

“Discover Laurelwood Arboretum” Cell Phone Tour

Welcome & Instructions

Welcome to Laurelwood Arboretum, a Wayne Township public park. This tour guides you from the Knippenberg Center Complex, along many of the arboretum’s scenic paths, through natural and designed spaces and back to the Center.

We recommend that you wear sturdy shoes and stay on the trails for your safety and enjoyment.

If you create any trash, please take it with you when you leave the park.

It takes about an hour to complete this tour, depending on your walking pace and interests.

You will proceed from one marked, numbered Stop, or place of interest, to the next.

After you dial 973-547-1750, simply press the number of the Stop, and listen as we describe the place, its history and horticulture.

You can start, stop, or replay the audio clip whenever you please.

To stop, simply hang up.

To restart, redial the main tour number, and you will automatically continue.

To repeat a stop, press the Stop number again.

At the end of each audio clip are directions to the next Stop.

Begin your tour at Stop 1 - the Knippenberg Center Complex, The Knippenberg Education Center Porch

Stop 1 - The Knippenberg Center Complex

Laurelwood Arboretum was a gift to Wayne Township from Dorothy and John Knippenberg, who lived just across the street on Pines Lake Drive West. The Knippenbergs acquired this property over a period of time, starting in the 1940s.

It was mostly swampland then, but gradually, they transformed it into a commercial nursery and called it Laurelwood Gardens. They specialized in rhododendrons and azaleas and soon became widely known for developing many hybrid varieties. The name, Laurelwood, may have come from the nursery's laurels that grew happily under the native Canadian hemlocks.

The Knippenbergs enjoyed sharing their rhododendrons and azaleas with their neighbors, but they also had a bigger vision. It was their wish that the property would become a public park after their deaths. They envisioned the nursery as an arboretum, a place where trees and plants are grown to be seen by the public and studied, a kind of outdoor museum of trees and other woody plants.

Dorothy studied art at the Pratt Institute in New York and also had a lifelong interest in horticulture and landscape design. Her artistic sensibilities are evident throughout the property.

She worked in the gardens from sunrise to sunset every day until her death at the age of 96 and was often helped by friends, neighbors, and local children. A group of volunteers formed to support her efforts. In 2003, this informal group was incorporated as the nonprofit organization, Friends of Laurelwood Arboretum.

Following Dorothy's death in 2006, Friends of Laurelwood Arboretum assumed responsibility for management of the arboretum, in accordance with an agreement with Wayne Township. Today, the arboretum is managed by this volunteer organization whose enthusiasm matches Dorothy's passion for Laurelwood.

The Knippenberg Center for Education was dedicated in 2015. Open Tuesday through Sunday from noon - 4pm, and from April through October, it hosts a variety of educational programs and community activities. The adjoining Educational Greenhouse provides space for hands-on horticultural activities for all ages. The Pollinator Garden is alongside the Educational Greenhouse. Here, herbaceous perennials provide food and nectar for butterflies, bees, birds, and other pollinators. A succession of colorful blooms includes milkweed, goldenrod, coneflower, blazing star, aster, tickseed and beebalm. The garden is a certified Monarch Watch Waystation. Construction of the center and greenhouse was funded by the Passaic County Open Space, Farmland & Historic Preservation Trust, the Wayne Township Open Space Fund, and Friends of Laurelwood Arboretum.

From the Pollinator Garden, face the Pines Lake Drive West parking lot and cross the gravel path to Stop #2 - The Wetlands Garden

Stop 2 - The Wetlands Garden

The Wetlands Garden is an area in which water pools on the surface of the ground after heavy or prolonged rains. The plants grown in the low-lying wet area include river birch, dappled willow, maiden grass, pennisetum, leucothoe, and native chokeberry. They are surrounded by Norway

spruce, Kousa dogwood, Southern magnolia, Japanese cedar, arborvitae, rhododendron, foxglove and beauty berry. The Wetlands Garden is best viewed from the wooden walkway extending into the garden, attached to which is instructive signage about the plants. Both the garden and walkway were constructed thanks to a generous donation from Pines Lake Drive resident, James Veale and family. As this is a new garden, we are monitoring the growth and health of the plants that were specially selected for this environment.

Walk along the gravel path, past the Knippenberg Center for Education to Stop 3 - The Native Plant Demonstration Garden.

Stop 3 - The Native Plant Demonstration Garden

The Native Plant Demonstration Garden features plants that are native to Passaic County, New Jersey and the East Coast, as well as cultivated varieties of native plants that are available at garden centers, nurseries, and catalogs. An interpretive map and a plant-specific brochure may be found at the entrance to this garden.

Plants here are arranged in groups, such as those requiring sun, shade, wet, or acid soil conditions, or those that attract pollinators. There are more than 200 varieties of perennials, shrubs, grasses, ferns and trees in this garden. Some exotic, or non-native non-invasive plants were retained because they reflect Laurelwood's history.

Here, and as you tour the arboretum, you will notice deer netting. Deer damage is one of our most serious challenges. We spray continuously and put up netting to prevent deer from trampling, eating, or rubbing against our most treasured plantings. Despite our best efforts, the arboretum still suffers from significant deer damage.

Facing the Center, turn right and proceed to Stop 4, the Sensory Garden.

You will pass a fine specimen tree on the right - the Japanese Umbrella Pine, planted by the Knippenbergs as they began to re-create the property as a public park.

Stop 4 - The Sensory Garden

Years ago, the Knippenbergs had a succession of different gardens in this space. It was first a rhododendron propagation area, then a vegetable garden, then a Braille Trail created by a local Girl Scout and finally, a meadow. The Sensory Garden was redesigned to serve people with visual, physical and emotional challenges. Dedicated in 2012, it was funded by the Passaic County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, the Lions Clubs of Wayne and West Milford, Wayne Township; and Friends of Laurelwood Arboretum.

This barrier-free space is designed with wide pathways and raised beds, so that visitors of all ages and abilities can experience nature up close.

Each of the four raised beds features plants that encourage the use of a specific sense-- sight, smell, touch, or taste. The 5th sense, sound, is represented in the bubbling water fountain.

The Learning Circle at the back is a good place for quiet contemplation and educational gatherings.

The Sensory Garden is put to bed each fall and re-created each spring by Laurelwood staff and volunteers.

The Sensory Garden and all Laurelwood's gardens are maintained by volunteers. Each year, the arboretum benefits from the work of more than 200 volunteers, who contribute more than 12,000 hours of their time annually. It's a way of life at Laurelwood – a public/private partnership that's all about passion for plants and nature and respect for those who have come before.

To learn more about the plants in this garden, please take a Sensory Garden brochure from the holder.

Exit the Sensory Garden and, with the wooden pavilion on your left, begin your ascent of Home Hill. Laurelwood Volunteers enjoy refreshments after working in the gardens in the pavilion's shade.

Proceed up Home Hill to Stop 5, Summer Garden and Jack's Bench.

Stop 5 - Summer Garden and Jack's Bench

On your right, a pair of 'English Roseum' Rhododendron flank the entry to the Summer Garden. A handsome Adirondack bench, created by New Jersey woodworking artisan, David Robinson, offers a quiet place to sit. It was donated by and named for a longtime friend of the Knippenbergs.

Surrounding the bench are hardy perennials such as Peony, Rose Campion, and Lungwort. Tender perennials like Angel's Trumpet with its pendant, trumpet-like blooms, are wintered over in our greenhouse and replanted each Spring, bringing an exotic, tropical feel wherever they are placed.

Take note of the wood sculptural pieces here and throughout the arboretum. The "Wooden Pants," were placed here by Dorothy Knippenberg. Volunteers continue to use found wood to create interesting forms that enhance and accentuate the natural surroundings and bring life to the expression, "No wood leaves Laurelwood."

Please visit our website to learn more about Laurelwood's Donate-A-Bench Program.

On your left along Home Hill, is the Propagation Greenhouse, where we continue the important work of propagating and preserving the special cultivars for which Laurelwood is known.

Located on the same site as the 1940's original greenhouse, this new structure was built with funding from the Passaic County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, Wayne Township; and Friends of Laurelwood Arboretum.

Continue along the Home Hill Path to Stop 6, Laurel Pond.

Stop 6 - Laurel Pond

Laurel Pond was one of the first construction projects at Laurelwood. The Knippenbergs expanded the stream that runs through the property. Today, the pond is the primary source of irrigation for the arboretum. Two fountains aerate the pond water.

The pond is a good place for bird watching. Both migrating and resident birds abound at Laurelwood. The Pileated Woodpecker, American Goldfinch, Ruby Throated Hummingbird, Great Crested Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Great Blue Heron, Scarlet Tanager, Red Tail Hawk and many other bird species make Laurelwood their home. As you walk through the arboretum, you will see bird signs and bird houses along the way that were placed by an Eagle Scout. If you spot a bird and know its name, please add it to the wildlife registry at the Knippenberg Center for Education. In early spring, be still and listen for Spring Peepers, tiny tree frogs emerging from their winter hibernation in the pond.

Turn left, along Azalea Way to Stop 7 - Azalea Way

Stop 7 - Azalea Way

This area is one of the arboretum's favorite attractions, especially in mid-May when the hybrid azaleas bred by Joseph Gable of Pennsylvania in the early 1900's are in bloom. Among them are: 'Othello,' 'Snow' and the sweet-scented 'Rose Greeley.' 'Laurelwood Sunset,' an evergreen azalea propagated by one of our volunteers, grown in our greenhouse, and registered by the Royal Horticultural Society, is planted along Azalea Way.

Continue down the hill to Stop 8, the Knippenberg Memorial Gazebo.

Stop 8 - The Knippenberg Memorial Gazebo

At the bridge, on the left, is a native Redbud and a lovely Threadleaf Japanese Maple. Also, on the left at the bridge, please note the handsome Cedar of Lebanon tree.

Beyond is a charming gazebo on the site where Dorothy Knippenberg and her volunteers would sit on a ring of tree stumps, sharing cheese and crackers after a long work session.

The hand-hewn gazebo was created by David Robinson using native wood from Osage Orange and Red Cedar trees. A close friend of the Knippenbergs donated the funds for the gazebo in memory of John and Dorothy.

This picturesque spot overlooking Laurel Pond is a favorite setting for weddings and photo shoots. Commercial photographers must obtain a permit at the Knippenberg Center or online.

Bare left onto Brook Road to Stop 9, Brook Road.

Stop 9 - Brook Road

This walking path runs the entire length of the arboretum. We think of it as our “Fifth Avenue,” with small “pocket” gardens on both sides. The brook along its left side gives this pathway its name.

The first place of interest along Brook Road is the Three Corners Garden at the intersection of Azalea Way, Brook Road and the Knippenberg Memorial Gazebo. Brightened with colorful annuals, perennials, shrubs and a specimen weeping cut leaf Japanese Maple, this garden also includes reintroduced heather and hydrangeas.

Continuing along, Japanese Primrose bloom in the Spring near the feeder stream on the right side, with tall White Oaks as a backdrop.

Over the second bridge, on the left you will spy “The Gate to Nowhere” a gift from a longtime volunteer with a sense of humor.

As you stroll along, try to spot the “Fairy Stump” on your left - a result of Superstorm Sandy. As with most of the downed trees in the arboretum, its wood was mulched for reuse. The stump remains to provide a home for animals, insects and Laurelwood’s garden fairies.

On the hillside to the right, John and Dorothy maintained test gardens where they planted rhododendron cultivars sent to them from all over the country. These were subjected to the New Jersey climate and cultivated for East Coast growers. At one time, they raised 6,000 seedlings on the hillsides of Laurelwood. The Knippenbergs imported plants from England and donated cuttings, seeds and pollen to growers throughout the world. Over the years, they raised and/or hybridized approximately 50 new rhododendron cultivars.

Continuing along Brook Road, you will come to the 3rd bridge on the left. Spend some time admiring this Asian-inspired landscape designed by Dorothy Knippenberg. The weeping hemlock, prostrate juniper and lichen-covered rocks imbue this area with a distinctly Eastern feeling.

Further along, on the left, you will encounter an unusual fence. Built by a Laurelwood volunteer, it makes both practical and decorative use of downed White Oak and Rhododendron wood.

At the fourth bridge, a grove of Redbuds has made itself comfortable, and just beyond, a 40’ high climbing hydrangea snakes its way up an ash tree.

Around the fourth bridge, decide if you have time for an off-road detour. If so, turn right onto Cedar Hill Road. About 50 feet along, look for a rustic wooden arbor on your right. This is the entrance to Stop 10,

Dorothy's Way. If you don't have time, or prefer to stay on a flat surface, continue along Brook Road to Stop 12, South Rock Garden.

Stop 10 - Dorothy's Way

This 500-foot soft footpath parallels Brook Road and is marked at each end by an arbor created by Eagle Scouts using cedar wood from the arboretum. If your Scout troop is looking for volunteer opportunities, please consider Laurelwood.

Through the years, Dorothy's Way has been enhanced with daffodils and native plants.

We believe that many of the rhododendrons along Dorothy's Way were part of a Knippenberg hybrid rhododendron test garden. They usually bloom in late May. The path takes you up close under and among the huge rhododendrons. What a way to see these fantastic blooms, including Dexter rhododendrons on both sides.

Dorothy's Way is one of the best places for a walk during the heat of summer. Under the tall oaks and lush rhododendrons, and surrounded by shade loving ferns, it remains cool and shaded.

If you have taken Dorothy's Way, return to Brook Road and proceed to the right. Continue past the 4th bridge.

In the Spring, you may wish to extend your tour to the Lilac Walk and the "Back Forty." If so, look to your right for a road that leads to the entrance to this naturalized area.

Stop 11 - Lilac Walk and the Back Forty

Laurelwood's Lilac Restoration Committee is developing a collection of lilacs that represent many colors, fragrances and bloom times of this wonderful plant. Lilacs can bloom from late April to June, but full bloom usually occurs around Mother's Day.

Our collection currently includes 'President Lincoln,' 'Monge,' 'Remembrance,' 'Sensation,' 'Maiden's Blush' and the diminutive Korean Lilac 'Miss Kim.'

The "Back Forty" is a behind-the-scenes area beyond Lilac Walk. We do not cultivate or prune plantings in the "Back Forty." Milkweed, beloved by Monarch butterflies, flourishes here. Come fall, look for the butterflies' orange and white wings. Here is also where Wayne Township's leaves and Laurelwood's cuttings are composted into what we call "black gold."

Turn around and return to Brook Road. Then turn right and proceed to Stop 12, South Rock Garden.

Stop 12 - South Rock Garden

You have reached the farthest edge of our 30-acre arboretum and have completed about one-half of the tour.

Stop to rest on a secluded bench and enjoy the serenity of this beautiful garden. The plant palette here includes unusual low-growing evergreens whose ground-hugging and mounding forms are a backdrop for seasonal blooms of crocus, azalea, iris, dianthus and astilbe.

Dorothy Knippenberg had an abiding interest in Asian style rock gardens. This was one of the first special gardens she created, and it was always her favorite. The garden has many beautiful plantings and unique design features including a babbling brook and a Japanese-style bridge.

The Watnong Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society partnered with the arboretum to restore areas of this garden to reflect Dorothy's original vision.

Exit the South Rock Garden and turn right onto Brook Road. Just a bit beyond, is a sign on the left that points to Stop 13 - Dawn Redwood Glade. and a footpath to the Dawn Redwood.

Stop 13 – The Dawn Redwood Glade

The Dawn Redwood, a member of the Sequoia family, is the tallest tree in the glade. It is one of the few cone-bearing deciduous trees and has the only cone with four sides. During the summer, its needles are green, and in autumn they turn brick red before shedding. Dawn Redwoods grow very quickly when they are young. As they age, their trunks become fluted.

Fossil records show that Dawn Redwood grew 50 to 100 million years ago when dinosaurs roamed the earth. They were thought to be extinct and were known only through plant fossil records. In 1947, Dawn Redwoods were discovered growing in China's Hubei Province. Shortly after they were discovered, a specimen was gifted to the Knippenbergs. It was one of the first Dawn Redwood planted in the United States.

Return to Brook Road, continue, bear left and then turn left to Stop 14, Ridge Road.

Stop 14 - Ridge Road

On the left, along the brook, is the Silver Garden. Its deer-resistant, drought-tolerant plants are primarily silver and fuzzy-leafed.

Continue along about 200 feet to see the unusual Stewartia tree on the right, with its unusual exfoliating bark and beautiful, camellia-like flowers that bloom in June.

Proceeding uphill, take note of the acid-loving shrubs, century old hemlock trees and large-leaf rhododendrons which dominate this area. For a unique vantage point, look to the left at the brook and gardens beyond.

In early Spring, Winter Aconite and Snowdrops show their colors along this road. Later, Eastern Redbuds decorate the understory with tiny, magenta flowers studding their branches. Dogwoods follow, lighting up this sylvan spot with their flowers, and then the Mountain Laurels with their honeyed scent.

If you are here after a recent rain in steamy midsummer, you may see the white, mushroom-like Indian Pipe, a native wildflower, growing in the leaf mold. Also known as Ghost Plant, it relies on a symbiotic relationship with a soil fungus to obtain food.

Along Ridge Road on the left are labeled understory trees such as Ironwood and Dogwood. Stop 15, Eastern Hemlocks, is at the top of the hill.

Stop 15 - Eastern Hemlocks

Admire this stand of tall Eastern Hemlocks, remnants of the old growth ravine forests that have existed since the last ice age.

It was the hemlocks that first interested Dorothy and John Knippenberg in this property. They provide the shade that rhododendrons and azaleas need and were perfect for their commercial nursery. On hot summer days, Dorothy worked here with her crew, enjoying a slight breeze and the hemlocks' fragrant scent.

Now, the hemlocks are out of their comfort zone because of climate change. They are also vulnerable to attack by an invasive, aphid-like insect, called wooly adelgid. John Knippenberg showed great foresight when he started treating the hemlocks many years ago. This is the only area in the arboretum that is treated. No pesticides or non-organic chemicals are used elsewhere on the property. While hemlocks have all but disappeared in the surrounding areas, we still have hemlocks at Laurelwood.

Continue to the intersection of Ridge Road and Long Valley Road to Stop 16, Southern Magnolia 'Edith Bogue'.

Stop 16 - Southern Magnolia, 'Edith Bogue'

As you approach the intersection of Ridge and Long Valley Roads, Southern Magnolia 'Edith Bogue' rises into view on the far right. This is one of the hardiest Magnolia cultivars, but it is seldom found north of Laurelwood Arboretum. 'Edith Bogue' has long, broad, glossy leaves and sports huge 8-inch fragrant flowers in July, followed by red fruit in September and dried pods throughout the winter. This specimen is one of several in the arboretum.

This was Dorothy's favorite Magnolia, and it's a favorite of honeybees too. In September, birds feast on its small red fruits.

Continue along Ridge Road to Stop 17, the Hybrid Rhododendron Collection.

Stop 17 - Hybrid Rhododendron Collection

A grove of Dexter Rhododendrons grows along the road on the right just past Long Valley Road. Charles Dexter, a Cape Cod hybridizer, created some of the most beautiful big leaf rhododendrons in the mid-Atlantic region. The trunks of these rhododendrons attest to their

longevity. Their foliage is dense, and the flowers, many of which are fragrant, are of superior size and color.

On the left are the small leaf Nearing rhododendrons. Guy Nearing was a gifted botanist and internationally known expert in hollies, rhododendron and lichen. He owned two nurseries in New Jersey, where he hybridized hardy and dwarf rhododendrons. Laurelwood still has some of Guy Nearing's introductions including 'Mary Fleming,' 'Ramapo,' 'Rochelle,' 'Windbeam,' and 'Brandywine.'

Also, on the left are rhododendrons hybridized by Joseph Gable, who bred many fine rhododendrons at his nursery in Stewartstown, Pennsylvania. Several of Gable's early creations found their way to Laurelwood Gardens. Today, the arboretum is home to many Gable rhododendrons including 'Caroline,' 'Conewago Improved,' 'County of York,' 'David Gable,' 'Cadis,' 'Mary Belle' and 'Catalgla,' as well as many of his azaleas.

The Knippenbergs were known for cultivating rare plants and loved unusual varieties. They propagated by taking cuttings and layering. They began hybridizing rhododendrons in 1955, intent on propagating interesting and improved plants, such as hardy large-leafed varieties and those with greater flower substance and later bloom.

Today, our volunteer Rhododendron Study Team is identifying and documenting the location of the hundreds of rhododendrons at Laurelwood. Digitizing the collection using Dorothy's photographs, their goal is to locate and identify her hybrids, including those she registered. They also hope to replace some of the important hybrids that are no longer exhibited here by reaching out to hybridizers and arboreta across the country, as well as to local residents

Our brochure, *The Role of Laurelwood Gardens in East Coast Rhododendron Hybridizing*, is available on our website and at the Knippenberg Center.

Proceed along Ridge Road to Stop 18, the Spring Garden.

Stop 18 - The Spring Garden

Look left before the intersection of Ridge Road, Fairway and Easy Way for the Spring Garden. Planted predominantly with spring blooming bulbs which bloom, from April through May. This garden also features a statuesque Kousa Dogwood tree. Sometimes called a Japanese Flowering Dogwood, this deciduous tree is native to eastern Asia. It blooms 6 weeks later than native dogwoods and features very showy flowers in late spring. When the blossoms fall to the ground, it looks like snow in June.

At the intersection, turn right onto Easy Way and continue to Stop 19 Easy Way .

You are almost back to the Knippenberg Center Complex and the tour's end.

Stop 19 - Easy Way

It's all downhill now, and here the hillside is covered with white foxglove in late Spring. Dorothy allowed only white foxglove at Laurelwood, and "pulled the pinks." Loyal to her

wishes, staff and volunteers continue to remove the errant pink foxglove that occasionally appear. See the Knippenberg Education Center on your right? Your tour of Laurelwood Arboretum has come to an end. Comments about this tour may be left at the Knippenberg Center or at info@laurelwoodarboretum.org

Thank you for visiting and please come again, as each season brings fresh beauty to Laurelwood Arboretum.

Laurelwood Arboretum is open year 'round from 8 am to dusk, except in emergency conditions.

Memberships, donations, grants and Wayne Township funds ensure that this unique property will remain an oasis for future generations of visitors who come to be inspired and renewed.

We invite you to become a member of Friends of Laurelwood Arboretum. Membership dues help support, maintain and enhance this very special place.

Join us at www.laurelwoodarboretum.org or by mail as we “*Connect People with Nature.*”

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