

Ash Brook Reservation

Enjoy an intriguing walk through three widely-differing topographical areas

West Hill (trail entrance, at right of the police academy): A hill bordered by a parking lot and wetlands. Trees: Almost all deciduous, primarily beech, maple, and oaks, plus tulip trees and sassafras.

Ash Swamp: The area between West Hill and Red Hill. Drainage ditches built decades ago to reduce mosquito populations crisscross the area. Trees: Deciduous, including ash, maple, sycamore, and an isolated stand of hornbeam (aka ironwood). Other Flora: Much spicebush and skunk cabbage, and wildflowers, including turtlehead, lizard's tail, joe pye weed, cardinal, asters, and goldenrods.

Red Hill: An area unique to Central New Jersey with fine, sandy soil that causes rainfall to drain rapidly, resulting in a very dry environment in sharp contrast to bordering wetlands. Much of Red Hill's plant life resembles that of the South Jersey Pine Barrens. Trees: A mixture of deciduous trees, including pin oak, sweetgum, gray birch, river birch, and black cherry, plus conifers, including white pine and scotch pine. Other flora: In lower, tree-covered parts: ferns, spicebush, and ground pine. In upper, open parts: high-bush blueberry, and tall grasses.

Ash Brook Reservation's North Trail

Ash Brook Reservation's North Trail is being built and maintained by volunteers using only locally-harvested materials, except for the construction of a small bridge. To raise the trail over the wettest and muddiest areas, they place logs cut from nearby trees across the trail, a trail bed construction technique called "corduroy," or "accordion." But since flooding can dislodge the logs, volunteers take additional steps. After they place logs across muddy trail sections, they walk on them to push them into the mud. Then they shovel mud over the logs, cover them with dead leaves and grass, pour water over it all, and then walk over it to make the grass and leaves adhere to the mud.

From there, nature takes over. The trail bed's mud/leaf/grass mixture hardens into an adobe-like composition, and months later, grasses and other plants begin growing on the trail bed. Underneath, their roots secure the raised trail bed from washing away, and above ground, they blend with the surrounding area. In some parts they blend in so well the trail bed appears to be a natural formation.

The trail's planning and initial construction began in 2004 when Marc Grobman, a volunteer Adopt-A-Trail steward for Union County's Department of Parks & Recreation, marked the trail's route and began laying broken branches across muddy sections. Members of the county's Adopt-A-Trail Chainsaw Crew, Bob Czaja, Larry Russo, Ned O'Connell, and Paul Hansen, cut and removed trees whenever they fell across the trail, and cut dead tree branches into properly-sized logs for the trail's corduroy sections.

Trail stewards Rich Palmatier and Larry Russo provided additional construction and maintenance help. Other trail stewards and local residents provided and continue to provide assistance. Thanks to volunteers, Ash Brook Reservation's North Trail improves every year. If you would like to volunteer, please email Marc Grobman at marc@marcgro.com.

Directions to Ash Brook Reservation

GPS or Waze: Follow directions for [1776 Raritan Rd., Scotch Plains, NJ 07076](#), till you arrive at the Union County Vocational & Technical Schools' main entrance. Then see section below, "Directions to Hiking Trail Entrance and Parking Information."

From Scotch Plains / Fanwood / Westfield / Garwood via Route 28 / North Ave. / South Ave.

1. On Park Avenue go South (toward Clark) heading toward Lake Avenue.
2. Right on Raritan Road/Rte. 611 (across street on right is Center for Hope Hospice).
3. Pass Board of Education on left. About 50 feet ahead, turn left (on right is a sign with arrow saying "Main Entrance"). Now see below, "Directions to Hiking Trail Entrance and Parking Information."

From Scotch Plains / Fanwood / Plainfield via US 22 and Terrell Road

1. From US 22 go south on Terrell Rd., which is between the Sears store and Sears Automotive.
2. Cross South Avenue. Eventually road bears left and becomes Raritan Road/Rte. 611.
3. Pass Do Not Enter one-way sign on right.
4. Take next right at sign saying "Main Entrance." Now see below, "Directions to Hiking Trail Entrance and Parking Information."

From Clark via Lake Avenue

1. Go north on Lake Avenue heading toward Park Avenue in Scotch Plains.
2. At fire house on right & Center for Hope Hospice on left, turn Left on Raritan Road / Rte. 611.
3. Pass Board of Education on left. Go about 50 feet, turn Left onto one-way road. Now see below, "Directions to Hiking Trail Entrance and Parking Information."

Directions to Hiking Trail Entrance and Parking Information

1. Follow road to end of parking lot. Turn right and continue to police academy on left. If there are only a few cars between yellow-lined spaces, you can park there. If lot is crowded, academy is having classes, so park further to right between white-lined spaces.
2. After parking, walk to the right of the police academy. Pass the picnic table on the right, then turn right for trail entrance.

Disclaimer: The map and all information in this flyer were created by Marc Grobman, a volunteer trail steward in the Union County Adopt-A-Trail program. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Union County Parks and Recreation Department.