



# Newsletter

## February 2025



### Since Last Time ...

I hope everyone enjoys the break in cold weather. January was rough. Hopefully you have started your winter sowing projects. If anyone has questions about winter sowing, you can email WOA [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com) . Also, Gail Olson has identified 2 resources on line: <https://www.facebook.wintersowers>

Winter Sowing of Seeds - [Univ of Maryland extension](#)

What you will learn:

Understand the process of winter sowing

Create a mini-greenhouse from a recycled container

Start growing plants from seed with little cost, no grow lights, and little after care

[Extension.umd.edu](http://Extension.umd.edu)

There is so much to look forward to this year. Please check the WOA website for a Native Species plant list, developed by a committee to identify plants native to Washington County VA and surrounding areas. This list includes all the details a member might need to identify the best options for planting in our area.

We are also working on an introductory letter for members to bring to local nurseries introducing the native plant movement and encouraging nurseries to sell more native plants. More to come in the newsletter.

My appeal to members (and visitors to our website)...WE ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO INCREASE RETENTION OF EXISTING MEMBERS. To do this we need input from you. I strongly urge 1-2 people to come forward to take part in the events committee to grow our event planning in NE TN. This would involve Zoom or in person meetings usually in Bristol TN monthly.

We are considering conducting a member survey, but we need a resourceful member to help us. Please contact a Board member or email WOA [@gmail](mailto:@gmail.com) address.

Wishing you good health this winter season.

Paula Reynolds  
2025 WOA President

### Calendar at-a-Glance

**February 27: Restoration Ecology and River Cane Restoration with Laura Young (VDCR)**  
in-person @ VHCC and Zoom (details below)

**March 13: Building a Wildlife Pond with Melanie Smith** via Zoom (details below)

**April 11-12: Garden Faire**  
Southwest Virginia Higher Ed Center (details below)

**May 3: Spring Plant Swap**  
(Members only)



### WOAH Merch



Hoodies, ball caps, bucket hats, and tee shirts—they come in many colors and options. They all have the chapter logo in the front. The shirts also have the “Get Wild” design on the back.

Visit [www.bonfire.com/get-wild-6/](http://www.bonfire.com/get-wild-6/), or scan the QR code below with your smart phone’s camera.



## Chapter Compiles Native Species List for Gardens

The WOA Chapter compiled a list of 147 native species selected to do well in our native habitat gardens. We based the list on **A Guide to Gardening with Southwest Virginia Natives**, other lists of native species, and talking to local nurseries, plus the experience of the working group. The group included Teresa Young, Snow Ferenia, Loyd and Paula Reynolds, Gail Olson, and Dick Olson, Josh Banks, Susan Brown, Jani Niner, and Mark Merz. Many thanks to the hard work that this group put in to compile this extensive list.

The **Meadow Native Species List** is available on our website under the Tools tab. [Native Species List for Our Region - Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands Chapter Native Species List](#)

It includes 6 cover species, 11 ferns, 47 forbs, 6 grasses/sedges, 36 shrubs, 4 vines, and 37 trees with over 100 available from local native plant nurseries. We encourage you to use the list in designing your garden. If you purchase native plants locally, we ask you to thank them. If they don't carry the native species that you are looking for, please urge them to add them to their inventory.

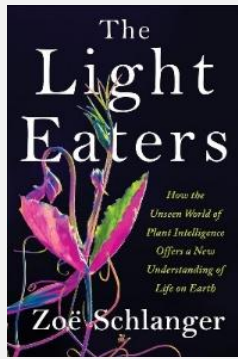
Also, soon to come under our website Tools tab is the document **Promoting Native Plant Species** which is an introduction to our list and encouragement for nurseries to carry natives.

### Member Garden Project

WOAH members are encouraged to provide photos showing how they have used native plants in their gardens. Paula Reynolds contributed two photos here demonstrating a small area that fellow member Josh Banks designed. Paula and Loyd plan to remove the ajuga along their driveway and replace it with Tennessee Coneflower, Appalachian blazinstar, Purple lovegrass and Moss phlox as shown in the rendering that Josh designed and created for them in the second photo. Josh is preparing plants for the spring and we look forward to updates in the coming year. In the meantime – how about sending a few photos and a member profile or description of your own garden project?

Josh Banks information and nursery inventory are found at his website: [Paragraph Designs](#)





## Book Review

### **THE LIGHT EATERS**

#### **HOW THE UNSEEN WORLD OF PLANT INTELLIGENCE OFFERS A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE ON EARTH**

**by Zoë Schlanger · RELEASE DATE: May 7, 2024**

Most of you know Dick and Gail Olson as past presidents and active members of WOA as well as Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists. They are also avid readers of everything gardening and natural world so they now provide us with some insight on a new book into the world of plants that we may not typically perceive.

I have read books about adjacent trees being connected through their roots and plants warding off insect attacks by increasing the level of tannins in their leaves, but this book tells a much broader story of how plants can show a range of behaviors previously unknown. The author is a staff writer for the Atlantic. Although not a scientist, she spent several years researching plant behavior for this book after wanting a new focus other than climate change stories. She describes a variety of studies throughout the world, the scientists themselves, and often her own reaction to these amazing discoveries. It is a fascinating book about how plants have developed unique capabilities to adapt and thrive.

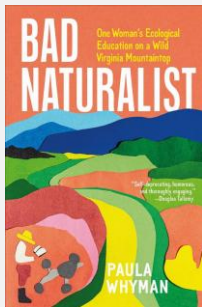
All aspects of her story were captivating to Gail and me because of our passion for plants and my career as an environmental scientist. Every chapter divulges another behavior being observed, such as plants communicating threats of predator insects or roots selecting the best underground path. One of Gail's favorite chapters describes how a vine in Peru can change its leaf shapes to blend in with the plant it is growing on.

Often researchers don't understand how plants perform these feats, and their results are routinely challenged by fellow scientists. To me, Schlanger's observations of the scientific process were intriguing. Scientists struggling to develop a vocabulary that captures plant behavior such as reporting that plants can sense objects without saying they have "eyes" as we think of them. Or ways plants respond to changing conditions in an "intelligent" way. She explores these mysteries in a way that is understandable and enthusiastic.

There may be much more to learn about plant behavior, but the author conveys a compelling story of how we can appreciate them in new ways, not just as inanimate objects we depend on and enjoy.

## **And Another Book**

Many of you already know that WOAHA Vice President Melanie Smith is, in addition to everything else she does as a Virginia Master Naturalist, WOAHA board member, and FrogWatch USA affiliate, is a school librarian in Smyth County. This month she sends us a new recommendation.



***Bad Naturalist: One Woman's Ecological Education on a Wild Virginia Mountaintop,***

***Paula Whyman, Timber Press: 2025***

This is the story of Paula Whyman, who dreamed of a place in the country. A place where she knew she would feel most at peace. Then she began dreaming of establishing a native meadow wherever she ended up and when she began looking in earnest, found over 200 acres on a mountain. Some of it was rolling open meadows, formerly a cow pasture, and steep sloping forests. And all of it in need of some TLC. Suddenly, she wanted not just a native meadow, but wanted to make a true difference in nature. She began planning to restore this mountaintop to its native glory and beauty and this book is the story of that dream. What Whyman finds is lots of nonnative plants and discovers that removing those plants sometimes creates even more problems. She is beset with contradicting advice from well-meaning folks with differing views on land management and has to make tough decisions about whether to use herbicides, bush hogging, fire and till or no till methods to reduce invasive species and reintroduce native species. Where to begin? I think I really liked this book because I, too, have a lot of acreage (but not quite that much!) and feel constantly overwhelmed by the “to do” lists—meanwhile watching an invasive species cover more and more ground, literally! Whyman addresses this problem honestly and she certainly does her research.

Starting and restarting, learning along the way, changing attitudes—Whyman relates through her own experience that all of these aspects of land restoration should be expected and embraced. And patience. Most of all patience. Apparently Whyman's project is still going strong and now she lives and writes on her dream property while she actively manages it. While not a how to book, **Bad Naturalist** is an impressive bit of storytelling which weaves her journey in getting to know her land with very readable bits of ecology and descriptions of land stewardship. Her dedication and willingness to laugh at herself give me hope that it CAN be done. And more importantly, should be.

## There Are Many Ways to Get Involved!

**Volunteer** Wild Ones does not require formal training classes, volunteer work hours, or continuing education hours for membership. However, the Chapter has events that do require volunteer member help. Tabling events such as the April 11-12 Garden Faire are opportunities for introducing the public to WOA. We will pair new volunteers with a Board member. If you can volunteer even an hour or two please send an email to [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com). There is a WOA Board that meets a little less than once per month, and our chapter also has various committees. Perhaps you'd like to serve on one! Let us know with an email to the above address.

**Newsletter** Send in your own member profile. As you've seen over the last several months, your profile can take many forms. It can be as simple as telling a little about yourself and how you got involved with native plants, or you can include photos and go into more detail as a few others have done in previous newsletters.

Write about your garden. What are you hoping to accomplish, what resources did you use, what strategies did you employ? Do you have before and after pictures that show what you've done?

Have you read a good nature book that you'd like to review?

Your fellow WOA members would love to hear from you! Send your text and photos to [markmerz243@gmail.com](mailto:markmerz243@gmail.com).

## How About Now?

**"Wanted: creative volunteer** to assemble and arrange materials on the new Chapter display board. The 36x72 inch table-top display consists of 3 panels to attach photos or text using Velcro or pins. If you can help the Chapter create our display, please send an email to the [Chapter gmail](#).

### Strategic Plan

2025 WOA President Paula Reynolds mentioned our Strategic Plan in her inaugural "Since Last Time..." comments in the January newsletter. The most current revision of the document is now on the WOA website. You can link to it here [Strategic Plan](#). It is the culmination of many hours of committee labor led by Dick Olson, during his 2023 WOA presidency. It is our guiding document. Check it out!

### Bare-root Native Plant Sale

Plant SWVA Natives [About – Plant Virginia Natives](#) group is selling bare-root native woody plants. These packages would be a great addition to any native habitat garden. Two packages are offered this year with six plants each package, two of each species. The BIRD PACKAGE has 2 buttonbush, 2 elderberry, and 2 flowering dogwood. The BUTTERFLY PACKAGE has 2 false indigo bush, 2 spicebush, and 2 pawpaw. Pickup locations include: Abingdon Lowes Exit 19 Parking Lot, Floyd Farmer's Market, Veteran Park in Radford, and Wong Park in Blacksburg. See order details at: [Reserve your plants today](#).

The prepaid plants will be available for pickup at Lowe's Exit 19 store from 10-Noon on Saturday, March 8 in the area of the parking lot in front of the gardening section. Contact Dick Olson ([dickolson627@gmail.com](mailto:dickolson627@gmail.com)) if you need a different arrangement.

## Event Details

**February 27, 2025**

### **Restoration Ecology for Rivercane, Native Prairies, and Beyond**

Humans have both the power to destroy nature and the power to heal it. Learn why we can't just leave vegetative systems "alone" to return back to their natural states when they have been so heavily manipulated by us. The Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Program works to manage, restore, and protect many different types of threatened and endangered habitats and species throughout southwest Virginia. Many of these unique community assemblages or species could be helped by you through greater awareness, volunteer stewardship, or incorporation into your tiny piece of the Earth.

**Time:** 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm (Eastern Time)

**Location:** In-Person in the ISC Building on the campus of Virginia Highlands Community College, 100 VHCC Dr. Abingdon or virtual via Zoom

**Link:** <https://wildones-org.zoom.us/j/89405383386?pwd=MN6DzUB0yMNZmkjNnX8AdK8whhEXQa.1>

**March 13, 2025**

### **Building a Wildlife Pond**

This Zoom workshop features information on creating a wildlife pond to enhance your native habitat. Wildlife ponds are especially attractive to amphibians and insects, both of which are essential parts of the diversity puzzle. Also, learn about FrogWatch, a national citizen science program that you can participate in to provide important data about frogs and toad populations. Attract them and they will come! Presented by Melanie Smith, WOA member, Holston Rivers Master Naturalists and FrogWatch Coordinator.

**Time:** 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm (Eastern Time)

**Location:** Zoom

**Link:** <https://wildones-org.zoom.us/j/83795791828?pwd=uarJBiHALosaKsERHYxfkqbqFz6JLv.1>

**April 11-12**

### **Washington County Master Gardeners Garden Faire**

This event features: a garden marketplace with perennial and annual plants, native plants, garden art, supplies, all things gardening; plus, multiple speakers and workshops and tool sharpening.

**Location:** Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, Interstate 81 Exit 14, One Partnership Circle, Abingdon, Abingdon VA

**Link:** <http://www.gardenfaire.net/>

**May 3**

### **Spring plant swap (members only)**

We are working on getting plant donations from nurseries and we have a \$50 gift certificate from Shy Valley nursery to give away. This event alone returns values greater than your annual dues. More details to come.

**Time and Location:** 3:30 pm, Civitan Shelter, Steele Creek Park, Bristol, TN