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EDITORIAL: A jewel of Mount Olive

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It was once said that Turkey Brook Park is the gem of Mount Olive.

Well, there's another gem in town and it's called the South Branch Raritan River watershed property off Wolfe Road.

It is a place of environmental sustainability, creativity and beauty, a place to reflect, grow and hike.

AdChoices 

Its true raison d'être is to protect the land and headwaters of the South Branch of the Raritan Water, a system that produces drinking water for 1.5 million people.

The property is owned and maintained by the Land Conservancy of N.J.

The latest additions to the area are three sheep and two goats.

They are the low-tech, low maintenance answer to pesticides in ridding the property of destructive, invasive plants.

True to their reputations, the animals are pretty indiscriminate about what they eat and that includes invasive plants.

It is part of "Project Chew," a pilot project sponsored by the Land Conservancy of N.J., the N.J. Water Supply Authority and the Antler Ridge Wildlife Sanctuary in Newton.



The community garden is on another section of the land.

An abundance of vegetables are thriving on 145 plots on a quarter-acre on the westbound side of Wolfe Road.

The skills of the community gardeners are obvious.

There are strawberries, spinach, radicchio, Swiss chard, escarole, beets, tomatoes, string beans and garlic and much more.

Some of the harvest goes home with the farmers and some is donated to food pantries in town.

There is a loop trail around the entire property where anyone can take a leisurely walk to check out the 109 different bird species and 48 kinds of butterflies.



Or just to mediate in the quiet of the meadow.

There is a bee pollinator habitat along with 7,305 new trees and shrubs on 37 acres of former corn fields.

A total of 26 bluebird boxes have been put up on fence posts.

Wild flowers have been planted to give a welcome home for the declining monarch butterfly population.

There is nothing like nature to make a person feel that there is some purpose outside of the sturm and drang of daily life.

Welcome to this oasis of nature and solitude away from the hustle and bustle.



