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# Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve & Elachee Nature Science Center

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**Thank you for visiting  
Elachee Nature Science Center.**

## DODD LOOP SELF-GUIDED NATURE TRAIL

Welcome to Elachee's Dodd Loop  
located within the 1440-acre  
Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve.

This trail was named for Ed Dodd,  
Gainesville outdoorsman,  
conservationist, and scoutmaster.

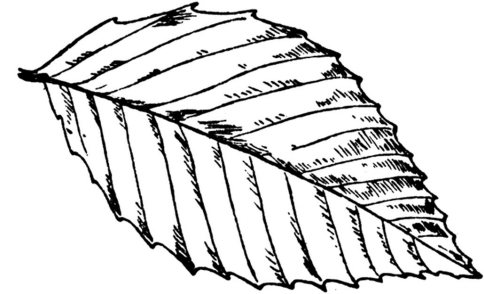
He was the creator of the *Mark  
Trail* daily cartoon series which at  
its peak was carried in over 500  
newspapers nationwide.

This typical northern-piedmont forest ecosystem includes a mixed pine hardwood forest, an oak-hickory forest, a riparian or stream-side forest, and a wetland. As you walk, enjoy the diversity of plant and animal species that make their homes in Chicopee Woods.

Snakes are abundant in Chicopee Woods including the venomous copperhead. Please stay on marked trails to avoid encounters with these snakes and to protect the forest habitat.

Follow the RED blazes starting at the Ed Dodd Trailhead from the parking lot near the E-House.

As you hike the Dodd Loop, you will transition from an oak-hickory forest, to a riparian forest along Walnut Creek, and into a mixed pine forest. In the winter, you will notice many American beech trees (*Fagus grandifolia*) in this area. They stand out against the winter woods since they hold their golden-brown leaves till spring.



1. Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*) can be seen behind the marker. This small to mid-sized tree often leans or grows crooked. The bark is gray with a reddish tinge, deeply furrowed and scaly. It is among the latest of the flowering shrubs and trees to bloom, with white, bell-shaped flowers that dangle like fingers from the tips of the branches. The flowers are an important pollen source for bees who produce tasty "sourwood" honey. The young shoots were used by the Cherokee to make arrowshafts.
2. Common wildlife along the trail include turtles, frogs, shrews, chipmunks, squirrels and raccoons. White-tailed deer are abundant in Chicopee Woods and are frequently seen crossing trails in early morning and late afternoon. Take a moment and listen for the call of songbirds. More than 150 species of birds make their homes in Chicopee Woods or pass through during spring and fall migration. Many large trees have fallen in this area. The fallen trees will provide habitat for numerous insects, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.
3. In this area mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) surrounds the trail. It is a member of the heath family (*Ericaceae*), which includes huckleberries, blueberries, azaleas, cranberries and rhododendron. This shrub's leaves are lance-shaped, glossy and dark green in color, three to four inches long, and are leather-like in texture. They resemble the leaves of the rhododendron but are generally smaller in size.

4. Beside a small stream, you will notice a grove of American holly (*Ilex Opaca*) and evergreen Christmas ferns (*Polystichum acrostichoides*). Since this fern and the holly stay green all winter, they were often used for Christmas decorations. Beside the small stream, you may see large cinnamon ferns (*Osmunda cinamomea*). These ferns will send up a tall fertile frond, covered with spores, that resembles a cinnamon stick.



5. Along the creek, there is a thicket of dog hobble (*Leucothoe fontanesiana*). Dog hobble is a close relative of rhododendron and azalea. Its evergreen waxy leaves have a similar look. The common name refers to the very thick, layered colonies of these shrubs which are nearly impossible to walk through. It is said that the dense vines of this plant would stop hunting dogs from pursuing their prey.

6. From this overlook, you can view the stream restoration along Walnut Creek. This restoration was done in order to control stream bank erosion and create habitat for stream life. Across the creek, there is a small wetland. Wetlands slow the flow of surface water, reduce flooding, and provide wildlife habitat for many species of amphibians and birds.

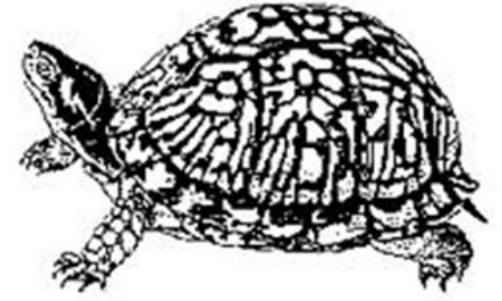
7. In the early spring, small white flowers of bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) are found in this cool moist environment. In the late spring, you can also find Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) growing along the trail. It gets its common name from its odd flower: a green pouch-shaped spathe (pulpit) with an overhanging hood that surrounds a fingerlike central spadix (Jack). In late summer, a cluster of bright red berries appears.



8. In the clearing, a large tulip poplar tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) marks the site of an old homestead. The tall hill behind the home site has rich, calcium-containing soil that supports woodland plants such as maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*) and an abundance of native

snails which you may spot clinging to trees. Native river cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) grows across the trail from the homesite. This plant was used by Native Americans to make everything from houses and weapons to jewelry and medicines.

9. As Elachee Creek flows down into Walnut Creek, many human-introduced invasive plants can be seen including honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), and Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*). These rapidly spreading introduced species can quickly outcompete native species. Elachee is working to control these introduced plants to promote ecological conditions reflecting earlier plant diversity.



10. Look to the right of the bridge for a good example of bracket fungi on dead logs. Fungi, along with decomposing bacteria and insects, are important in breaking down nutrients stored in the dead wood, thereby “recycling” these nutrients back into the soil to nourish future generations of plants.

11. Many wild flowers are found in the rich soil along the trail beginning with hepatica (*Hepatica nobilis*) in late winter. As spring begins watch for bird-foot violet (*Viola pedata*), toothwort (*Dentaria diphylla*), and rue anemone (*Thalictrum thalictoides*). Chicopee Woods is home to several species of trillium including the toadshade trillium (*Trillium cuneatum*). Watch for this maroon three-petaled flower with three mottled leaves beginning in March.

12. There are two types of large vines growing up the trees along Elachee Creek, muscadine (*Vitis rotundifolia*) and poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*). Poison ivy vines utilize numerous hairy “rootlets” to attach to tree trunks as they grow upward seeking sunlight. Muscadine vines, by contrast, loop over low tree branches and are borne upward as the tree grows.

13. Elachee Creek begins as a spring at the top of the hill. It is the home to small fish, water bugs, crawfish, frogs and other creatures. You may notice many mosses and ferns growing along this creek in the moist shade of hardwood trees.

14. As you cross the paved Geiger Trail, you will see a specimen hemlock tree (*Tsuga canadensis*). The future of the eastern hemlock is in question due to the spread of the hemlock woolly adelgid, an accidentally introduced invasive sap-feeding insect.

