



# Newsletter

## March 2026



### Since Last Time ...

I hope everyone survived the winter storms without too much damage to yourself and your property, and that the worst of the weather is over this year! Many of you might be engaged in winter sowing and seed stratification. Look for the advice section on page 2 of this newsletter if you need more information.

First issue to update you on... the new chapter email - [appalachianhighlands@wildoneschapters.org](mailto:appalachianhighlands@wildoneschapters.org) has encountered challenges. We are going back to our original Gmail address - [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com). Sorry for the confusion.

We had two great Zoom presentations: *Methods for Ecological Restoration at Home* and *Virginia Grasslands: Past, Present and Future*. Both were great. Both are available on our [YouTube channel](#) and on our [website](#). Both have been viewed over 100 times already! On page 4 of this newsletter, you will find a discussion of the grasslands presentation and a list of 13 Virginia grasslands open to the public, 4 of which are located in our region of Virginia.

Our chapter membership continues to grow. Many WOAHA members were among the 106 people who attended the Randy Smith Seed Swap and *The Plot Thickens* presentation on February 28. Thanks to Monica Hoel, Karen Elmore, Gail Olson, Anne Tucker and Beth Merz for their presentation. A total of 248 seed packets were given out by Dick Olson, Snow Ferreniea, Cindy Tauscher and Vickie Boese at the booth! **We hope to see new and existing members at the Members Only Plant and Seed Swap on May 2.** See “Events Details” section in this newsletter and on our [website](#) for up-to-date information. We have several Wildflower walks planned in the spring as well as other great events. Come join us!

We will have a Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands table at **Garden Faire** in Abingdon April 11-12. This is a great way to meet visitors interested in native plants. Look for an email with details of how to sign up for a 2-hour time slot using a new app “Sign Up Genius”. This will be distributed in early March. Volunteers get free admission to the Garden Faire and lots of time to take part in vendor exhibition and speakers.

I am enthusiastic about recruiting a new chapter President for next year, 2027. If anyone has the SLIGHTEST interest, please contact me at our [Gmail](#) address. I would be happy to answer questions, share details etc.

See many of you soon, I hope. Happy spring...soon.

Respectfully yours, Paula Reynolds, President

### Calendar at a Glance

(Details on Pages 6-10)

**March 21:** Native Medicinal Herbs and Seed Blocking

**March 23:** Moss & Lichens at DMR

**March 27:** Bluebells Wildflower Walk

**April 4:** Spring Ephemerals Wildflower Walk

**April 10-11:** WCMG Garden Faire

**April 18:** Plant it Forward, Earth Day at Hungry Mother SP

**April 18:** Sustain Abingdon Earth Day

**April 22:** Meditation Walk at DMR

**May 2:** WOAHA Plant and Seed Swap (members only)

#### March-May:

- VTech Invasive Species Series
- Nature Conservancy
- Spring Naturalist Rally

### WOAHA Merch

Spring is coming! [Get your short-sleeve tees, sweatshirts, hats and mugs](#) - all available in many colors! It is the only fundraiser for our chapter. Visit [Get wild. | Bonfire](#), or scan the QR code below with your smart phone's camera.



## Seed Stratification Success – Now What?

Have you checked your winter sown containers lately? Gail Olson has been teaching winter seed sowing and converting hayfield to meadows for a number of years. We asked Gail's advice on some best practices for successful outgrowth of our winter sowing containers.

Gail provided a discussion of her extensive experience here - Many of mine have already started to germinate. If your containers have not germinated, don't worry, I started mine outside early in December. Even in the same container, seeds will germinate at different rates. There's still plenty of time. After a few days I did knock the snow off to allow more light.

Did your containers freeze solid? That's not a problem, mine did as well. That also happens in nature. I even had sprouts in one of them. They're fine. It's amazing to me still.

I have found this year that in general, things are a little slower in starting out than some other years. I believe this is due to so many cloudy days; many seeds need light to germinate. The freezing temperatures are also a factor in timing (like in nature), but as things warm up, you will see it did not harm them.

You have sprouts! Congratulations! As the temperatures rise, make sure they are not getting cooked in those containers (inside will be as much as 20 degrees warmer). You may want to "pop their tops" in the daytime (not on strong windy days) and move them in and out of sun as needed. This will vary by species.

If temperatures are consistently 50+ degrees, including at night, certainly you can leave your containers uncovered/open, especially when all your seeds have sprouted. But keeping containers closed helps retain moisture, cuts down on watering and protects your seedlings until they are ready to be planted out.

Your seedlings do not need fertilizer at this point. I have read that a very weak fertilizer is OK to use when they are large enough to transplant. This is something I have not felt I needed to do. Maybe I should experiment?

You will most likely not need to weed anything. Your container lids have kept any weed seed out. Occasionally, I will find a seedling that looks different from all the other seedlings. I will remove these different seedlings. It may be a weed, or it may be a seed that made it into the "wrong container" when I was preparing them.

When do you transplant? When they have two sets of real true leaves. Seedlings first emerge with cotyledon leaves (sometimes referred to as seed leaves) and then grow true leaves. Or when the seedling is 1-2" tall.

Don't wait for YOUR LAST FROST DATE TO TRANSPLANT your seedlings. Your seedlings GERMINATED and GREW OUTSIDE so they can handle the cool weather. If the ground has warmed up enough so that you can work it, natives can be transplanted (tender annuals or veggies may need to wait). Transplant your seedlings and continue to water them so they can settle into their new garden space.

How densely should I plant seedlings? That depends on species. What is mature size? Whatever that is, I would plant a little closer. You want plants to form a community and touch each other

to create habitat. Also, some seedlings might not make it. Tender seedlings are also wildlife candy. Density of planting also depends on how that seedling propagates itself. Take a species like Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum* family), which spread aggressively by rhizomes. I would space those seedlings further apart, knowing that they will fill in themselves in a short time. The same would be true for a species that was known to spread well by seeds such as Blue Mist (*Conoclinium coelestinum*)

Resources pages: Winter Sowers-the original facebook page: [Winter Sowers - The Original | Facebook](#) You will see a lot of similar wording above. This is where “I” go for questions. There are guides in their resource section that are worth looking at.

Many of you are not on Facebook. Master Gardeners of Maryland have a good site: *All the Dirt on Winter Sowing*. They also put together a great YouTube video: 2023 01 07 *All the Dirt on Winter Sowing Native Plants*.

I always have a few containers that were duds (or very low germination) I offer no guarantees, but it is the best and easiest way to propagate seed I have found.

Gail Olson

“One of the healthiest ways to gamble is with a spade and a package of garden seed”  
Dan Bennett

### **Fellow Member Ken Moore Recognized for Rescue of the Number One Goldenrod Species in Mt. Cuba Trial Garden Report**

In late January we were pleased to find a post from the North Carolina Botanical Garden regarding **Ken Moore** and “Fireworks” goldenrod as quoted below.

*We were delighted to learn that the goldenrod that came in first place in Mt. Cuba Center's new goldenrod trial was none other than Fireworks wrinkle-leaf goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks') – a selection rescued in the 1970s from a site near Wilson, NC, by the wonderful Ken Moore, NCBG assistant director emeritus!*

*In Mt. Cuba's Trial Garden research report, they evaluated 70 goldenrod species, ecotypes, and cultivars over five years for their ornamental and ecological value. Fireworks' arching sprays of fall flowers, its easy-going nature, and its many insect visitors contributed to its high score.*

*This plant was one of many Ken rescued and brought back to the Garden from this site in eastern North Carolina. He noticed it didn't breed true from seed and later joined forces with Niche Gardens to introduce it to the nursery trade, where it's propagated by divisions and cuttings. Read more about 'Fireworks' and all the goldenrods in Mt. Cuba Center's new report: <https://mtcubacenter.org/trials/solidago/>*

Ken brought this stellar species to WOAHS seed swaps during the past several years and described its benefits. If you have not already obtained a start of this species of goldenrod perhaps you can obtain your own start at the May 2 spring swap.

## Virginia Grasslands to Visit

[Virginia Grasslands: Past, Present and Future](#), Alaina Krakowiak - February 2026

Grassland loss is one of the greatest conservation issues currently facing the Southeastern United States. Of the nearly 6,000 plant species native to the Southeast, 60% of these require or prefer grasslands. Despite this, grasslands across this region are being lost at an alarming rate. The Southeastern Grasslands Institute (SGI) is an organization dedicated to studying, conserving, and restoring grasslands in the Southeastern United States. Alaina Krakowiak, SGI's Central Appalachian Grasslands Coordinator, presented a talk "Virginia's Grasslands: Past, Present, and Future" to the WOA Chapter on February 12, 2026.

In this presentation, she described the history of grasslands in Virginia: what they might have looked like, and where they would have been found. She also discussed the current state of Virginia's grasslands: what do we have left and what is threatening them. Grass species are an essential component of our native gardens. Alaina provided a list of thirteen Virginia grasslands (full detailed list on our [resources web link](#)) that can be visited by the public. Note, some visits must be arranged with site steward.

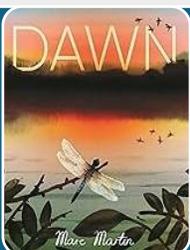
Native grasslands in our SW Virginia region included:

- The Cedars Natural Area Preserve, Lee County, VA
- Cleveland Barrens Natural Area Preserve, Russell County, VA
- Whitetop Mountain, Grayson County, VA
- Buffalo Mountain Natural Area Preserve, Floyd County, VA

## Book Reviews from Mellie

WOAH Vice President Melanie Smith, in addition to everything else she does, is a school librarian in Smyth County and sends us recommendations with promises of more to come in the next newsletter.

I have always believed that books make the best presents for kids. And by kids, I mean people of all ages! However, there are some really good books out there written for youngsters that touch on the importance of native habitat. Giving these as gifts, finding them in a library, or reading them to young people can plant a seed (pun intended) for native gardening and rewilding the landscape. Here are a few of the newer ones I've read recently:



**Dawn** by Marc Martin. 2025, Candlewick Studio.

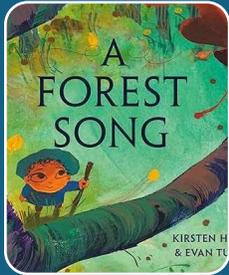
The World is alive with wonder from the first rays of light as they break over the horizon. This ode to nature uses single words and images to help the reader slow down and notice, appreciate and love the nature around us. What we love, we want to take care of.

**Bud Finds Her Gift** by Robin Wall Kimmerer and illustrated by Naoko Stoop. 2025, Allida.



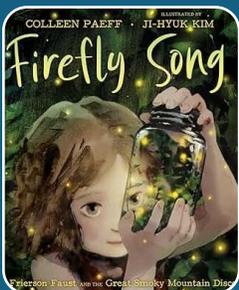
Most Wild Ones members will recognize the author of this picture book as the bestselling author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*, *Gathering Moss* and *The Service Berry*. Our main character, Bud, notices people staying busy and doing “important things.” She wonders what she can do that was just as important.” But Nokomis, her grandmother, shows her how to slow down, look, listen, taste, touch and hear the natural world. Bud begins to notice the connections nature around her and realizes she has something important to do. And one of those things is to plant a pollinator garden to benefit those connections

**A Forest Song** by Kirsten Hall and illustrated by Evan Turk. 2025, Random House Studio.



This is a book of “Cento” poetry, which strings together lines from other poems. Images from the likes of Mary Oliver, Robert Frost, Emily Dickenson, Walt Whitman and many others are woven into a story of forest wandering, wondering and love for nature. The illustrations are rich and impressionistic, lending to the overall majestic feel of this lovely picture book for children (and adults!)

**Firefly Song: Lynn Frierson Faust and the Great Smoky Mountain Discovery** by Colleen Paeff and illustrated by Ji-Hyuck Kim. 2025, Margaret K. McElderry Books.



Synchronous fireflies were once thought to only exist outside of North America, until young Lynn notices them in what eventually becomes Great Smoky Mountain State Park. No one pays attention, so she takes matters into her own hands and spends her life studying fireflies, researching them and finally proving what she has always known. There are miracles right here in our mountains. This book contains great information on creating habitat for lightning bugs, including leaving your lawn unmowed and planting natives, especially grasses, to provide habitats for these magic critters of the night.

## Upcoming 2026 Event Details

### **March 18: Free National Webinar: Rethinking Horticulture with Real Ecology**

Join Joey Santore, creator of *Crime Pays But Botany Doesn't*, for a candid Wild Ones National Webinar examining how inherited garden aesthetics shape native plant landscapes. Drawing on field experience and real ecology, Joey challenges tidy design norms and explores why dense, irregular plant communities are often the most resilient and ecologically sound.

**Time:** 7:00 – 8:00 PM

**Location:** Hosted by **Wild Ones National** by Zoom:

**Register Here:** [Rethinking Horticulture with Real Ecology -](#)

### **March 21: Medicinal Native Plants and Soil Blocking Workshop (Sold Out)**

Native plants have been used for their medicinal properties for 1000's of years. **Casie Martinez** will share her knowledge of native plants that are easy to find in this area. She will describe when to use the plants and how to prepare them. Casie is a member of both the Washington County Master Gardeners and the Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands chapter; both organizations are sponsoring this event. Seed blocking helps reduce plastic waste and encourages strong root development, making it an eco-friendly and effective way to start seeds. Participants will use the soil block makers to press soil into blocks, then plant their chosen seeds in each block. Afterward, they can take their blocks home and care for their seedlings until they're ready to transplant into their gardens.

**Time:** 11:00 AM

**Location:** Abingdon Higher Education Center, One Partnership Circle, Abingdon, VA

### **March 23: “Moss and Lichens Hike” at Doe Mountain Reserve (Open to the public)**

Please pre-register for hikes by phone. You must also complete a waiver which can be done online at <https://dmra.gov/tos-waiver/>

Doe Mountain Reserve Adventure Center, Phone: 423-460-1295

**Time:** 6:00 – 7:00 PM

**Location:** 1203 Harbin Hill Road, Mountain City, TN 37683

## **Event Details continued**

### **March 27: Bluebells Wildflower Walk (Open to the Public)**

Enjoy a spectacular collection of Virginia Bluebells in bloom! We will take a slow-paced stroll around the back forty with the bluebells as our centerpiece, and see many other blooming ephemerals and some of the insects they support. **Connie Deegan**, Johnson City Parks and Recreation naturalist, will lead the walk.

We will meet at the Disc Golf Parking Lot.

**Time:** 6:00 – 7:30 PM

**Location:** Winged Deer Park, Johnson City, Disc Golf Parking Lot,  
204 Carroll Creek Rd, Johnson City, TN, 37601

### **April 4: Spring Ephemerals Walk (WOAH members only, pre-registration required)**

**Dr. Benjamin Lee**, Assistant Professor of Forest Ecology Department of Biological Sciences and the Plant Ecology and Climate Change Lab at East Tennessee State University will guide us on a tour of the incredibly rich wildflower community on a wooded parcel uphill from the actual Fish Hatchery. It's easily accessible for us. There is also some research infrastructure there that is interesting to view. Dr. Lee will be assisted in guiding the tour by ETSU students including WOA's own members, graduate students Erin Helbert and Liz Howe. Registration via [WOAH Email](#).

**Time:** 1:00 – 3:00 pm

**Location:** Erwin National Fish Hatchery (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

### **April 10-11: Washington County Master Gardeners Garden Faire**

**The annual Garden Faire in Abingdon, VA is right around the corner and we are looking for volunteers to help cover our information table.** We greet guests at the event and educate participants about native plants and the Wild Ones organization. Volunteers will man the tables in 2-hour slots so there is plenty of time to enjoy the Garden Faire when your 2 hours are finished. The entry fee is waived for WOA's volunteers and participants have access to free refreshments and lunch.

The Washington County Master Gardeners have presented the regional Garden Faire for over 30 years. The Garden Faire includes plant, garden art, and crafts. It is attended by several thousand participants.

If you decide that you want to join us, please click on the following link to [Sign Up Genius](#), where you will find a list of available volunteer times and duties. If you have any issue navigating Sign Up Genius, please do not hesitate to contact Terry at [tarag8008@gmail.com](mailto:tarag8008@gmail.com) and she will be happy to help you with any issues. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/805094FA4AA2AA3FF2-61842784-wild>

**Time:** Friday April 9:30 – 6:00; Saturday April 11, 9:30 – 4:00

**Location:** Abingdon Higher Education Center, One Partnership Circle,  
Abingdon,

## Event Details continued

### **April 18: Sustain Abingdon Earth Day at the Fields Penn House**

208 Main St, across from the farmer's market. Kid's activities, food, family fun and informational booths.

**Time:** 9:00 – 1:00 PM

### **April 18: Plant It Forward, Earth Day Celebration at Hungry Mother State Park**

HMSP volunteers will be stationed around the spillway, each with a different type of native plant that visitors can help us repopulate. Each volunteer will be equipped to provide information about their chosen native plant while also helping participants to plant one here at our park. If there are any plants left over, there will be a drawing from all the participants to see who gets to take a native plant home to plant in your own backyard. The Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands Chapter has been invited to provide volunteers to assist with describing characteristics of the native plants to participants and demonstrating how to plant them. There will be ten native plant stations. **Our goal is to have enough volunteers to staff each station for 1½-hour shifts. New members will be paired with more experienced members to learn about the plants. Volunteers will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge of native plants, connect with fellow members, and contribute to environmental education in our community. To volunteer or learn more, please send an email**

**to:** [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com) by March 31st. Please indicate if you prefer the 10:00-11:30 or 11:30-1:00 shift or can stay for both shifts.

**Time:** 10:00 – 1:00

**Location:** Hungry Mother State Park, Event at the Spillway

### **April 22: Earth Day Meditation Walk at Doe Mountain Reserve (Open to the public)**

Please pre-register for hikes. You must also complete a waiver which can be done online at <https://dmra.gov/tos-waiver/>

Doe Mountain Reserve Adventure Center, Phone: 423-460-1295

**Time:** 6:00 – 7:00 PM

**Location:** 1203 Harbin Hill Road, Mountain City, TN 37683

## **Event Details continued**

### **May 2: WOAHA Members Only Native Plant and Seed Swap with Potluck**

Many members may have participated in plant and seed swaps and know it's a great way to expand your garden. However, our swap is unique in that it is **exclusively for native plants and seeds**—a special benefit for Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands members. You do not need to bring any plants or seeds; simply come ready to meet other members, learn, and take home native plants or seeds. This is a great chance to ask questions and expand your knowledge about native species, as experienced members will be available to help identify and discuss different plants.

The Swap will be followed by a **potluck dinner and social hour**. Please bring your own beverage and a dish to share. You will be charged \$2 at the gate for parking.

**Time:** 3:30 – 6:00 PM

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

### **Virginia Tech Invasive Species Spring Webinar Series**

Virginia Tech is hosting a webinar series on invasive management. **It's FREE but you do need to register using link below. You can sign up for both of these listed or each individually.**

The Invasive Species Collaborative (ISC) at Virginia Tech is excited to host a spring webinar series that highlights our partners and affiliates. The webinars will be held monthly from **11:00 AM to 12:30 PM.**

**March 24** - Restoring Invaded Landscapes Speakers: Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc. and Plant SWVA Natives

**April 28** - Invasion Pathways & Agricultural Biosecurity Speakers: Schmale Lab at Virginia Tech and Lieurance Lab at Penn State

<https://virginiatech.zoom.us/.../G1Xuv0EqTfWl6v0f4SNWig...>

## Event Details continued

### Nature Conservancy Volunteer Opportunities

For the most current and most local information, register at this link:  
<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/946902e77d3743a7a2e70f29cdf31a8f>

**March 28:** Volunteer Work Day at the elk release site

**April 2:** Native river cane harvesting at Clinch River St. Park ((St Paul)

**April 4:** Native river cane harvesting at Cedars NAP (Jonesville)

**April 18:** Abingdon Earth Day Celebration

**April 24-27:** Community Nature Challenge through iNaturalist

**May: 9:** Outdoor nature drawing/painting workshop with Renee Weinecke (Richlands)

### **May 8-10: Mount Rogers Spring Naturalist Rally At Blue Ridge Discovery Center**

Information and preregister at: [Blueridgediscoverycenter.org](http://Blueridgediscoverycenter.org)

### **WOAH Merch is the only fundraiser for our chapter**

[Get wild. | Bonfire.](#)

