

Disclaimer

These minutes reflect the actions taken by the Commission during its November 14, 2025 meeting. Although these minutes have been approved by the Commission, no action authorized by the Commission during this meeting, as reflected in these minutes, shall have force or effect until ten (10) days, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays excepted, after a copy of these minutes has been delivered to the Governor for review, unless prior to expiration of the review period the governor approves same, in which case the action shall become effective upon such approval. These minutes were delivered to the Governor on November 19, 2025.

PINELANDS COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES
November 14, 2025

All participants were either in-person or present via Zoom conference and the meeting was livestreamed through YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ViSDpU5ans>

Commissioners Participating in the Meeting

Nicholas Asselta, Alan W. Avery Jr., Mark Lohbauer, Gaetano Matro, Mark Mauriello, William Pikolycky, Jessica Rittler Sanchez, Ryck Signor, Douglas Wallner and Chair Laura E. Matos. Also participating were Executive Director Susan R. Grogan, Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Jay Stypinski and Governor's Authorities Unit representative Michael Eleneski.

Commissioners Absent

Deborah Buzby-Cope, Jerome H. Irick, Theresa Lettman and Jonathan Meade.

Call to Order

Chair Matos called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

DAG Stypinski read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement (OPMA).

Executive Director (ED) Grogan called the roll and announced the presence of a quorum. Ten Commissioners participated in the meeting.

The Commission pledged allegiance to the Flag.

Minutes

Chair Matos presented the minutes from the Commission's October 10, 2025 meeting. Commissioner Pikolycky moved the adoption of the minutes. Commissioner Lohbauer seconded the motion.

The minutes from the October 10, 2025 Commission meeting were adopted by a vote of 10 to 0.

Committee Reports

Chair Matos provided a summary of the October 31, 2025 Policy and Implementation Committee meeting:

The Committee approved the minutes of the September 26, 2025 meeting.

Staff provided a summary and reviewed evaluation criteria of the Pinelands Conservation Fund 2025 Land Acquisition Project proposals. One application was received from the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. The Committee met in closed session to review project specifics and the funding allocation requested. Committee members approved the award of \$3 million in available funding to the NJ Conservation Foundation for land acquisition in the Medford-Evesham priority acquisition area in Burlington County.

The Committee discussed a draft Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) amendment for the "Gap" application and approval process. The amendment would address private development applications that receive no municipal or county approvals or permits. Staff noted that a more formal rule proposal is planned for 2026.

Executive Director's Report

ED Grogan provided information on the following matters:

- Final design plans have been submitted to the New Jersey Historic Trust for the Fenwick Manor rehabilitation project. The appropriation of \$69,000 was received by the Commission as noted in the State's FY2026 budget. The next step is to share the Request for Proposals with the four pre-qualified candidates. The project no longer calls for any of the chimneys in the building to be disassembled.
- The Commission also received \$95,000 to support salary increases stemming from the Communication Workers of America (CWA) contract. The funds were provided to the Commission through the coordination of Governor's office, along with the Office of Management and Budget.
- At the October Commission meeting, Commissioner Avery asked if there were any funds left to support the Limited Practical Use (LPU) program. Staff contacted the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), and the NJDEP said there are no

more funds for the LPU program. However, there is approximately \$750,000 for land acquisition projects that have been generated by Pinelands license plate sales.

- Two longtime Commission staff members are retiring in the next two months. Kim Laidig began his career in the Science Office in 1993 and will retire on December 1, 2025. Teri Melodick, who is currently the Commission's receptionist, began working at the Commission in 1988 and will retire on January 1, 2026.

Gina Berg, Director of Land Use Programs, provided an update on the following items:

- In October, staff sent letters to property owners that received Waivers of Strict Compliance prior to 1992, advising that the Waivers would be expiring in one year from the effective date of the rules that the Commission adopted at its October meeting.
- An internal kick-off meeting was held in October to discuss the development of a new application information system with better all-around functionality for staff and eventually a component in which applicants can check the status of their development applications. This is a multi-year project that will take up a lot of staff time. National Park Service funding will be used for this initiative.

Director Berg said the Land Use programs office is also working with Rutgers University, which asked for staff to participate in the development of a watershed stressor evaluation tool. The Delaware River Basin Commission asked for staff to provide comments on a Climate Resiliency Plan that they are creating. Staff will also be providing input on two watershed plans in the Barnegat Bay where the restoration is nearing completion.

April Field, Chief Permitting Officer, provided information on the following matters:

- Manchester Township applied to construct a communication tower on municipally owned land. The application also proposed road improvements, the construction of a driveway and small parking area. The site has significant Threatened & Endangered (T&E) species concerns and would require a two-season drift fence survey. The township indicated that this tower is necessary to ensure public safety throughout the town. Commission staff suggested that the application be modified for just the construction of the communication tower and limited clearing. The township agreed to this approach and submitted a modified one-season survey and a revised plan that ensures only necessary clearing will occur. Manchester Township is expected to re-apply for the other development associated with the tower. The application is up for public comment at today's meeting.
- An application has been submitted for a resource extraction operation on an approximately 74 acre portion of a parcel located in the Preservation Area District in Woodland Township. In 2013, the Commission denied an application to mine the property due to T&E snake species on the parcel. The applicant is proposing preparation of a habitat conservation plan to address T&E species. A two-season drift fence survey was submitted and is currently under review.

- On October 21st, staff met with Woodland Township and discussed the following projects: installation of a well at the Chatsworth Fire Company, specifically for fire fighting efforts, an indoor cannabis grow facility to be located along Route 72 and groundwater quality issues raised by an existing autobody business also located along Route 72.
- On October 29th, staff met with representatives from the Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) regarding a boy scout camp that they purchased. PPA advised that the camp use would continue but they plan to use the camp for research and teaching. Staff advised that a change of use application would need to be submitted to the Commission. Staff advised PPA that they should reach out to Tabernacle Township in order to determine if the use is permitted in the Preservation Area District.

Stacey Roth, Chief, Legal and Legislative Affairs, said oral argument for Clayton Sand Company's challenge to the Kirkwood-Cohansey rules was held on October 29th. DAG Stypinski represented the Commission and responded to the court's questions. She said no decision has been issued.

Brad Lanute, Chief Planner provided updates on the following:

- Staff continues to participate in the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience (IAC) meetings. Staff shared information with the IAC about the redesignation of the Black Run watershed and the money provided for a large acquisition project in Evesham Township that will be included in the 2025 IAC Annual Report.
- Pinelands towns continue to submit municipal ordinances related to cannabis businesses. So far this year, staff has reviewed 11 ordinances, and a few are still under review. Municipalities are modifying where cannabis uses are permitted. It's ultimately a municipality's decision to permit these facilities and specify conditions for their development, as long as the siting standards remain consistent with the CMP.
- Staff met with Waterford Township on October 30th to discuss amending the Haines Boulevard Redevelopment Plan. The municipality is working with a redeveloper who is seeking to provide additional affordable housing. Staff provided guidance on the process.

Paul Leakan, Communications Officer, provided the following updates:

- The 2026 Pinelands wall calendar is currently being printed. The 10th edition calendar has a water theme and will be available for free in early December.
- New Pinelands merchandise will soon be for sale and will be revealed at the December Commission meeting. Profits from the Pinelands merchandise support the Katie Fund's mission of planting native vegetation.

- Commission staff recently planted five highbush blueberry plants, 32 tubelings of bearberries and one pitch pine at the agency's headquarters. All of the plants were donated by Pinelands Nursey of Columbus, New Jersey. Earlier this year, Commission staff contacted the NJDEP Parks and Forestry Service to compliment them on their new, interpretive signage at state parks and forests. Commission staff also received permission to print and use the signs at the agency's office. The Commission paid to print a total of 34 sign panels, and the signs will be installed onsite during the next few weeks. The plantings and corresponding signage will create both an educational and visual experience. See attached photos of the plants and signage.

Public Development Projects and Other Permit Matters

Chair Matos introduced a resolution for the expansion of an existing artificial turf field at Shawnee High School in Medford Township.

Commissioner Avery made a motion Approving With Conditions an Application for Public Development (Application Number 1987-0345.019) (See Resolution # PC4-25-31). Commissioner Mauriello seconded the motion.

Mr. Ernest Deman, Environmental Specialist, displayed an aerial (see attached) of the existing artificial turf football field at Shawnee High School. He said this application proposes the additional placement of artificial turf at the north and south end zones that will be used for track and field sports.

Commissioner Rittler Sanchez said she is not supportive of artificial turf fields, but in this instance, she will be voting yes because it is just the expansion of an existing turf field.

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 9 to 0. Commissioner Wallner abstained.

Commissioner Lohbauer said he voted yes on the application. He said the Executive Director's report states that there are currently no regulations in the CMP related to construction materials. Therefore, the Commission needs to look at what the science is revealing about artificial turf as it relates to groundwater quality to determine if amending the CMP to restrict the installation of artificial turf in the Pinelands Area is necessary.

Chair Matos said she is expecting active participation and discussion at the upcoming P&I Committee, during which the NJDEP will deliver a presentation on artificial turf fields.

Chair Matos introduced a resolution for the demolition of a senior center and the construction of a playground and two basketball courts.

Commissioner Lohbauer made a motion Approving With Conditions an Application for Public Development (Application Number 1988-0532.005) (See Resolution # PC4-25-32). Commissioner Pikolycky seconded the motion.

Mr. Deman said this application is for the development of a playground. The demolition of a senior center is included in this application; however, the demolition has already occurred. This application will also resolve two other violations, including basketball courts that were installed without application to the Commission and a small stone parking lot that was developed also without application. The parking lot will be removed (See attached aerial).

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 10 to 0.

Public Comment on Development Applications and Items Where the Record is Open

Mr. Deman said the following public development applications and one Waiver of Strict Compliance are up for comment:

- Construction of maintenance building at Shawnee High School
- Construction of a communication tower in Manchester Township
- Paving of the 16th Street right-of-way in Estell Manor City
- Development of a single family dwelling in Egg Harbor Township

No one from the public provided comment.

Ordinances Not Requiring Commission Action

Chief Planner Lanute said in the past month staff reviewed 11 ordinances and one Master Plan Re-examination Report. He said staff worked with Pemberton Township for a number of years to resolve ordinances that were adopted in 2021 and 2022 related to cannabis. He added that in an effort to more effectively regulate warehouse development, Pemberton Township rezoned an existing non-residential district within the Pinelands Area and created three new non-residential zones. To ensure these new zones met CMP standards, staff assisted the Township in drafting additional amendments to properly cross-reference the CMP-related standards already contained in the Township Code. As an additional benefit, the rezoning also eliminated a zoning district that had spanned multiple Pinelands management areas, which is a zoning practice that Commission staff has consistently advised municipalities to avoid.

Presentation: Alternate Design Wastewater Systems Pilot Program Implementation

Claire Osei, Resource Planner, said in 2002 the Commission amended the CMP to create the Alternate Design Wastewater Treatment System Pilot Program. The Pilot Program was established to determine if certain wastewater technologies could limit the amount of nitrogen on parcels under 3.2 acres but larger than one acre for residential use. She said the CMP requires periodic reporting on the Pilot Program.

She said in 2021 the Pilot Program was expanded to allow the following technologies to participate: Hoot ANR, Fuji Clean CEN Series, Busse MF-B-400, Pugo systems, and Waterloo Biofilter. Based on the assessment of these technologies per the CMP evaluation criteria, staff recommends that Hoot ANR and Fuji Clean remain in the Pilot Program as their median effluent

total nitrogen (TN) results fall below the 14 mg/L target that is required for one-acre parcels, and they have had minimal installation, operation, and maintenance issues. Staff also recommends that Busse MF-B-400, Pugo Systems, and Waterloo Biofilter remain in the Pilot Program despite the lack of installations in the Pinelands. This will allow more time for potential sales considering the existing competition from other successful technologies and since no other technologies have been identified yet that could replace them. Finally, the Commission may want to consider implementing an amendment similar to what the NJDEP adopted in April of this year that permits treatment technologies certified to Standard 40 and/or 245 by other third-party organizations with accreditation from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) other than the National Sanitation Foundation International (NSF) to operate in New Jersey. This will increase the number of eligible technologies that can participate in the Pilot Program and potentially increase competition and reduce costs. She said to date a total of 497 technologies have been installed throughout the Pinelands Area. The next implementation report is due in November of 2027.

Link to presentations slides: <https://www.nj.gov/pinelands/home/presentations/Presentation-%202025%20Alternate%20Design%20Septics%20Systems%20Pilot%20Program%20Implementation%20Report.pdf>

Commissioner Lohbauer asked why the number of installed systems were so low in Cape May and Gloucester County and why Cumberland County has zero installed systems.

ED Grogan said there are number of factors to be considered, one being that the number of acres that are in the Pinelands Area in Cape May County, Camden County and Gloucester County is significantly less compared to Burlington, Atlantic and Ocean Counties. Another factor is that there is limited sewer service in Burlington County's Regional Growth Areas and certain parts of Ocean County, such as Whiting, where there are existing one acre lots, thereby necessitating the use of pilot program technologies. This is not the case in Atlantic County, where there is sewer available in the Regional Growth Area.

Commissioner Mauriello said emphasized the importance of authorizing technologies that have achieved certain certifications. This enables the Commission, as a regulatory agency, to provide certainty to the property owner and, in the long run, will save property owners time and money.

Commissioner Rittler Sanchez asked what happens when a technology is removed from the Pilot Program and whether the homeowner has to replace the septic system.

ED Grogan said one of the fundamental guidelines of the Pilot Program was that the homeowner would not be penalized should the technology not end up producing the intended results. She said the replacement of a septic system does not require an application to the Commission therefore we could not track data related to the repair or replacement of a septic system.

Chair Matos requested an oral motion authorizing the continuation of the Alternate Design Wastewater Systems Pilot Program for two more years at which time staff will provide an updated Implementation Report. Commission Pikolycky made the motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Lohbauer. All were in favor.

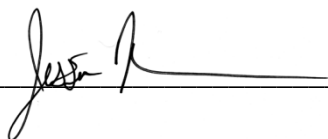
General Public Comment

Jason Howell, Pinelands Preservation Alliance, said preservation of the Black Run watershed seems to be moving in the right direction. He said the Commission should consider the Amatol tract in Mullica Township as its next target for preservation. He said it consists of approximately 1,900 acres that are not preserved or developed. He said because it was former munitions plant, underground radar would need to be conducted to ensure that the munitions are no longer a risk.

Adjournment

Commissioner Lohbauer moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Pikolycky seconded the motion. The Commission agreed to adjourn at 10:55 a.m.

Certified as true and correct:



Date: November 19, 2025





Highbush Blueberry

(*Vaccinium corymbosum*) Height: 6 feet to 12 feet

Highbush blueberry is a native shrub that thrives in the sandy, acidic soils of pine barrens habitats.

Its white, bell-shaped flowers are beautiful in spring. The dark blue berries of summer are sweet and popular as fresh fruit treats and in pies, muffins and cakes. In the wild, small mammals and birds feast on this delicious fruit. In autumn, scarlet leaves color the landscape while reddish twigs brighten the winter scenery.

Commercial blueberry growing originated in the NJ Pine Barrens in 1916, their cultivation pioneered by Elizabeth White.

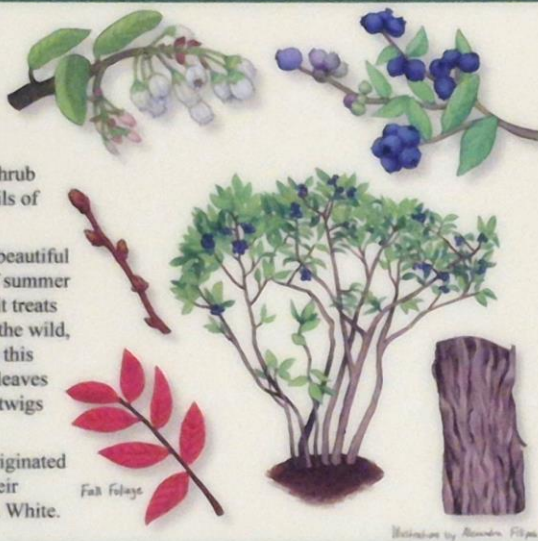


Illustration by Alexander Filipe

Designed and developed by:
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
State Parks, Forestry & Historic Sites

Production of this sign funded by:
NJ Pinelands Commission

Pitch Pine

(*Pinus rigida*) Height: 30 feet to 60 feet

Pitch pine, the most common tree of the New Jersey Pine Barrens, grows well in dry, sandy soils. Features such as thick, scaly bark, epicormic buds and serotinous cones, allow it to survive the frequent wildfires of the region.

Epicormic buds begin under the protective thick bark. After fire, these buds sprout along burned trunks and stumps and grow into new branches.

Most cones on pitch pines in this area are **serotinous**. These cones are held closed by a glue-like resin that melts in the heat of a wildfire allowing the cones to open and release seeds.

Pitch pine is named for its thick, sticky, dark resin known as "pitch" which was used to make tar and turpentine.



Illustration by Alexander Filipe

Designed and developed by:
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
State Parks, Forestry & Historic Sites

Production of this sign funded by:
NJ Pinelands Commission

Sheep Laurel

(*Kalmia angustifolia*) Flowers: One-fourth inch to half-inch wide

Sheep laurel is a small evergreen shrub that only reaches three feet in height. It can grow in both dry and wet conditions and is commonly found in sandy soils, bog edges and swamps.

Laurels have a unique pollination mechanism. The anthers are "spring-loaded" in pockets inside the flower. When an insect lands on the flower, the anthers pop out and shower the insect with pollen.

Sheep laurel provides wildlife with protective cover but is toxic when eaten. Hence, its nickname, "lambkill."

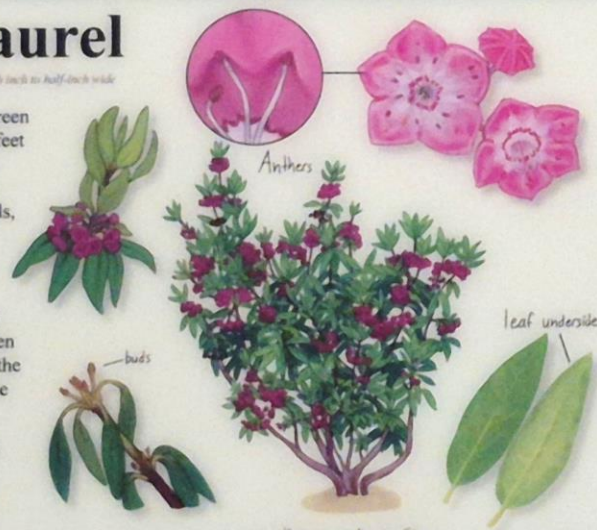


Illustration by Alexander Filipe

Designed and developed by:
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
State Parks, Forestry & Historic Sites

Production of this sign funded by:
NJ Pinelands Commission

Pitcher Plant

(*Sarracenia purpurea*) Leaves: 4 inches to 10 inches long; Flowers: 12 inches to 24 inches tall

Plants eating animals? Oh my!

The **pitcher plant** is one of New Jersey's carnivorous plants. To insects, its pitcher-shaped leaves look and smell like flowers. But it's a trap! Once inside, downward-pointing hairs on the insides of the leaves prevent the insects' escape. At the bottom of the "pitcher" there's a reservoir of water and chemicals that dissolve the prey into nutrients that the plant can absorb.

Pitcher plants grow in wetlands. Flower stalks appear from late May to mid-June. In the 1800s, Indigenous people used medicine they derived from pitcher plants to treat smallpox.

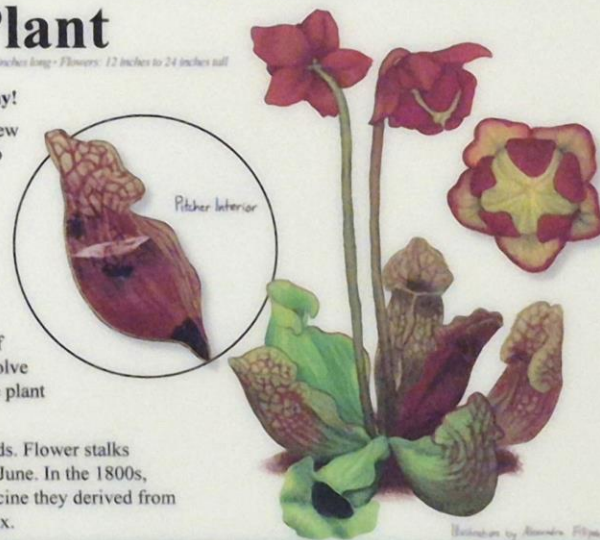


Illustration by Alexander Filipe

Designed and developed by:
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
State Parks, Forestry & Historic Sites

Production of this sign funded by:
NJ Pinelands Commission

Flowering Dogwood

(*Cornus florida*) Height: 40 feet to 50 feet

Beautiful in all seasons, the native **flowering dogwood** grows in the understory of fertile forests. It is often planted as a landscape tree, though the showy white (or cultivated pink) "petals" are really bracts (modified leaves) that surround the small greenish-yellow true flowers in the center. Maroon leaves decorate the tree in the fall as birds feast on the red fruit.

Indigenous people used the bark and roots as a remedy for malaria and extracted a red dye from its roots. The wood has been used for wheel hubs, handles, spindles and pulleys. Dogwood is the New Jersey State Memorial Tree.



Illustrated and written by
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites

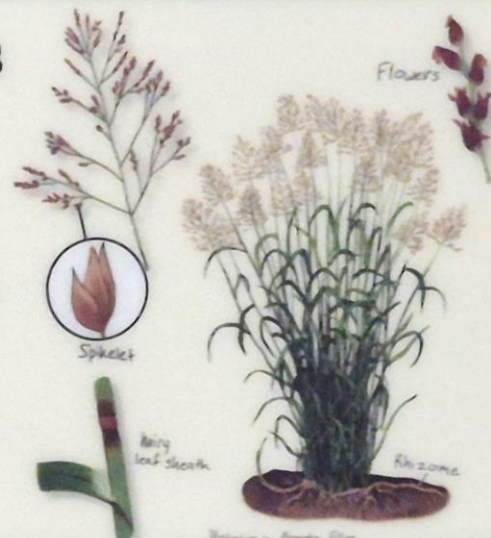
Production of this sign funded by
NJ Pinelands Commission

Switchgrass

(*Panicum virgatum*) Height: 3 feet to 5 feet tall
Up to 6 feet with flower panicles
Leaf size: 1 inch wide

Switchgrass tolerates a wide range of soils and is native throughout most of the United States. It is easily identified by its pinkish, finely textured, multi-branched flower panicles which seem to float over the leaves like a cloud. The leaves are about one inch wide and have a white patch of hair where they attach to the stem.

In the fall when the seeds mature the pink flowers turn beige and the leaves turn from green to yellow to beige. The seeds provide food for quail, turkeys, doves and numerous songbirds.



Illustrated and written by
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites

Production of this sign funded by
NJ Pinelands Commission

White Oak

(*Quercus alba*) Height: Up to 100 feet

Native to eastern North America, **white oak**, named for its light-colored bark, is a slow growing but long-lived majestic tree which may reach 90 to 100 feet tall. In good growing conditions, the crown (top branches and leaves) might reach 100 feet across!

As its acorns mature and germinate in autumn, white oak's round-lobed leaves turn wine-red. More than 180 species of birds and mammals (including humans) eat the acorns.

The strong, durable wood is useful for many purposes, including ship building, flooring, furniture and fence posts. The wood is noted as having "tight cooperage," a description of its abilities to hold liquids when fashioned into barrels.



Illustrated and written by
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites

Production of this sign funded by
NJ Pinelands Commission

Arrowwood Viburnum

(*Viburnum dentatum*) Height: 3 feet to 15 feet

Arrowwood viburnum is a tall shrub of wet or dry ground in or near swamps and water courses.

Its common name is thought to be based on the long, straight stems or the arrowhead-like leaf shape. Arrowwood viburnum is common throughout New Jersey, but only reaches into the Pine Barrens along waterways. It is salt-tolerant and can be found on the margins of coastal marshes.

Thickets of arrowwood can be important nesting sites. The rose hooktip, a caterpillar that mimics a dead leaf, can be found feeding on this and other *Viburnum* species.



Illustrated and written by
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites

Production of this sign funded by
NJ Pinelands Commission



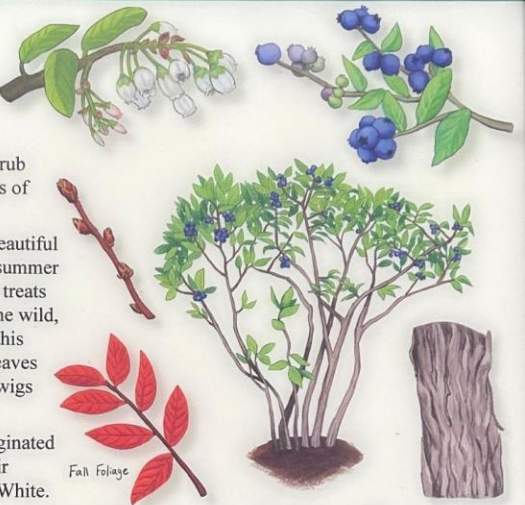
Highbush Blueberry

(Vaccinium corymbosum) Height: 6 feet to 12 feet

Highbush blueberry is a native shrub that thrives in the sandy, acidic soils of pine barrens habitats.

Its white, bell-shaped flowers are beautiful in spring. The dark blue berries of summer are sweet and popular as fresh fruit treats and in pies, muffins and cakes. In the wild, small mammals and birds feast on this delicious fruit. In autumn, scarlet leaves color the landscape while reddish twigs brighten the winter scenery.

Commercial blueberry growing originated in the NJ Pine Barrens in 1916, their cultivation pioneered by Elizabeth White.



Designed and developed by:
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites

Illustrations by Alexandra Filipjak
Production of this sign funded by
NJ Pinelands Commission



