

Fernwood Nature Trail

in Cleveland Park

Fernwood Nature Trail is a short trail of about 1/2 mile, winding through a mature hardwood forest portion of Cleveland Park. It was developed by the City of Greenville Parks and Recreation Departments, together with the William Bartram Group, S.C. Chapter of the Sierra Club. For several years, these two organizations have worked together to define, clear and maintain the trail, identify plants, and develop interpretive materials, so as to allow an enjoyable and educational experience in this previously little-used section of the park.

The land that is now Cleveland Park was donated to the City of Greenville by the Cleveland family in 1928. The original donation included 126 acres of farmland near the Reedy River. In the 1930s and 1940s, Mr. Cleveland sold some of the surrounding land for residential development.

One of the original features of Cleveland Park was its horse and riding trails. The trail that is now the Fernwood Nature Trail is part of the old horse trail.

Twenty-four numbered sites along the trail are described on the reverse side of this sheet. If you are quiet and observant while you walk, you may also be able to see some of the park's wildlife, including birds of many kinds, squirrels and chipmunks, frogs, lizards, turtles, and snakes (almost certainly non-poisonous), as well as insects and spiders.

Please stay on the trail to lessen erosion of the surrounding land and prevent destruction of the fragile wildflowers and other special plants along the trail. Beware of the poison ivy. Although it is periodically cleared from the trail itself, this is ideal poison ivy habitat, and it cannot be eliminated from the surrounding woods.

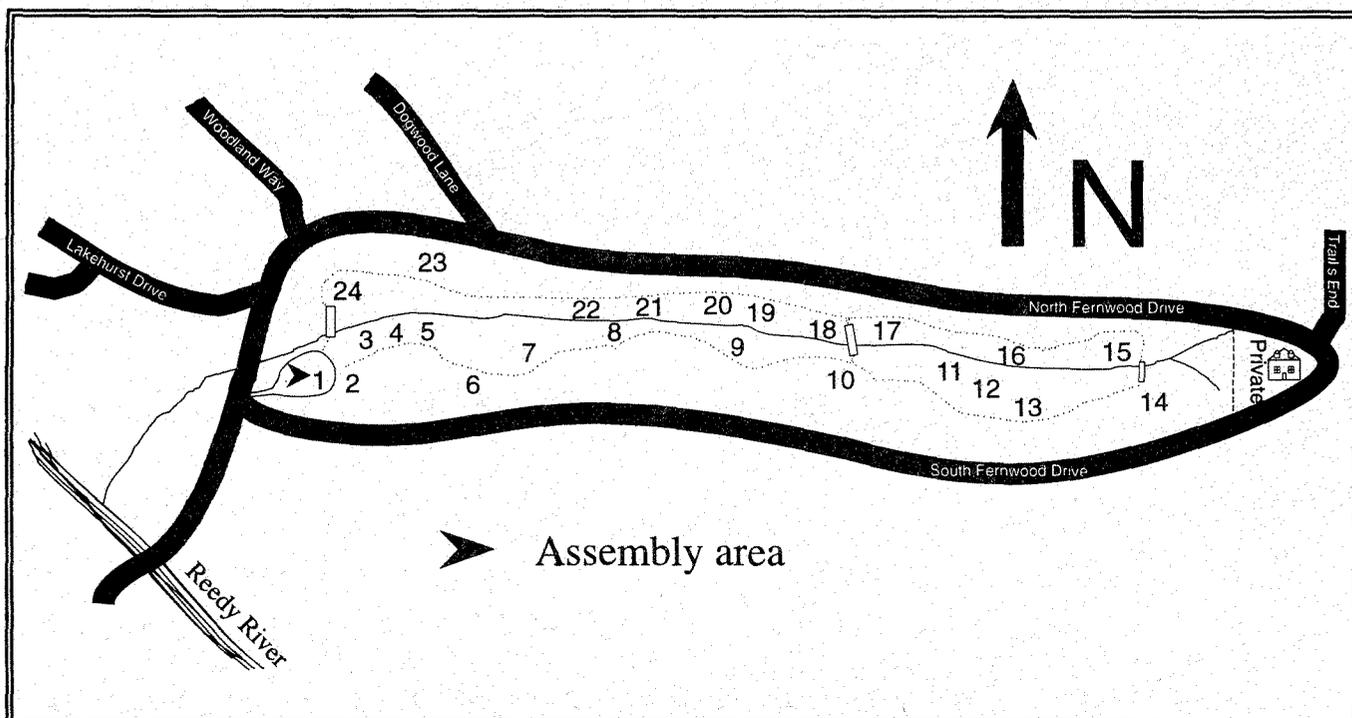
Other places of interest around Cleveland Park include:

- * The Greenville Zoo - East Washington Street in Cleveland Park
- * The Rock Quarry Garden - McDaniel Avenue near Cleveland Park
- * Reedy River Historic Falls Park & Falls Cottage Gardens - South Main Street at Camperdown Way
- * The Kilgore Lewis house and Terraces Gardens - Academy Street

*For further information on the Fernwood Nature Trail
or other Greenville Parks & Recreation, please contact,*

City of Greenville Parks and Recreation Department
(864) 467-4350

For further information about the Sierra Club, write to:
P.O. Box 5923, Greenville, SC 29606-5923
or call 1-800-944-8733



GUIDE TO NUMBERED SITES ALONG THE NATURE TRAIL

1. The small tree in front of you is a Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), a familiar tree that dominates the understory, or lower height level, of southern forests. Most of the big trees forming a canopy over the meeting area are Tulip Poplars (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), with tall straight trunks and broad leaves. Down by the bridge is a large Water Oak (*Quercus nigra*), which has small wedge-shaped leaves.
2. This tree is Shortleaf Pine (*Pinus echinata*). Both on the ground and on the surrounding tree-trunks you will see lots of Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*). Beware of its irritating leaves, identifiable by their three leaflets. Poison Ivy thrives here despite attempts to control it, because of abundant moisture and because the trail creates an opening for sunlight. On the positive side, Poison Ivy berries are a food source for songbirds and woodpeckers during the fall and winter. We will leave the meeting area by the adjacent trail, and will return later by the bridge to your left.
3. The large tulip poplar on your right shows a long thin scar from being struck by lightning at some time in the past. In the thunderstorm-prone climate of the Southeast, lightning strikes often. Lightning and the fires it can cause have been important natural disturbances since prehistoric times. On your left is another large Water Oak.
4. At this point on the trail, there are lots of introduced ornamental plants. On the left is Chinese Holly (*Ilex cornuta*), with its glossy, dark green, spiny leaves that are somewhat square in outline. On the right there is Japanese Holly (*Ilex crenata*) a similar shrub but having much smaller, oval, non-spiny leaves. Later along the trail you will also see our native American Holly (*Ilex opaca*), which has spiny leaves that are dull green and round in outline, and can grow into a tree. On the ground, there are ornamental ground-covers such as Lilyturf or Monkey-grass (*Liriope spicata*) and English Ivy (*Hedera helix*). The presence of ornamental plants in the woods is a reminder that we are in an urban park. Most of these produce berries, which is a clue to how they got here: birds ate the berries of plants in surrounding yards, and the seeds were passed on through their digestive tracts.
5. Stop for a moment to look at the creek. Due to development of the surrounding streets and neighborhoods, the creek receives large surges of rainfall runoff during storms. This has caused erosion of the stream banks, exposing the large tree roots you can see. Unfortunately, you will often see litter as well, left by thoughtless visitors.
6. This slope has a stand of Shortleaf Pine. Note that the lower limbs are all dead or missing. Like most pines, this species is not shade tolerant 'so the only living branches are at the tops of the trees. For the same reason, there are no young pines growing in the shade of the tall ones; eventually, this stand of pines will give way to hardwood trees. The large tree with bark that looks 'striped' just ahead on the left is Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*).
7. Here is a small Sassafras tree (*Sassafras albidum*), with some leaves shaped like gloves or mittens and others that are simply oval. Sassafras roots were the original source of the flavor in root beer. Also growing here is Box-Elder (*Acer negundo*), a tree with bright green twigs and leaves that look like poison ivy, but are non-poisonous. (If in doubt, don't touch!)
8. The plant with the glossy, mottled, heart-shaped leaves growing in the ground is Wild Ginger (*Hexastylis virginica*). In the spring you may be able to see its brownish-purple flowers by brushing aside the dead leaves around the base of the plant. The spicy-smelling flowers buried under dead leaves are pollinated by crawling insects like beetles.
9. This tree is Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). It is often confused with maple, but its leaves are single along the twigs, not paired. On your left is a Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*), with large round leaves. Behind you is a Black Gum tree (*Nyssa sylvatica*), which has rather nondescript oval leaves that begin to show their pink fall color as early as late July.
10. Leaning over the trail here is a fascinating tree of Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*), well known as a source of nectar for honeybees. The hollow at the base runs a long way up the trunk. The two large woodpecker holes overhead were made in one day by a Pileated Woodpecker. He cut the top hole first and, finding he didn't have a base inside the hole for his nest, moved down and tried again with the same result. Although there is a bridge, stay on the right side of the creek for now, unless you are looking for a short-cut back to the meeting area.
11. On the left is another large Northern Red Oak. On the right, there is a Pignut Hickory (*Carya glabra*). When large, Pignut Hickory gets a distinctive pattern like a basket-weave of diamonds in its bark (the pattern is less obvious in small trees). Like all the hickories, its nuts make good food for squirrels and other wildlife.
12. The bushes here on the creek-bank are Wild Hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*), a wild relative of the garden hydrangea. Look back at the creek to your left. For about 20 feet, it disappears underground. At some time in the past, a tree probably fell across the creek, accumulating debris and soil until a solid "roof" over the stream was created.
13. Up this side-trail, you may see the remnants of a picnic area built during the 1930s. A dam was built across the creek to make a pleasant pond. Unfortunately, the erosion mentioned earlier has carried so much silt into the area behind the dam that the pond no longer exists, with only this curious stone "waterfall" marking its place.
14. The trail turns sharply left here; be careful crossing the creek. On your left you may see a barbecue pit, again remaining from the old picnic area.
15. This large Pignut Hickory was broken off in a storm in the winter of 1990-91. This kind of disturbance will create a 'light-gap,' an opening in which new young plants can prosper. This is a natural part of the forest regeneration process, and since this is a natural area, the Parks Department is intentionally leaving the dead tree where it lies.
16. The tall tree with the dark bark and long compound leaves, just to your left as you face the creek, is Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). Imported from China, it has become something of a nuisance, especially on roadsides where it can grow into tall dense thickets.
17. The next three big trees are White Oaks (*Quercus alba*), identifiable by their pale, flaky bark and rounded leaves. White Oak scorns are especially good wildlife food. The wood is of great economic importance as lumber for furniture and cabinets.
18. The huge Tulip Poplar here has growths called burls on its trunk. Burls are caused when the trunk of the young tree is injured or diseased, distorting all future growth of the wood. Apart from causing a weakness in the trunk, however, the burl does not harm the tree. Sometimes burls are cut to provide wood with interesting grain patterns for furniture. More large Tulip Poplars await you farther down the trail.
19. The Rose bushes that form this thicket are introduced ornamental species. They fulfill a useful function, though, by providing cover that shelters many kinds of wildlife, such as rabbits.
20. A tree had to be cut here because it lay across the trail. Take a minute to examine the log, and try to count the annual growth rings on its cut end. Note the fungi growing on the log and breaking it down. A bit farther along there is an older log, which is farther into this process of breakdown. Note that the soft outer sapwood rots away, leaving the more resistant inner heartwood, studded with the bases of branches.
21. The stream here shows a basic geological process. One bank is very high and steep, while the other is more gentle. This is called the formation of a meander; it is always the outside of the curve with the steep bluff, and the inside with the gentle slope. That is because the stream itself has cut away at the outer bank and deposited the soil on the inside of the curve.
22. The vines overhead are muscadine (*Vitis rotundifolia*) and have grown to the top of tulip poplar here to take advantage of the sunlight. Muscadines are a native grape that prefers our southern climate. Many named varieties have been developed including the variety "scuppernon".
23. This tree is an Ash (*Fraxinus americana*). Ash has a very flexible and "springy" wood, and is therefore the material of choice for baseball bats.
24. Here at the end of the trail, what has been a narrow stream creates a broad marshy area, full of Cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*), our only native species that is a true bamboo, or woody grass. The trail crosses the marsh on a boardwalk. If there is standing water, you may see an oily-looking film on the surface, shimmering in many colors. It isn't really oil, but a film of bacteria, digesting the debris that washes down from the forest above, and working to purify the stream. The living plants and microbes in natural ecosystems perform the essential task of cleansing and purifying the water, which all living things need.