

ROYAL OAK'S NATURE PRESERVES: TENHAVE WOODS and CUMMINGSTON PARK

Royal Oak's two nature preserves, Tenhave Woods and Cummingston Park, are the "natural jewels" of Royal Oak and surrounding communities. They are both heavily wooded, have lined trails and contain over 300 species of flora between them. These natural areas are open to the public during the daytime, seven days a week. Dogs are not allowed inside the preserves because they disturb the wildlife. During the winter and spring, boots are recommended to be worn while in the parks. Because of mosquitoes, insect repellent and dressing appropriately is advised from late spring through the end of summer. Location of these two parks and their trail maps can be found at "[Park Locations](#)."

Tenhave Woods:

Tenhave Woods, which is just east of Royal Oak High School, is in a fenced-in area located within the boundaries of Quickstad Park. Tenhave Woods was once part of a Royal Oak settler's (the Goodwin family) woodlot and was probably kept that way because of their need for firewood.

Tenhave was dedicated as a city park in 1955. After an incident in the middle 1960's, it was fenced in by the city. The only way that anyone could get into the woods was by going to the city and getting the key to unlock the gate. After two turnstiles were installed in 1986, the park was re-opened.

Tenhave Woods encompasses about 22 acres and was named in 1999 after Hessel Tenhave, a Dondero High School biology teacher. He taught in Royal Oak for 34 years and often utilized the woods to impress the importance and beauty of the environment on his students. Walter Nickel, former naturalist for Cranbrook institutions, said, "This is one of the finest acreages of hard woods that I have ever seen in this area."

The park's entrances and exits are through turnstiles that are never locked. At present, the main entrance can be found along the south fence, facing Lexington Blvd and about 300 feet east of Marais. A second entrance is at the northeast corner of the park, just off of Normandy. Exit-only turnstiles are located on the west edge of the park next to the soccer fields and northwest corner (facing Normandy). Lexington entrance parking is available at a lot adjacent to the intersection of Lexington and Marais and at the Senior/Community Center.



Tenhave's Lexington Entrance

Tenhave Woods has several assets. One is Dragonfly Pond which was rebuilt in 2005 by removing 68 trees that blocked that sunlight from reaching the pond and some excavation work that was done. Rebuilding the pond area has helped to reduce the number of mosquitoes in that part of the park by increasing the quantity of pond life that eats mosquitoes. Other features include the park having three different types of forests (swamp, oak/hickory and beech/maple), a good trail system that is continually being improved, and entrances that were installed in 2007 and 2008. Those entrances now

provide a dry entryway into the park during the spring when the west end of the park is usually quite wet.

The following are completed Tenhave Woods projects:

- October 2002: Built Sassafras Trail (Eagle Scout project)
- November 2003: Swamp and Scout Trails were built (Eagle Scout project)
- Spring 2004: Began the ongoing project of removing Garlic Mustard (Nature Society Project)
- October 2005: Tenhave Woods Vernal Pond Project completed (Nature Society Project).
- October 2007: Moved soccer field “entrance/exit” turnstile to Lexington side of park. It became a new entrance to the park. A new “exit only” turnstile was installed to replace the turnstile that was moved to Lexington. (Nature Society Project)
- February 2008: Trail extension from Sandbar Trail to where new Normandy entrance/exit turnstile is going to be installed (Eagle Scout Project)
- April 2008: Two benches were installed at Dragonfly Pond and Wood Duck houses put up at Dragonfly Pond (Eagle Scout Project)
- June 2008: Built Fern Trail (Eagle Scout Project)
- August 2008: Sassafras Trail widened (Eagle Scout Project)
- November 2008: -Relined and widened both Swamp and east half of Scout Trail (Eagle Scout Project)
- December 2008: Rerouted Pond Trail (Eagle Scout Project)
- December 2008: The Normandy “entrance/exit” turnstile that was located at the west end of the park off of Normandy was moved to the east end of the park (Normandy side). It became a new entrance to the park. A new “exit only” turnstile was installed to replace the turnstile that was moved to the east end of the park off of Normandy. (Nature Society Project)
- October 2009: Used dirt to raise Pond Trail near the Goodwin Trail and the Fern Trail in order to keep those trails dry in the spring. Also rerouted part of the Sassafras Trail (Eagle Scout Project).
- November 2009: Installed trail identification signs at all trail intersections at Tenhave and installed Tenhave trail maps at both entrances (Eagle Scout project)
- November 2009: Brian and Chris Cooley from Community Arborist cut down about 12 trees from the area north of Dragonfly Pond. Then Perry Gentner from Machine Works came in with machinery and removed those trees and their tree stumps. Then he removed over a foot of dirt from that area.
- April 2010: Scout Trail relined (Eagle Scout project)
- November 2010: Realigned some trails, added a bench to the peninsula jutting into Dragonfly Pond (Eagle Scout project)
- October 2011: Added sand to trails that had a clay base (became very soggy when it rained) that was added to them several years ago. (Eagle Scout project)
- October 2012: Deer Fence Project that increased the height of 6-foot fence behind neighboring homes to over 8 feet. (Eagle Scout Project)
- February 2013: Had over 100 people form a line and walk through the park to make sure that there were no longer any deer in the park.
- September and October 2014: Nature Society work crew filled fence gaps along the ground with logs. The purpose of this project was to help keep deer out of the park.
- January 2016: The Scout trail from Goodwin to the Swamp Trail and the Swamp Trail back to Goodwin and a little of Goodwin between these 2 trails was relined with logs. (Eagle Scout project).
- December 2020: Laying sand on the north end of the Pond Trail to the Goodwin trail & at that point going west to the exit gate on the Goodwin trail (Eagle Scout project).

Cummingston Park:

Cummingston is located on Royal Oak's northern border, just east of Meijer. The 31-acre park is mostly wooded, except for an open field and play structure at the east end. The west and middle sections of the park are fenced, but unlike Tenhave Woods, the main entrance does not have a gate or turnstile. That entrance is located at the intersection of Torquay and Leafdale, where on-street parking is available.

In 1925, five acres of what is presently Cummingston Park, was dedicated as a park. It was bounded by Leafdale, Langley Court, Mansfield, and Torquay. The balance of it was purchased by the city in the early 60's and dedicated in 1963. It was used extensively from the mid 50's through the 60's for nature study classes. The Michigan State Botany Department said, "Cummingston Park contains the richest wild area in this part of Michigan". As recently as the late 1960's, run-off water from the park drained into the north branch of the Red Run, which flowed along what is presently known as Parmenter Road. When an apartment complex south of the park and Meijer Drive, north of the park, were built in the early to mid-70's, excess water from the park had nowhere to go. This caused a good portion of the park to flood from March to July, every year. This in turn reduced tree growth, killed off tree saplings, and initiated a decline of wildflowers in the park. In 1975 there were over 3,500 red trilliums; in 1999 there were only 50!



In 2002, at least 1/3 of Cummingston Park was underwater during the spring. In late spring, the city put in an experimental drain to see how much water could be drained from the park. The results were inconclusive in 2003, because the park was relatively dry. In the spring of 2004, the northern part of the park was underwater again. At that point, further planning was necessary in order to get the park to properly drain in the spring. Check out "[A History of the Water Conditions in Cummingston Park](#)" for more information about excessive water in Cummingston.

Cummingston Park's assets include Crawfish Pond built in 2008 and a good trail system. From drainage work done in 2006 and 2010, the excessive water buildup in the spring has subsided. Cummingston will still need a lot of work to get it back to the way it was in the 1950's. The process to restore it will probably take several generations. The following are completed Cummingston Park projects:

- Summer 2002: Removed honeysuckle from the front part of the park (Nature Society Project)
- Early Fall 2002: Removed grapevines from the front part of the park (Nature Society Project)
- November 2002: Built Meadow and Eagle Scout Trails along with rebuilding the Gentian Trail (Eagle Scout)
- October 2004: Built the Shagbark and Arkona Trails (Eagle Scout project)
- November 2006: Deepened drainage ditch running alongside Leafdale Trail (Nature Society Project)

- December 2008: Completed building Crawfish Pond (Eagle Scout project)
- February 2010: The City of Royal Oak installed a drain tile in the southwest corner of Cummingston Park. They dug about a four-foot-deep ditch, laid the drain tile and connected it to a street sewer located at the corner of Delemere and Torquay.
- June 2010: Used log piles by pond to line Leafdale trail (Eagle Scout project)
- September 2011: Relined Gentian trail from Leafdale to gate, the Eagle Scout Trail and the Chinquapin Trail from the intersection at the Eagle Scout Trail, west to the intersection with Arkona Beach Trail. (Eagle Scout project).
- November 2011:
- The slopes at the edges of Cummingston's Crawfish Pond were decreased in order to increase the size of the breeding ground for amphibians.
- April 2016: A culvert was built under a section of Leafdale Trail necessary to direct excess water to the north/south drainage ditch along Leafdale Trail.
- November 2016: The Royal Oak Democratic Club helped to line new trails and clean out drainage ditches along with park clean up.
- December 2016: Built two new trails west of Leafdale (Eagle Scout project)
- July 2017: Debris in the meadow area was cleaned up which included the removal of grapevines along the fence (Eagle Scout project)
- October 2017: Thirty-seven volunteers from Stout Risius Ross, a financial company in Southfield volunteered their help by relining trails with logs, clearing more debris (glass, bricks, broken concrete, etc.) from the meadow restoration area, and improving drainage to the pond. It was estimated that 1,000 feet of trails were relined.
- June 2018: Over 100 Oakland University 3rd Year Medical Students worked in Cummingston Park. The northern section of Eagle Scout Trail was rerouted and lined. Parts of Arkona Trail were relined. Low spots on Gentian Trail and others were filled with gravel. Meadow Trail was cleared of vines, etc. that could trip people. Dead grapevines, broken glass, bricks, and concrete were removed from the meadow itself. A path was created along the meadow's ridge. The new eastern trails were cleared of branches, vines, small stumps, etc. Invasives were removed from the meadow and other places in the park. Three drainage ditches were cleared out.
- November 2018: Building & installation of 3 benches just outside the Cummingston Park Leafdale entrance in November (Eagle Scout Project).
- July 2020: Built bridge over Cummingston ditch & one next to the pond (Eagle Scout project)
- December 2021: Made a trail beginning on the east side of the clearing on the eastern edge of the park, heading northward & then turning west & running into the northeast corner of the Arkona Trail (Eagle Scout Project).