



# Newsletter

## September 2025



### Since Last Time ...

The Board has been very busy this past month. Many thanks to Jani Niner (Secretary), Anne Tucker (Treasurer), and Mendy Bechtold (Webmaster). They created an amazing survey which you should have received recently. IF YOU DID NOT RECEIVE A SURVEY, PLEASE CONTACT WOAHP THROUGH THE [GMAIL ADDRESS](#). If you haven't done it, now is the time. It is brief and easy to complete. DEADLINE for returning surveys is September 7. This is the Board's most important goal for this year. How can we serve you better?

There is something new in the Merchandise section of the newsletter. We now have coffee mugs available. Check it out. We will be giving away a mug at the October 4th plant swap and the annual meeting November 6th.

Speaking of the newsletter, it is getting longer and more complex. For this reason, we have decided to publish it every other month. For the remainder of the year, we only have this one in September and again in November. You will still get emails about upcoming events.

The BIG news other than the survey is the November annual meeting scheduled for November 6th, 6:30-8:00pm. See details in the Events section of the newsletter. Considering our membership has increased, with retention rate above the national average, we are hoping to see a good turnout for the annual event. This is the time the Board will: 1) share results of the survey and the action plan 2) review the very active year we had with events and 3) VOTE on the slate of officers for 2026. The meeting is very informal, and we have a good time socializing. Please join us.

Speaking of voting on officers, we are appealing to you to consider some of the following positions: President (I will be there to support you); Membership Chair (Board position); and Events Committee co-chair with Dick Olson (not a Board position). See the volunteer section of the newsletter for details on page 3.

We want to thank Susan Brown for the Home Garden tour. We had excellent turnout with several new members joining us. Susan will provide details in this newsletter. She had an abundance of resource information, and I think everyone enjoyed a stroll through the many areas. Thank you, Susan, and Snow Ferreniea for assisting with native plant identifications.

Happy Fall Ya'll,

Paula Reynolds, [WOAH President](#)

### Calendar at-a-Glance

Details on pages 9-11

**September 7: Membership Survey due**

**September 9: Guided Nature Walk, Doe Mountain Reserve, Jen Skarsaune**

**October 4: Native Plant and Seed Swap: Members Only**

**November 6: Annual meeting, The Summit, Bristol, TN**

**December 6: Adding Year-Round Interest and Color**

### WOAH Merch



**WOAH now offers a new mug!! White ceramic body with color-accented interior and handle in 5 colors, only \$16.99. Short and long-sleeve tees, sweatshirts, bucket hats and ball caps in many colors! It is the only fundraiser for our chapter.**

**Visit [Get wild. | Bonfire](#), or scan the QR code with your phone.**

## Project Updates 2025

### **Coomes Recreation Center Native Garden**

The city of Abingdon has its first native garden thanks to Master Naturalist Karen Elmore who received a monetary award from her employer designated for use by a 501c3 organization. Karen, an avid native plants gardener, contacted Beth Merz, Gail Olson, Monica Hoel and Anne Tucker to form a committee to create a native plant garden in Abingdon. The group represents the Holston River Master Naturalists, Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands and the Washington County Master Gardeners.

Working with Kyle Pollard, Abingdon Director of Parks and Recreation and Kevin Sigmon, Abingdon Arborist, a site was selected at the Coomes Center next to the tennis courts on the street side and next to the outdoor walk path.

WOAH member Josh Banks, Karen and Gail designed a colorful garden in the 8 x 16-foot site. The city of Abingdon donated mulch and bricks for the project. Native plants were grown by Karen and Gail and a few were purchased from native plant growers or donated by Carolina Native Nursery.

On June 7, a group of enthusiastic Master Naturalists, Wild Ones and Master Gardeners braved a huge thunderstorm and planted over 100 small seedlings and plants. Though wet and muddy the group completed the task and finished the morning with smiles and pictures.

After occasional weeding and watering this summer, the committee met at the garden on August 21 to weed and review the progress and to start planning the next steps. They found many plants in bloom and the native milkweed had 16 monarch caterpillars! The following day we found one monarch caterpillar crawling up a nearby tree to start its next life stage. The larger community is noticing – someone later posted a photo of a monarch chrysalis on the fence next to the planting on Abingdon Community Connect Facebook page and people are asking for a list of the native plants.



Monarch caterpillar



Butterfly weed



Monarch chrysalis

### Johnson City Southside Elementary School Butterfly Garden

Susan Hernry, kindergarten teacher reported during the first of August that their butterfly garden is flourishing. We are seeing butterflies and hummingbirds. No Monarchs yet. About a week and a half ago (first week of August), we had a terrible rain storm that beat down the milkweed and zinnias. I staked up the milkweed and they are doing great. We tied the zinnias back and they are OK as well. We've added about 5 perennials.

On August 25, Susan reported that they just noticed places where the leaves had been eaten and now found a huge caterpillar on the biggest plant (pictured below). Also, they saw a monarch butterfly flying around to all the milkweed plants! The first monarch they have seen and they are sooo excited!!!



**Please Help WOA**H – The Chapter has events and organizational efforts that do require volunteer member help. There is a WOA H Board that meets a little less than once per month, and our chapter also has various committees. We are currently recruiting for **President** (current President will help); **Membership Chair** is a Board position and does not require a lot of time. Primary responsibility is sending Welcome letters to new members and reminders to members whose membership is due to expire. The current Membership chair is Gail Olson and she will provide support to the new Chair; and Dick Olson would welcome an **Events Committee Co-Chair** who might be willing to work with him and ultimately take over the position in 2027.

Let us know with an email to the following address: [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com) if you can volunteer for one of these positions or if you want to join a committee to see how things work. We would appreciate your help and it's a great way to get to know other members.

**Newsletter:** **Share your experiences.** Your fellow WOA H members would love to hear from you! Send in your own member profile. 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?

## Making Space for Native Plants – Susan Brown

Mike and I were very excited to host the WOA group here at our property in Abingdon on August 9. It was wonderful to see everyone enjoy some time together and bond over native plants! It also gave us an opportunity to reflect on our own evolution learning about the benefits of native plants in the ecosystem as well as the threats posed by invasive ones.

Before we moved to this property about 20 years ago, we lived in a subdivision and had the usual half acre or so lot. The parcel was already landscaped with some natives like rhododendron, maple and hemlock trees. During the 15 years that we lived there, we did what most folks did. From the big box stores, we bought and planted English ivy to climb the chimney, burning bush to hide the heat pump, and a Bradford pear to replace a maple tree we lost in a storm. No one (that I knew) was talking about the benefits of native plants or the ecological threat of invasive species, and native plants certainly weren't being offered at Lowes. Even if I had known more, I might have dismissed the concerns about invasive species because I would have surveyed my lot and said I am not having any issues with these non-natives taking over—*on my lot*. What I have learned since is that birds and other animals can translocate seed far from the original source. But most folks still believe that plants stay where you plant them because the neighborhood lot is still most people's experience.

All that changed when we moved to our new home on twelve acres bordered by 20+ neighbors. We got a crash course in the destructiveness of invasive plants as well as the benefits of native ones.

I wish I could remember the first plant that introduced me to the world of invasive species. It might have been Japanese stiltgrass. When I first noticed it billowing in the breeze, I thought, "how pretty," and assumed that this was a native plant returning to its rightful place in the ecosystem. Once I saw it taking over, I researched it. By the time that I learned what it was, it had gained quite a foothold on our property. In 2023, I started logging how many hours my husband and I spent pulling up stiltgrass and other invasive plants. Between the two of us, it was 317 hours. On stiltgrass alone, it was 118 hours. In 2024, it was 292 hours, stiltgrass accounting for 85 hours. In 2025, I'm still logging hours on stiltgrass and learning about how it reproduces so that we can try to outsmart it.

Stiltgrass was our introduction to invasive species, but since then we have identified over 30 invasive species that we try to control. I also have the dubious distinction of reporting the first sighting of lesser celandine in Washington County, Virginia on EDDMapS (an app for reporting invasive species). This plant is wreaking havoc in many areas of the state, so the Virginia Department of Forestry's invasive species expert asked me to preserve a specimen

for the Virginia Tech's herbarium. I'm glad I found that one plant and removed it before it could spread. I've learned that catching invasive plants before they get a foothold is vital and saves you lots of time down the road. I wish I had pulled up the first blade of Japanese stiltgrass!!

The tendencies of all living things to reproduce and find a niche in an ecosystem (whether exotic or native) is something I've learned from working on our property. And most living things (except for most humans) don't recognize property lines. The vast majority of property east of the Mississippi is in private hands and that property is being divided into smaller and smaller parcels. It is easy for small property owners to believe what they do on their property is of small consequence. But these properties, however small, are connected to the whole. Teaching people about native plants and where to purchase them, as WOAAH does, is very important.

Most people (and I was certainly one of them) will choose what is marketed to them by the big box stores. If people learn about natives and their place in the landscape, they have choices beyond the exotic and invasive plants sold commercially. Learning about invasive plants helps consumers know that avoiding them or removing them from their properties will help make space in landscapes for native plants. One hopeful development in Virginia has been the passing of a state law that goes into effect January 1, 2027. It requires retailers to post signs alongside 39 invasive plants identifying them as invasive and suggesting native alternatives. Now if the big box retailers would just sell the native plants!

With so many invasive plants to combat on our property, Mike and I can often see it through the rather negative lens of what's wrong and what we still need to do. Having WOAAH visit, helped us see the ecosystem that we steward through the eyes of our WOAAH visitors. I hope folks enjoyed their visit here—it certainly raised our spirits to share it with you.



## Wild Ones Merch

### Something New! WOAAH now offers a mug!

The mug is an 11 oz. ceramic two tone coffee mug with a white body and matching color-accented interior and C-curved handle that is lead-free and microwave/dishwasher safe. Offered in 5 colors and only \$16.99 each.

Fall is around the corner and time to start thinking about long sleeve T-shirts, hoodies and sweatshirts. Make it a Holiday gift or just a gift to yourself! Combine your order with that of other members to save on the shipping costs.

Visit [Get Wild/Bonfire](#) or scan the QR code with your smart phone's camera. Scroll to the bottom of that web page to view all the WOAAH merchandise.



## Book Review – Melanie Smith

### *The Insect Epiphany: How Our Six-Legged Allies Shape Human Culture.*

**Barrett Klein. Timber Press, 2024**



Native plants attract insects. Insects attract birds and other wildlife. We enjoy watching that wildlife and the wildlife have a safe home with food, shelter, space and a place to raise their young. It's a win-win situation. That's why we plant natives. (Plus, many native plants are just downright attractive!!)

But the insects! Have you ever really thought about the role insects have in our everyday lives? *The Insect Epiphany: How Our Six-Legged Allies Shape Human Culture* provides insight into the myriad ways bugs influence us, from art to architecture, from food to fighting and from dancing to dressing. Medicine, products like silk, wax, honey, lacquer and even venom are possible because of insects. The diversity of insects alone is enough to make you wonder what is possible!

This book, with lavish illustrations and photographs, will help you appreciate the wonders of the insect world and how their world has shaped ours. Read it and be amazed.

Then, go out and plant more natives. The more bugs, the better!

## Ode to Frances Lamberts from Snow Ferreniea

Frances Lamberts – a cherished friend and fellow gardener of many years, has set an example to all of us in her commitment and dedication to the rescue, growing and dissemination of native plants. Living in Jonesborough Tennessee for more than 40 years now her focus has been on rare and endangered Tennessee natives. Despite the fact that I always remind her that plants, birds and animals are oblivious to state lines!

I first met Frances some 12 years ago when a friend took me to see her garden. An oasis of vegetables in raised beds, the majority of which she cans, and a giddy array of wildflowers. Sun lovers for summer and fall, and in spring the denizens of wooded situations; that may well be in sun at that time, but are sheltered from it later on from the expanded foliage of the woody plants.

Frances began her interest in native plants 40 years ago when taking a botany class while working on her doctorate in Environmental Law. She found that the professor who taught this class strongly advocated growing native plants. Thus, began years of her decades of involvement with native trees, shrubs and wildflowers

Starting in 1996 she, almost single handedly created a 3-acre wildflower area on an abandoned site surrounding Jonesborough's recycling and waste-water treatment operations. The twice certified "Ardinna Woods Arboretum" was filled with a wide range of native wildflowers, focusing on those specific to Tennessee's southern Appalachian woodlands that included some rare or endangered plants. Amongst the latter, she successfully developed a long border of the Tennessee Coneflower, (*Echinacea tennesseensis*). This having become almost extinct and federally listed under the Endangered Species Act. Many of them were given to garden clubs and arboretum visitors, or sold at plant sales to ensure wide dissemination and a better chance of survival.

I would join her from time to time as others did to maintain this amazing, vital island. And we were all always tired long before Frances – who just kept going! She told the town officials that she would retire from this when she was 80 and sad to say neglect of the plantings and heavy storm damage in recent years have devastated what a visiting botanist once called a "a botanic wonderland".

However, her own garden flourishes to this day. One area that was once sunny and maintained by a pair of sheep has become too shady for grass to grow, and is now a shade garden burgeoning with all manner of treasures, both herbaceous and woody. Many coming from Shy Valley Nursery. The lower section of this area is on the moist side due to being near an on-off stream. It is therefore perfect for plants that like these conditions. One that is grown to perfection, a long-time favorite is Sweet Bay - *Magnolia Virginia*. Decked out this spring in 30 or more large, fragrant chalices, that are now in August developing into attractive seed pods. Frances added more sedges (*Carex*) when realizing from a recent (2021) State Rare-Plant list that at least 30 of Tennessee's *Carex* species are listed as endangered, threatened or

species of special concern. Ferns abound here also amongst many woodland wildflowers that provide beauty, color and interest for many months. Shrubs and trees in this area including Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea*), Elderberry (*Sambucus*), Red Chokecherry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), and Carolina Buckthorn – *Rhamnus caroliniana*. All of which form fruit, often red berries which are enjoyed through winter if not eaten by birds beforehand.

As the months pass into summer, interest moves to the sun-lovers. The upper garden is ablaze with all manner of wildflowers most of which are pollinator favorites. Frances's garden is also an official "Monarch Waystation" and when we talk on the phone I will be excited at having seen one Monarch, and then she tells me of her great delight, during their fall migration last year on October 13th of seeing some five dozen Monarchs alighting one or two at a time on zinnias of all things! Sad to say not an abundance of them seen this year. However, on her morning walks through the garden a calendar entry will often note "many butterflies in the garden". Indeed, when I visit every few weeks her effusive comments are primarily about the myriads of pollinating insects that adorn the flowers. Especially this year with all the additional rain that kept the flowering blooming longer and continuing on 'til dormancy brought on by the advance of winter. As one group of flowers goes by these focused workers move to another group. Favorites like Anise Hyssop – *Agastache foeniculum* and Crimson Beebalm – *Monarda*, Oxeye Sunflower – *Heliopsis helianthoides*, Joe-Pye-Weed - *Eupatorium*, Mt. Mint - *Pycnanthemum*, Brown-Eyed Susan – *Rudbeckia triloba*, Golden St. John's wort shrub (*Hypericum frondosum*) and Hoary Mt. Mint – *Pycnanthemum incanum* blooming in Jonesborough in August is one which the Tennessee Wildlife Federation shows on the certificate for any new "Certified Wildlife Habitat" for their member.

There are no shortages of butterflies, all manner of bees and all the other pollinators in this garden. Hummingbirds are amongst them too, often working the brilliant blue flowers of *Salvia* Black and Blue, perhaps their favorite? Frances delights in sitting at her breakfast table and looking out her window watching Hummingbirds feasting on various flowers. What a start to the day! Her garden also hosts the Pipevine Swallowtail Butterfly who lays its eggs on leaves of the Pipevine – *Aristolochia tomentosa* and on occasion the leaves of *Yucca*! Like all gardeners she and I share our experiences, the plants we love, the problems we are dealing with. Learning from each other, maybe changing how we are doing something or re-thinking what we are doing.

Frances like many of us is not enjoying the physical issues that challenge us as we move into our sage years or the struggle with "remembering" as our minds have become so full of information – mostly plant names and facts! She has been an inspiration to so many of us and would enjoy showing her garden to some enthusiastic folk who would welcome the opportunity of not only learning more about native plants and being exposed to this cornucopia but to just stand and savor all the beauty.

## Upcoming Event Details

### **September 9: Living on the Edge, Members Guided Nature Walk at Doe Mountain Recreation Area with Jen Skarsaune**

WOAH Members Only, Pre-registration Required

Join Certified Tennessee Naturalist and fellow Wild Ones member Jen Skarsaune to explore the flora and fauna of edge habitat at Doe Mountain Recreation Area. Learn about native plants in bloom and some of the pollinators that they support. The Doe Mountain Recreation Area hosts over 40 rare plants and animal species across the 8,600-acre conservation reserve.

We will gather at the Doe Mountain Adventure Center before leaving on a 1-mile naturalist guided walk along one of Doe Mountain's trails. Wear durable footwear and weather appropriate clothing. The walk will take approximately 1 hour. Bring your curiosity, a water bottle and hiking stick. This is a FREE event. You do not need to purchase a day pass but please complete a waiver if you do not already have a DMRA pass. <https://waiver.smartwaiver.com/w/wvujn19nk2mezbgnmb2ymw/web/>

Participation will be limited to maintain a high-quality experience for all attendees.

WOAH members can register via e-mail to:

[wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com) DMRA is about 1 hour's drive from Bristol. Confirmation will be provided to the registrants by email.

**Time:** 6:00 pm

**Location:** Doe Mountain Adventure Center

More info: <https://dmra.gov/>

### **October 4: Native Plant and Seed Swap**

WOAH Members Only, Native Plant and Seed Swap with Potluck Diner

Fall is a great time to share both native plants and seeds from our gardens. Our annual event on Saturday October 4th, is one of the benefits of being a Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands member! This is an opportunity to thin out your flower beds of native plants and bring your labeled plants or seeds to swap and share.

Please start to gather your extra plants or seeds and identify them for the swap. If you don't have any extras, just come and take some home!

## Upcoming Event Details (Continued)

### October 4: Native Plant and Seed Swap

The Swap will be followed by a potluck supper and social hour. Please bring your own beverage and a dish to share. This will be a great opportunity to learn about natives, get free plants, and meet members.

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

**Time:** Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 – 6:00 pm

**Location:** Steele Creek Park, Civitan Shelter, Steele Creek Park, 4 Little Ln, Bristol, TN, 37620.

Wheelchair Accessible, Public Restroom

### November 6: Members Only Annual Meeting and Elections

We will celebrate our fourth anniversary as the Appalachian Highlands Chapter. This is our only official meeting held once a year. We hope to see new faces and of course the regular active members.

There will be a short business meeting with a social hour afterwards. We will hold the election for 2026 officers. This is the time the Board presents the proposed slate of officers for next year. The members can approve as presented or submit nominations from the floor.

The most important item on the agenda will be discussion of the survey results. This was an important goal the Board established for this year. In addition, we will give a brief review of the chapter Strategic Plan and welcome any suggestions from the membership.

This is a great time as members reflect on what we have accomplished this year and discuss our future goals. And we have a few door prizes, most exciting is a small battery-powered chainsaw donated by Jani Niner.

Water, coffee, and light sandwiches will be provided. Please bring your favorite “small bites” and your nametag. We have a lot of unclaimed nametags, as well as nametags for new members to distribute.

**Date:** Thursday, November 6th, 2025

**Time:** 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm (Eastern Time)

**Location:** The Summit, Expedition Room, 1227 Volunteer Pkwy, Bristol, TN, 37620

The Summit building is set back from Volunteer Parkway with an access road between Eastman Credit Union and Bank of Tennessee. There is a cut-through on the Parkway divide for a left turn if you are coming from the downtown Bristol area.

The Board sincerely hopes you will make every effort to attend. We always have a good time.

## Upcoming Event Details (Continued)

### December 6: Adding Year-Round Interest and Color to your Garden with Snow Ferreniea

We tend to think that gardening happens in spring and summer. Our view of fall is all about the striking colors of trees, mostly maples. However, fall offers an abundance of garden interest in the form of flowers and foliage colors, along with displays from berries and seed heads that overflow into the winter season. With the addition of attractive bark and silhouettes from woody plants, we will explore these attributes that are overlooked during the other seasons.

Snow Ferreniea is English, learning initially about plants and gardening from her parents, both of whom were avid gardeners. She received her formal education in horticulture in England. Coming to America in the 70's, she continued to pursue her passion for plants, especially native ones, as a professional horticulturist. Snow was director of horticulture at Garden in the Woods. She has also worked at the New York Botanical Garden, Holden Arboretum and Wayside Gardens.

The Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands Chapter and the Washington County Master Gardeners are cosponsoring this talk.

**Time:** Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 am- 12:00 pm

**Location:** The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center



Connecting people and native plants for a healthy planet