



# Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186  
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## Flower Power on I Love My Park Day - May 3, 2014 — by Bonnie Schaller

I Love My Park Day brought out an Army of volunteers for all sorts of projects. The Thacher Garden Gang had the energy and enthusiasm of Girl Scouts to help us tidy up Thacher's many flower planters. Equipped with rakes, shovels, trowels and plenty of bug repellent, we all went to work. From the south entrance planter to the north entry, mulch was piled high, leaves raked to reveal the bright spring grass and an occasional red eft or salamander made an appearance. Thank You to maintenance for helping with ALL the mulch!!!! We used just about every shovel full.

Since we had such a cool spring, planting tender flowers was put off until a later date in May. That left us with two big projects. The first was removing the aging yews from around the flag pole and the second was putting new life into a planter at the Indian Ladder restroom. With Chris Fallon's OK, we began to plot our strategy.

We knew that once we had the planters empty we had to quickly get fresh dirt and new plants put into the ground. Deciding what plants was both interesting and a challenge. Laurel Tormey-Cole of the Nature Center helped us pick plants that would both survive and be as close to native as possible.



Indian Ladder Restroom planter

Before



After

We needed help from maintenance to pull out the yews around the flag pole (DEEP roots)!



Office Flag Pole planter

Before



After

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Once the yews were gone, mulch was added to both planters so that we could begin the rebuild. We had some left over daylilies and irises to re-establish, but the shrubs needed to be planted in what now looked like HUGE voids. Our new plants rose to the occasion. The restroom has a new shadbush, and the flag pole has three "Ilex" and one azalea. All planters are now sporting tons of flowers too!

We hope you get a chance to see all of the planters and enjoy this small part of Thacher Park along with the other beautiful aspects cared for by Park Staff and volunteers.

The Garden Gang would like to thank: Chris Fallon, Park Manager; Laurel Tormey – Cole, of the Nature Center; Girl Scout Troops – Bethlehem and Thacher Park Maintenance Staff.

Garden Gang: Anita Wahlen, Sue Fero, Jayne Maloney, Leslie Hartnett, Linda Hodges and Bonnie Schaller.

## Updates

### I Love My Park Day Wrap Up - by Chris Fallon

Thacher Park hosted its' third annual I Love My Park Day on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and once again, it was a huge success. Overall, approximately 140 volunteers, including many of our Friend's members came out to lend a hand. Several projects were completed and much good work was done. A summary of the projects completed includes:

- Flower Beds throughout the park were weeded and prepped for planting thanks to our Garden Gang and Girl Scouts from Bethlehem (more on this in an article by Bonnie Schaller)
- Installation of 5 new benches (3 at Thacher Park and two at Thompson's Lake Campground)
- A foot bridge over a ravine leading to the eventual Tory Cave trail and ladder way (thanks to our friends with the Albany Amateur Radio Association)
- Lifeguard cabin, fence railings and flagpole at the campground were painted
- Several areas were cleared of brush and raked
- Wood chips were spread along the wetter areas of the escarpment trail
- Piles of scrap metal, old barrels and the like were dragged out of a newly acquired property adjacent to Thompson's Lake campground
- Bridge railings were replaced along the Indian Ladder Trail and washouts near steps on the trail were filled in and the steps stabilized
- The Nature Center garden areas were weeded
- Two pet waste stations were installed
- Thacher Park Road was cleaned up as part of The Friends Adopt a Highway agreement with DOT

That is a lot of work and we are grateful to everyone who

pitched in. The day wrapped up with an excellent barbeque lunch provided by the Friends (Thanks again to John Kilroy for coordinating this). The day's festivities were enhanced by the appearance of the "LL Bean Bootmobile". Thanks to LL Bean for their sponsorship of this event and for pitching in and volunteering.

### Centennial Update

Our Centennial Celebration is drawing closer and the anticipation and excitement is building. By now many of you have probably seen the new rack card promoting the event. In addition to all the great activities listed on the rack card, we have worked out an agreement with two local running groups to have a trail running festival kick off the day at 8:30. After meeting with representatives of the Albany Running Exchange and the Hudson Mohawk Road Runners Club, we have decided to organize a trail running festival featuring 4 trail races; a 5k, 10K, a marathon and a 50k ultra marathon. With this in mind, when folks start arriving for the start of the rest of the day's activities at 10 AM, we will already have a big crowd gathering.

### HELP!!! VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR THE CENTENNIAL PLEASE CALL 872-1237 TO VOLUNTEER

Hopefully, you are planning to attend this celebration. If you are planning on attending and have some time to volunteer, please let us know. In an effort to make September 13, 2014 a memorable and successful day, we are in need of many volunteers. Volunteer opportunities include help with parking, litter clean up, scavenger hunt, T-shirt making, information hosts and messengers. Additionally, we are looking for a few people to help set up tents prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> and break them down after the 13<sup>th</sup>. Please call the park office at the number listed above if you can volunteer.

Thanks!!! We look forward to seeing you for the Centennial.

Check for updates at [www.friendsofthacherpark.org](http://www.friendsofthacherpark.org)

### Officers of the Friends Board of Trustees

President:	John Kilroy	872-1501
Vice President:	Laure-Jeanne Davignon	872-2723
Treasurer:	Betsey Miller	869-0739
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Jim Schaller	861-7452	Sigrin Newell	439-6705
Chuck Ver Straeten	872-2223	Bert Schou	221-8693
Dan Driscoll	872-0602	Linda Hodges	872-0940

**As always, call 872-0800 or 872-1237 to verify activity times and dates.**

Please feel free to call any board member with questions or suggestions.

Many thanks to Bonnie Schaller, Chris Fallon, Sigrin Newell, Betsey Miller and Bert Schou for their contributions to this newsletter, and to Rodger Fink, webmaster.

## Bicycling Safety/Trail Etiquette - by Bert Schou

Bicycling is not only fun, but great exercise. Whenever you ride a bicycle at Thacher State Park, the most important thing is safety – always wear a helmet! In New York State, all children under the age of 14 must wear a helmet. A helmet should fit and be worn properly to be effective in reducing head injuries.

Whether riding on trails or roads including both park and campground roadways, be courteous to other users. Parks and campgrounds are special places for people of all ages and abilities. Do not approach others too close or too fast and give adequate warning with a bell or voice. On trails where bicyclists are permitted, respecting the enjoyment of hikers by slowing down or stopping is recommended. Hikers enjoying their walk can easily be startled and often do not expect a bicycle which can approach quietly and quickly. Remember, pedestrians always have the right-of-way. Please follow these basic Rules of the Trail as recommended by the IMBC International Mountain Bicycling Association:

1. Ride Open Trails: Respect trail and road/trail closures and never make new trails.
2. Leave No Trace: Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage than dry ones. When the trail is soft, consider other riding options. Be sure to pack out at least as much as you pack in. Only ride on trails where bicycles are permitted.
3. Control Your Bicycle: Inattention for even a moment could put yourself and others at risk.
4. Yield Appropriately: Do your utmost to let your fellow trail users know you are coming – a friendly greeting or bell ring are good methods. Try to anticipate other trail users as you ride around corners. Bicyclists must yield to other non-motorized trail users. Bicyclists traveling downhill should yield to ones headed uphill. In general, strive to make each pass a safe and courteous one.

5. Never Scare Animals: Animals are easily startled by an unannounced approach, a sudden movement or a loud noise.
6. Plan Ahead: Know your equipment, your ability and the area in which you are riding and prepare accordingly.

### On all roads, including park and campgrounds:

1. Learn about NYS Laws as they pertain to bicyclists and in-line skaters.
2. Practice your Riding Skills: including starting/stopping, steering a straight line, scanning for traffic or other road users and communicating with others by signaling your intentions. Riding straight, predictably, and following the basic principles of traffic law reduces conflicts and crashes. Remember, most crashes have nothing to do with motor vehicles.
3. Principles of Traffic Law. This is easier to understand for experienced drivers/riders so please help your children know the basics:
  - First Come, First Served
  - Ride on the Right-hand Side of the Road
  - Yield to Crossing Traffic
  - Yield when Changing Lanes
  - Speed Positioning. In general, stopped or parked vehicles are next to the curb, slower moving vehicles are to the left of them, faster moving vehicles are closest to the centerline. Overtaking on the right violates this principle and is more risky than overtaking on the left.
  - Intersection Positioning. At intersections, position your bicycle to avoid conflicts with the movement of other riders or users of the road. Right turners are to the right of center, left turners are to the left of center, and straight-through cyclists are between these positions.
4. Be visible. Wear bright colors and use both front and rear lights when riding on all roadways, including campground roads at night.

## Scavenger Hunt in a Meadow - by Sigrin Newell

In summer, another way to enjoy Thacher Park is to explore the meadows. Fine meadows can be found near the Nature Center and on the High Point trail. These are kept mowed as habitat for birds such as bluebirds and bobolinks who prefer open grassy areas.

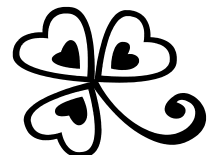
While you may be lucky to catch a glimpse of one of the birds, you will have no trouble finding meadow flowers. Mid-summer is peak blooming time for clovers and composites. Here's a new kind of scavenger hunt for children and their families. See how many different kinds of clovers you can find.

The name clover comes from *clava*, the Latin word for club. The giant Hercules had a three part club whose shape reminded the ancients of the three-part leaves of clover plants. The shape of the club on a deck of cards came from the same myth.

White, red, and rabbit's foot are three clovers that are easy to find. You'll have no trouble recognizing the rabbit's foot clover by its fuzzy flower. The hairy bristles help the seeds disperse. If you are hunting for four leaf clovers, you are more likely to find them on red clover than on the white.

Many other clovers and their relatives can be found in open meadows and roadsides. Bring along a flower guide to see how many you can identify: yellow sweet clover, white sweet clover, bush clover, hop clover and least hop clover, bird foot trefoil, tick trefoil, wild indigo, purple vetch. The two sweet clovers and birds-foot trefoil are invasives - a good reason to learn to recognize them to help get rid of them.

Altogether, that's an even dozen members of the pea family to challenge scavenger hunters. What's your total?



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**Next:** **Wednesday, July 9, 2014**  
**Board Meeting**  
**7:00 pm at the Thacher Nature Center**

**We want to thank everyone** who has helped fund buses for schools to bring students to Thacher Park and the Nature Center. As you know, with the cutbacks in education funding, many schools do not have resources to pay for buses for field trips. As of June we have raised slightly more than \$3,500 to support about 14 buses to bring children to the park. Now when schools express an interest in bringing children on a field trip to the park Nature Center staff can offer funds for buses if the schools need financial assistance .

It is hard for those of us who love Thacher and nature to imagine that for some of the children from the city schools this is their first visit to the woods. Along with the other children they are fascinated by some of nature's oddities like the spittle bug blowing bubbles out of its butt. They love looking through binoculars at the birds using the Nature Center's bird feeders, seeing the spotted salamander up close, watching swallows feed their babies, and learning about the woods on their nature walks. We hope for some of the children this is the beginning of a lifelong connection with nature. For others

it helps strengthen a connection they have already begun.

The idea for the fund raising effort came out of our strategic planning process where the Friends' Board, interested members and staff from Thacher identified goals for the next few years. The founding members of the Friends, especially Fred Schroeder, had a strong commitment to connecting children with nature. In the strategic planning process, the current Board reaffirmed that commitment, and identified the program to fund buses to bring children from local schools to the park as one important method of connecting children with nature.

When we sent out the letter in late November to request support for these buses we had no idea what to expect in terms of a response. We were all gratified at the response from our members and friends. The contributions ranged from \$5, the cost of supporting a single student, to support for a full bus. Thank you for your support, and know that your contribution may be the key to starting a life long connection to nature for a child.

*- by Betsey Miller*

As always, you can find a color version of the newsletter at [www.friendsofthacherpark.org/pages/news.html](http://www.friendsofthacherpark.org/pages/news.html)