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### **Mother's Day Flower Walks**

Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., the day before Mother's Day, University of Illinois Extension will be offering guided wildflower walks at the Natural Resource Education Center (NREC) in Russell Woods Forest Preserve. Russell Woods is located 1 mile west of Genoa on state route 72. The Natural Resource Education Center is at the end of the forest preserve road.

"People will often come into the NREC and ask us to come outside and help them identify one of the many beautiful spring native wildflowers in the forest preserve," said Peggy Doty, University of Illinois Educator. "This time of year is crucial for these delicate plants. The spring woodland flowers grow in the wooded areas but come up early to attain enough light to make food for themselves. If they wait too long the shade of the trees would block the precious light they need," continued Doty. The spring beauties are one of the most delicate flowers found first on the forest floor and research has shown they are critical for many native pollinators. The trillium have recently opened and the Virginia bluebells are carpeting the lowland forest. Mother's Day weekend the forest will be still be putting on quite a display," said Doty. According to Doty it is also important for people to understand that it is illegal to remove plants from preservation areas so come with a camera if you would like to take something home.

All are welcome on the guided hikes. Two local botany enthusiasts will be available to guide people out onto the trails to see and talk about what is blooming. "Brian Hale and Karen

Matz have been leading the hikes for many years and both love to share their enthusiasm regarding wildflowers,” said Doty. We will do walks starting at 9:30 a.m. and each half hour through the morning and then again at noon and one last walk at 1 p.m. There are trails accessible for all abilities so come out to enjoy spring. Doty added, “If people have company in for the weekend this would be a great short destination and activity for their enjoyment.” There is no charge for the hikes and Extension staff will be in the center to talk about birds at the feeders and the displays so you can come for a walk or just to visit NREC. If you have questions please call the NREC at 815-784-2000.

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*Source: Peggy Doty, Educator, Energy and Environmental Stewardship, University of Illinois Extension, Unit 2.*

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