

Can You Find These?

- **The "Mitten" Leaf:** Look for Sassafras trees. They have three leaf shapes: an oval, a "mitten" with a thumb and a three-fingered leaf.
- **The "Stocking" Fern:** Find a Christmas Fern near the ground. Each tiny leaflet is shaped like a miniature holiday stocking or a boot.
- **The "Tulip" Tree:** Look up! Tulip Poplars are the tallest trees here. Their leaves look like silhouettes of tulip flowers.
- **The "Puzzle" Bark:** Find a Northern Red Oak. Its bark has long, flat-topped ridges that look like shiny "ski tracks."
- **Nature's Cup:** In late spring, look for Mountain Laurel shrubs with their unique, geometric pink and white cup-shaped flowers.

Leave No Trace

Help us protect this fragile ecosystem for the next generation of students:

- **Stay on the Path:** Stepping off-trail tramples delicate wildflowers and causes erosion.
- **Pack It In, Pack It Out:** Please carry all trash back to campus bins.
- **Respect Wildlife:** Observe animals from a distance; do not feed them.
- **Four-Legged Friends:** Dogs are welcome but must remain on a leash at all times.
- **Take Only Pictures:** Leave plants, rocks, and artifacts exactly where you found them.

Be Prepared: Tell somebody where you are going and when you will return. Wear shoes or sandals with solid soles and a backstrap, and perhaps bring a rain jacket.

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts."

-- Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*



Step Into Your Campus
Outdoor Escape:

The Southwestern Community College Nature Trail

*1.87 Miles of Forest, Fresh Air
and Restoration*



Explore the Loop

Distance: 1.87-mile loop.

Difficulty: Moderate (*varied terrain with wooded paths and pavement*).

Time: Approximately 45 - 60 minutes at a leisurely pace.

Access Points: Look for kiosks at the Balsam Center, above the Library, near the Water Tower and by the Maintenance Yard.



Nature is the *Best Medicine*

Science confirms that "Green Time" is essential for your academic and personal success. Spending just 20 minutes in the forest provides:

- **Reduced Stress:** Significant drops in cortisol and lowered blood pressure.
- **Brain Recovery:** Relief from "directed attention fatigue" (screen burnout), leading to better focus and creativity.
- **Immune Support:** Inhaling phytoncides (essential oils released by trees) boosts your body's natural defense cells.
- **Emotional Balance:** Natural light and movement are proven to reduce anxiety and boost overall happiness.



Slow Down & Sense the Forest

Forest Bathing (Shinrin-yoku) is the practice of immersing yourself in nature through your senses. Try these "Invitations" while on the trail:

- **Use Your Senses:** Stop walking. What are three things you can hear? Two things you can smell? One thing you can feel (the bark of a tree or the breeze)?
- **Finding Motion:** For five minutes, move as slowly as possible. Focus your eyes only on things that are moving: a leaf fluttering or an insect crawling.
- **The Breath Exchange:** Stand near a tree. Realize that with every breath, you inhale the oxygen the trees provide, and they take in the carbon dioxide you release.

