



Newsletter

June, 2024



Attention: Jeremy Stout at Steele Creek on June 13

Robin Feierabend says to come early (6pm) to see the native garden!

Catching Our Breath!

Our previous newsletter depicted an almost frenetic pace of activity, with tabling events, a garden tour, launching the tee-shirt fundraiser, and the spring plant swap at Steele Creek Park. I've been pleased that the time since then has been a little slower, with plenty of time to work in and enjoy our own gardens and home landscapes.

Mark Merz, 2024 WOAHS President

Calendar at-a-Glance

June 13: Jeremy Stout, "Ghosts in the Forest" (in-person only) at Steele Creek Park at 7 pm

August 3: Members Tour of Josh Banks's Garden and Paragraph Nursery, Johnson City from 10 am until 12 noon

September TBD: Monical Hoel Tour of Emory & Henry Meadow, Meadowview

October 26: Members' Fall Plant & Seed Share at Steele Creek Park



WOAHS Tee-Shirts Are Available for Order!

It's a nice shirt with a great message, with so many style and color combinations that you may never see two that are exactly alike (though they do all have the small chapter logo in the front left pocket area and the large Get Wild design on the back). Prices range from \$26.99 to \$41.99, and it takes 10-14 days for delivery. Sizing is called unisex, so think "Men's." Visit the Bonfire website using this link: www.bonfire.com/get-wild-6/, or scan this QR code:



Connecting people and native plants for a healthy planet

Tee-Shirt Fundraiser

I was so excited that we were ready to sell shirts last time that I forgot to explain WHY we are selling them. It has to do with wanting WOAHS wanting to extend its mission in northeast TN and southwest VA. Our Wild Ones chapter gets back a portion of each membership fee paid to the national organization, but WOAHS could do so much more if we were able to raise additional money. We'd like to become a little more ambitious in attracting paid speakers for programs. We want to develop more professional presentation materials for tabling. In short we want more and better resources for spreading the word on native plants!

Getting Wild: Transformation Strategies

I'd like to launch a new feature for the WOAAH newsletter. I'd like to use this space for sharing both 1) the ideas and strategies behind the ways members are working toward re-wilding their home landscapes and 2) how WOAAH membership supports those efforts. My own approach has included a combination of actively adding plants and simply letting nature take over. When my family moved to our present location—a house on a one-acre lot in southwest Virginia—it was a sea of nonnative, cool season turf grass. We reintroduced native trees and shrubs, along with native understory plants as the woody species started casting shade. In other areas, we simply let the wind and the birds bring new species. They don't always bring what we want, so we remove them. They don't always put them where we want, so we move them. Most recently we stopped mowing a section of lawn adjacent to where our small woodland has developed. This has become an area of rapid change and surprise and is probably the one spot in our yard most influenced by our connection to WOAAH. I'll use a few pictures for, hopefully, better telling the story.

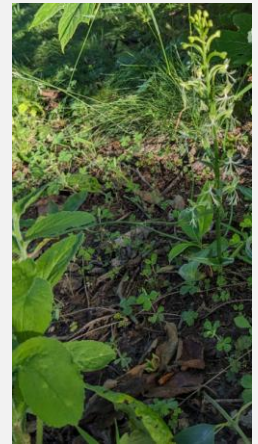


We took the plunge and quit mowing this section of our front yard, which is below the maturing native hardwoods. To us, it doesn't look so bad, and we're finding that new plants are establishing quickly, both the ones we've planted and the ones coming in on their own. We've also been happily surprised at the amount of native broomsedge bluestem already present; it was beautiful last fall!

Just as jays bring beech and oak, chipmunks planted this black walnut. I moved it to our new no-mow zone.



There are many unwelcome plants that show up when you stop mowing—invasives like, in our case, bittersweet, autumn olive, and Callery pear trees. But there are some really interesting surprises, too. The picture on the right shows a ragged fringed orchid and Indian tobacco (*Lobelia inflata*, aka pukeweed). We've found about half a dozen of the orchids and innumerable pukeweed plants!



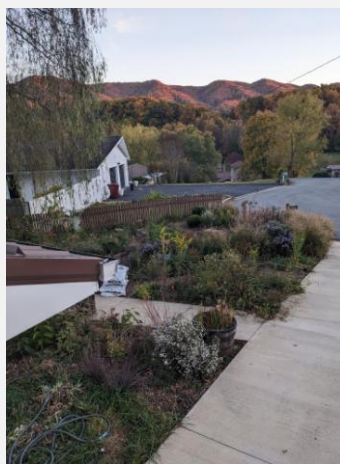
There are plants in this picture from the WOAAH spring plant swap—lance-leaved coreopsis, Ken Moore's *Solidago rugosa* 'fireworks,' blazing star, and different asters. You also see one of the jays' black oak seedlings, nursery grown blackgum and mountain pepper bush, and alternate-leaved dogwood and thread-leaved coreopsis that I moved from elsewhere in the yard. The dogwood is a great tool for getting shade on the ground quickly.

Preview: WOAH Members Only Tour of Josh Banks' Garden and Nursery

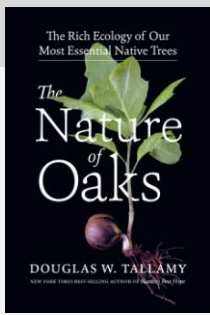
August 3rd in Johnson City, TN

My wife & I moved to Johnson City from Montgomery, AL in late 2021. Since the spring of 2022, I have been slowly removing the turf from our sloping 1/3-acre plot, and replacing it with mostly native perennials, shrubs, and trees. I work as an architect, and regional design is something I think is very important, both in architecture and landscape design. I like to grow native plants because they give a "sense of place" to a landscape - and we really are spoiled here with some amazing plants to choose from! I also have recently started a small backyard nursery and landscaping design business called Paragraph Designs. My main frustration was the lack of access to affordable plug/small potted plants available to the home gardener, as I believe that is the most cost effective and environmentally-friendly way to get more plants into the landscape. My hope is to make more plug plants available and to grow as many as I can from local seed.

It's difficult to imagine a cleaner slate to work with than the front yard Josh and his wife encountered when they moved to Johnson City. He's provided us with this sequence of photographs that shows steps along the way toward his beautiful final result.



I think it's safe to say that every WOAH member has a garden story to tell. Josh shared his; I shared a little of mine in the "Getting Wild" section of the newsletter. Would you consider doing the same in one of the upcoming newsletters? Type up your narration and attach a few pictures in an email to markmerz243@gmail.com. I'm looking forward to your submissions!



Bookshelf: Review by WOAHA Member Melanie Smith

The Nature of Oaks:

The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees

Written by Douglas W. Tallamy

Timber Press, 2021

The man who has brought the science of native plants into our everyday lives has hit home again with *The Nature of Oaks*, a lovely addition to his other best sellers, *Nature's Best Hope* and *Bringing Nature Home*. Focusing on a single genus, *Quercus* (the oaks), Tallamy begins in October (because “that was when I decided to write this book”) and then proceeds month by month for an entire year of oak biology, phenology, and the diverse ecology an oak tree brings to any setting.

An oak tree is more than just acorns. Way more. In addition to providing the mast that is an important food source for many native species, an oak creates an entire habitat of its own to support thousands of insect lives, which in turn support hundreds of birds, and so on. Even the dead leaves create the all important layer of habitat on the ground, and the root system may grow 10 times more mass than the tree we can see!

As is typical of all Doug Tallamy's works, the science he presents is well researched (often by himself and his students) and is written as readable as a novel. The reader gets to know the tree he and his wife planted himself, and around which this “story” is told, and by the second chapter, I had plans to create my own oak forest. I bet you will, too.

The reader leaves this book not only feeling an affinity for this stately tree and all its kin, but with a better understanding of the intricate processes which create a healthy, diverse habitat.

Send us your own review of a book about native plants, nature appreciation or an environmental concern: markmerz243@gmail.com



Member Profile

Actually, ... we don't have a member profile this month, but I'm hoping one of your fellow members I've been talking to will have something for next month. Meanwhile, consider writing a brief bio about yourself for sharing in this newsletter. As with your garden story and pictures, send it to me at markmerz243@gmail.com. Don't be shy! People are curious about you and what you've been up to in your garden!

Event Details

June 13 **Ghosts in the Forest: Prehistory & Ecology in the Southern Appalachians**

All of life occurs in a geological context. This talk will explore the connections between modern distributions of plants and animals across the 4th dimension: Deep Time. Jeremy Stout will instruct attendees on geological forces and extinct organisms and how they affect the modern assemblages we find in the region today.

This event is free and open to the public.

You will be charged \$2 at the gate for parking.

When: 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm (Eastern Time)

Location: Steele Creek Nature Center
4 Little Lane, Bristol, TN, 37620

Robin Feierabend says to come early (6pm) to see the native garden!

August 3 **WOAH Members Only Tour of Josh Banks' Garden and Plant Nursery**

You can learn more about Josh and what to expect on the tour elsewhere in this newsletter.

When: 10:00am-12 noon (Eastern Time)

Location: More specific information will be provided to registrants closer to the tour date.