways, roofs, roads, and parking lots as a major source of pollution to our nation's waterways. More information on rain gardens can be found at: <http://nemo.uconn.edu/raingardens/index.htm>

Pass the garden and turn down School Street. You will pass a yellow house and a split rail fence. Please be respectful of this private property. After the split rail fence and the fire hydrant, before the next house on the right, turn into the field on your right onto a mowed path. You are on Flanders property again. As you walk through the field, keep the fence on your right. When the fence makes a sharp right turn, you should turn and continue to follow the fence. When the fence ends, turn left. Follow the shore of the kettle – Woodbury's glacial depression. As you approach the shore, watch and listen for ducks. Notice the Buttonbush, an aquatic shrub that is filling most of this end of the kettle. Its flower clusters form little balls or buttons. You may see more deer prints here. Pause for a good look at the kettle.

Turn around and head back toward School St. On your way, look for Butterfly Weed – *Asclepias tuberosa* - a member of the Milkweed family and another host of the Monarch Butterfly. This is shorter than the Common Milkweed. Its flowers are a brilliant orange. Its leaves are slightly more slender than the leaves of the Common Milkweed, but they have the same pale underside. If you are lucky enough to see a monarch caterpillar, do not disturb it. Also, remember that you should not pick flowers when you are on Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust property.

You will again be walking through clusters of Little Blue Stem and Common Milkweed.

When you are back on the road, turn left and pass the yellow house. After the house, there will be brush and trees on your left. At the end of this group of trees, when the field begins again, immediately turn left and head down to the kettle once more. When you get near the kettle, turn left. Ahead of you there is path with a boardwalk. Follow this path. Look for more deer prints. Walk 5 or 6 feet along this path. You may find a Burning bush –*Euonymus atropurpureus* or Winged Euonymus. Look at the branches with their winged edges and you will understand that last name. In the late summer and fall, these bushes turn a spectacular red. For that reason they have often been used in gardens. **However, Burning bush is an invasive plant that destroys the habitat for native species. It should not be planted.** It spreads rapidly and the roots of the Burning bush form such a thick underground mat that other plants are unable to grow. This area used to be covered with Burning bush. Volunteers have worked extensively to remove it.

Face the kettle, turn to your right and walk along the edge of the field near the shore. You will see more Button bush growing in the water. You will pass a pile of brush and a small pile of cut logs. Slow down and look carefully. You will pass a white pine – that evergreen whose long needles are in clusters of five. On your left, after passing the white pine, near the shore, you will see a large tree that has broken. One end of the fallen tree has fallen to the ground. The other end is still attached to the tree trunk. On the ground near it, you will see logs that were cut from that broken tree. Walk a bit closer to the shore with a few cut logs on both sides of you. **DO NOT ACTUALLY APPROACH THE FALLEN TREE. DO NOT MOVE ANY LOGS.** Look behind some of those logs on the ground and under some bark. You will find the letterbox. This box contains a letter stamp, so be sure to stamp your passport as well as your logbook and our logbook. Carefully replace everything just as you found it.

Climb up the hill and return to your car.



CHECK LIST FOR THE MANVILLE KETTLE

Did you see or hear:

Little Bluestem _____

Deer prints _____

Sour or black gum tree _____

Common milkweed _____

A rain garden _____

Burning bush _____

Butterfly weed _____

A duck _____

Buttonbush _____