



Don't look now, but the sun has finally come out! The maple buds are swelling and the early spring bulbs have been released from their snowy captivity.

Brief reminders:

Early Spring Hike at Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park - Sunday, March 21 at 1:00 PM. Explore the new wetland area. Meet in the gravel parking lot on the north side of Kuhlwein Road, just east of Darby Creek Drive. Bring your cameras and binoculars. Duration: approximately 1½ hours.

The Annual Meeting for the Stewards of Metro Parks - Monday, April 5 at 12:00 PM. Meeting location is DesignGroup (515 E. Main Street, Columbus 43215). Officers for 2010/2011 will be elected and there will be a brief business meeting. If you are interested in attending or want more information, please contact Debra Knapke: dknapke@columbus.rr.com.

The May Event at Scioto Audubon Metro Park - Sunday, May 23 at 1:00. Open event for members, friends and park visitors. Along with the climbing wall activity, there will be a tour of the Grange Insurance Audubon Center and a birding tour of the Whittier Peninsula. Join us for an afternoon of information, fun and food.

GARDEN TIP:

GARDEN MAINTENANCE: The ground is saturated and “mushy” except in higher and/or extremely well-drained areas. If you decide to get in there and clean up old stems and leaves, try to avoid stepping into wet garden areas. You will create areas of impermeable soil in the shape of your garden boots. And, unless you know exactly where all your plants are, you may be crushing emerging plants.

ROSES: By late March/early April (depends on Mother Nature) you will notice that the leaf buds are beginning to break. These will be your “pruning” guides for how much of the old, dead cane to remove. Always cut to an outside bud, and slant the cut away from the bud. A good reference is: *Growing Roses Organically* by Barbara Wilde.

PARK TIP:

Vernal Pool fauna and flora are becoming active. The spring thaw combined with spring rains and temperatures rising above 42 degrees are signs that salamanders will be migrating to the pools. According to the Ohio Vernal Pool Partnership listserve, reports have come in from southern Ohio that the spotted salamanders are already on the move.

ENVIRONMENTAL TIP:

It's Spring cleaning time! As you're preparing to roll up your sleeves and rid the house of the winter accumulation of dirt, ash, cinders, and all those other things from bygone days (which started the routine), it's a good time to reflect on the relationship between your health and the products with which you clean!

INSIDE: Elbow grease is ultimately the best cleaning product. But we have lots of other options that make the efforts go faster and, in some cases, work better. Rather than think of it as an “all or nothing” proposition in terms of chemical use; consider reducing the amount of all products used. Certainly, less toxic is better for your health and the ambient environment, but quantity matters as well. Just because a little works doesn't mean a lot will work better! Make sure you have good air circulation anytime you are cleaning with any chemical products, and always finish with wiping down the just cleaned surface/item with a damp rag that you rinse continually.

OUTSIDE: Spring is the time when many folks clean out the garage and the basement as well. Think carefully about what you have that you need to get rid of-- and then commit to NOT purchasing more of this type of product in the future. In some studies of hazardous household waste collection programs, it has been found that many individuals return year after year with the same types of products-- purchasing decisions are some of the single most important environmental actions you can make!