

Rhododendron State Park

Trail Information

The Little Monadnock Mountain Trail branches from the rhododendron grove loop and climbs for one mile, where it joins the Metacomet-Monadnock (MM) Trail. There is a vista of Mt. Monadnock, Pack Monadnock, and North Pack Monadnock Mtn. at the junction of the two trails. Turning south on the MM leads to the summit of Little Monadnock about a half mile away. The 117-mile long MM connects the Metacomet Trail in Meridan, CT with the summit of Mt. Monadnock.

Walking Along the Wild Flower Trail

There is something to be seen along the trail at every season. Springtime brings many woodland flowers that open before they are too deeply shaded by unfolding leaves. Mountain laurel blooms in June and the rhododendrons, for which the park is famous, flower in July. Late summer brings Indian pipe and woodland asters, and in autumn come bright berries and a brilliant show of foliage.

In winter, when vegetation is dormant, a blanket of snow protects the fragile plant-life.

Much can be learned from seeing wildflowers in their native habitat; by observing the effects of varying light and shade, noticing which plants seem to do best on dry slopes and which in boggy areas. Under which trees do which plants prefer to grow? Evergreens and oak shed needles and leaves that create the deep acid humus needed by rhododendrons and mountain laurel. Where maples and other deciduous trees drop their leaves the soil becomes more alkaline, hospitable to different species. (continued on the next page)

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Trail Information (continued)

We thrill to the song of birds in spring and early summer, but how many other bird sounds do we know? The “drumming” of the ruffed grouse can be so low that it seems to be more felt than heard! A rustling sound in dry leaves under a bush may be a white-throated sparrow or a towhee searching for bugs. Tiny lisping voices betray chickadees or warblers feeding in treetops. Woodpeckers, flickers and sapsuckers make tapping sounds, but perhaps a nuthatch is storing seeds in rough tree bark, or a brown creeper may be spiraling up a tree gathering its dinner of insects and their eggs.

Moving quietly along the trail you may see animals and birds “at home” as well as wildflowers. You might take time also to explore an outcropping of ledge that has become a natural rock garden, or a stump where a squirrel has eaten his lunch of seeds hidden deep in a pine cone, or perhaps the short cropped shrubs where deer have browsed. Was that a foot print left behind? Are those the telltale droppings underneath the roost of a partridge, owl or hawk?

And watch, too, for rabbit trails and small round holes where skunks have been digging up grubs for dinner.

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