The Rock

This is Year Two for the Putnam County Master Gardener Volunteers’ pollinator garden, which sits next to Red Fox Cabin at The Quarry Farm. A 2017 newsletter described how three committees selected native plants, designed a layout, planted hardscape features and then installed the garden. By late May 2018, most plants are spreading nicely along the curving stone-lined path, except for a few gaps where unhappy species need to be replaced. Decaying logs and a bee block sit in one corner and a plum-colored tricycle in another—just for fun, although butterflies and birds are welcome to perch on it. Until several days ago only one planned hardscape feature was missing from the pollinator garden: a big rock.

During the 1990s, some very large rocks were pushed and dragged to Red Fox Garden from resting places around The Quarry Farm where they had been deposited by a retreating glacier or 19th century quarrying. Master Gardeners studied the available candidates for the pollinator garden and decided on a small rounded boulder, just a short haul away from the spot appointed for a rock in a circle of Joe Pye Weed. The boulder was nesting cozy against a clump of evergreens like a big fat broody hen, having burrowed deeper into its spot year by year.

Once the rock was chosen, head-scratching and chin-stroking ensued: How to wrestle that boulder out of its surroundings in the evergreens and move it the distance to the pollinator garden? Months passed. Several Master Gardener meetings came and went. When asked to report on the progress of the garden, I would describe how well the plants were holding up against dry spells, hungry critters, weedy invaders, etc., and end with, “But we still need to move the rock.” Members would murmur, “Ah, yes—The Rock,” and a discussion of ways and means would follow.

Finally this spring, one attempt proved that a strong man with a five-foot crowbar couldn’t pry The Rock from its nest. It was clearly a job for a mule team or a Bobcat—the mechanical kind with a skilled operator like Sheldon “Red” Doud, a supportive Master Gardener spouse. Red had already demonstrated his skill by deftly maneuvering his Bobcat around the garden confines (without leaving a trace) during construction of the pollinator garden. Red generously agreed to tackle the “Rocky” challenge, and several days ago trucked his Bobcat across Putnam County, where he would not only attempt to move The Rock, but also help Master Gardener President Joe Hovest put in a new fence around the pollinator garden.

As Joe and Red were installing the first section of fencing, I left on an errand to fetch more cable ties—and donuts for a coffee break. Later, break over, I stepped off the porch, heading out on another errand to exchange the cable ties for the right size—and did a double take. There at the base of the evergreens was a hole where The Rock had been. I exclaimed with awe and delight over the feat that Red and the Bobcat had accomplished in my absence. Said Red with a wry smile, “It only took about five minutes.”

—The Gardener at The Quarry Farm
Preserve & Conservation Farm.

All photographs printed in this newsletter
lays eggs on the banks of Cranberry Run
On the cover: A female snapping turtle
organization in Pandora, Ohio.

The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve
ivy, blooms in the floodplain.

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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.

Under one big sky

Spring certainly came in like a lamb this year, on the ice cold breath of a winter lion. If you joined us for our first Golden Snitch Walks, you’ll know that more than one of nature’s own Golden Snitch—the American Woodcock—were darting around the back grassland on March 9 despite the cold. We heard them nowhere and while until a Great-Horned Owl began to call, silencing all potential prey. By the second walk on April 7, all but a couple of these long-billed, baseball-sized birds had buried themselves to northern climes.
The air warmed and May was hopping. Woodducks nested in the trees above the quarry, as did a variety of herons, Tree and cricket frogs began to sing and dragonflies took to the air. Preschool students from Patrick Henry joined us for two days. They met Tyree the Cornsnake, made lasting leaf t-shirts like no other, took a smelling hike through the gardens and watched fish swim in the stream. Later in the month, the entire third grade class from Ottawa Elementary joined us, adding to their agenda a meet-and-greet with a Honey Locust Tree and a big picnic lunch in the Seitz Family Pavilion.

The bridges that Paul built

Paul Nusbaum grew up near The Quarry Farm. He is an avid outdoorsman, farmer and educator. Over a decade ago, he shared his passion for Ohio History by dressing in Ohio Pioneer costume and demonstrating fire-starting for one of our visiting school groups. For years now, The Quarry Farm has been lucky to include Paul as a member of our Board of Directors. We can only assume that Paul isn’t planning another cross-country trek for this year as he has devoted a great deal of time and expertise to building bridges on the nature preserve.

The first bridge is actually the spit of land, approximately 20 to 25 feet wide, between the quarry wetland and Cranberry Run. In April, Paul cleared invasive bush honeysuckle and two downed trees from the strip, opening a path that will serve as an open-air land lab between two distinct aquatic habitats.

The second bridge is the existing Cranberry Run footbridge. Rushing fall flood waters had removed several boards, the angled approach and left one of the main supports in a state of decay. Thanks to Paul, the bridge is solid, yet still allows for the rise and fall of water after heavy rains.
The third bridge spans a deep overflow channel developed over a century ago by a quarry operation. The new platform offers smooth passage and is a perfect observation area for watching migrating birds, spring babies and listening to amphibian calls.

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Summer 2018 Programs & Events

Putnam County District Library: Libraries Rock!
June 18, 19, 20 & 21 (11 a.m. & 1-3 p.m. each day)
Learn about Northwest Ohio creatures that hide under rocks and those who turn over rocks to find food. Visitors may meet Quinn the Red Fox who searches treasures under rocks and soil and Tyree the cornsnake who takes shelter under rocks. We’ll be at a different PCDL branch location each day. Check http://mypcdl.org/calendar/month for the schedule.

Family Day
Saturday, August 4, 1 to 4 p.m.
Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora
Bring yourself, friends and family for an afternoon of fun in the gardens, woods and wetlands. See how to make a wren house from a gourd, Make a walking staff and take it with you along their trails to count butterflies and Blanchard’s cricket frogs and visit residents of the farm animal sanctuary. Refreshments will be available. Admission to the event is free; tax-deductible donations are welcome.

5th Annual Quarry Farm Jam
Saturday, September 8, 6 to 9 p.m.
Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora
Whether you play an instrument like a virtuoso or just like to pretend, sing along or listen, spend a sweet late summer evening with music under the big red roof alongside the calls from the nature preserve. There will be cookies, too.

Thank you...
...to Red Doud and Joe Hovest for setting pollinator garden fence and moving The Rock
...to Paul Nusbaum for building the quarry trail bridge, repairing the Cranberry Run bridge and trail maintenance
...to David Seitz, for bridge maintenance and trimming

Monetary Donations:
Tom Dobmeyer
Doug and Sandy Downing
Dorisca Etayo
Laura Greitinger
Ottawa Elementary students

WISH LIST
The following items are needed for garden and visitor trail development and educational animal ambassador rehabilitation, care and handling. Please call 419-384-7195 or email thequarryfarm@gmail.com if you can supply anything on the list.

• unsalted tree nuts in the shell (acorns, almonds, hazelnuts)
• zucchini and squash