

This Oak Tree and Us

A large oak tree grows in Pony Hollow, the area of the nature preserve that is as Old Growth as it gets here on The Quarry Farm. Pony Hollow is so named because, once upon a time, two ponies named Cookie and Babe pastured here. They seemed to prefer its steep slopes above Cranberry Run and the shelter provided by two established Black Walnuts and that one significant oak.

Last spring I walked the property with Dan Bartlett, a forester with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Kevin Edinger, District Conservationist with USDA/NRCS Ohio. Dan was excited to spot a young Chinquapin Oak growing in the upland woods at the intersection of the Wetland Forest and Upland trails. I led the two visitors down into the Hollow to show him the large oak. He told me that the tree is one variety of White Oak—a Chinquapin. As we followed the trails, we spotted more young oaks, all the same species, likely the progeny of the great oak that resides in the Hollow. When we think of Ohio’s remaining native keystone species, if we do, what comes to mind are big mammals like White-tailed Deer and flashy birds like the Bald Eagle. Those are 2 that are always shouted out when we ask students for examples. But never has there been a shout for plants. And if you’re going to shout, oak trees are a keystone species that deserves significant shouting.

According to research touted by the USDA and U.S. Forest Service, oaks provide numerous ecosystem services that support human well-being: providing shelter, regulating



The Chinquapin Oak in Pony Hollow

the environment, and enhancing culture and aesthetics. And without a food chain leading up to humans, our well-being would be moot. Oaks play a significant part in that ladder. In a single region, up to 2,300 species—including birds, insects, fungi, lichens, and mammals—are associated with oaks. Doug Tallamy, a leading entymologist and conservationist, states that oaks sustain a complex, year-round web of life, creating habitat and resources for countless species, from caterpillars right on up the food chain. They store significant amounts of carbon, helping mitigate climate change.

Oak trees appeared on this planet about 65 million years ago. Unlike other forms of life they have not gone extinct because their seeds are encased in a hard shell. These seeds and oak

leaves are coated with tannic acid, which prevents fungi and insects from harming them. Oak trees can continue to grow and produce acorns for 700 years. One tree can produce about 10 million acorns during its lifetime, even though they don’t begin to produce these seeds until they are at least 50 years old.

Yet oaks are in decline due to the combined stress of climate change, drought, and pests and pathogens. Tallamy writes, “We cannot casually accept the loss of oaks without also accepting the loss of thousands of other plants and animals that depend on them.”

Despite significant deforestation and drainage efforts, white oaks are our best hope for survival in Northwest Ohio. They are ecologically adaptable, historically dominant, and well-suited to the region’s soils and climate. They just need our help. It takes many arms to hug the Mama Oak in Pony Hollow. Even though she and other Chinquapin oaks seem to be standing strong on The Quarry Farm, the Gardener allowed a chinquapin oal seedling to grow in the pollinator garden, deciding it’s ultimately more valuable than the flowers. We planted a little Chinquapin on the farm animal sanctuary this fall. It is surrounded by goat fencing. I stroke its leaves and pray for it to survive because we all need it to.

Carl Sagan, American astronomer and planetary scientist, offered a really good reason for that need, I think. “This oak tree and me, we’re made of the same stuff.”

Fall 2026 Programs & Events

Dress for the weather, including good walking shoes, and meet in Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora. There is no fee to participate unless noted otherwise. **Tax-deductible donations are welcome.**

Open Wednesdays AND Fridays at the Kitchen

Beginning Wednesday, October 7, 7 a.m.

Last year. Steve’s “House That is a Kitchen” was open Fridays during the winter. The reception was outstanding, so much so that he is doing it again, and adding Wednesdays to the schedule. You won’t have to miss your favorite Farmer’s Market breads, bagels, macaron, and scones this winter because The House That is a Kitchen will be open Wednesdays and Fridays, 7–10 a.m. 12–5 p.m. at The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm. Call 419-672-0981 to order or stop in at the copper-roofed kitchen. Available items include:

- Sourdough, Cinnamon Raisin Sourdough, Cinnamon Babka, Gran’s Milk & Honey, Chocolate Walnut Babka, Sandwich Rye, Honey Oatmeal
- New York-Style Bagels: Plain, Everything, Salt
- French Macaron with buttercream or curd filling
- Sweet and savory scones
- Martha’s fruit jam

Making Bark Masks

Saturday, October 24, 6 p.m. at World Goods Et Cetera, 115 S. Main St., Bluffton, OH

Join World Goods Et Cetera’s Artist of the Month Anne Coburn-Griffis of The Quarry Farm for a spooky and creative way to experience nature. Anne will be leading a class on making masks using locally-gathered tree bark. Fun for any age, this would be a great activity to prepare for Halloween.

Preregistration is required. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/59wb6z57>

National Hiking Day Hike at Night

Saturday, November 21, 6 p.m. National Hiking Day is Monday, November 16. We are celebrating just a few days later—at night. Put on good walking shoes, weather-appropriate clothes and join us on the nature preserve trails to enjoy the mental and physical health benefits of hiking.



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Do you have questions, want to schedule an outing or workshop for your group or keep up with what’s happening here? Email thequarryfarm@gmail.com, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and visit www.thequarryfarm.org or call 567-376-0705.

Donations to The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a 501(c)(3) public charity, are tax-deductible.



Mission Statement

It is our goal and mission to provide the opportunity for people of all ages to increase their understanding of the natural environment of Northwest Ohio and to interact with their fellow inhabitants in a sustainable manner.



Emerson surveys a visitor from his bookcase.

The Quarry Farm Newsletter is a quarterly publication for supporters of The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a nonprofit organization in Pandora, Ohio.

On the cover: *Fall Migration Bird hikers, 2026*

All photographs printed in this newsletter were taken on The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm.

www.thequarryfarm.org



Printed on recycled, recyclable paper



Happy planters were woven for succulent care.

Under One Big Sky

Summer programs, workshops, and fostering passed with such a WHOOSH! of activity that this newsletter will tread a bit into Fall territory. A group from The Loft of Findlay traveled here for the first time on July 10. Siyo Inada, the “Hello Snake,” was a big hit and so was Steve’s bread baking in the kitchen.

We haven’t had a leaf-making workshop for a while. By popular demand, concrete was mixed and lasting leaves were cast in the pavilion on July 18. Several patches of burdock had been allowed to flourish in preparation since the plant’s huge, deep-veined leaves are perfect for the project.

The Gathering Basket Herb Society held their August 13 meeting here where they planted herbs and succulents in a creative fashion. In this case they made mud balls that were planted with a variety of green growing things, wrapped in moss, and tied tightly to form kokedama, a centuries-old gardening art form that evolved from bonsai and kusamono traditions in Japan. One sedum was leftover to make the kokedama that now hangs from the kitchen front porch rafters. Participants in the August 22 “Weave a Succulent Planter” workshop wove containers using branches and cuttings collected around the preserve and gardens.

Children from Owens Community College’s Early Learning Center began spending a couple of hours a week with us last season and did so throughout the summer months. They visited with the animals, learned about their habitats, painted t-shirts through the Art in Nature program, and lunched in the pavilion.

Fall began with The Quarry Farm’s participation in a long-time Putnam County schools tradition. Nearly every 5th grade student attended the annual Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District’s annual 5th Grade Conservation Tour on September 22 and 24. Eira, the Virginia Opossum, was a charming introduction to his species in our Wildlife station at Ottawa Memorial Park. He carried the torch the following week during Ottawa Elementary School’s “Rock the School” Tuesday. Most of the Kindergarten through 4th grade students were intrigued by this representative of North America’s only living marsupial, even though some kids had to forego some precious recess time to meet him.



Preschoolers meet foster turtles



Herb kokedama

Resident Spotlight: Rabbits

Over a decade ago, a domestic rabbit lived in the farm animal sanctuary. He was a county fair 4H fail, which means he wasn’t sold. Because he didn’t quite fit in at his first home, we agreed to take him on. We named him Waldo, because he was released on the grounds where he was only seen occasionally.

A lesson was learned one day. Waldo produced tiny mini-Waldos. We agreed not to allow intact mammals to roam the pastures, no matter what their purported sex. Waldette’s offspring were placed elsewhere. No more domestic rabbits lived here where they could mingle with wild Eastern Cottontail rabbits. No more rabbits, until July when someone dumped 8 domestic rabbits at a state nature preserve in Lucas County.



Two American white rabbits and 6 Rex rabbits arrived mid-summer; males in one large kennel and females in another. An outdoor enclosure was quickly designed; installed and, once the males were neutered, the group moved in. Underground animal barriers along the perimeter allow them to tunnel under their igloos without fear of predation and fencing on top keeps the visiting Great Horned Owl outside at night. Goats and Stewie the Bronze Turkey find them very interesting. The donkeys lost interest quickly, although they take umbrage with the fact that the bunnies have their very own supply of fresh morning grass hay.



Volunteer Spotlight: ONU ACE Day

Ohio Northern University observed their annual ACE Day on August 22 to introduce incoming students to the surrounding community through service projects. The crew that volunteered their time and sweat here readied the farm animal sanctuary outbuildings with fresh coats of paint. One of the leaders told me that she spent her ACE Day at The Quarry Farm 4 years ago and wanted to make sure she came back during this, her Senior, year. We are honored.



Thank you...

...to Martha Erchenbrecher for workshop leadership

...to ONU ACE Day participants for painting outbuildings

...to David Seitz for honeysuckle and vine removal and hydrological engineering

...to Keith Seitz for the black walnut and resin handled tray that is displayed in the Kitchen

...to Rita Seitz for workshop leadership

...to Phil Seitz for launching the 5K

...to Deb Weston for leading bird hikes



Autumn is apple and pumpkin time! If you have extra squash in your garden and apples in your orchard, the goats are big fans. Please call us before coming by.

Monetary Donations:

Bruce Coburn in memory of Bert Coburn

All 5K Participants

Gathering Basket Herb Society

Joe and Rebecca McKee

Putnam County Soil & Water Conservation District

Leticia Regalado

Cathy Rupert

Keith and Lois Seitz

Phil and Phyllis Seitz

Deb Weston