

# Eco-Justice Center Self-Guided Tour



# Eco-Justice Center

## Self-Guided Tour

Look for numbers that correspond to numbers in this guide. Note that some numbers are skipped due to facility changes. Start at the farmhouse and walk counterclockwise. Please do not enter any of the buildings or animal enclosures. See map for details. Enjoy your tour!

1

### Farm House - it's brown...and green

Everything at Eco-Justice has been updated with three main things in mind 1) preserving the historical character of the farm, 2) using environmentally friendly or recycled building materials and, 3) using renewable energy sources as much as possible. This 1912 Dutch Colonial house was renovated and expanded with reclaimed red oak flooring from the Usinger mansion and Eco-shake shingles made from recycled plastic and rubber. In addition, it has a geo-thermal heating/cooling system and solar hot water panels on the south side of the house.



*How you can be green... Conserve water by installing a water aerator on your kitchen faucet. An aerator allows the water pressure to remain the same but can help to reduce water use by as much as one full gallon every minute.*

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### Pump House

This small building is a recent construction, built in the early 1990s. It resembles the original "milk house" that was attached to the main barn that was used to cool and store cow's milk until the milk was taken to the cheese factory. Today the structure houses the water pump and animal supplies. The pump is connected to the city water system.



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### Rain Barrels

When it rains, the rainwater runoff collects pollutants and washes them into sewers and the watershed. This is one of the biggest threats to clean rivers and our Great Lakes. We reduced the amount of runoff by installing multiple rain barrels like this one. Not only do rain barrels reduce our water usage and utility bill, it also is a great way to water our plants.



*How you can be green... Check out your local municipality for more information about getting a rain barrel for your home.*



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### 1889 Barn

This 1889 barn once housed cows, calves and horses in addition to storing feed for the animals. Today we use the main level and north loft as an educational space for our summer camps and the south loft for storing hay and straw for animals. The south lower level where the horses were kept now houses our goats. **The north lower level where the cows were kept, serves as shelter for our geese, ducks, and guinea fowl.** The flat black box attached to the top left side of the barn is a bat house. Bats are a vital part of our ecosystem since they eat many insects that affect our crops. We do not yet have bats living in the bat house, but are hoping some will find it and decide it is a good home!



*How you can be green... Become a volunteer citizen-scientist and assist the Wisconsin Bat Program by gathering data on native bat species.*



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## Chicken Coop

The chicken coop is home to our laying hens. Chickens can lay one egg every 26 hours during their prime and when the days are long. As hours of daylight decrease, so does the number of eggs. Hens like to lay eggs in a nest that other hens have used, so there are a few wooden eggs in some of the nesting boxes. We have several breeds of chickens so the eggs vary in size and color (brown, light blue and pale green). Eggs are sold on weekends during the summer (self-serve in a cooler on the front porch of the farmhouse). Unlike "factory farm" chickens, these chickens get to go outside every day, dig in the dirt, take dust baths, and experience sunshine and fresh air. In addition to fresh water and layer feed, they also enjoy garden scraps.



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## 1870 Granary

The granary is the oldest standing building on property. It was originally used to store farm equipment on the main floor and animal feed in the upper level. Today it is separated into multiple sections. Next to the hen house is the work shop, where tools and supplies needed for repairs around the farm are stored. The space under the 1870 sign is still used for the storage of the larger farm equipment, including our 2012 Case Farmall 35 tractor. Atop the granary are 55 solar panels. These panels take in energy from the sun during the day and turn it into electricity. Our system is tied into the WE Energy grid; we are paid for any excess energy produced by the solar panels but we can draw from the grid if the panels do not produce enough for our needs.



**How you can be green...** Turn down the heat on your thermostat in the winter and use your air conditioner less in the summer. Heating and cooling costs constitute nearly half of an average home's utility bills, so these reductions offer the greatest savings and environmental impact.



## Wind Turbine

The 10kW Bergey Excel-S wind turbine, was erected in the hay field in the fall of 2010. It sits on a 140 ft. lattice tower with a blade diameter of 25 feet. As the wind blows, the blades turn, creating electrical energy. An inverter converts the direct current into alternating current which is used to power the Education Center. Wind must be at least 6 mph to activate the blades, but it can function both day and night. The EJC receives a check each month from WE Energies for any excess energy that is produced and added to "the grid."



*How you can be green... Save energy! "Phantom loads," or the electricity used by electronics when they are turned off or in standby mode, are a major source of energy waste. 'Smart' or 'advanced' power strips eliminate the problem of phantom loads by shutting off the power to electronics when they are not in use.*



## Hoop House

This 20'x 50' Hoop House was built in 2015 to enable us to extend our growing season. Along with the adjacent gardens, it is tended by our [Racine Area Youth Farm Corp crew](#). It also serves as an educational space for students who come to learn about organic gardening.



*How you can be green... Conserve water! Water your lawn and garden as early in the morning as possible. This will prevent the water from evaporating as quickly and result in the need for less watering in general.*



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## Den-Mar Garden

This flower garden is named in honor of Dennis and Marian Kornwolf who owned this property previously. When they owned these 15 acres, they called it the "Den-Mar Farm." The red oak tree in the center was donated in memory of Dennis who died in 2005.



*How you can be green... Conserve water by placing a layer of mulch around your flower bed and garden and under shrubs and trees. Mulch not only looks nice, but it also helps keep water from evaporating as quickly and ensures that the water is getting down to the roots.*



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## Berries

Blackberries and red raspberries grow in the row just north of the vineyard. Some strawberries are growing in two raised beds on the northwest side of the garden. One gooseberry shrub growing near the blackberries is yielding delicious fruit. These berries are great for making cobblers, jam and jelly.



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## Hazelnuts

The shrub-like plants growing on the east end of this plot are hazel nuts. If we are observant about when they ripen and not too busy in late September, we can gather the nuts before the squirrels get them! They are delicious for baking.

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## North Garden

Organic gardening differs from conventional gardening in that no commercial fertilizers or pesticides are used. We use compost to fertilize the soil and hands-on weeding and pest removal instead of chemical pesticides. Each year the garden changes so you'll have to observe what is growing this year - however, you might recognize rhubarb at the east end of the garden and pole beans growing up the arched trellis. We like to intersperse flowers among the vegetables to add color, variety and attract pollinators. **Extra vegetables are shared with the Sisters at Siena Center or donated to the needy.**



**How you can be green...** Conserve water! When you wash fresh produce, re-use that same water for your houseplants rather than filling up a watering can.



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## Orchard

Ten varieties of apple trees, and two trees each of cherries, pears, and plums were planted in this orchard in 2011. **Tags are attached to a branch of each tree to help you identify the kind of fruit the tree will produce.**



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## Sugar Bush

A "Sugar bush," is a stand of trees that are grown to eventually produce sap for making maple syrup. This stand of sugar maples was planted during the years 2011-2013 with hopes that by 2050-2055 they will be large enough to be tapped to make maple syrup!



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## Compost Bins

Compost is organic material that can be added to soil to help plants grow. By turning food scraps and yard waste into compost, it saves space in landfills, reduces the need for fertilizers and nourishes the soil. Into these bins we put yard waste, food scraps, and animal manure. The materials are layered, lasagna style, and transferred from one bin to another until all the material decomposes to form compost. To accelerate the composting process, the piles are turned over regularly and water is added as needed. It takes 6 months to 1 year to produce usable compost.



**How you can be green...** Start your own compost bin at home. If you don't have space for an outdoor compost pile, you can compost materials indoors using a special type of bin, which you can buy at a local hardware store, gardening supplies store, or make yourself.

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## Asparagus bed

Asparagus is a perennial, a plant that comes up every year without needing to be replanted. Asparagus is harvested in the spring as stalks shoot straight up from the ground. Later on the plant grows many small thin fern-like leaves. These leaves are left after the harvest so they can absorb sunshine and make food to nourish the roots for the next season.

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## Alpacas

Alpacas are native to South America where they live in the Andes Mountains. There are no wild alpacas - they were domesticated from the vicuna thousands of years ago. South American people raise alpacas for their wool or fiber. Alpaca fiber is softer and stronger than sheep wool. Because it is so soft and contains no lanolin, people seldom have an allergic reaction to items made from alpaca fiber. Here at Eco-J they are sheared once a year in the late spring; the fiber is used for spinning, felting, and knitting. Notice their toe nails; they need to be trimmed every 6-8 weeks. If you don't see the alpacas in the pastures near their shelter, they may be out in the pasture on the other side of the creek.



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## Native Plant Garden

This is home to native plant species that were used for medicinal purposes by the Native Americans and early settlers. Botanical signs name each cluster of plants and a booklet explaining the medicinal uses of each plant is available to visitors in the green mailbox located near the garden. The entrance to a walking path that extends to the east edge of the property begins near the black walnut tree located at the southeast edge of the Medicine Wheel. It is about a 5-10-minute walk with benches along the way.



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## Rain Garden

This rain garden was created to capture water that falls on the farmhouse roof. An underground pipe connected to the down spout leads the water to the garden where it soaks into the ground. It was planted with 18 varieties of native plants that serve as habitat for birds, bees, and butterflies. Read the sign to learn more about the rain garden.



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## Solar Hot Water Panels

Four solar hot water panels are located on the south roof of the house. They provide almost all the hot water needed by those who live there. As the sun heats the liquid inside copper coils in the panels, it is circulated to holding tanks in the basement of the house. On very sunny days, the water could be warmed to 160 degrees. As needed, the water is cooled to 125 degrees, ready for use in the faucets.



*How you can be green... To save energy, wash your clothes in cold water and dry them outside on a clothesline when you can.*



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## Hermitage

The Hermitage, built in 2009-2010, is available for rent by a single person or a couple, interested in getting away from life's hectic pace and experience a time of quiet and solitude. Inside are the necessities for a simple life style including double bed, recliner, table, fireplace, refrigerator, coffee pot, toaster, and microwave. The Hermitage is "built green" and uses reclaimed building materials, a steel roof, composting toilet, and green jean insulation. The black walnut flooring of the hermitage comes from a tree that grew on this property. Persons interested in spending time at the Hermitage can visit our website to learn how to make reservations.



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## Outhouse

This outhouse is the original two-seater that was regularly used at the farm until 1983 when a flush toilet was installed in the house! Lucky that no one needs to use or clean this structure today!



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## Greenhouse

This greenhouse bustles with activity during the late winter and early spring since most plants grown at the EJC are started from seed in late February and early March. Other times of the year, the greenhouse is used for drying seeds and gourds and for storage of garden supplies.

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## Labyrinth

This sacred walking path and meditative space is called a labyrinth. It is intended to be walked silently, slowly, and with a contemplative mind. Unlike a maze, you cannot get lost in a labyrinth. Walkers are encouraged to rest on one of the benches and consider what they want to ponder as they walk to the center of the labyrinth. They might pause for a while in the center before retracing their steps to the starting point. Some people then return to the bench and journal their thoughts. When walked with reflective attentiveness, people often experience energy and enlightenment as they go forth to walk their path in life. Take a moment to quietly walk the labyrinth.





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## Vernal Pond

This is a vernal pond which means it is filled with shallow water at certain times of year. Our pond usually collects water during winter and spring rains, but dries up in the summer. During a single season, it may fill and dry several times depending on the amount of rainfall and drainage from nearby fields. This pond has no fish, but it can be home to a range of small aquatic invertebrates and it is a favorite place for the geese and ducks.



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## Treehouse

The treehouse was built in 2014 from re-used and repurposed materials. The small windows are from an old school bus, the large windows are from the Habitat Re-Store, the exterior siding is from a 150-year-old barn, the interior cedar is reclaimed wood from cedar closets. The doors were found in storage here - probably from the old log cabin or some animal shelter. The steel roofing came from a few left-over sheets of barn roofing. The treehouse was designed as a creative space for children and people of all ages to explore nature from a different perspective. Take a moment to explore the treehouse and enjoy the view.

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## Honey House and Bees

This building was originally a pig barn (notice the weather vane on the roof) but was transformed into a honey house in 2010. This is the place used when honey is extracted. When honey is "robbed" from the bees, only the extra honey not needed by the bees for the winter, is taken. Sixty pounds of honey must be left in each hive to make sure the bees have enough to eat during the winter and early spring when there is no food outside.



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## Goats

This is our alpine goat yard. Both male and female goats are born with the ability to grow horns, but many farmers will disbud the goat when it is small. This makes the goats less likely to harm each other or the farmer. The goats have lots of climbing structures, access to the sod roof on top of the chicken coop and access to shelter and hay inside of the barn. If you do not see the goats here, they may be in pasture across the creek.



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## Small Chicken Coop

This small poultry house is for raising young chicks. In the fall, the adult chickens are usually moved to the hen house where they join the laying hens.

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## Education Center

The Education Center was built upon the foundation of the farm's original 1858 two-story log house. After the family living here moved into the 1912 house, the old log house was used to raise chickens and ducks. In 2004 there was just a stone foundation left on the site. In 2008, the Education Center was built to house a classroom, **gift shop**, **office space**, public restroom and **root cellar**. It too, is "built green" with reclaimed red oak flooring, bio-based foam insulation, steel roof, fiber cement board siding, reclaimed bowling alley counter top and sink, low-flow faucets, and a dual flush toilet to conserve on water use. You can enter this building if you wish.



**How you can be green...** Conserve water by making sure the parts inside your toilet tank are in good shape and up to date. Worn-out fittings or chains can cause the toilet to run unnecessarily. Many new models of high-efficiency toilets work just as well without using as much water, so consider upgrading.

## Thank You

We are grateful to all the volunteers, friends, and visitors who have helped make the Eco-Justice Center what it is today and who continue to support its mission of environmental education and care of Earth. If you would like to be on the EJC email list, please sign-up on the sheet in the Education Center. If you would like to make a donation, you can use one of the envelopes found near the sign-up sheet. Please return this guide to the box where you found it. Thank you.

Ethical behavior is doing the right thing when no one else is watching -  
even when doing the wrong thing is legal.

-Aldo Leopold

