

Sargent Town Forest History



Dr. Frank H. Sargent was born and educated in Pittsfield and served the town in a general medical practice that began in 1894. He was a pioneer in efforts to treat those addicted to drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. He established Sargent Hall as a sanatorium for patients suffering from addiction. Dr. Sargent passed away in 1944.

Dr. Sargent donated five acres to the town as a town forest. On Arbor Day in 1925 the Pittsfield Women's Club, through their forestry program, purchased and planted over 2,500 White Pines. It was hoped that the forest would become a center for recreation in future years.

In March, 1999, the Conservation Commission received permission from the Town of Pittsfield to create a Nature Trail that would provide outdoor education and recreation to the residents and students of the town. This trail was built by members of the Natural Resources Committee and many other volunteers under the advisement of the Conservation Commission. In 2005 permission was granted by the State to put a portion of the Brook Trail on small section of State Land which adjoins the Town Forest and this was completed in the summer of 2005.

SARGENT TOWN FOREST

TRAIL GUIDE



Pittsfield Conservation
Commission

2001
Revised 2006

Welcome to the Sargent Town Forest Self-Guiding Nature Trail

Located 1.5 miles South of Pittsfield on Rte. 107, this public land is yours to enjoy, dawn to dusk, on foot. To help us preserve this area, please:

- Park in the designated area
- Keep your pet on a leash
- Take only photographs – leave only footprints
- Stay on the trail
- Keep all trash in your pocket

For public safety, no fires or hunting are permitted.

Use of this brochure

Along the trail you will find posts with numbers that are keyed to the numbered descriptions in this brochure. Each points out a feature of natural or historic interest. We hope this brochure helps to increase your enjoyment and appreciation of this special area.

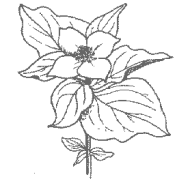
This easy to moderate trail is slightly under a mile. The Lower and Upper Loop trails are connected by a Link trail and the Brook Walk Trail can be accessed from the parking lot and the Upper Loop trail. *See the map in the center of this brochure.* When you are done you may keep this brochure or recycle it by returning it to the box for others to use.



ENJOY YOUR WALK!

Cornus canadensis -

Bunchberry grows up to 9 in tall and is a type of dogwood. It has 4 showy white bracts in the spring, bunches of red fruits in the fall and a nice red fall color.



Vaccinium spp -

Blueberry. There are several different types of blueberries found in the town forest. *Low-bush blueberry* is a ground cover and *highbush blueberry* is a shrub. Both have small, white flowers, blue berries and red or green buds.



Ferns

There are many species of fern found in this forest including the *common polypody fern* which lives on the tops of rocks. The *cinnamon fern* among others can be found in the wetland and the *bracken fern* in dryer areas of the forest.



Bracken Fern



Common Polypody



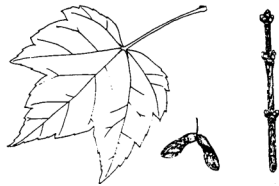
Cinnamon Fern

Can you identify these plants found in the Town Forest ?

Acer rubrum—

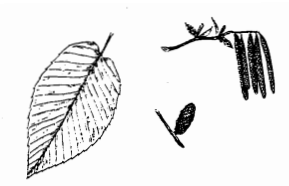
Red Maple

grows up to 60 ft tall and has a red or orange fall color. The leaves have silver undersides.



Betula lenta-

Black Birch grows up to 70 ft tall, has black bark and wintergreen flavored twigs. The dry fruits shown in the picture are called catkins.



Fagus grandifolia-

American Beech

grows up to 70 ft tall and has smooth bark. The leaves turn bronze in the fall and remain attached in the winter.



Fraxinus americana-

White Ash grows up to 60-70 ft tall. It has diamond shaped furrows in the bark. The fruit is a winged seed called a samara.



Lower Loop Trail

- Start at the parking lot trail entrance and follow the signs. This is a quarter mile loop with easy terrain.

1. Water Trough -This water trough was installed in the 1800s so people could water their horses on their way in or out of town. It was found near the property by a neighbor and was put back near its original location during trail construction.



2. Paper Birch -This isn't the only common name of this tree -can you think of some others? Due to its beauty and usefulness, it's the state tree of New Hampshire. It is a common landscape tree because of its beautiful white bark. The wood is made into wooden bowls and utensils and pulp for making paper.



3. Hardwood Forest -This forest is predominately a hardwood forest. This term does not refer to the hardness of the wood but to the fact that most of the trees are deciduous -which means the leaves fall off in the winter. The hardwood trees found in this forest include *American beech*, *red maple*, *red oak*, and *yellow, black and white birch*.



4. White Pine Plantation - From this spot you can see mature *white pines* growing in rows.

This *white Pine* plantation was planted in 1925. Can you find large stumps, an evidence of logging?

White pine is a very important timber tree, the wood is used for many things including cabinet making, building construction and furniture. Pines are very important to wildlife: many species of birds and mammals feed on the seeds found in the cones. *Deer* and *grouse* eat the needles, and *porcupines* and *small rodents* use the bark and wood as food.



5. White Spruce -There is only one spruce tree in this forest. Can you guess how it got here?

Spruces make good Christmas trees; forest animals eat the cones and the wood is used for lumber.



6. Wetland - If you visit this spot in the spring, you will probably get your feet wet! In the summer, the area may not look like a wetland. But look more closely at the kinds of vegetation around you. The *highbush blueberry*, *mosses* and *ferns* indicate moist conditions. Wetlands and moist woodlands are important habitats for *wood frogs*, *spotted salamanders*, *toads* and some species of *turtles*. If you find an animal leave it here for others to discover also.



**It is not so much for its beauty that the forest
makes a claim upon
men's hearts, as for that subtle something,
that quality of air that
emanates from old trees, that so wonderfully
changes and renews
a weary spirit.**

- Robert Louis Stevenson



25. Stone Culvert– A culvert is a drain that passes under a road, railroad, etc. or through an embankment. Many of the earliest culverts were made of stone. Look at this one carefully. How was the stone placed so that the culvert did not collapse? When the new 107 was built, cast iron pipe was put into the culvert to increase stability to compensate for the extra traffic.



26. Large Tree -This Red Oak is very large for the species. How old do you think this tree is? The average life span of a Red Oak is 100-150 years old. The age of a tree can be determined after it is cut down by counting the growth rings in a cross section of the tree. In some years the rings are larger than other years. Why do you think this is? Do you think you can find out a trees age without cutting it down? Yes you can ,it is done with an increment borer, an instrument which takes a small core sample out of the tree. The circumference of this tree is fourteen and a half feet. How many people linking arms does it take to get around it?



7. Witchhazel - Do you see how the branches on this tree fork at the ends? The branches are used for dousing (searching for water). The seeds are contained in a capsule and when they are ripe, the capsule explodes sending the seeds up to 50 ft away. This is how the tree spreads from one place to another. Many birds and other animals eat the seeds, buds and twigs including *bobwhite* and *white-tail deer*. An extract from the young stems and roots is sold in stores for soothing minor burns and insect bites and as an astringent.



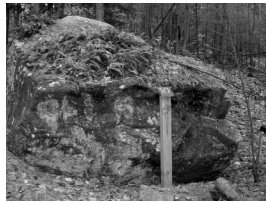
8. Northern Red Oak - Look for the red stripes in the furrows of the bark of this tree. This is one of its identifying features. Also the leaves have pointed leaf lobes which distinguish it from the *white oaks* which have rounded leaf lobes. *Red oaks* are a very important hardwood tree in New Hampshire. The wood is strong, hard, and heavy. It is used for furniture, pallets and flooring among other things. The acorns are eaten by many birds and mammals. There are several old, massive *red oaks* on the Upper loop trail. See if you can find them.



9. Dead Trees and Decaying Logs - Standing dead trees and decaying logs, such as those you can see from this spot, are as important for wildlife as living trees in the forest. Hollow “snags” and cavities in living trees provide nesting sites for over 40 wildlife species, including birds and mammals such as *flying squirrels*, *raccoons* and *fishers*. Snags provide excellent perching sites for hawks and owls. Dead trees and decaying logs are filled with juicy *grubs*, *termites*, *ants*, *beetles* and other *insects* which become “food” for hungry birds and other wildlife. Over time *fungus* and *insects* help decompose the wood, releasing the tree’s nutrients to the soil, to be taken up again by new plants. And so the cycle begins anew.



10. A “Woolly” Rock - How can a plant grow on bare rock? With difficulty! First, lichens, which are a combination of an alga and a fungus, become established. These pioneer plants help break down bits of rock, forming small amounts of soil. Then, larger plants, such as *mosses* and *ferns*, can get a foothold. When these plants die and decay, they form more soil, so that larger plants such as trees and shrubs can grow. The orderly progression of life forms growing on a rock is called succession. Please give the plants a chance and don’t climb on this rock. The rock itself is a glacial erratic –it was left behind when the glacier receded.



23. Bridge –Stand on the bridge, look into the water and see if you can find any insects, frogs, or small fish. Walk down to the edge of brook and look more closely. Did you find any water life? Many insects including *beetle*, *caddis flies*, and *mayflies* are found under or attached to rocks, *crayfish* are usually found in shallow pools hiding along the edge or among the rocks. If you look under the rocks be sure to put them back in the same place. The type of life that is found in a stream indicates it’s health and the quality of the water.



24. Swamp -This is a very different view of the wetland swamp than was seen on the lower loop trail. Look at how the stream has wended its way down to the lowland area and then fans out. At the bottom of the hill the force of gravity is the weakest so the water moves outward instead of downward. Wetland are important to preserve because they absorb excess water which decreases flooding,



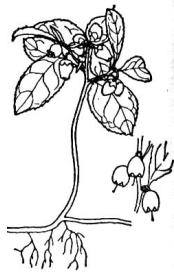
they act as water reservoirs and they filter pollutants. They are also home to many interesting plants and animals.

21. **Amphitheater**—Sit on the bench and look up to the right and you see the land rising up above you making it seem like you are on the stage of a theater. Notice the brook and the intermittent stream which is only present in the spring. Why does a stream appear in the spring and dry up in the summer? On the edge of the stream you can find *skunk cabbage*; a large leaved cabbage like plant which smells like a skunk when the leaves are crushed. *Skunk cabbage* is edible to insects but poisonous to mammals.

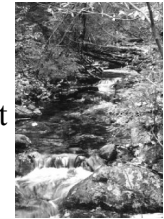


22. **Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)** -

Look for this erect, groundcover which grows 2-6” tall after you pass the large rock. The name *wintergreen* comes from the minty scent of the foliage and the red fruit which ripens in August. This plant is also called *teaberry*, because a tea is made from the foliage. Oil of wintergreen derived from the leaves is used in many products such as gum and toothpaste. The berries are eaten by *bob white, ruffed and sharp-tail grouse, pheasant and many other birds. Deer* eat both the leaves and the fruit. ***Make sure you identify the plant by the wintergreen smell before you sample the berries and leave plenty for the animals.***



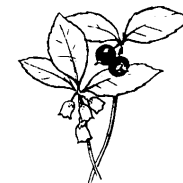
11. **Brook** -This is a good spot to look down at the small brook in the gully below. In the summer this brook is a just quiet trickle but in spring snowmelt and rain make it a powerful, rushing force. Notice that the vegetation along the banks is different than the rest of the forest. *Hemlock*, a conifer, replaces the hardwoods.



12. **Ground Covers** - Ground covers in a forest are plants that grow low to the ground and can tolerate the shade of the trees and shrubs above them. Ground cover plants include *ferns, mosses* and herbaceous plants. Some of the herbaceous plants include *wintergreen* - both berries and leaves have a wintergreen flavor and *partridgeberry*—the red fruits that have two “eyes” on them are a favorite food of the partridge, or ruffed grouse. Other herbaceous plants include wildflowers such as the *lady slipper* which is a wild orchid which has showy flowers in the spring. Ground covers only receive 1 to 5 percent of sunlight. That is why many of them flower early in the spring before the leaves come out on the trees and shade them.



Partridgeberry



Wintergreen



Lady Slipper

Link Trail

- *This short trail connects the lower and the upper loop trails.*

13. Hemlock Grove - The trees in this area are predominately *eastern hemlock*. This is a conifer which grows 60-70 ft tall and has short green needles with two white stripes underneath. It grows abundantly on cool moist slopes. In the spring listen for birds such as the *veery* (song descends the scale) and the *junco* (a trill). The dense, foliage of younger trees offer shelter to *grouse*, *wild turkey*, *deer* and other wildlife. In winter, birds such as *chickadees*, and mammals including the *red squirrel*, strip the cones for their seeds. *Porcupines* are also fond of hemlock bark and wood.



14. Snag trees - Behind you there is “snag” tree; a dead tree that is caught up in another tree. Notice the *woodpecker* holes in the lower trunk of the snag. *Woodpeckers* bore into decaying wood looking for insects or a nesting site. They have sharply pointed beaks especially for pecking into wood and long tongues that are used to get larvae or ants from their burrows in the wood or bark of the tree. They drill a new nesting site every year and other birds use their old nest holes.



Brook Walk Trail

- *This 1/4 mile trail follows the brook and is more challenging than the Lower and Upper Loop Trails. The terrain is steep in some places.*

19. Wild Sarsaparilla (Aralia nudicaulis) - On this banking there is a colony of this tall groundcover. It grows 1-2 ft tall, has white ball shaped flowers in May to July and blue-black berries in late summer. The rootstock is used as a flavoring, it is a substitute for true *Sarsaparilla* and is also used for making 'root beer'. It can be used as an emergency food, having a sweet spicy taste and a pleasant aromatic smell. A nutritious food, it was used by the Indians during wars or when they were hunting since it is very sustaining.



20. Hobblebush (Viburnum lantanoides) - If you look down toward the brook you see a colony of *hobblebush* which has hairy, toothed leaves and large flat white flowers in the spring. It also has red fruit in the fall which turn to black in the winter. The fruit is a nutritious food for birds and wild animals but they do not taste good to us. Why do you think this is called *hobblebush*? Below the *hobblebush* the stream wends its way down the hill disappearing in places and the reappearing. Where does it go?



17. Brush Pile - Creating brush piles when clearing trails can increase the amount of wild-life in the area.

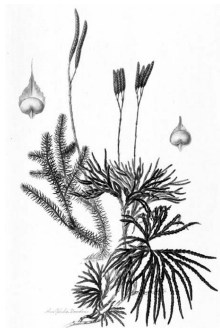
They provide shelter for small animals such as *red foxes*, *chipmunks* and *low nesting birds*. It



is best to crisscross the brush to make pockets for nesting and to keep the piles a good distance from the path to protect the animals from being disturbed.

18. Club Mosses (Lycopodiums) - If you look down on the ground here you can see three types of *club mosses*; *princess pine*, *ground cedar*, and *running pine*. The first two look like evergreen seedlings but in fact they never grow any taller than what you see. The *ground cedar* has flatter branches than the *princess pine*. The *running pine* runs along the ground and the branches look like tiny antlers.

All three are shown in the picture .The *club mosses* are primitive vascular plants and they reproduce by spores like ferns do. The upright structures that look like candles contain the spores.



Upper loop Trail

- *This trail does a quarter mile loop around the upper portion of the forest. The terrain varies from easy to moderate.*

15. Stone Wall - When you look through the trees you can see a low stone wall which extends around three sides of the property. When New England was settled in the 1700's and 1800's the land was cleared for fields and orchards. The stones found during the clearing were piled into walls to mark boundaries and to make plowing easier. Farming in New England is difficult because of the terrain and poor shallow soils and as better land was found in the Midwest and West these fields were abandoned. Now over 87% of New Hampshire is reforested.



16. White pine seedlings -*White pine* seedlings need sunlight for germination and growth. Notice how well these small *white pines* are doing in this cleared area and also notice that there are fewer *white pines* seedlings in the denser, shadier areas of the forest.



These seedlings have planted themselves, the seeds coming from the cones of the large trees in the forest. When growing *white pine* for lumber the trees are thinned to ten or more feet apart to give the trees room to grow healthy and large.



Sargent Town Forest Nature Trail

~ 5 ACRES
MAP AND KEY

Map Key

- Lower loop trail
- Link Trail
Brook Walk Trail
- Upper loop Trail
- Perennial Stream
- Intermittent Stream
- Stone Wall
- Wetland

