

Nature and Wellness

The Middletown Green Team's mission is: "to conserve Middletown's shared natural resources, including land, air, water, open spaces, and vistas. By working in partnership with our schools, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, businesses, and residents, we seek to sustain natural resources and promote healthy living for generations to come. We will accomplish our goals by creating understanding in the community, promoting involvement by way of education, and addressing environmental challenges and opportunities by focusing on economic, environmental, and social sustainability."

Living with our fellow residents in this beautiful valley surrounded by mountains, woods, fields, and streams, we on the Green Team support and promote the health benefits of and ample opportunities for spending time in nature.

Recent research has focused on measuring both the benefits of being in nature and the time needed: Two hours per week brings clear results.

The research gathered data from a 2019 study of 20,000 people* found that those who spent 2 hours a week—either in one outing or cumulatively—were substantially more likely to report good health and psychological well being than those who spend less than 2 hours/week in nature. The benefits were found across a wide range of demographics—different occupations, socioeconomic levels, ethnic groups, and levels of disabilities and illnesses.

Many other researchers are finding similar conclusions: Time in nature—whether in our backyard gardens, at a community park, by the water, or in wilder natural places—improves our well being in many ways. These include helping us to:

- Reduce stress, including lowering blood pressure and stress hormone levels
- Increase resilience
- Increase nervous system regulation
- Enhance immune system functioning, quickening rates of healing
- Increase self esteem
- Reduce anxiety
- Improve mood, mental health, and emotional well-being
- Improve attention
- Increase empathy and cooperation
- Promote awareness of and increase our sense of connection to natural spaces, leading to concern and engagement to advocate to preserve wild spaces and native plants and animals for future generations.

We hope this information encourages you to spend more time in nature, enjoying all the ways it can strengthen your well being.

* Link to the 2019 study: Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44097-3>