



Newsletter

July-August 2026



Since Last Time...July 1, 2026

Summer is in full swing. I hope your gardens are thriving with native plants. Although we are in a drought, we had much needed rainfall recently in June.

Wild Ones team enjoyed a beautiful day in Jonesborough on June 6 for the Garden Gala. There was a nice flow of visitors starting very early in the day. It helped that we were right in the center of it all on Main St. We were happy to see 89 visitors to our table. Hopefully we will add a member or two.

Check the Calendar for a Wild Ones webinar and local scheduled events in July and join us August 1 for a member only nature walk on Jen Skarsaune's home in Butler TN. Jen's topic is "Native trees and Butterflies" and preregistration is required. See details for all upcoming events below in this newsletter and at our site: [Upcoming Events - Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands Chapter](#).

Our main goal is to continue to spread the word about the benefits of native plants. We are currently in year 3 of our 3-year Strategic Plan. In my opinion, we are doing well to meet our goals. A committee will be convened to review our goals and objectives for the next 3 years. Please consider volunteering for this committee so we can get input from the general membership. You can contact a Board member or email the [WOAH Gmail address](#).

We are always interested to add members to our WOAHH committees such as for strategic plans and events. We would love to have your added newsletter input. I would like you to consider that your participation is essential to continue to grow the Chapter; and to meet the needs of our current members. My concern is that the same group of people have been serving for several years. While I appreciate the hard work of everyone involved, I do think it is important to involve new members. Not to worry, we will still have seasoned members to welcome newcomers. We would love to hear from you.

Safe travels this summer, Paula Reynolds, President

Calendar At A Glance

(Details on Pages 8-11)

July 22: How to Talk to Your Neighbors and HOA About Your Garden

July 27, 30, 31: Virginia Highlands: Moths; Meadows; E&H Cemetery Meadow

August 1: Native Trees and Butterflies Walk

August 19: Ecology of Home: Creating Habitat that Works

Sept. 16: From Lawn to Meadow

Sept. 26: Native Seed Collection and Social

WOAH Merch

Summer is HOT! Get your hats, short-sleeve tees, mugs and more_ 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.



Summer Wild Ones National Journal Highlights

Dick Olson notes that - One benefit of belonging to the National Wild Ones organization is the quarterly digital journal which is A Voice for the Natural Landscaping Movement. The summer issue is both educational and inspirational, offering practical ideas members can use to expand natural habitat in their own yards and across the community. Several articles are included on fire, both as an element of our native environment and how we can reduce fire risks with our native landscaping. Other articles describe how members have dealt with homeowners' associations and their own experiences in transforming traditional lawns into ecologically valuable native habitats. Also, there is a "juicy" look at enjoying blackberries and another on how to enjoy natural spaces while minimizing tick-related health risks. The Journal can be viewed here by logging in your Wild Ones account [Current Wild Ones Journal - Member Account](#).

This issue begins a new series of articles on Featured Plants to be discussed by Ken Moore and Snow Ferrenia. Watch for this upcoming series to learn more about some of our area's most unusual and interesting native plants.

Featured Plant: Green Dragon

By Ken Moore

Green Dragon or Dragon-root (*Arisaema draconitum*) is an herbaceous perennial, native to North America from Quebec through Minnesota, south through Florida and Texas, where it is found growing in damp forests. The plant produces a palmate (like a hand) leaf topping a long petiole (stem.) A leaf may have 7-13 "fingers." It grows from a bulb-like corm deep in the soil. In the spring it produces a single spadix, similar to the Jack-in-the-Pulpit. The protrusion from the spadix resembles the tongue of a serpent. Green berries within the base of the spadix turn crimson red in the fall, falling to the ground, where they are consumed by box turtles and other ground critters. New plants appear away from the mother plant spread from poop, wherever it falls.

Harriet Martineau reported, in her travel diaries in the 1830s, observing a young native woman "rubbing her teeth with the dragon-root." Do Not Try This! In spite of historical writings that report use in folk and indigenous medicine, primarily for respiratory and rheumatoid ailments, modern medicine strictly advises against consuming or handling the plant due to severe toxicity.

Green Dragons, like Jack-in-the-Pulpit, are generally used for its ornamental curiosity in shaded, moist woodland gardens.

Green Dragon embodies growth, renewal, healing and the untamed force of Nature.

In a garden, beware that this plant is very aggressive and will rapidly crowd out nearby desirable native perennials.

Plant in a low moist area where it can be allowed to run freely without harming other garden plants.



Note the five to several "fingers" of each separate leaf.



Note the extension from the base of the spadix resembling a serpent's tongue, thus the name Green Dragon.



On the left are Green Dragon whole plants with roots.

On the right are the bottoms of Green Dragon roots exposing multiple bulb-like corms which quickly expand to crowd out adjacent desirable garden plants.



One Year Anniversary -The Coomes Center Native Garden

The Abingdon Coomes Center Native Garden is now one year old. In early June the butterfly weed and rattlesnake master began to bloom. The milkweed was just starting to have a few blossoms. All of this while the area was still in drought and no special attention was being applied. By mid-July now the garden is bursting with blooms of bee balm, butterfly weed, mountain mint, blazing star and milkweed.

Looking over the past year, we figured we spend about 7 hours maintaining the garden including some watering and weeding during its establishment. The Town of Abingdon also did some watering. Proof that native plants are able to survive tough conditions with minimal maintenance.

There are plans to enlarge the garden and we will soon have an information sign installed nearby. Once installed we will share an image of the sign. WOA member Mendy Bechtold designed the sign identifying some of the plants, the virtues of native plants, and included QR codes for more detailed information. Additional QR codes refer visitors to the organizations that helped create the garden- The Town of Abingdon, Virginia Master Naturalists, Washington County Master Gardeners and Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands.

Please visit the garden located at Coomes Recreation Center located at 300 Stanley Street, Abingdon. The garden is on the street side of the pickle ball courts at the front of the property. You will find inspiration for your own native garden at home.



Gardening Smarter: A Physical Therapist's Guide to Stronger Movement and Less Pain

Gardening is a rewarding way to stay active—but it places repetitive stress on the spine, hips, and knees. Bending, kneeling, lifting, and twisting can add up quickly, especially without proper preparation. The goal is not to avoid these movements, but to build a body that tolerates them well.

As a physical therapist, I encourage gardeners to treat yard work like exercise: prepare for it, move well during it, and recover afterward.

Why Strength and Movement Matter

Gardening often falls into the **moderate-intensity activity range ($\approx 3-6$ METs)**, similar to brisk walking or general yard work. To support long-term health, guidelines recommend:

- At least **150 minutes/week** of moderate activity
- **2+ days/week** of strength training targeting major muscle groups
- Activity level examples: **Light (<3 METs)**: leisure walking, doing dishes, making a bed.
 - **Moderate (3.0 - 5.9 METs)**: brisk walking (3.5 mph), vacuuming, casual biking.
 - **Vigorous (≥ 6.0 METs)**: jogging, carrying groceries upstairs, calisthenics, or hiking.

Staying active year-round is critical. **Avoid** the “hibernation” effect in winter—this leads to deconditioning, stiffness, and higher injury risk when activity resumes in spring for gardening.

Joining a local gym or recreation center can help maintain consistency, offering:

- Indoor walking (track/treadmill) during extreme heat or cold
- Resistance/weight machines and bands for safe strength training
- Pools and Saunas for general health and wellness
- Training staff for a helpful resource in understanding equipment and different exercises
- Structured classes for extra accountability

Better Body Mechanics for Gardening

- Use a **hip hinge**, not spinal flexion, when bending
- Keep loads **close to your body** when lifting
- Avoid twisting—**pivot your feet** instead
- Alternate positions (kneeling, half-kneeling, standing)
- Use tools or raised beds to reduce prolonged strain

Therapeutic Exercise Program for Gardeners

Perform 3–4x/week. Focus on control, not speed.

1. Bridge (Glute + Core Stability) Lie on your back with knees bent. Tighten your core, then lift hips until shoulders–hips–knees form a line. Hold 3–5 seconds. Slowly lower.

Perform 2-3 sets of 10-12 reps. *Targets:* glutes, posterior chain

2. Bird Dog (Lumbopelvic Control) On hands and knees, extend opposite arm and leg. Keep hips level and avoid trunk rotation. You can also perform this modified in a standing position. Hold 3–5 seconds. Alternate sides. Perform 2-3 sets of 10-12 reps.

Targets: core stabilizers, coordination

3. Sit-to-Stand / Squat (Functional Strength) Stand up from a chair without using hands. Control the descent back down. Perform 2-3 sets of 10-12 reps. *Progression:* add weight or lower chair height. *Targets:* quads, glutes

4. Step-Ups (Single-Leg Strength) Step onto a stair or platform, then slowly return down. Maintain upright posture. Perform 2-3 sets of 10-12 reps. *Targets:* quads, glutes, balance

5. Hip Hinge Drill (Movement Training) Practice bending at the hips while keeping a neutral spine (use a dowel or hands on hips). Perform 2 sets of 10 reps.

Goal: reinforce safe lifting mechanics

6. Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch (Mobility) In half-kneeling, shift hips forward while keeping torso upright. If you can't tolerate being on your knees, perform a standing lunge stretch instead. Hold 30-60 seconds, perform 2 sets on each side.

Targets: hip mobility, reduces lumbar strain

7. Trunk Rotations (Upper & Lower)

- **Lower trunk:** Lying on back, knees bent, gently rotate knees side to side
 - **Upper trunk:** Seated or standing, rotate shoulders while keeping hips stable *Goal:* improve rotational mobility and reduce compensatory strain
 - Perform 2-3 sets of 10-12 reps for each
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8. Posterior Pelvic Tilt / Mini Crunch Flatten lower back gently into the surface by engaging abdominals. Progress to small crunch if tolerated. Hold for 3-4 seconds, and perform 2 sets of 10-12 reps. *Targets:* deep core activation

9. Pallof Press (Anti-Rotation Core Stability) Using a resistance band or cable: Hold the handle at chest, press straight out, resist rotation. Hold briefly (3-4 seconds), then return slowly. Perform 2-3 sets of 10-12 reps for each side.

Targets: transverse abdominis, anti-rotational control

10. Chop and Lift (Functional Rotation Strength) Using band or pulley:

- **Chop:** high to low diagonal pattern

- **Lift:** low to high pattern Keep core engaged and movement controlled. Perform 2-3 sets of 10-12 reps for each side. *Targets:* total core, diagonal movement patterns used in gardening
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11. **Row** (Upper Back Strength) Using band or machine, pull handles toward torso while squeezing shoulder blades together. Avoid shrugging shoulders. Perform 2-3 sets of 10-12 reps for each side. *Targets:* upper back, posture support

Structuring Activity Year-Round

- Warm up before gardening (5–10 minutes walking or mobility work)
- Break tasks into shorter sessions
- Rotate activities to avoid overuse
- Stay active during winter with indoor walking or gym programs that include resistance/weight training
- Aim for **consistent weekly movement**, not seasonal bursts

Bottom Line

Gardening is physical work—and your body responds best when it’s trained for it.

By combining:

- Proper body mechanics
- Consistent strength and flexibility training
- Year-round activity

You can reduce strain on your lumbar spine and knees while improving endurance and enjoyment in the garden.

Think of exercise as preparation for the activities you love—not a separate task.

About the Author

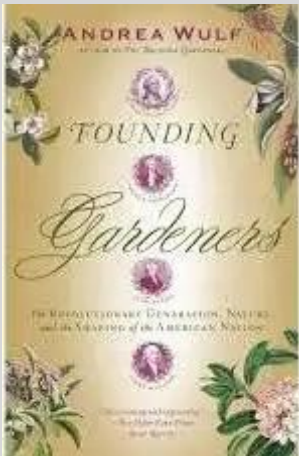
Marcus B. Taylor, PT, DPT

Physical Therapist



Books: seen but not yet read

I just returned from a trip that included Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest where we noticed a book "Founding Gardeners" which seemed quite appropriate for this season. While I have not yet read it myself the descriptions appear quite enticing and the author, Andrea Wulf, wrote another book, "The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World", that I enjoyed immensely. "The Founding Gardeners" is available at Amazon as a book or free as audiobook for members.



From Amazon "this is the story of how George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Madison's passion for nature, plants, agriculture and gardens shaped the birth of America. Through a series of vignettes spanning the Declaration of Independence to the death of Adams and Jefferson exactly fifty years to the day afterwards, these stories that weave the political, the personal and the botanical and are in turns funny, fascinating and moving. The Founding Gardeners shows that it is impossible to understand these visionary men and the American nation without considering their love of gardening."

Upcoming Events

July 22: Free National Webinar: How to Talk to Your Neighbors (and Your HOA) About Your Garden with Lorraine Johnson

You planted native. Your neighbor has opinions. Maybe your HOA does too. If you've ever felt like the hardest part of native plant gardening is the conversations, not the gardening, you're not alone.

Wild Ones is thrilled to share this upcoming free webinar as part of the **2026 Less Lawn More Life Challenge**. Join Lorraine Johnson for a practical conversation on navigating HOA rules, addressing neighbor concerns, and fostering community conversations about native plant gardening and ecological landscapes.

Time: 7:00 – 8:00 PM

Location: [On Line- Resister Here](#)

Upcoming Events

Virginia Highlands Festival Outdoors

July 27: Moths and Other Nighttime Insects

Abingdon Highlands Festival presents Lance Jessee, a naturalist and the research and collections coordinator at The Nature Center at Steele Creek Park in Bristol, TN. Lance will discuss some of the most diverse groups of insects (pollinators) that are active under the cover of darkness: moths, beetles and more at 7:30 – 8:30 pm.

This will be followed by: **Moth Attraction Night on the Creeper Trail.**

Following the talk Lance will set up a light station at the Watauga Trailhead parking lot of the Creeper Trail to see some of these nighttime insects as they are attracted to lights at 9:00 – 10:00 pm.

Time: presentation at 7:30 to 8:30 pm

Location: Abingdon Higher Education Center, Executive Auditorium, One Partnership Circle, Abingdon, VA

July 30: Meadows in Your Backyard by Gail Justice Olson

Abingdon Highlands Festival presents Gail Olson, fellow Wild Ones member and Washington County Master Naturalist. Gail creates wildlife habitat in her gardens at home by using native plants and management practices and teaches the art of native habitat gardening in Master Gardener Classes.

Gail will discuss the significance and historical context of grasslands in Virginia, some of our fastest disappearing ecosystems.

Time: 7:30 to 8:30 pm

Location: Abingdon Higher Education Center, Executive Auditorium, One Partnership Circle, Abingdon, VA

July 31: Life in the Cemetery

In 2022, with the help of The Nature Conservancy, the Cemetery Board of Trustees developed a partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Partners Program and turned almost 3 acres of unused property in the cemetery into native habitat. Previously mown grass, is now a thriving part of the ecosystem providing shelter for small animals, food for birds, healthy habitat for pollinators, and water retention for soil. Participants will meet a range of individuals who interact with this newly establish meadow.

Time: 10:00 to 11:00 am

Location: Holston Conference-Emory & Henry Cemetery, 12150 Linden Street, Meadowview, VA

Upcoming Events

August 1: Native Trees and Butterflies Walk

Most of us associate butterflies with flowers but trees play a big part in supporting butterflies and are every bit as important as flowers. An interesting example is the mourning cloak butterfly which only sparingly feeds on the nectar of flowers. Its larval food is primarily from tree species and as an adult it feeds mostly on tree sap from oaks.

Jen Skarsaune, a nature lover, tree hugger, gardener, homesteader and Certified Tennessee Naturalist will be sharing a glimpse of the wild places at Lucky Dog Homestead in Butler, TN. She has a bachelor's degree in Biology, was an ISA Certified Arborist and spent most of her career in vegetation management doing jobs from invasive species control to utility forestry. During this walk we will discuss our native trees and the butterflies they support.

Participation in this event will be limited to maintain a high-quality experience for all attendees. Register by email to: wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com

The site is about an hour's drive from Bristol. Confirmation and directions to the walk will be provided to the registrants by email

Time: 10:00 – 11:00 am

Location: The site is about an hour's drive from Bristol. Confirmation and directions to the walk will be provided to the registrants by email

August 19: Free National Webinar: The Ecology of Home: Creating Habitat That Works with Shaun McCoshum

Native plants are the foundation of habitat, but wildlife need more than food to thrive. Join ecologist and Certified Wildlife Biologist Shaun McCoshum, PhD, to explore how nesting sites, shelter, water, soil conditions, and other often-overlooked resources can transform a yard into a functioning ecosystem that supports biodiversity year-round.

Time: 7:00 to 8:00 pm

Location: Registration Link Coming Soon on the Wild Ones National Website

Upcoming Events

September 16: Free National Webinar- From Lawn to Meadow with Sara Weaner Cooper

What does it really take to turn a conventional lawn into a thriving native meadow? Join Owner & Principal, New Directions in the America Landscape (NDAL), Sara Weaner Cooper for a candid look at her family's ongoing lawn-to-meadow transformation featured in The New York Times and BBC. Drawing from three years of hands-on experience, Sara will share the methods, lessons learned, successes, and challenges of converting turfgrass into a dynamic native plant community. Participants will gain practical insights into site preparation, planting, management, and the ecological principles that guide successful meadow establishment, along with realistic expectations for how these landscapes evolve over time.

Time: 7:00 to 8:00 pm

Location: Registration Link Coming Soon on the Wild Ones National Website

September 26: Members Only Native Seed Collecting and Social Gathering

WOAH members are invited to come stroll through the Olson meadows and enjoy the late fall blooms of the season. Bring paper bags and clippers to gather seeds to take home and grow in your own space.

The Olsons will share what they have learned about creating meadows and updates on their 2-acre meadow prescribed burn earlier this year.

We'll wrap up our visit with light snacks and good conversation. It's a wonderful chance to share ideas, learn a bit about what's thriving, and simply enjoy time together outdoors. Please bring your favorite beverage, a snack to share, and a chair if you have one, as outdoor seating is limited.

Time: 3:00 to 6:00 pm

Location: Please register by email to wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com to receive the event location and directions.