Nature Explorers Camp
Morris Arboretum & Gardens of the University of Pennsylvania

Parent Handbook

Dear Parents,

We are delighted that your child will be spending their days making amazing summer memories at the Morris Arboretum & Gardens. For over ten years, we have been offering summer programming that is uniquely designed for children to experience over 100 acres of gardens and natural spaces at Morris Arboretum & Gardens. Our goal is for children to be as comfortable as possible around nature, and to experience nature through fun immersive experiences that encourage scientific inquiry, curiosity, and discovery. It is our belief that when children are surrounded by trees, birds, animals, and insects, they will come to appreciate and protect them as future stewards of our planet.

Our youngest adventurers, Little Lightning Bugs (ages 4 to 5), will spend their summer headquartered on the public side of the Morris, where most visitor events take place. Parents will go up the hill and park in our main visitor lot (rain or shine) and meet our counselors near the parking lot. During inclement weather, drop-off and pick-up will be at the back of the Widener Visitor Center in the event tent.

Our older campers, Bloomfield Buddies (ages 6 to 10), are headquartered at Bloomfield Farm, located directly across from the main entrance of the Morris on Northwestern Ave. Bloomfield Farm is a wonderful place for our campers to explore, as it's filled with wildlife, lush meadow paths that are mowed weekly, and our Springfield Mill. These campers will also cross the street regularly to our main visitor gardens.

REGISTRATION POLICIES

Register and pay online (https://experience.morrisarboretum.org/Login.aspx). Completed forms, which include the child's emergency contacts, medical info, parent permission and liability form, and health insurance info must be printed and submitted **by May 10** to hold a camper's place in the program. Forms must be mailed or dropped off at Morris Arboretum & Gardens. If the forms are late, a $25 fee will be added to your registration. Without these forms your child cannot attend camp.

MORRIS ARBORETUM & GARDENS MEMBERSHIP

Morris members receive a discount on summer camp and other great benefits. To learn more about becoming a member visit our website, or contact the Membership Office at 215.247.5777 x205.

WEATHER & CANCELATION POLICIES FOR EXTREME CONDITIONS

Camp is held rain or shine. Campers may still be outdoors in light rain, so please send extra clothes and/or rain gear! In the case of lightning, activities will be moved indoors. The Hillcrest Building (headquarters for Little Lightning Bugs) is air-conditioned. Bloomfield Barn (headquarters for Bloomfield Buddies) has some air-conditioning and fans, and campers will have access to space in Widener or the Horticulture Center during excessive heat warnings.

While normal rain or a lightning storm will not deter us from camp activities, the Morris Arboretum & Gardens does reserve the right to cancel or shorten a camp day if the conditions are highly unsuitable and/or dangerous due to extreme weather or air quality. While it is rare that we will ever cancel, if more than half of a camp week is canceled due to weather, then a half-tuition refund will be issued to all registrants. If less than half of a camp week is canceled, then no refund will be issued.

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Typical Camp Schedule	Bloomfield Buddies & Lightning Bugs
8:45 to 9:00	Camper drop-off
9:00 to 9:30	Morning meeting; announcements; games
9:30 to 10:00	Out on a Limb time for LLB; Morning lesson or begin hike for BB
10:00 to 10:30	Snack; group activity
10:30 to 12:00	Hike/garden exploration; creek exploration; nature games
12:00 to 12:30	Lunch; story time
12:30 to 1:00	Free choice activities
1:00 to 2:00	Arts & crafts; science time
2:00 to 2:45	Water play; afternoon games. LLB walk to Widener for pick-up.
2:45 to 3:00	Closing circle; cleanup/pack for home
3:00 to 3:15	Pick up at Bloomfield car line / Lightning Bugs @ Widener

WATER PLAY

In addition to morning creek walks about once a week, we will do water play (sprinklers, splash pad, baby pools, water games, etc.) on many afternoons, especially when there is a heat advisory. Please send a pair of water shoes (waterproof sandals, crocs, or old sneakers are all ok), a bathing suit or change of clothes, and a small towel on Monday. We will keep water shoes and extra dry clothes at camp and send them home on Friday. Extra clothes should be in a sealed bag and labeled with your child's name.

WHAT TO BRING

Please dress your child in clothes that can get dirty! Make sure your child's shoes are comfortable to walk in since we will be spending a lot of time on our feet. Extra socks can be helpful since morning dew on the grass might get our feet a little wet. Some children don't mind, but others really benefit from dry socks. Open-toe shoes are **NOT** permitted for running games and hiking. Some sturdy open-toe sandals are OK as water shoes, but these cannot be worn all day. Hats, comfortable clothing, and sneakers are strongly encouraged.

Please be sure that your child is covered with sunscreen and insect repellent before their arrival to camp. Campers should bring **a backpack with the following items: a lunch, some snacks that can be carried on a hike**, **refillable water bottle, change of clothes, and water shoes**. Water shoes will stay at camp throughout the week and come home on Friday. Please label all items.

Less is more! **Please do not bring toys, phones, cameras, electronic devices, money or valuables to camp.** The fewer items that your child brings the better!

SUN, MOSQUITOES & TICKS

Please apply sunscreen and/or insect repellent prior to camp. It is recommended that bug spray is applied after sunscreen. For more info: cdc.gov/mosquitoes & cdc.gov/ticks. Counselors will reapply as needed with permission (see Registration Form) for younger campers. While ticks have not posed a serious problem at our camp in the past, they are prevalent throughout Pennsylvania, and tick-borne illnesses can be very serious. We suggest that tick checks be done every day when campers get home.

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CAMPER CODE OF CONDUCT

Our camp environment is informal and fun, but we do provide structure and routines throughout the day. Campers will be informed of rules and etiquette on their first day of camp. All campers are expected to respect each other, as well as Morris staff, plants and wildlife. Disruptive behavior affects the fun, safety, and overall quality of the camp experience for everyone. Parents will *not* be notified of all minor infractions as this is a normal part of child development and happens every day, but the camp director will get in touch with parents when there are bigger behavior concerns. In the event of repeated misbehavior, Morris staff will notify the parent/guardians and request that the camper be picked up or dismissed. No refunds will be given to campers who are dismissed.

ACCOMMODATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

Our primary goal is providing a safe, fun, and positive camp experience for children. We can meet a variety of needs; however, we do hike every day, and our camp staff is unable to provide one-on-one supervision without neglecting their responsibilities for the rest of the group. We are often outdoors, in a less-structured environment than at school. If your child receives assistance at school, it is often part of their IEP to receive assistance in the summer as well. Please discuss your child's IEP with your school and if needed, make arrangements to send an aide, TSS, or care facilitator to camp as well. If your child will have an aide or therapist coming to camp, please notify our Camp Director at igrubin@upenn.edu

SAFETY & MEDICAL INFORMATION

We take the protection and security of our visitors and campers very seriously. All Morris counselors, education staff, and education volunteers are vetted through a three-point background check (state, federal, child abuse) and approved by the Human Resources department of the University of Pennsylvania. All counselors and staff must have current First Aid & CPR certification.

Nature Explorers Camp is an outdoor camp that incorporates physical activity. Nature hikes to different areas of the Morris Arboretum & Gardens may have hidden dangers (*including but not limited to*: risk of bee stings, poison ivy, ankle sprains, excessive heat, and exposure to ticks and mosquitoes). Camp staff are trained in administering first aid and will contact 911 in the case of an emergency.

Please include all pertinent medical information about your child on their camper health form – this helps us to keep your child safe. If your child will be bringing any medications to camp (asthma inhalers, EpiPens, etc.), they must be in a sealed bag with your child's name. The bag needs to hold the medication and the prescription information from a physician.

CANCELATION POLICIES

Planning ahead can be challenging for everyone, but please be mindful when making your camp registrations. We often cannot accommodate requests to change scheduled weeks since we fill up quickly.

Cancelations up to May 10: $50 fee will be deducted from refund for each week canceled.

After May 10: Refunds will ONLY be issued for extenuating circumstances and are at the discretion of the Camp Director. If a replacement is found from the waiting list, a refund may be granted minus a $75 cancelation fee.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can my child be in the same group as their friend, sibling, cousin, etc.?

→ There is one group for all Little Lightning Bugs (ages 4-5), so everyone who has registered for Little Lightning Bugs will be together. Bloomfield Buddies has two age groups, and you will select your child's group during the registration process online*. There is one group for children aged 6-7 and one group for children aged 8-10. If you want a child to be in a different age group, please contact the camp director BEFORE you register online.

* **This is new for 2027!** We will no longer be dividing the Bloomfield groups after registration is done online.

Can I send my child home with another adult?

→ Please mark on your camp forms any friend or relative who has permission to pick up your child. If you need to make additions or changes, please do so by email at igrubin@upenn.edu.

What happens if I cannot drop off or pick up my child at the normal time?

→ Drop off begins at 8:45 am each day. We usually begin morning meeting at 9 am, and by 9:30 am our campers could be off exploring over 100 acres of gardens. Please let us know ahead of time if there will be a late drop off or early pickup since it can be very tricky for counselors to make separate arrangements. The camp director will help figure out the best timing and location to find the group (usually snack or lunchtime).

→ In the event of an emergency during camp hours, please contact the education desk at 215.247.5777 x125, or ask a Visitor Services representative to reach the camp director.

→ Afternoon pick up is from 3:00 – 3:15 pm. There is a grace period of one late pick-up, but after the first infraction, campers picked up after **3:15 pm** will be charged a late fee of $5 for every 5 minutes late.

Can I stay at the Arboretum after I drop my child off?

→ Unfortunately, families cannot stay on the grounds after a child is dropped off. However, they are welcome to walk around the public gardens once we officially open at 10 am. You may also stay and visit the gardens after pick-up. The gardens remain open until 5pm.

What do campers do when there is an excessive heat warning?

→ On days when the temperatures and humidity are excessive, we scale back the number of activities that involve physical activity. Instead, we focus our energy on crafts, splashing in the sprinklers, and doing games and activities in the shade.

Can I pack peanut butter?

→ Yes. We are not a peanut-free camp. We discourage campers from sharing lunches or snacks and will place campers with food allergies at separate tables per parent's request.

What do you do when it is raining?

→ A light sprinkle will not deter us from being outdoors. Pack extra clothes or rain boots! If there is lightning, heavy rain, or any sort of severe weather, we will stay indoors.

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DROP-OFF & PICKUP PROCEDURES

Little Lightning Bugs: Ages 4 to 5

Drop Off/Pick up Location: Top of hill near main visitor parking lot (100 E. Northwestern Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19118). In the case of rain, pick up and drop off will be at the event tent behind the Widener Visitor Center.
Drop-off: 8:45 - 9:00 am
Pickup: 3:00 - 3:15 pm

Campers ages 4 to 5 will begin and end their camp day in the open field near the Widener Visitor Center, accessed from the main entrance on Northwestern Avenue. Please park in the parking lot and walk your child to their counselors. If you have a child on both sides, please consider dropping off your older one first at Bloomfield Farm. If you arrive before 8:45 am, please wait with your child until a counselor is present. During inclement weather, please go straight to the event tent behind the Widener Visitor Center for both drop-off and pickup. **Curbside drop-off and pickup is not permitted.** Campers will be permitted to leave with authorized adults (as listed on the Registration Form). If you need to make changes to this list, please email Ilana Grubin (igrubin@upenn.edu) or call 215.247.5777 x125 and speak with an Arboretum staff member. Please be respectful to Counselors and Morris staff and pick up your camper no later than 3:15 pm each day.

Bloomfield Buddies: Ages 6 to 10

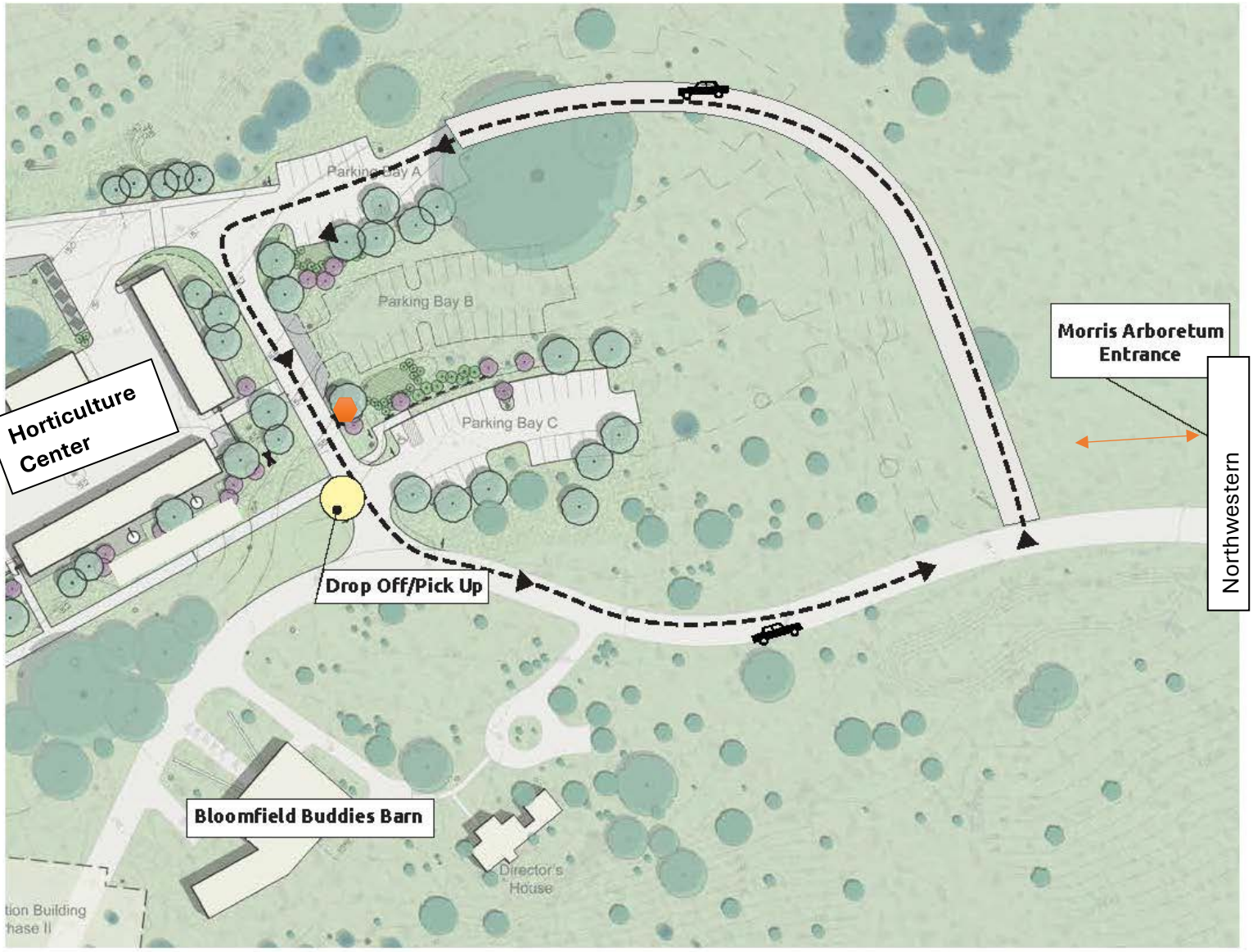
Car Line Drop-Off/Pickup Location: Bloomfield Farm (Please see map below)
GPS Address: 120 Bloomfield Farm Road, Lafayette Hill, PA 19444
(Directly across the road from the main entrance to Morris)
Drop off: 8:45 - 9:00am
Pick up: 3:00 - 3:15pm

Bloomfield campers will be dropped off and picked up in a car line at Bloomfield Farm (across the street from the main visitor entrance of the Morris Arboretum & Gardens). There will be signs to guide you ☺. Please drive slowly as horticulture staff and township employees use these roads as well. Stop for pick-up and drop off at the 'Stop Here' sign. If you need to get out of the car to assist your child, please get out of the car line and park in the parking lot.

Please do not start lining up for pickup before 3pm – kids will be dismissed at 3pm and lining up early just mean extra wait-time for you and creates a very long traffic line around the loop that blocks the road for our horticulture staff who frequent those roads and driveways. If you also have a child in Little Lightning Bugs, we recommend picking that child up first. Children should exit the car on the *passenger side only* at the designated pickup and drop-off spot when counselors are present. Campers will be permitted to leave only with authorized adults (as listed on the Registration Form). If you need to make changes to this list, please email Ilana Grubin (igrubin@upenn.edu) or call 215.247.5777 x125 and speak with a Morris staff member. Please be respectful to Counselors and Morris staff and pick up your camper between 3 to 3:15 pm each day. **(See Map on next page)**

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<u>Bloomfield Drop-off Map</u>: Located directly across the road from the Morris main entrance.
GPS Address: 120 Bloomfield Farm Road, Lafayette Hill, PA 19444



More Questions?
Please contact Ilana Grubin 215.247.5777 x127, or via email igrubin@upenn.edu

We are looking forward to seeing you!