



Potato Hill Farm Outdoor Education Center

Outdoor Education Center (OEC) - Little Pond Points of Interest

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INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE TO THE LITTLE POND

- 1. Deciduous trees** Deciduous trees lose their leaves in winter to conserve energy and water. There is not enough sunlight and water in the winter for photosynthesis to occur. Native deciduous trees on the Farm include black cherry, maple, ash, butternut, beech, birch, poplar, Juneberry, choke cherry, hornbeam, and elm.
- 2. Animals** There will be a variety of animals in the paddock during the season of Alpaca, Black Welsh Mountain Sheep, Alpine Goats, Donkeys, Percheron horses, Scottish Highland Cattle.
- 3. Maple Alley** The maple tree has a single trunk with ascending branches. The tree silhouette is an oval shape. The leaves are 5-lobed. Leaves that have fallen break down quickly making one of the best organic fertilizers. Maple is one of the most valuable hardwoods. The wood is used in furniture, flooring, and cabinets. Sugar maples are the source of maple syrup and maple sugar. It takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. There has been some decline in the growth of maple trees caused by acid rain.
- 4. Glacial erratic** Erratics are large boulders standing by themselves in a field or forest. The erratics were brought here from miles away by the movement of a glacier, either a river of ice or a sheet of ice (Laurentian Ice Sheet) that formed approximately 8,000 to 10,000 years ago during the last Ice Age. The glacier probably began in the Adirondack Mountains and moved down over this area pushing and dragging dirt, rocks, and other debris with it. The rounder and smoother the erratic appears the greater the distance the boulder traveled within the glacier.
- 5. Cherry tree** The black cherry tree has a thick trunk with few lower branches. It is the largest of the cherry trees. The dark bark looks like cornflakes. Cherry is valued for its lumber. The wood is used for furniture, interior finishes, and some musical instruments. The fruits and twigs are eaten by animals. A fungus called black knot attacks black cherry trees. Large black growths can be seen on twigs and small branches, leading to die-backs of the infected branches.
- 6. Golden Rod Galls** Parasitic gall flies deposit their eggs and the hatched larvae live through the winter in the galls. A parasite is an organism that lives in or on another organism, or host. The parasite benefits by getting nutrients, often at the expense of the host.
- 7. Willows** There are over 100 species of willows in North America that range in size from shrubs to tall trees. All willows have narrow, pointed, alternate leaves. Willows are one of the woody plants that grow along shores and in wetlands. Willows reproduce by catkins.

Willows are important in controlling stream bank and mountain erosion. Willow twigs are used in basket making. The willow bark provided tannin that was used to cure leather and salicin the basis for aspirin.

- 8. Birch trees** Birch trees are native to northern regions. The bark is marked with cross-streaks and/or dark chevron-shaped trunk markings. The curling older bark is flammable even when damp. The bark of some species (white birch) was once used by Amerindians/Native Americans to make canoes. The sap of some birches is used in drinks and syrups. The flowers of birches are caterpillar-like catkins. Male catkins are present on the tree in the winter. The seeds and buds are eaten by ruffed grouse, wild turkey, red squirrels, and song birds. The twigs are browsed by moose, deer, and rabbits.
- 9. Tamarack/Larch trees** Tamarack is the only conifer in New York that sheds its needles. The needles grow in clusters on twigs and branches. The light brown cones are only ½ to 1 inch long. New cones are red in the spring. Tamaracks like wet soils. Tamarack trunks are used for posts.
- 10. Sedge** Sedges are grass-like plants with leaves that are triangular in cross section (when cut in half). “Sedges have edges”. Most of the 3000+ species grow in wetlands. Because aquatic plants typically grow in water-saturated mud that is low in oxygen they have tissues with large air-filled spaces to diffuse the oxygen down to the buried roots. Reproduction is by seeds or nutlets.
- 11. Reeds** Reeds grow along lakes and ponds. They have long flat leaves with stiff hollow stems. Reeds are grasses. Grasses have hollow stems. Rushes have hollow or pith-filled stems and flat, often hollow leaves. Reproduction is by seeds often enclosed in a spikelet. The leaves of reeds were used in making thatch roofs.
- 12. Cattails** Cattails are angiosperms or flowering plants. They have 2 flower parts. The bottom of the flower cluster is a brown mass or pistillate, the female part. The upper part of the flower cluster is a spike or staminate, the male part. Cattails reproduce by wind-borne seeds and also by underground root-stocks. The plants grow to a height of 6 to 8 feet. There are 12 species of cattails in North America. Cattails grow in marshes, ditches and along lakes, ponds, and slow moving streams.
- 13. Amphibians and Reptiles** Amphibians are vertebrates, animals with backbones. They usually live in water as larvae and on land as an adult. The larvae respire with gills. The adults breathe with lungs and skin. Amphibians have moist skin that contains mucous and poison glands. Amphibians are classified in 3 groups: salamanders and newts, frogs and toads, and caecilians, or legless animals. Many species of amphibians are declining especially in Western Europe, North & South America, and Australia. Amphibians are an indicator species that is observed closely to identify pollutants. **Reptiles** Reptiles are vertebrates with scaly skin, lungs, and leathery-shelled eggs. Most reptiles have claws, except snakes. The four orders of reptiles are: lizards and snakes, crocodilians, turtles and tortoises, and the tuatara. At the Little Pond there are turtles. Look for painted turtles, sliders, and snapping turtles. Snapping turtles are the New York State Reptile.

14. Fish Fish are aquatic vertebrates that are characterized by fins for movement, scales for protection, and gills for respiration. There are exceptions to these characteristics, e.g. Catfish do not have scales. The New York State Fresh Water Fish is the brook trout. The New York State Salt Water Fish is the striped bass. At present there are no native fish in the Little Pond.

15. Birds Birds are vertebrates that are warm-blooded. All birds have feathers. Birds have 2 legs for walking or perching and 2 wings. Some birds do not fly. These are the emu, ostrich, rhea, kiwi, and cassowary. Many of the birds around the Little Pond are passerines or perching birds. Passerines include song birds. Birds of prey or raptors may be spotted near the pond. The raptors would be owls and hawks.

Revised 6/22/11