

We hope you enjoyed your visit! Happy trails!

The Life Science Department serves as an advisory committee to the college for the management of the area. The department is responsible for scheduling tour reservations, providing guided tours, and training guides. If you are interested in being a tour guide, please contact the LS Department 231-777-0273.

Management of the Natural Area



<https://www.muskegoncc.edu/trail>

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Life Science Department, 231-777-0273

For guided tours, contact:

Use the QR or visit the website address below.

The Kasey Hartz Natural Area is a wooded tract which has been shaped by natural processes, weathering and glaciers, and human influences particularly lumbering and fires. Four Mile Creek flows through the area on its way to Muskegon River. Look, listen, and feel as you proceed through the different habitats. More information is located on our website.

Welcome to the Kasey Hartz Natural Area!

Since their existence, the trails are available to the Muskegon community including school aged children and those young at heart. We hope our service here “will help to create a greater awareness and appreciation of the natural environment and a real sense of responsibility to work toward environmental quality for the Muskegon community.”

- Kasey Hartz

Mary Kathryn “Kasey” Hartz
Muskegon Community College
Biology Instructor
1958-1973



LEGEND

- Handicap Accessible Trail
- MCC Main Trail
- Arbutus Loop
- Trail Shortcut
- Emergency Access Road
-  Trailhead
-  Trail Post
-  Trail Benches
-  Trail Staircase

- ### Natural Area History
- College Instructor, Kasey Hartz, began to establish the natural area shortly after the campus property was purchased in 1963.
 - Ecology class of 1967 began to construct the nature trail and the following year, a tour was attended by the College Board of Trustees.
 - The natural area was officially established on April 20, 1970 by the Board of Trustees.
 - The 10 acre area and trails were officially dedicated as the Kasey Hartz Natural Area on May 4, 1974.
 - The Michigan Natural Areas Council recognized the area as a natural area preserve in 1979. (Crispen, S. 1980. *Natural Area Preserves in Michigan*. The Michigan Botanist.)
 - In 1991, the State of Michigan granted monies to develop the concrete barrier-free access to the first 600 feet of the trail and other upgrades such as the entrance sign.
 - With funds bequeathed from Kasey Hartz, new boardwalks and staircases were constructed in 2003.
 - March 2008, the 15 acre natural area was officially delineated and recognized by the Coordinating Council.



Kasey Hartz Natural Area



*Enjoy Nature,
Experience Nature,
Respect Nature,
Add nothing,
Remove nothing.
Let there be harmony between us and the land.*

Upland Oak & Pine Habitat: Trail Posts 1-9



white pine

1. Representative trees are white oak (*Quercus alba*), with its lighter bark, black oak (*Quercus velutina*), and red oak (*Quercus rubra*). Our state tree, white pine (*Pinus strobus*) can be identified from its bundle of five needles. After this station is a shortcut trail to the left or south that leads to the end of the trail.

2. *Prunus serotina*, black cherry, is common but doesn't grow tall. Easily recognizable is sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) by its three different shaped leaves.



sassafras



blueberry

3. The low bushes are huckleberry (*Gaylussacia*) and blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*). Huckleberry has orange resin spots on the backside of its leaves and blueberry has a darker green leaf. Also common before frost is bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*).

4. The large-leaved aster (*Eurybia macrophylla*) blooms in the fall with a blue-purple flower. Also blooming in the fall is the blue stem goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*) which you may have noticed as you walked along the trail. As you proceed along the trail, notice the oak on the right hand side that has been infected with a shelf fungus.



blue stem goldenrod



dogwood

5. Take a short spur off to the left to find this number at the flowering dogwood tree (*Cornus florida*). Return back to where you previously were (if you continue downhill you will join the trail loop near its end).

6. Have you heard or seen any animals yet? Be careful around the bend, the thorns of greenbrier (*Smilax*) may snag you.



greenbrier

7. Can you recall the names of the trees in this location? Which tree is white pine? Which is white oak?



8. To the north you will see a newer grassy ravine area which was part of the new sewer system and is now proposed to be planted as a prairie.



witch-hazel

9. Rest for awhile on the bench under the arching branches of witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) and listen. As you continue down the stairway, be careful especially when they are wet with dew or other forms of precipitation.

10. At the bottom of the steps, you may take the short spur to the right on an old roadway to see the proposed prairie area and then return.

Creek Bed Habitat: Trail Posts 11-13



princess-pine

11. Have you noticed a change in the temperature? Do you see the miniature "pine trees" about 10 centimeters tall? Sometimes called clubmoss or princess-pine, they are neither pines nor mosses, but are *Lycopodium*.

12. Four Mile Creek flows through a mostly residential watershed and our immediate habitat supports many wetland plants such as skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) and cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*).



skunk cabbage



partridgeberry

13. Do you see the two small plants with red berries? Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*) is larger than the creeping partridgeberry (*Mitella repens*).

Red Maple & Witch-hazel Habitat: Trail Posts 14-20



red maple

14. As you climb the stairway, notice that you are moving into another type of habitat. Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) dominate the slope with a smaller percentage of white pine and oaks. Rest for a moment at the bench. A short Arbutus trail loop begins at the top of the stairway if you so desire.



marsh marigold

15. Overlook Four Mile Creek and its meandering curves. Early in the spring, marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*) will be blooming a bright yellow flower along the water's edge. Listen for the frogs.



star flower

16. Witch-hazel arches the trail and blooms in the autumn. Little star flowers (*Trientalis borealis*) bloom white "stars" in the spring.



mayapple

17. Also in the spring, look for the plant with the large umbrella type leaves on the wetland side of the trail: mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*).



cinnamon fern

18. Other ferns besides cinnamon fern are royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) and sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*). Beware of poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) along the trail.



liverwort

19. In the very moist microhabitat along the creek, a liverwort (*Marchantia*) grows and looks like a green flat leaf-like plant.



poison ivy

20. Red maples abound and so does poison ivy near the current access road ahead. If you want to take the shortcut to the beginning of the trail continue on the dirt trail on the left or proceed on the current path toward the college and turn left on the access road to go to the parking lot.