



Welcome to Curtis Preserve!

Saratoga PLAN's Curtis Preserve opened to the public in Fall of 2025. Three trails, totaling about 1.4 miles, were built by PLAN staff and volunteers, including participants from Regeneron's *Day for Doing Good*. In addition to offering a great trail experience, the preserve is an important link for wildlife right on the edge of the Adirondack Park.

The property consists of a mixed forest dominated by red oak, white pine, eastern hemlock, pitch pine, and American beech. This secondary growth forest is the result of the property's historical agricultural use and former timber harvests. Today, the property is 100% forest cover with a peaceful brook running through the property offering cool, shaded areas for wildlife to rest during the increasingly hot summers.

What is Letterboxing?

Letterboxing is an old English tradition dating back to 1854 where people began leaving a self-addressed post card or note in a jar, hoping for them to be returned by mail by the next visitor. Today we've adapted this tradition and put it to use on Saratoga PLAN's nature preserves and trails. Each preserve has a letterbox which gives adventurers an exciting opportunity to explore the trails and have fun while doing so. When you find the letterbox, feel free to write us a note in the logbook with comments about your journey. Use the stamp inside the letterbox to mark your PLAN Preserve Passport on the appropriate page. Once you have collected at least five stamps (or listed three species observed during each visit) stop by PLAN's offices in Saratoga Springs for a FREE Saratoga PLAN t-shirt!

We hope you enjoy your letterboxing experience on this trail. Interspersed within the clues *in italics* are natural history observations for those interested. For example:

Did you know that porcupines are excellent climbers and spend most of their time in trees? Keep an eye out and you might just see one sitting up in the branches! What other animals spend their time in trees?

LETTERBOX CLUES FOR CURTIS PRESERVE

- 1. Start heading into the preserve on the Blue Trail. As you walk, look on your right for a beech tree whose top has broken off and is leaning on a pine tree. Remember that beech trees have smooth, grey bark.**

Notice the very large woodpecker holes that are on this tree. These big holes were most likely made by a pileated woodpecker looking for carpenter ants inside the dead tree. These holes can be used by many other animals.

- 2. At the end of the Blue Trail, the Orange Loop Trail splits to your left and right. Take the trail on the right and look for an oak tree with two trunks that split into a "V" shape. Keep going on the Orange Trail and you will see that the Yellow Trail eventually branches off to your left. Continue on the Orange Trail.**
- 3. While on the Orange Trail, you will see young pine saplings growing on your left. Go further and you will eventually see a section of fencing on the left at the bottom of a steep hill.**

Pine trees are best identified by their long, thin needles arranged in bundles. Can you believe that one day these small trees may reach heights upward of 150 feet? Look around and see if you can identify the grown-up pine trees high in the sky!

4. **Continue past the fence and the trail will bring you up a hill. As you gain elevation, look for a fallen tree on your right with fungi growing out of the sides. These are called bracket or shelf fungi, which commonly grow on birch trees.**

Fun fact: In 1991, Otzi the Ice Man was discovered in the Italian Alps when the ice had started melting. This man was believed to be over 5,000 years old and preserved in the ice. Shelf or bracket fungi similar to what you see here were found with him in his survival kit!

5. **Keep moving forward and you will cross a small, wooden bridge. Look to your right and you will see a large, old white pine with short branches sticking out in all directions. These branches were most likely broken by wind or storms.**

To get the preserve ready for public use, Saratoga PLAN stewardship volunteers and Regeneron Pharmaceutical employees teamed up for one day to clear the trails, install fencing, and build this bridge!

6. **As you continue around the Orange Trail Loop, keep an eye out for large, white pine trees with holes at the bottom. These could make great hiding spots for porcupines in the cold winter months.**

Did you know that porcupines are excellent climbers and spend most of their time in trees? Keep an eye out and you might just see one sitting up in the branches! What other animals spend their time in trees?

7. **Eventually you will come across two sections of fencing on your left. These were also built by PLAN and Regeneron volunteers. Keep going on the trail through the forest until you come to one section of fencing on your right.**

8. **Once you are at the section of fencing, look to your left and you will see some old debris. Now search around the fencing and you will find what you're looking for.**

This type of old debris is commonly found on properties that were previously farmed. Just be sure not to add any of your trash to it!

GREAT WORK!

Great job finding the letterbox! To exit the preserve, continue on the Orange Trail and then take the Blue Trail back to the parking lot. As you pass by the intersection with the Yellow Trail, be sure to keep an eye out for an interesting, fallen tree that grew into a loop. The loop is large enough to fit your head inside, so snap a photo with it and tag us at @saratogaplan!

Thank you!

Your Friends at Saratoga PLAN

The mission of Saratoga PLAN is to steward and protect farms, forests, and waters of the Saratoga region and the southern Adirondack foothills – now and forever. To learn more, please visit us at www.saratogaplan.org.



Thank you for generously funding the Letterbox Program!

Please return these clues to the kiosk. Thank you!