

NATURALIST'S CORNER

COME ONE, COME ALL, TO A PARTY

I adore springtime colors. Neighborhoods are bedecked with snow-white flowering pear trees. Ivory-colored magnolia petals rain down on greening lawns. Pink redbud flowers dangle daintily from branches while the dogwoods hold out their pink or white blossoms like a waiter balancing a tray at a fancy restaurant. Small leaf rhododendron add their delicate lilac color to the mix while shouts of yellow forsythia foretell the advent of sunshine. Even the myriad shades of green on every mountainside speak of newness and freshness. Beholding these sights in spring makes me smile.

What makes you smile when you are outdoors? Do you experience mental or physical health benefits? Does it improve your enjoyment of life? Do you approach the outdoors scientifically, naming plants and animals, or do you approach a walk outdoors more metaphysically?

I surveyed my 9th and 10th grade honors biology students, asking what they like to do outdoors and why. Fully half of my students said that they like hiking and walking outdoors because it relieves stress. Nearly that many said they play sports outdoors for fun and to stay active. Many said they like to watch wildlife and enjoyed the beauty, fresh air and peacefulness of the outdoors.

As a club, we have a great opportunity to share our love of the outdoors and show young and old alike what beauty we have to celebrate. As a club, we can have a larger voice and advocate for nature together. The Club's 50th anniversary plans to be not only a celebration of everything that we do but also an opportunity to showcase for residents of the Pioneer Valley and Hilltowns everything that is great and wonderful here in our natural neighborhood.

See the anniversary announcement on page 7 of this newsletter for details of the events planned. The party will take place at the Appalachian Mountain Club's Noble View Outdoor Center in Russell the first weekend of October. Put this event on your calendar. You can stay overnight in the double cottage. Most important of all, bring a friend or two or five, and spread the word and grow the club. Let us share what makes us smile outdoors and advocate for nature together.

~ Nancy Condon