

Hike through
McDonald Woods
to experience
an oak woodland.

Along the way, you'll
see and hear some of the
many plants and animals
that make up this
natural community.
And you'll read about
the conservation efforts
that will help keep
this fragile Illinois
environment healthy for
future generations.

McDONALD WOODS IS...

A Rare Treasure



McDonald Woods is a small piece of a larger oak woodland area that thrived in this region just a century ago.

For thousands of years, oak woodlands have been an important part of the landscape that is now Illinois. But many years of land development have reduced their size and number. The Chicago Botanic Garden's McDonald Woods provides a rare opportunity to see and experience the beauty and diversity of an oak woodland.

A Community of Plants and Animals



McDonald Woods provides homes for an incredible array of plants and animals. So far, Chicago Botanic Garden staff and volunteers have counted more than 400 species of native plants, 20 species of mammals, 118 species of birds and thousands of insects in this oak woodland community. Some of these plant species, including northern cranesbill, forked aster, dwarf raspberry and dog violet, are threatened or endangered in the state of Illinois.

A Living Classroom



McDonald Woods is the setting for environmental education and conservation research. The Chicago Botanic Garden works with scientific organizations throughout the region to study the plants and animals of this oak woodland community. One of these is Chicago Wilderness – a partnership of more than 190 conservation organizations dedicated to preserving and restoring the natural areas around Chicago. This organization has designated McDonald Woods as a demonstration site for oak woodland restoration in the Chicagoland area.

STROLL THE McDONALD WOODS TRAIL

Here are a few native woodland species to watch and listen for as you walk this three-quarter-mile path:

TREES



Red Oak

(*Quercus rubra*)
This tree found in moist woodlands is more shade-tolerant than other oaks and has sharply pointed leaves.



Swamp White Oak

(*Quercus bicolor*)
This oak thrives in low, wet areas and has leaves with a velvety underside.



White Oak

(*Quercus alba*)
White oak, the dominant oak in our woodland, flourishes in well-drained soils, usually on higher ground.

BIRDS



Downy Woodpecker

(*Picoides pubescens*)
Listen for the tapping of this black-and-white songbird.



Red-Eyed Vireo

(*Vireo olivaceus*)
This migrant from the tropics is a vocal inhabitant of the treetops.



White-Breasted Nuthatch

(*Sitta carolinensis*)
This short-tailed songbird, similar to a woodpecker, displays the unusual behavior of descending tree trunks upside down. Listen for its characteristic “ank ank” call year-round.

FLOWERS



Purple Spring Cress

(*Cardamine douglassii*)
Look for attractive lavender spikes of flowers in spring. Can be found in wetter sites.



Red Trillium

(*Trillium recurvatum*)
Upright dark red petals and mottled leaves welcome spring.



Short's Aster

(*Aster shortii*)
Clusters of sky-blue flowers bloom in late summer.



Tall Thistle

(*Cirsium altissimum*)
This rare woodland wildflower features large pink flowers that bloom in mid- to late summer. Butterflies love it.

INSECTS



Appalachian Eyed Brown Butterfly

(*Satyrodes appalachia*)
This brown butterfly depends on open wetland areas of healthy oak woodlands. Look for it in late summer.



Hop Merchant

(*Polygonia comma*)
This orange-brown butterfly with irregular wing edges feeds on the sap of trees. It can be seen most of the year, including winter.



Underwing Moth

(*Catocala* sp.)
Several species of this camouflaged moth live in oak woodlands. It displays bright orange or pink underwings when it flies from tree to tree. Look for it in summer.

ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Woods Invaded



McDonald Woods may seem healthy, but many parts are not. Weedy non-native and native plants have invaded the woods and are reproducing at an alarming rate. These aggressive plants threaten to replace native oak woodland plants and oak tree seedlings. Recent research has identified exotic earthworms as an additional threat to the oak woodland. Non-native earthworms consume leaf litter, thereby disrupting nutrient cycling and eliminating the natural habitat of animals and insects that depend on native woodland plants.

Restoring Health



The Chicago Botanic Garden works to protect and restore the native diversity of McDonald Woods. Staff and volunteers cut and pull weedy plants such as buckthorn and garlic mustard. Ecologists conduct carefully controlled burns in selected areas of McDonald Woods to clear out invasive plants. They also collect and plant the seeds of native grasses, sedges and wildflowers. These efforts help to ensure the regeneration of the plants and animals of this oak woodland community.

Abundant Life

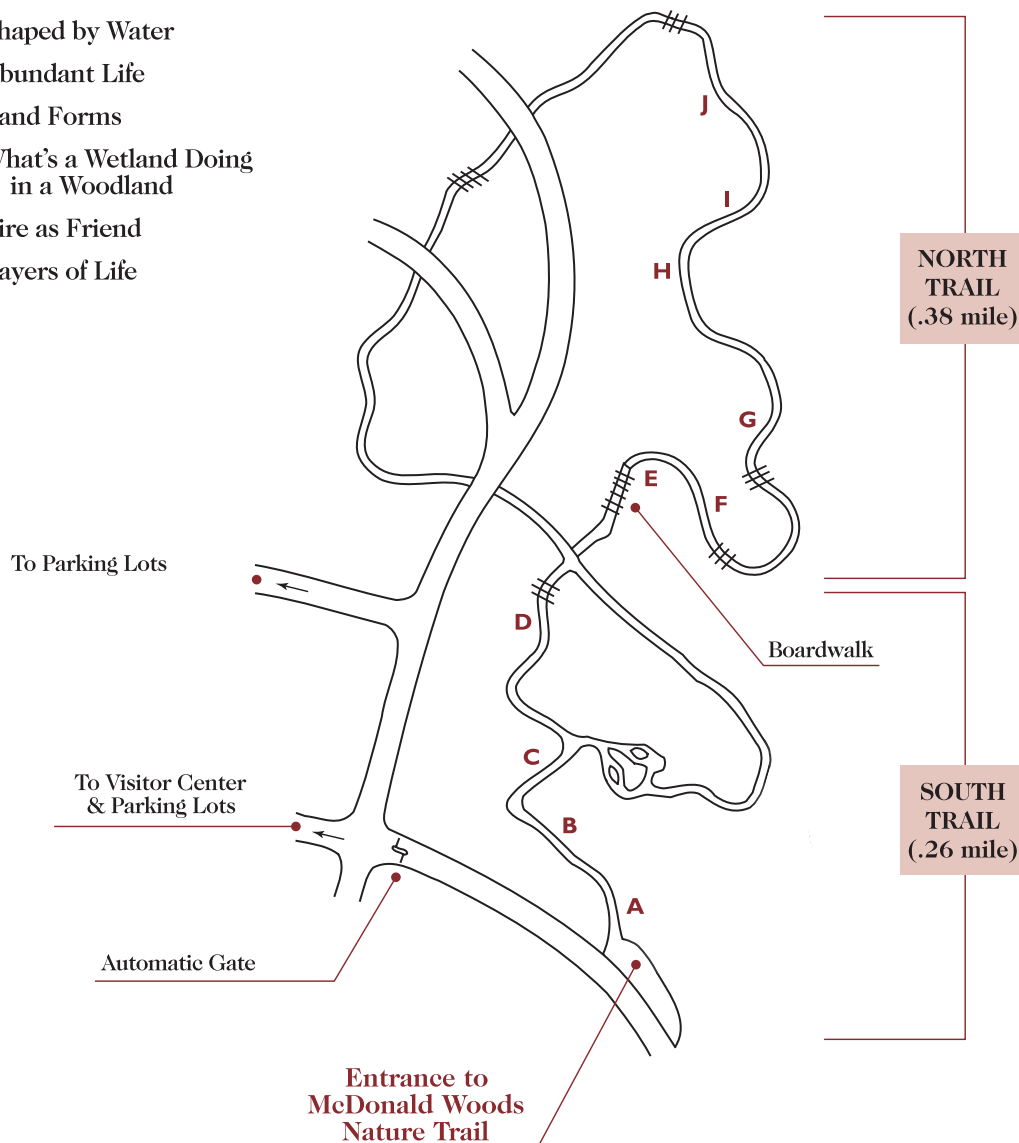
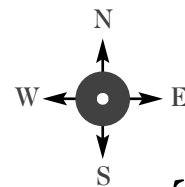


Restoration returns species diversity to oak woodlands. In a restored woodland, oaks and other trees grow far enough apart so that sunlight reaches the ground. This open, sunny environment supports a diversity of plants, animals and insects. The Chicago Botanic Garden is committed to restoring diversity and maintaining the health of McDonald Woods so that future generations can enjoy this natural resource.



You'll find interesting information about McDonald Woods at these stops.

- A** Hidden Inhabitants
- B** An Oak Framework
- C** A Supportive Community
- D** Woods Invaded
- E** Shaped by Water
- F** Abundant Life
- G** Land Forms
- H** What's a Wetland Doing in a Woodland
- I** Fire as Friend
- J** Layers of Life



MARY MIX McDONALD WOODS