

Garden Column for the Salisbury Post

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Yesterday I had the chance to take a walk at the Eagle Point Nature Preserve off of Black Road on Bringle Ferry. The preserve has over three miles of trails including a self interpretive tree and plant identification loop, and an additional hiking trail leading to beautiful isolated coves. The two hundred acres of natural area are alive this time of year with wildflowers, but I had heard about a particular flowering plant that I wanted to see, which Poison Ivy was, believe it or not,. I've seen poison ivy leaves of course, and unfortunately, like most of us, experienced the side effects of brushing by its leaves, or hairy vines, running up a tree. "Leaves of three, let them be!" However, I had never actually seen the plant in flower, and I had heard that there was a huge vine at Eagle Point which was flowering. Since I just can't seem to help myself from trying to identify the wild flowers and weeds I find, off I went in search of an opportunity to find something of beauty in what I normally kill around the house.

The preserve has several trails, but the easiest and shortest is the Plant Loop. It takes about 45 minutes to enjoy, and is a nice walk. The trees are identified for us, as are other nature facts. (I guess I never realized that the club moss I gather for Christmas decorations is really called "Running Pine"). I passed the fragrant honeysuckle; then spotted some violet beardtongue, and beautiful pink sorrel. They are not to be missed, as their shamrock leaves

just set them apart from the crowd. The deer berries were in full bloom, and the preserve has "sparkleberries", which have very shiny leaves. The forest floor was carpeted with the little blue bluets, wild strawberries and vinca; dotted here and there with mint, ferns, and pea flowers. One of my favorite weeds, the rattlesnake weed, has its beautiful leaves on the forest floor about to spike their tall yellow flowers. And then I saw it.

The vine was huge, and the whole thing was flowering with its tiny white flowers. Since I generally get poison ivy rash just from looking at these things, I was oh-so-careful in gazing up at its way into the tallest of trees. It was SO worth the trip! The vine had wrapped its way around the trunk, limbs and all the way up and around the entire tree. The poor tree was feeling the effects of having something else live in its branches, but I have to admit the invasive plant never looked so beautiful. The little white flowers are in clusters and in a few weeks the flowers will turn into berries, so I'll have to make the trip back to see that and add it to my scrapbook collection of weed photos, which now numbers 12 volumes. (Ok, so I get a little carried away.) The thing to remember about poison ivy is that the oil on its stems last several years, even if it's dead. So if you get the oil on your skin, you have about an hour to wash it off before you may get a rash. I make an annual poison ivy search in my home woods every spring and fall. In the fall the leaves are bright orange, so they are easy to see and spray.

There will be guided trail walks scheduled at the preserve for the Saturdays, June 28<sup>th</sup> and July 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 A.M. Call

Dan Nicholas Park for more information. Hope to see you there!