

Maple Sugaring All Year (Sort Of)

BY ANDY BAKER, FARM PARK ADMINISTRATOR

Maple sugaring is a seasonal activity. For visitors to Lake Metroparks Farmpark, the sugaring season has been the only time of year to visit the Woodland Center and learn about the maple process. After the 2008 sugaring season that will change. Presently, the Woodland Center is not large enough to allow space to secure equipment and supplies and provide for year-round exhibits. The most one can do is observe the tubing stretched through the woods and peer in the windows.

Thanks to a generous donation to the Lake Parks Foundation by Farmpark members, Chip and Pat Kulp, Lake Metroparks has been able to purchase the materials to construct an addition to the Woodland Center. Under the direction of Don Beran, our maintenance staff crew leader and resident maple expert, the addition was constructed and the floor plan laid out to provide space to store supplies, secure the equipment and accommodate a series of interpretive stations.



The interpretive exhibits will outline the process of sugaring from tapping the maple tree to the finished product. The exhibits will illustrate the tools and knowledge available at different historic periods to show how the technology and market has changed over the past 400 years. For the Native Americans and early Western Reserve settlers obtaining sugar was the primary goal and the tools were cheap and simple. From the late 19th century on through the current syrup producers, maple products have been the goal and the technology has become increasingly expensive and sophisticated.

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In 2008, these exhibits and the equipment inside the Woodland Center will be available for visitors to tour on their own all year round. At present it is not our intention to heat or air condition the building. It will give visitors the real farm feel of a sugar house in the off season when the maple trees are in full leaf or frozen down. So even if you can't join us on Maple Sugaring weekend, you can still discover the maple process year-round and take home a sweet taste of our syrup through a purchase at the Farmpark Gift Shop.

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