

SHENANTAHA CREEK PARK, Malta, NY - *Late May*

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Shenantaha is Iroquois for “deer water.” Most recently it was farm land for livestock. When we walk by the old stone walls you’ll note they are made of large stones removed from pasture lands. Were crops planted, there would be many smaller stones as well. When you arrive at the Creek you’ll be standing at the remains of a mill that pressed flax. In 1997 Shenantaha opened as a park. It is 60+ acres and has the Zim Smith hike/bike/ski trail passing through it. For map and directions, <https://www.malta-town.org/Facilities/Facility/Details/3>

To get to the trailhead, park in the lot and then head to the woods past the playground. You’ll see two blue and gold historic signs ahead on your right. Go through them and turn left following the trail. The first plant in abundance you will see will be May apples. Please note that most are single leafed and will therefore not be bearing any flower or fruit. “It takes two (leaves) to tango.” Note the **shag bark hickory**.



Also note the ironwood, a muscular appearing smooth wood. There are hundreds of **Canada May flowers** throughout this walk, once again mainly single leafed. When you find a double-leafed one look for the emerging flower. “It takes two to tango.”



The yellow **barren strawberries** in bloom are in abundance throughout the walk.



Keep your eye out for early **meadow rue**.



Note the shaggy bark of the **hop hornbeam**.



There are some **hepatica** leaves emerging from the old. Flowers, sadly, seem to be over for the season. Remember that the ephemeral flowering plants in the understory need to complete their life cycle from bloom to seed before the trees' leaves shade them out



Maple leaf viburnum is another very abundant shrub off the trail. Feel it's leaf to easily identify it from a maple tree leaf. The viburnum's leaf is velvety in comparison to the smooth feel of the tree leaf. There are a few gay wings or **fringed polygala** in bloom. These may look like an orchid but are actually in the milkwort family.



When you pass through the **stone wall**, continue straight and to your left down to the water.



The mass of **blue cohosh** are awesome. You might find a couple of red trillium as well.



The **marginal woodfern** is abundant in the Park. Note the fertile dots on the margin of the back of the leaf. You can see last year's leaves still green and now lying flat on the ground. The new leaves are beginning to emerge as fiddleheads.



Sarsaparilla is starting to emerge as well.



There's a lovely patch of **miterwort** or bishop's cap.



When you've finished exploring by the water return to the stone wall and this time turn left, heading past the tennis courts on your right to the parking lot where you began.

Look down. You may see **crowfoot**, **pussytoes**, and **violets**.



Notice the **gill over the ground**, also known as creeping Charlie or ground ivy. If you spin a piece of the stem in your fingers you'll note the square stem. This is a member of the mint family.



If you choose to walk on the bike trail you may discover other wildflowers. Enjoy! (Photos by Collins and Jones)

