



The mission of the Environmental Cooperative is to expand and coordinate conservation throughout the Hudson Valley by supporting current efforts and developing new programs to inspire further engagement in conservation education, outreach, and research by the community and region.

Here at the Environmental Cooperative
we recycle!

Please leave this brochure and
map in the box provided at the barn.



Trail created by Lydia Gold
Environmental Studies major class of 2017

The Environmental Cooperative at Vassar Barns

Contact Us

50 Vassar Farm Lane
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

Multi-sensory Trail Guide

At the Vassar
Ecological Preserve



To begin, carefully follow the road
around the barn to the pond

1. Pond Stop

Can you see any turtles, herons, ducks or frogs? Can you hear the insects fly by? Can you feel the rays of the sun? Keep walking and observe on the dock!

2. Red Maple Grove

Look at the trees around you! What do you notice? Some of the trees have smooth bark, these are red maples! They can grow to over 120 feet tall. The trees with scaly or flaky bark are black cherry trees!

3. Cover Boards

On the left side of the trail you will see some wood cookies with handles! Lift them up! What do you see? Maybe a worm or salamander. If you see what looks like white string, it is actually a mushroom. How does the soil feel and smell? Is it wet? Most organisms that live under the boards are decomposers, which means they breakdown and recycle nutrients.

4. Dead Tree

If you look closely you will see squiggly lines going up and down the part of the tree without any bark. These squiggly lines were made by beetles! Beetles lay their eggs under the bark and when the eggs hatch, called larvae, they tunnel through the wood making these squiggles. When the tree dies, the bark falls off. Dead trees are important homes for many living things such as mushrooms and insects.

5. Field

You have just left the forest and you will see a field in front of you! It may seem warmer and brighter due to the loss of tree cover. The shade of the forest helps to keep you cool and protected from the sun.

6. Stream

Try closing your eyes. What do you hear? If you listen closely you can hear water flowing past in the stream. The water in this stream comes from an underground pool made by nature. Even in the summer there will be water flowing! Reach down and touch the water. The water will always be cold because it comes up from underground.

7. Bench

Take some time to sit quietly on the bench with your eyes closed. What do you hear, smell and feel?

8. Mugwort

If you look around this sign, you will see mugwort! Pick a few buds and crush them in your fingers, it will release a nice smell! Mugwort has been used for medicine, food and bug repellent. Mugwort is an invasive species and can take over old fields and meadows, here at Vassar we mow it regularly.

9. Farm

Look across the field. You will see a fenced in garden. This is a community garden, each small plot is managed by a different person. A lot of people don't have space to have gardens at their homes. A community garden allows people to grow a plot, take care of it and eat the fresh produce they grow!

10. Birdhouse

The two birdhouses are part of the preserve's Eastern Bluebird Project. This bird is native to New York and is our state bird. These birds are losing habitat so setting up birdhouses can help provide them with homes. It is important to take care of nature as best we can.