

## 12 months in Buchanan County Parks and Natural Areas

April – Guy Grover Timber and Tree Plantings

<http://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Buchanan/Park/Guy-Grover-Timber-and-Tree-Plantings.aspx>

Directions: On Nolan Ave two miles south of the Quasqueton Diagonal Blvd between Independence and Quasqueton.

If you go: Remember the park is a hunting area as well as a nature enjoyment and fishing area. Wear bright colors during spring turkey season and come mid-day to avoid most hunters and on sunny days to enjoy the best wildflower and pollinator activity. There can be a lot of mosquitos in later spring and early summer. North section of trail will flood when Wapsipinicon floods. Poison Ivy is abundant, but staying on trails is pretty clear.

Spring certainly has more people outdoors enjoy the beauty of the weather and the surroundings. Step off the beaten path and do your walking or running at one of your Buchanan County Conservation parks or natural areas.

Late April and Early May are the peak seasons for woodland wildflowers and one of our best places to enjoy a diversity and abundance of these spring ephemerals (they pop up to flower and seed in spring before the tree leaves shade the ground where they grow) is Guy Grover Timber and Tree Plantings between Independence and Quasqueton. The warm weather has hillsides of wildflowers already blooming with hundreds of red admiral butterflies (photo 1) flitting in to enjoy the nectar.



Taking the easy to follow trail counter clockwise from the parking area, you will encounter violets (photo 2) and buttercups along the more open areas. The trail takes you uphill into an open area where the gobble of several turkey toms was heard Monday afternoon. Winding past the planted pines, you turn into the more natural upland of deciduous trees (the ones that lose their leaves in the fall) where the wildflowers are most prevalent.

Gooseberry bushes are blooming now and raspberries are leafing out as you head up the second hillside. Keep your eyes peeled now for the dainty white clumps of Dutchman's breeches (photo 3) – the individual flowers look like a pair of pants hanging upside down from the 2 legs. This is where the butterflies were really active – nectaring, sunning and feeding on tree sap. Among the Dutchman's breeches are scattered bloodroot (yes, the roots are red) and clumps of spring beauty. Unfortunately, the hilltop is also the location of several clumps of invasive garlic mustard (photo 4).



Feel free to pull out clumps of garlic mustard from the roots to remove the invasives and take them home for a dinner of spring greens; if you are unsure of their identity, crush a leaf in your fingers – the smell of garlic is unmistakable. Garlic mustard produces hundreds of seeds from each plant and the developing leaf clumps can become so dense they shade out and outcompete native wildflowers in just a few years. By mid-May, the flowering stalks will be 3-4 feet tall and white flowers will adorn the tops. Within a couple of weeks developing seeds will be spread.

Going down the hill, you will get expansive views of the Wapsipinicon winding along the north side of the park. The trail forks at the bottom of the hill; going right along the river to the east parcel or left along the river back around to the parking lot. As you follow to the left, you will gently drop down to a wetland slew that fills with water as the river rises and then stays trapped in little ponds. The frogs are in full chorus now – toads and green frogs joining in with the tiny chorus frogs and numerous birds to create a spring symphony.

In the coming weeks look for a succession of wildflowers including: yellow violets, Jacob's Ladder, wild phlox, wild columbine, jack-in-the-pulpit, wild ginger, wild geranium, wild anise, thimbleweed, golden alexander, spiderwort, waterleaf, Solomon's seal, and showy orchids.

For more information about Buchanan County Conservation Board parks, programs and activities, visit [www.buchanancountyparks.com](http://www.buchanancountyparks.com).