



2015 Take a Hike Series-Fleming Preserve

Cowles Road, Woodbury

Planted 2015 / **Revised 2024**

Hike time: 30 minutes

Hike length: less than a mile

Introduction:

A map of Fleming Preserve and its location can be downloaded at:

http://www.flandersnaturecenter.org/flanders_places/hiking_trail_maps.html

The Take a Hike series is a set of four letterboxing trails created to continue to lure people to the family friendly properties with trails at Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust. Since we expect families to be hiking with children, we have added a checklist and included observations and information about what you might see as you hike in order to keep everyone engaged. One of the letterboxes on each trail will contain a rubber stamp for one of the letters: H, I, K or E

Flanders has also 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 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 we have not mentioned. The observations for the Take a Hike Series were made during the fall.

Clues:

Park near the Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust's kiosk in a field off Cowles Road in Woodbury.

This hike begins on the yellow trail. Look at the Fleming map and find the yellow trail. Begin with your back to the kiosk. Cross the parking field. Pass through the opening in the stone wall that is beside a tree with a yellow blaze. Head downhill on this "yellow" trail. When you reach a field, look for yellow blazes on a tree across the clearing. If the trail has been mowed it will be very easy to cross the field and find the yellow trail marked with the double blaze. If you are hiking during a season when there is no mowed path, just cross the field. You do not need to enter a wooded area and should not be crossing a stone wall to find the blazed tree.

It is at the edge of the field.

Two blazes (a double blaze) indicates a turn. The top blaze shows the direction of the turn.

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This means turn right.

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This means turn left.

When you find the blazed tree, you should turn right and follow the blazes to the bottom of the hill. At the bottom of the hill, the trail swings to the right crossing the end of the field. There will be a stone wall and a wooded area on your left.

You may notice some ***Polystichum acrostichoides*** or **Christmas ferns** on your left. How can you tell that these are Christmas ferns? Even in the winter, some of the fronds will remain green. The upper edge of each pinna on the Christmas fern has a distinctive "ear lobe." This makes each pinna look like a miniature Christmas stocking.

When you reach a wide opening in the wall on your left, leave the trail, pass through this opening, turn and look back toward the trail. Look on your left and under the edge of a stone in the wall to find a letterbox.

Return to the trail and continue to your left. The next yellow blaze shows that you should turn right. Walk until you see an opening in the stone wall on your left. The area near this opening is a great place to look around. There is a large, tall tree with bark that looks like it is peeling off the tree trunk. **Shagbark hickory (*Carya 011ata*)** are easy to identify in the winter because of this shaggy bark. You also might find hickory nuts on the ground. There is another tree near here that has a distinctive bark, which helps identify it in the winter. It is a tree with smooth bark and it is much smaller than the Shagbark hickory. The bark looks more like a piece of smooth, gray, carved granite than wood. One description is that it looks like sinewy muscle. It is ***Carpinus caroliniana* (American Hornbeam)** which some people call Ironwood or Musclewood. The best example of the ***Carpinus caroliniana*** tree is a three sister tree (three trunks) on the right side of the trail about twenty feet beyond the Shagbark hickory. The name Ironwood tree can be misleading. ***Ostrya virginiana* (Hophornbeam)** is also called Ironwood tree. Its bark is totally different. If you want to be sure what tree you are identifying, use the Latin name.

Why are there so many stone walls in the woods? Many stone walls were built when this land was first farmed. Farmers needed fields to grow crops and pasture land for their farm animals. Most of the land in this area was woodland so trees were cut down. After the land was cleared farmers found rocks, rocks, and more rocks. If they wanted to till the land to grow crops, what did their plows hit? Rocks! There were so many rocks that farmers used to call them "New England potatoes". Farmers used all the rocks they found to build walls. Bar ways were made out of wood posts to close the openings left in the walls. Follow this stone wall with your eyes from the opening as it goes uphill. Notice how it comes to a boulder and starts again at the top of the boulder.

Pass through the opening in the wall and continue following the yellow blazes as the trail takes you uphill and through a few openings in stone walls. As you walk you might notice more shagbark hickory and ironwood trees. Look at your map. This trail has no intersections and is easy to follow, but the trail does take a turn to the left to a tree with a single blaze. Keep walking and passing through stone wall openings. After walking to the top of the hill and passing through another opening in the wall, you will see a clearly marked double blaze. Turn left. A stone wall will be on your left after you turn. Soon you will again go through an opening in the wall and turn to the right. Now a stone wall will be on your right. Soon there will also be a stone wall on your left. Continue following the yellow blazes looking for a tree that has yellow and blue wooden arrows on it. The yellow trail ends here and you will turn left onto the blue trail. This is just after you have passed a red building on your left.

If you completed the Launching Series Fleming Hike you know that the red building is an old sugar house. You can also see it marked on the Fleming map. Continue to your left on the blue trail. You might notice blue hoses in the woods. These are used to collect sap. Near the end of each winter, the sap is collected by Flanders Nature Center and is made into syrup at the new Sugar House. The kiosk in the parking lot has information posted on making **maple** syrup.

After passing the red building on your left, you follow the blue blazes and will be looking for a sign to John's Bench. It is difficult to see when hiking in this direction. If you miss the sign you will cross a long boardwalk, approach Cowles Road and reach the end of the blue trail. Turn around and look for the sign to John's Bench and Overlook which will be on your right as you retrace your steps. It is much easier to see when walking in this direction.

Take the trail to John's Bench. Know that there is a steep drop off at the end of the trail so younger letterboxers should not be unattended. Enjoy the view. Look around and note the different kinds of mosses. Mosses are very difficult to identify without the use of a magnifying glass or a microscope. A person who studies mosses is called a bryologist. There are probably over 100 different kinds of mosses in the woods near where you live. Mosses have been around since pre-dinosaur times and are found all over the world except in salt water. They are small plants that usually grow in thick mats and grow best in damp shady areas. No mosses have flowers.

Often homeowners who have moss growing on part of their lawns want to get rid of it, use chemicals to kill it, and try to grow grass in shady areas. Grass does best in sunny locations. With growing concern about the environment, some homeowners are beginning to change their thinking about moss, realizing that it can be used as an alternative to grass, requiring no fertilizers or chemicals to grow well in shady, damp areas. There are nurseries that now sell different kinds of mosses to plant in lawns at home.

As you head back, look around before starting downhill on the trail. As you head back toward the blue trail, you will cross a broken down old stone wall. Go off the trail and follow what remains of the stone wall to your left. About 18 feet off the trail, you will find a letterbox behind a large stone.

After finding the letterbox, hike down the trail, and turn right on the blue trail. After passing the Sugar House, look at your map and take the trail that will lead you back to your car.



CHECKLIST FOR FLEMING PRESERVE

TAKE A HIKE SERIES

Did you see, hear or count:

Old roads

A place where maple syrup was made

A Shagbark hickory tree

An Ironwood tree - **Carpinus caroliniana**

How many different kinds of nuts did you find?

How many kinds of moss did you count?

What animals did you see?

A "Christmas stocking"