

Acton Arboretum Universal Accessibility

Assessment Performed 4/2014

SITE/ACCESS/ENTRANCES – Existing Conditions

- a.  The main entrance from the Taylor Road parking lot is level, hard stone dust and/or asphalt.
- b. The entrance from Wood Lane is relatively level, natural ground, without large roots or rocks.
- c. The entrance from Main Street is relatively level, grassy and can be muddy.
- d. There is an entrance from Concord Place, called the “Billings Trail.”
- e. There are steep wooden steps down to the Highland Bog trail from Minot Ave. near the bog boardwalk and the intersection of Forest Road. There is public parking at Conant School with a paved walkway and crosswalk to the Minot Ave. sidewalk.

PARKING – Existing Conditions

The Arboretum has 3 main entrances and two have parking*.

1.  Taylor Road Main Entrance has a parking lot with space for approximately 14 cars, with one **ADA** parking space 30 feet from the trailhead. The parking lot surface is packed stone dust with many potholes, which is plowed, but can be icy in winter and seasonally muddy.
2. Wood Lane entrance is not universally accessible. Visitors park at the end of a dead-end street. The entrance is relatively level, natural ground. There is an informational kiosk.
3. Main Street/Taylor Road entrance is for pedestrians. It is next to a sidewalk and a wooden carved sign. The trail is wide and grassy. This entrance is not yet universally accessible.

*Remote parking may be found behind the fire station on Concord Road, the Acton Memorial Library and the Acton Town Hall.

TRAILS – Existing Conditions

There are 3 main trails at the Arboretum. Two are **universally accessible with minor obstacles**. They are not passable, not maintained in winter, nor after heavy seasonal rains. Stone dust has occasional weeds growing in it.

 1. **The Orchard Loop** is approximately 0.2 mile long, turning left from the main entrance trailhead on Taylor Road. It does not include the paved trail. It is mostly level and consists of either packed stone dust with granite cobble edges, or asphalt edged with grass. A 224’ portion is rough, packed gravel and would be bumpy in a wheelchair. There are 3 mini-trails of 100’ or less within this loop through a hosta garden and grape arbor on packed stone dust. There are no roots or rocks. Not passable in winter or early spring due to mud, ice and snow.

 a. **Orchard Loop trail to Fragrance Garden and back** (from main entrance) is 0.6 mile. Trail is mostly level with packed stone dust surface; some granite, and some grass edging. Trail is not passable or maintained in winter or after heavy seasonal rain.

 b. **Rhododendron trail** : From the main entrance trailhead turn right, head 300’ down the paved trail. This portion of trail has between **5%** and **10%** slope. A stone dust trail on the left after the pond leads 440’8 around a rhododendron garden and through a wooden arbor; emerging back onto the main trail. The trail is narrow and has 5%-8% slope.



2. The Wildflower Loop is approximately 0.5 mile in length and contains the Orchard Loop within it. The surface is packed stone dust or asphalt. For 20' of the paved trail, the pitch is **15%**. There are 2 universally accessible wooden boardwalks. The Fern boardwalk measures 200' with a maximum slope of **10%** and a maximum pitch of **5%**. Assessed in 2014, the Fern Boardwalk is aging and some parts are in disrepair. Visitors should use caution. Funding will be sought in 2015 to replace it and bring it into ADA compliance. The Wildflower Boardwalk was newly rebuilt in 2013, measures 150' with **<5%** slope and 0% pitch. Approximately 225' of this trail has a maximum slope of 10% with two avoidable, embedded rocks and two 2" high roots. There is a 265' Fragrance Loop trail spur off the Wildflower Loop with a packed stone dust surface.

3. Highland Bog Loop is approximately 1.5 mile long when starting at the main entrance trailhead at Taylor Road. [One can also reach this trail directly via portions of other trails, or directly via other entrances to the Arboretum.] The trail surface is stone dust, paved asphalt, and natural ground. One mile of this trail is rocky, has many large roots and is steep in several sections. There is a narrow, winding 300' wooden boardwalk through a bog and numerous other wooden walkways through wetlands. These structures all lack railings. *

***(PLEASE SEE SITE ACCESS PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS)**

SIGNS – Existing Conditions

Trails are blazed yellow, blue or red according to the Town of Acton Land Stewardship Committee trail standards. Yellow denotes the main loop; red the access from parking; and blue is interconnecting trails. Blazes are painted, dollar-bill sized rectangles on trees. There are wooden carved, painted blocks with arrows directing hikers along the trail. The signs do not give distances. A large map at the main entrance kiosk shows points of interest, trail colors and scale.

Plans for Improvement- A new kiosk will be installed at the main entrance when the parking lot is reconstructed. Detailed universal access trail brochures with maps are being developed and will be available at the kiosk.

SERVICES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/ PROGRAMMING

There is a large map on a kiosk at the main entrance parking area. There is a QR code that can be scanned to download the trail map. There are no current programs specifically for persons with disabilities. However, we regularly provide customizable, guided tours to groups of citizens. Topics can be birds, plants, habitats, environmental protection, gardening, trees, etc. Please contact nr@acton-ma.gov to request a custom tour or program.

Plans for Improvement: Create self-guided audio tours that can be downloaded onto smart phones, and/or may be borrowed from the library on mp3 players.

RESTROOMS

There is a  **ADA** portable toilet at the Taylor Road parking lot trailhead on site from May – November.

BENCHES

There are wooden benches installed at least every 200' around the Wildflower Loop trail. They are adjacent to packed stone dust surface.

PICNICKING

There are a total of 8 picnic tables, randomly dispersed around the upper lawn area. This area is generally level. There is 1  ADA picnic table on the lawn, approximately 15 feet from the edge of the paved trail.

Plans for improvement: Plans are in place to build an **ADA** trailhead with all ADA components including an information kiosk, portable toilet and picnic table, all connected via paved trail.

PLAY AREAS

The upper grounds of the Orchard Loop are grassy and mostly level. The trail abuts the lawn area. A stone reading circle is located 20' from the paved trail. A pond may be viewed from the paved trail 10' from the edge.

RAMPS

The Wildflower Loop trail passes over two wooden boardwalks. There is a 20' long wooden bridge near the hosta garden; and a 10' long wooden bridge near the sun pond. All have railings at 18" and 36" high and <5% slope.

FRAGRANCE GARDEN

Fragrant plant species for this garden were specifically selected for the enjoyment of visitors who are sight impaired.

DRINKING FOUNTAIN

There is a drinking fountain approximately 450' from the main entrance. It is not handicap accessible.

Plans for Improvement: Plans are in place to install a universally accessible drinking fountain.

***SITE ACCESS PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS**

- a) Taylor Road Parking Lot: CPA funds were granted in 2014 for a complete re-design and construction of a 30-car, paved parking lot with  ADA spaces.
- b) Sidewalk entrance from Main Street: (Summer of 2014), the existing stone dust surface will be replaced with a 5' wide paved, standard sidewalk/universal surface.
- c) Replace existing Minot Ave. entrance stairs with an **ADA** sidewalk ramp. The new ramp will allow access to a new **ADA** bog boardwalk. CPA funds were granted in 2014 and private donations acquired for the new boardwalk.
- d) Redesign and replacement of the fern boardwalk will happen in 2015/2015. CPA funds will be requested for this improvement.
- e) The wildflower boardwalk was replaced in 2013 utilizing volunteer efforts, private funding and CPA grant money.