

In the Nature Preserve
VIRGINIA PINE FOREST
 by Maggie Heineman

Editor's note: This is the first in a series about the Nature Preserve. Each article will include a map, photo and description of a special section of our trail system.



On Tuesday, September 27 the Woodlands / Trails group had walked down Yellow Trail #1, and I had seen the many large

fallen trees and the marker. Five days later, prominent botanist Ted Gordon began his Witmer Stone Weekend walk named "Tour of Medford Leas' Diverse Habitats with Reference to Stone's Findings" by going down that very trail. Gordon explained that when he did the botanical survey of Medford Leas in 1992, that area was a Virginia Pine forest. Now some large pines are still standing, but many are on the ground and being replaced by oak, beech, and hickory, the predominant trees of a climax, or mature, forest in this region.

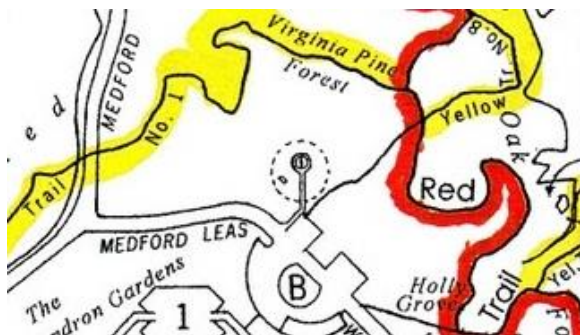


Maggie Heineman

Fallen pines provide space and light where oak, hickory, beech and other hardwoods replace them.

The pines did not die of disease or environmental change. They died because they have a short lifespan of about 75 years. They grew where there was an open field surrounded by hardwood forest. Now, after 75 years, they are giving way to

their successors. Ted Gordon said this small area of Virginia Pine is one of the most striking examples of natural succession that he knows of. He also said that Medford Leas is exceptional in its preservation of natural habitat which all around us has been taken over by development.



The Virginia Pine forest may be reached either from the west, where Trail #1 crosses Medford Leas Way just north of the turnoff toward parking lot B, or from the other direction by starting down Yellow Trail #8 from its entrance near Meditation Garden (the dotted circle on the map).

