

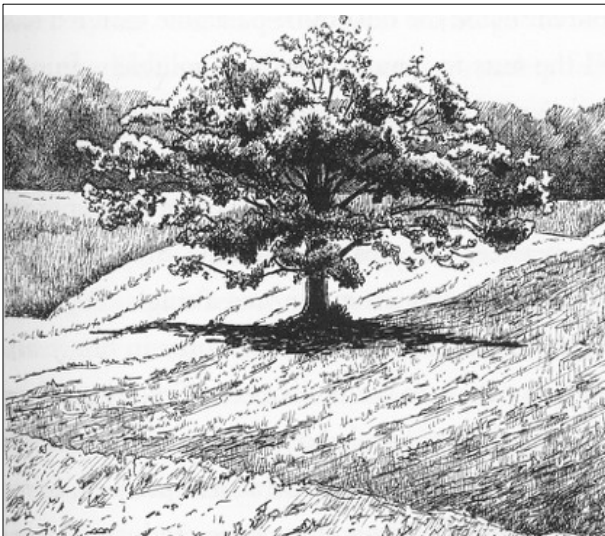
22. Blow down – Trees that blow down with their root ball intact create a pocket for water to collect. Later, the root ball will decompose and leave a mound of soil.

23. Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*). – This thorny shrub is an invasive non-native plant, which spreads aggressively, creating a monoculture that crowds out native plants. Japanese Barberry is a favored habitat of ticks.

24. Lichen on Rocks – The rocks around you are spotted with what looks like dried paint. This “paint” is Lichen, a dual organism made up of a green algae and fungus. Its color may be red, yellow, green or gray depending on moisture levels. Lichen can withstand wide variations of climate and provides hiding places for tiny creatures and nesting material for birds.

25. Erosion and Wet Trails – Excessive ground water and foot traffic contribute to wet parts of the trail. The soil and plants do not get a chance to heal from being trampled, especially in wet conditions. Some control methods help: note the water bars that divert water and culverts that drain water away from the trail.

26. Wolf tree – Decades ago, this now fallen White Oak tree (*Quercus alba*) stood alone pasture shade for livestock. Lone trees like these were known as “wolf trees”. Over the years, the forest grew up around it with the lack of grazing and cultivation. In the winter of 1997, a storm brought down the old tree.



27. Skunk cabbage – This herbaceous plant is one of the first to emerge and flower in the spring, growing in wet, low lying areas. Skunk cabbage is capable of producing its own heat to melt snow from around it. Skunk cabbage’s distinctive smell attracts pollinating insects.

28. Grapevine – Look all around you to see the vines of the wild Grapes. These heavy woody vines with dark shredded bark and twining tendrils have large, lobed leaves. In late summer, the vines will produce clusters of purple grapes, known as fox grapes - a favorite wild life food.

29. Spring and Watering Hole- This small spring-fed body of water was once used by livestock and wildlife as a watering hole. The brown wooden cover protects the spring and well.

30. Transition from forest to field – As you leave the woods, notice how the trees thin out and more shrubs grow. Shrubs give way to brambles and tall weeds such as Goldenrod, Joe Pye Weed and Mullein. Transition areas support the widest variety of wild life.

31. Christmas Tree Patch – You are walking through an abandoned Christmas tree patch of White Spruce (*Picea glauca*) and Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens*). D.E.P. foresters originally planted the trees as an educational tool for Christmas tree growers. The project was abandoned in 2002 and will now revert to wild life cover and a source for boughs.



<https://friendsoftopsmead.org>



Topsmead State Forest is a 634-acre property, 511 acres of which were given by Ms. Edith Morton Chase to the citizens of Connecticut in 1972 to enjoy and preserve. Ms. Chase’s legacy features diverse landscapes, including bike and nature trails, formal gardens, unique bird habitats and a meticulously crafted English Tudor style cottage.

The Friends of Topsmead State Forest is a volunteer organization, dedicated to providing programs and activities that will protect the environment and preserve Ms. Chase’s legacy. Our efforts are performed in conjunction with the CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, but

we also need your help!

You can help in 3 ways:

- ▶ **Membership**
- ▶ **Volunteering**
- ▶ **Donations**

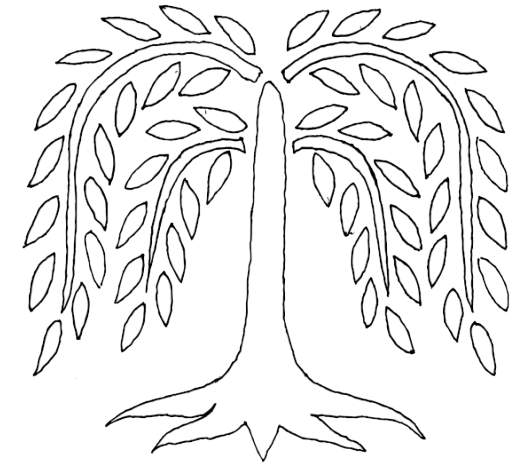
To find out more about helping, please visit our website:

<https://friendsoftopsmead.org>

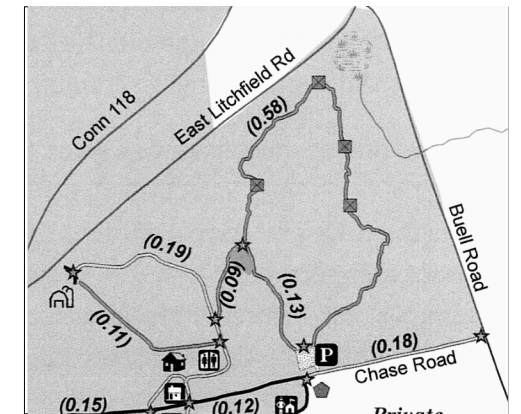


Topsmead State Forest

Edith Morton Chase Ecology Trail



A Self-Guided Walk

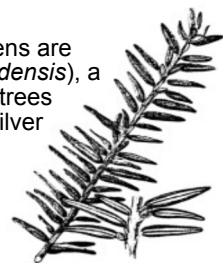


Topsmead State Forest
29 Chase Road
Litchfield, CT 06759

1. Mixed Woods – This wooded area is a Lowland Red Maple Forest. Consisting of Red Maple, Birches and White Ash trees with an understory of brambles, spicebush and honeysuckle; this is typical of a second and third growth forest. This means the forest has been cut off and regrown a couple of times, and was once a pasture for livestock. Species of trees succeed each other with passage of time.

2. Pond – This pond was dug for Miss Chase as part of the landscape design in the 1930's. Today it supports a healthy population of fresh water clams, frogs, turtles, salamanders and other aquatic life. The yellow iris around the shore is now on the invasive plant list. An aggressive grower, it has to be cleared away from the pond outlet. Also growing are cattails, a common pond plant with narrow leaves and a brown cigar like flower.

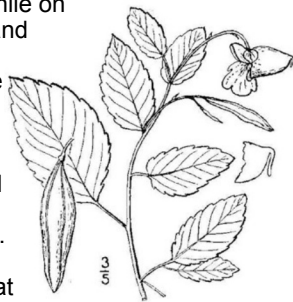
3. Hemlocks – These evergreens are Eastern Hemlocks (*Tsuga Canadensis*), a native tree, can be tall, graceful trees with flat needles that have two silver stripes on the bottom. Mature Hemlocks stands create dense shade that supports little undergrowth.



Hemlock

4. Yellow Birch – Ahead of you is a Yellow Birch (*Betula lutea*). Growing up to 100 feet tall, its bark peels into thin, curly, silvery-yellow strips. The wood of the Yellow Birch is ideal for making furniture, boxes, woodenware and plywood. Twenty feet behind you is a Black Birch (*Betula lenta*). Also known as Sweet Birch, the Black Birch leaves and twigs have a distinctive birch beer scent.

5. Bench – Please rest awhile on this bench to reflect, listen and watch around you. The tall plants around the bench are Jewelweed (*Impatiens pallida*) and Spotted Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) grow along this trail. The tall plant, with succulent stems, blooms from June until frost. When its seed capsules are ripe, they open explosively at the slightest touch, flinging seeds far and wide, inspiring the common name "Touch-Me-Not". Crushed Jewelweed is said to alleviate the itch of Poison Ivy.

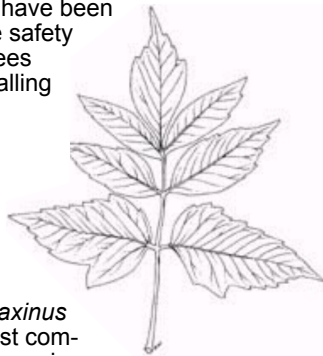


Jewelweed

6. Rotten Log – Though this tree fell to the ground years ago, it is still a source of food and shelter. Ants, beetles and grubs eat holes in the wood. Water enters and becomes a breeding ground for various fungi that will eventually break down the wood and return valuable nutrients back into the soil. This is one way nature recycles.

7. Spruce – Directly in front of you is a group of spruce trees. These probably sprouted 12 to 15 years ago when seeds were dropped by birds, left by squirrels, or blown in by the wind.

8. Fallen Trees – The fallen and dead trees you see in this area are mostly White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), a valuable native tree. The White Ash has been decimated by the Emerald Ash Tree Borer, an imported insect that tunnels beneath the bark, eventually killing the tree. Many of these trees have been cut down as a preemptive safety measure to keep dying trees and their branches from falling on hikers.



White Ash

9. White Ash Log – (*Fraxinus americana*) is one of the most common valuable hardwood trees in the forest. The long straight-grained wood is used for tool handles and baseball bats. Ash wood also makes good firewood.

10. Honeysuckle – This invasive species of Honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*) has hollow stems, which is what differentiates it from the native Honeysuckle. An escaped ornamental, the invasive Honeysuckle crowds out native plants. Their red berries have low nutritional value for wildlife.

11. Shrubby Growth – These thickets of shrubs provide shelter for small mammals and birds and browsing for deer. Viburnums, dogwoods, alders and blueberries are native shrubs that are a food source for wildlife.

12. Forest Opening – Numerous dying White Ash trees create this opening. Declines and destructive insects have recently affected ash trees. Forest openings create an opportunity for early succession plants like honeysuckle and brambles.

13. Spicebush – (*Lindera benzoin*). This native shrub grows 6-12 feet tall with yellow flowers in the very early spring and striking yellow fall foliage. All parts of the Spicebush are aromatic when crushed, hence the name.

14. Black Cherry – (*Prunus serotina*) – Black Cherry is a common forest tree with rough dark bark that grows 50-60 feet tall. Fruits are consumed by wild life and can be used for making wine and jelly. The lumber from Black Cherry is valuable for furniture making.



Black Cherry

Black knot-like cankers frequently affect this tree, to the point of being an identifying feature.

15. American Beech – (*Fagus grandifolia*) – This Beech is a beautiful smooth gray barked tree. A native tree, it can grow very large with long tan leaves that hang on well into the winter. Beechnuts are a valuable wildlife food source. Careless carving into the bark of this tree can cause it serious injury.



American Beech

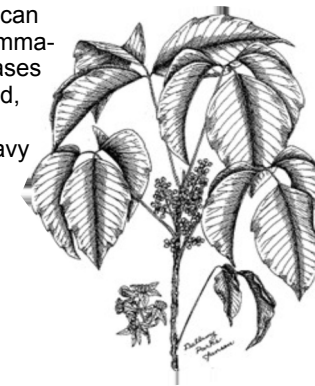
16. Stone Wall Remnants – This rubble of stones was part of a former stone wall. Connecticut woods are full of old stone walls that once marked boundaries, provided field enclosures and a place to put stones when

clearing fields. Note the large leafed low plant near the stone wall. These are Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*). Blooming in the early spring with a white flower, the sap of the Bloodroot is a dark red. This sap was used by Native People for dyes and war paint.

17. Farm Pond – As recently as the 1970s, this once farm pond supported bass fish, a home to wood ducks and served as a watering hole for livestock and wildlife. However, aquatic life has given over to cattails, shrubs, grasses and trees. This natural transition from water to field to forest is known as *pond succession*.

18. Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) – This native of eastern Asia is an aggressive rose that escaped cultivation here and spreads through forest and fields. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service originally introduced it in the 1930's as a "living fence" and soil erosion control. Its long thorny canes form an impenetrable thicket.

19. Poison Ivy – This is a poison ivy vine. Poison ivy can grow as a ground cover or climb as a vine. Contact with any part of the vine can cause an itchy skin inflammation, even in winter. In cases where this plant is burned, breathing its smoke can cause lung irritation. Heavy vines can burden and strangle trees.



Poison Ivy

20. Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) – This woody plant is an aggressive imported vine. Similar to the American Bittersweet, this invasive can smother and break trees. This marked vine shows how bittersweet can climb and strangle trees. Its showy red-orange berries are eaten and spread by birds.

21. Christmas Ferns – This common woods fern stays green all winter. The Christmas-stocking shape of the fern leaflet is an identifier. Ferns have no flowers but reproduce by spores found underneath the fronds.