



## 2014 Launching Series-Van Vleck Farm and Nature Sanctuary

48 Church Hill Rd., Woodbury CT

Planted 2014 / Revised 2024

Hike time: 1 hour

Hike length: 1 mile

### Introduction:

A map of Van Vleck Farm and Nature Sanctuary and its location can be downloaded at:

[Van Vleck Map](#)

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.

Flanders has created a passport to use when hiking the trails. 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. 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://flandersnaturercenter.org/letterboxing/>

Dogs are allowed on the trails but must be leashed.

You may not see all the plants and animals that we mention. The observations for the 2014 Launching Series were made in the spring and summer.

We wish you good luck on your hunt.

## Clues:

Park at the Sugar House parking lot on Church Hill Rd. Walk across the road, passing under an arbor made of cedar, grape vines and bittersweet vines.

If you need to get organized, have a seat on the bench. Did you leave anything you need in the car? Bug spray? Your stamp? Your passport? A map of the trail?

Walk straight ahead. There will be a tree with blue and white trail blazes in front of you. As you pass the tree, the red Trail House will be on your left.. Spot the blue wooden trail arrow and enter the Edmund L Briggs trail. Ed Briggs was a devoted naturalist and essential to the development of Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust.

Continue following the blue blazes until you spot a viewing platform on your right. Being careful not to step in the poison ivy, climb the stairs and take the time to look out at the marsh. Do you see a beaver lodge? Did you actually see a beaver?

Continue along the trail until you come to a post with a map and a bench in memory of Raymond B. Packard. Look at the map and you can see where you are. You will be walking in a loop and will come back to this spot. Turn left at this post and continue several feet until the blue trail splits. Take the trail downhill and slightly to your left. As you walk, you will begin to go up a little hill. Look for a wide unmarked trail on the left. Follow this toward the marsh and you will find a bird blind. As you enter the bird blind, watch out for wasps. From here you can watch the animals on the marsh. What do you see? It could be a turtle. It could be a Mallard duck or it could be a heron. Did you hear a frog? Look at the huge Cinnamon Ferns (**Osmunda cinnamomea**) in front of the bird blind.

You will find a letterbox on one of the benches in the bird blind. Open it and use your stamp to mark our log, write your trail name and the date. Now use our stamp to mark your log book. This is not a letter stamp so it does not have a special spot in your passport. Write the date near the imprint.

Did you remember to put everything back? When the letterbox is hidden, continue on your way. Be careful to stay on the boardwalk. Those boards were put there to keep your feet dry and TO PROTECT THE FRAGILE ENVIRONMENT. When you rejoin the trail, turn to your left. Notice the power lines. The trail turns to the right under the power lines and then turns to the right again as you re-enter the woods.

You will be walking under large evergreen trees. A few small branches with needles attached may be on the ground. Pick one up and examine the needles. They are in clusters. Each cluster has 5 needles. W H I T E - five needles and 5 letters in the name. These trees are White pines.(Pinus **strobus**)

When you have completed the loop and have come back to the map on the post and the bench, turn left. You will walk along the edge of a field and pass the wilderness trail on your left. It has red trail markers. Stay on the blue trail. Continue, passing the geology trail (green) on the left. Stay to the right at the fork. Walk until you come to a birdhouse on a post. Now you need to find the yellow trail. Turn to your right and spot the yellow blazes on trees near the beginning of the woods. Enter the woods and pass two trees with the yellow blazes. You will go down a gentle slope and swing to your left by a tree with a yellow blaze on your left. You will pass a tree with a yellow blaze on your right.

The trail will take another swing to the left and begin to slope uphill. You will pass a dead ash tree with a yellow blaze on your left. This tree also has the number 78 on it. Shortly before the next yellow blaze (which will be on your right), you will see a tree with three large vertical trunks on your right. It had a fourth trunk but that trunk has fallen. There is a fifth smaller trunk on the back. Leave the trail and look between the trunks - you will find a letterbox.

Use your stamp in our logbook and our stamp on your passport and log book. Put everything back and continue on the yellow trail. Soon the yellow trail will end. You will turn right on the blue trail and return to the arbor.

At the corner of the woods, near the arbor, there is a young sassafras tree (**Sassafras albidum**) . If its leaves are out, look at them carefully. Each tree will have three types of leaves: A leaf with "three fingers"

A leaf that looks like a mitten with a thumb

A smooth egg shaped leaf

There is a very old story that a lady was learning to knit mittens. She was having a difficult time. First she knit a mitten with no thumb. Then she knit a mitten with three fingers. Then she knit a perfect mitten. She jumped for joy and threw all three "mittens" over her shoulder. From those mittens, the first sassafras tree was born.

Cross Church Hill Rd and return to your car.



## CHECKLIST FOR THE VAN VLECK FARM AND SANCTUARY

**Did you see or hear:**

An arbor made of cedar, grape vines and bittersweet vines

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Poison ivy

A beaver lodge

A beaver

A turtle

A heron

Cinnamon ferns

A frog

Power lines

A White pine

A Sassafras tree