

July 2, 2022  
Medina Gazette Edition

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# Leaflet


Your Connection to Nature  Medina County Park District

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Transverse-banded flower fly  
Photo by: Bill Stitt

## For the Love of Flies!

By: Shelley Tender, Interpretive Services Manager

Flies definitely have a bad reputation. Some are pretty irritating, right? It is hard to love creatures who just seem to be out to annoy and bite you. Those biting gnats, mosquitos, and deer flies are the worst! But few people are probably aware of just how beneficial some of these little two-winged fliers really are.

The Order Diptera contains what are called the True Flies. Flies, gnats, and mosquitos are all part of this group. With over 160,000 known species found abundantly in terrestrial ecosystems across the globe, it is the second largest order of insects following beetles and preceding bees and wasps.

Flies do more than their fair share in helping to create a healthy, balanced environment. They provide pest control, are a food source for other animals like birds and fish, act as decomposers and soil conditioners, can indicate water quality, and are the second most important pollinating species of both wild and cultivated plants.

Yes, that is right. Next to bees, flies are the second most important group of pollinating insects! Bees visit flowers for nectar for themselves but gather pollen to provision their nests with food for their young. Flies have slightly different reasons for visiting flowers.

A family of flower flies, or as they are scientifically known, Syrphidae flies, are typically the pollinating flies of the group. Like bees, these flies may visit flowers for nectar and pollen. For flies though, this is food only for themselves so that they obtain the energy and proteins needed to reproduce. They may also visit to lay their eggs since the plant may provide cover and food for developing larvae. In very cold climates, some flowers provide a warm place to take shelter. Finally, flowers can also serve as rendezvous sites for mating. Any of these behaviors can result in the transfer of pollen between plants and end in pollination.

Research suggests that there are over 550 species of flowering plants that are regularly visited by flies, and more than 100 cultivated crops depend chiefly on fly pollination. You can thank flies for some of your favorites including pears, apples, strawberries, cherries, plums, apricots, peaches, mangoes, fennel, coriander, caraway, onions, parsley, carrots, and many more!

Some flies have specialized relationships with specific flowers, while other flies are generalists, feeding from a wide variety of flowers. A few of our early blooming spring wildflowers are good examples of specialization. The dark maroon color and putrid aroma of the flowers of red trillium, paw paw, and skunk cabbage all exhibit a deceptive form of adaptation that lures carrion flies to them by imitating the appearance of rotting flesh. Since the flies seek out decaying meat in which to lay their eggs, they are attracted to the flowers. These flowers do not produce nectar. Instead, they reward the fly with a pollen meal.

In a similar fashion, Jack-in-the-pulpit flowers have a fungus-like smell that attracts fungus gnats. The "Jack" of the plant is called a spadix and houses the tiny flowers. The outer covering, called the spathe, is rather slippery, so after entering, a gnat may become entrapped – unable to crawl back up the slippery surface to get out. In order to exit, the fly must find the small opening at the base of the spathe, and in so doing, becomes dusted with pollen that it can then transfer to another plant. By entrapping the insect in this way, the plant ensures pollination.

It is kind of a shame that with the important work these flies are doing, they often go unnoticed. Many flies employ mimicry coloration, leading them to be mistaken for bees and wasps a good percentage of the time. A close observer can easily distinguish a fly from its hymenoptera counterparts by first looking at its wings. As mentioned above, flies have two wings, or one pair, where bees and wasps have two pair of wings. You can also tell by the stout body shape with less obvious waist; large round eyes that cover much of the face; and the short, often-hard-to-see antennae.

The next time you see what you think is a small bee, look twice as you may just be seeing a flower fly instead!



## Native Plant SALE



Friends of Medina County Parks' Native Plant Sale returns with in-person sale dates taking place at Oenslager Nature Center on select weekends in July and, again, in September. Proceeds from the plant sale support Friends of Medina County Parks.

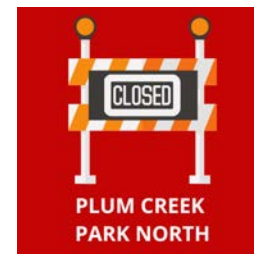
You can check out the entire plant catalog at [www.medinacountyparks.com](http://www.medinacountyparks.com) to see what's growing, but note that availability of species will vary from week to week as plants reach marketable maturity. To view the catalog from the website, click on *Programs, Public Programs & Events*, then on the *Special Events* icon.

Saturday, July 9: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, July 10: 1 to 4 p.m.

Saturday July 16: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, July 17: 1 to 4 p.m.



## Plum Creek Park North Remains Closed Through the Summer

Plum Creek Park North (2390 Plum Creek Parkway, Brunswick Hills, Ohio 44212) will remain closed this summer to enable construction crews to complete Phase

1 of the new multipurpose Plum Creek Greenway trail. The timeline for the project has been extended due to weather and the delayed availability of construction materials. Plum Creek Park South remains open for use by the public; however, some portions of the trails are not accessible. An updated map can be found at [www.medinacountyparks.com](http://www.medinacountyparks.com). Click on Parks, then again on Parks, then choose Plum Creek Park.

When completed, Phase 1 of the new trail will lead walkers and cyclists from Plum Creek Park to the city's Mooney Park. The hiking and biking trail is a collaborative project with the city of Brunswick. MCPD will provide future project updates when they are available.



## Several Employment Opportunities Available

Employment with the park district is more than a job -- it's an opportunity to make lives better in a fun, fulfilling team environment. Open positions include police officer and park planner. To learn more about these positions, go to [www.medinacountyparks.com](http://www.medinacountyparks.com), click on *About Us*, then on *Employment Opportunities*.



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