



Newsletter

September-October 2026



Since Last Time...September 1, 2026

I am looking forward to fall and maybe it will rain a little less. The year is flying by fast. The Board would like to hear about any exciting fall planting you have planned. And don't forget the October plant swap. See Upcoming Events for details.

The Board has been busy recruiting officers and committee members for 2027. Look for an email in October with the slate of officers proposed for next year. The members will review and approve at the annual meeting in November. AND anyone interested in getting more involved should send an email to the [WOAH Gmail address](#). We will find a place for you that piques your interest.

One project that will commence in the next few weeks is the review and update of the 3-year Strategic Plan. We have renamed the committee to **Long Range Planning**. We already have quite a few members who have volunteered for the committee. There is always room for you though. And if you would rather not be on the committee but have ideas for the direction we should incorporate, you can always send your suggestions to the [WOAH Gmail address](#).

If you would like to collect seeds for your personal use, please join us at Gail and Dick Olson's house in September for seed collecting. See details in the article on page 2.

Also, in October we will participate in the Wildlife Weekend at Steele Creek Park. It's always a fun time. Think about joining us. Guess how you would let us know 😊.

The Board has approved new bylaws recommended by National. These will be updated shortly to our [website](#). For your reading pleasure, the Bylaws are currently listed at the top navigation bar of the website.

Warm Wishes,

Paula Reynolds, President

Calendar At A Glance

(Details on Pages 10-13)

- Sept. 16:** From Lawn to Meadow Webinar
- Sept. 26:** Native Seed Collection and Social (See article page 2)
- Oct. 10:** Wildlife Weekend at Steele Creek Park
- Oct. 21:** Backyard Bats National Webinar
- Oct. 24:** Native Plant/Seed Swap (members only)
- Nov. 12:** WOAH Annual Meeting

Native Seed Collecting Event.....	p2
Featured Plants.....	p3
Cecilia's Transformation...	p4
Menday's 5x5 Challenge...	p6
Cullowhee Conference	p7
Book Review.....	p9
Upcoming Events.....	p10-13

Members Native Seed Collecting and Social Gathering – Sept. 26

WOAH members are invited to stroll through the Olson meadows and enjoy the season's late fall blooms. Many species will be ready for seed collection, including wild bergamot, side-oats grama, wild senna, cup plant, rattlesnake master, several mountain mints, and others. Please bring paper bags and clippers to gather seeds to take home and grow in your own space.

Since 2010, Gail has developed, expanded, and experimented with her meadows. She has deepened her knowledge through workshops, conferences, and membership in Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and Wild Ones. She also speaks to classes and groups about the value of native species and how to create habitat gardens.

The Olsons will share lessons from creating their meadows and provide updates on their 2-acre meadow, established in 2010. Gail will lead a tour of her mature front meadow before the group visits the upper meadow, where a February prescribed burn has improved biodiversity and habitat quality. Its regeneration is especially notable because the meadow regrew from perennial roots and the seedbank without replanting.

We'll wrap up our visit with light snacks and good conversation. It's a wonderful chance to share ideas 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. Please register by email to wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com to receive the event location and directions to this Bristol VA event. Also, receive a fuller list of species for collecting seeds.

Saturday, Sept. 26, 2026

Time: 3:00-6:00 p.m.

Gail's Front
Meadow



Upper Meadow February



Upper Meadow August

This issue includes the second of a series of articles on "Featured Plants" to be discussed by Ken Moore and Snow Ferrenia to learn more about some of our area's more unusual and interesting native plants.

Autumn - The Unsung Season

By Snow Ferrenia

We tend to think of Autumn/Fall as a winding down time. A time to "put the garden to bed" for the year. But first a reminder that in order to protect overwintering pollinators in one form or another we no longer do that if we are environmentally responsible gardeners. But we leave the majority if not all the plant material as winter protection and habitat for so many of those very necessary creatures in all their forms.

What has long been overlooked is the extensive array of wonderful plants that come into their own during the late summer and autumn months. These herbaceous perennials add brilliant colour to match that of the trees we are always raving about and take their own garden displays to killing frosts even beyond.

A favorite group that does not seem to be grown very often are the Ironweeds – Veronicas, of which there are several species. To me the sumptuous purple flowers personify the colors purple. All are tall 5'-6' sometime more. If that's too tall for you they can be given the "Chelsea Chop" the last week of May- first week of June by cutting them back by 1/3 to 1/2. Ironweeds do best in full sun, but will tolerate a little high shade for an hour or two. But they thrive in sunlight. They seem tolerant of a wide range of soils. In the wild they tend to be found in areas that are on the moist side, but they have grown well for me in areas that do not get any extra moisture. Ironweeds are the perfect companion for all the other late summer-fall blooming plants. And don't overlook the grasses which are their perfect counterpoint in the fall landscape where the large open heads of purple flowers add eye-catching highlights in both borders and meadows. They are also a striking companion for the plethora of native Asters and Goldenrods (Solidago). All of which attract a myriad of pollinators.

Asters are a diverse genus having a wide range of colors, growth habit and cultural requirements. There are even varieties that thrive in filtered shade! Such as macrophyllus – Big Leaf Aster and divaricatus – White Wood Aster. I always look forward to their white flowers lighting up my shady areas in late summer through the fall. The New England Aster *A. novae angliae* has been a favorite since childhood, with its many flower-colored forms and growth habits. These range from the tall, full species (which response well to the Chelsea Chop), to Purple Dome 15"-18", making it ideal for smaller areas. At the other end of the spectrum is *A. ericoides* Snow Flurry, a lovely ground-cover that covers itself in sparkling white flowers. *Aster dumosus* "Woods" selections are well worth getting if you want ones that stay in the 12"-15" range. Do delve into this diverse rewarding Genus and ALL its members both familiar and unfamiliar.

Then there are all the wonderful cheerful Goldenrods –Solidago, an ideal companion for the Aster. There is just one species *S. canadensis* which is invasive and should therefore not be

planted in a border or meadow. Leave it for the roadsides where it perks up normally dreary locations.

Of all the other species, *S. caesia*, the Wreath Goldenrod is a treasure in a shady area where its long graceful arching stems form a bright cascade. Like *S. flexicaulis*- Zigzag Goldenrod it prefers filtered sun. A plus in the late season months. *S. flexicaulis* has narrow upright spires of gold. Both add so much to the greens of shady areas in fall. The most atypical species of this Genus is *S. bicolor* the Silverrod. Narrow upright stems are tightly clothed greenish white flowers. Silverrod is usually found in sandy-gravelly soils growing 12"-20" tall. Again "dig in" to this genus and all its different species. All well worth growing adding so much striking cheerful color wherever they are planted. I tend not to cut them back in spring as I think they lose some of their grace.



Ironweed



New England Aster



Solidago-goldenrod

First Year Transplant's Native Plant Transformation

By Cecilia Boyd

My family began renting our house in June 2025. The small garden in the front featured rose stumps, crabgrass, and a nest of yellowjackets, which didn't suit my aesthetics. I reset the bed and began with plants from the WOAHS Fall Plant Swap: mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum* spp.), black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), and purple aster (*Symphyotrichum* sp.).

Last winter, I learned to stratify seeds and raised purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), bottlebrush grass (*Elymus hystrix*), and anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*) for transplanting. The WOAHS Spring Plant Swap filled the remaining gaps with blue waxweed (*Cuphea viscosissima*, my favorite), purple mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), and whorled coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata*).

By August, just over a year after we moved in, the front garden reached peak bloom. A volunteer pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) stylishly overtook the back corner, thriving after a Chelsea chop. American burnweed (*Erechtites hieraciifolius*) stalks appeared later in the summer. I kept a few and stripped their lower leaves like a poodle's tail to prevent them from shading out other plants.

Over 20 spp of pollinators have visited, most commonly leaf cutter bees (*Megachilidae*), Sweat and Furrow Bees (*Halictinae*), Scoliid Wasps (*Scolia*), Bumblees (*Bombus*), and Skippers (*Atalopedes*).

My main project however, is behind the house. Last fall, I conquered 3,000 ft² of Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), and English ivy (*Hedera helix*). My natives have a foothold. Over the next few years, I hope to share the progress of the meanest, most prolific, and indomitable natives I can plant there.



5X5 Less Lawn More Life Challenge

By Mendy Bechtold

In April, I signed up for the [Less Lawn More Life](#) challenge which provided weekly emails, webinars, and online resources to encourage a journey to make my yard wilder. The 12-week challenge recommended small actions to help turn lawn into something “**wilder, healthier, and more alive.**” Helpful weekly emails offered information, instruction and inspiration to make easy changes from **lawn to life** using **native plants**. Topics included invasives, water sources, and neighborhood relationships.

The keynote webinar speaker was Robin Wall Kimmerer. She encouraged us to be **stewards of the land**. One question she asked during the talk that stood out to me was: “How can we be medicine to the earth?” Robin reminded us that we have the power to encourage biodiversity and habitat in nature if we only “**roll up our sleeves and get to work.**”

The first week challenge began with a quiz which assessed my yard’s “Wildr” score. The next challenge was to pick and prepare the location – a grassy spot in the center of the yard, a shady spot around a tree, or even just a tired garden bed. This beginner’s challenge only required a **5X5 ft** patch of yard to transform. That seemed doable! Last fall I had prepared a similar sized flowerbed in a sunny location but had not decided on which plants to use. Since this space was a blank slate and ready for planting, I chose it as my location.

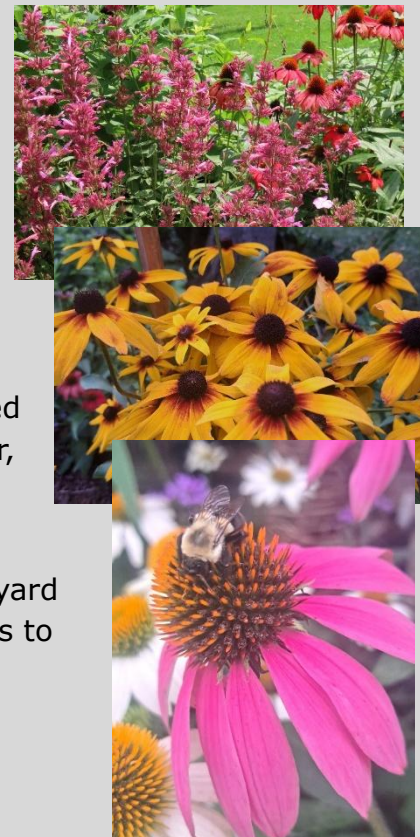
The next challenge was fun - to choose the native plants! My goal was to attract pollinators and have bright showy flowers. I planted hummingbird mint, coreopsis, coneflower, black-eyed Susan, milkweed, butterfly weed, mountain mint, garden phlox, and river oats. **It is amazing to see how much life fits in a 5X5 ft space!**

Other weekly challenges discussed the **negative impacts of pesticides** and the importance of **adding a water feature**. I committed to both of these challenges. Afterall, I wanted to attract pollinating insects and birds into my yard! I refrained from spraying unwanted pests and added a simple bird bath as my water feature.

The Less Lawn More Life challenge recommended that we track how the space changes over time. I did not expect to see the transformation that happened in that little space in such a short amount of time. As a Master Gardener, my yard has many flowerbeds and plants, but this **new native space is special**. It has attracted **many more pollinators** to my yard and it is so beautiful with color! With these results, I expanded the planting and incorporated other native plants like yarrow, blazing star, bee balm and whorled milkweed into my other flowerbeds.

The **biggest change** that I have witnessed from this project has been in my husband who loved his grass lawn! He now enjoys sitting in the backyard and watching the hummingbirds, butterflies and birds. He is making plans to tear out more grass and add more native plants!

Less Lawn More Life challenge: Success!



Cullowhee Native Plant Conference 2026

By Dick Olson

The largest gathering of native plant enthusiasts in the United States met in mid-July at Western Carolina University in North Carolina. There were 500 native plant nerds at the Cullowhee Native Plant Conference! The Conference was a nice mix of inspirational talks, field trips, workshops, vendors, and chatting with a lot of folks with similar interests and native habitat gardens. Gail and I have attended the conference about 10 times over the years. Ken Moore, Chapter member, was active in planning many of the earlier conferences.

Over a dozen plant vendors from the southeast had both common and unusual native species for sale (Gail found a few new plants!). One of the unique vendors was the City Lights Bookstore. They have been bringing a fantastic array of books and related stuff to the conference for years. Several of the native plant societies had information booths with lists of species native to their region, like [the list we have for our Chapter](#).

One of the talks I enjoyed was "A Wilding: Bring Ecology Home" about redesigning a large urban park in Raleigh, NC. Preston Montague described the many steps of gathering user input, site characteristics, species selection, and installation of a meadow area in Dix Park. His design for a typical yard in Greensboro is available on the National [Wild Ones website](#). We also learned about "pea vines" (varieties of legume species) that were extensive in the Southeast prior to the introduction of grazing cattle in the 1800's. The speaker, Bryan England, described his involvement in designing a nature preserve park in Raleigh for conservation and education. He was amazed with the reemergence of pea vine plants from the seed bank when they cleared off invasives from an area!

About 70 representatives from Wild Ones Chapters and Native Plant Societies had a roundtable discussion to brainstorm how these groups could be more effective in their messaging. The discussion identified opportunities to share information and advertise each other's events. It was apparent that Wild Ones chapters are very active in the southeast with a variety of programs to educate and inspire native gardeners.

After 40 years of conferences, the group is dropping its connection with Western Carolina University and becoming the Southeast Native Plant Conference. WCU provided most of the logistic support for the group with volunteer committees organizing each conference. There was discussion on how best to build on the past success and meet the needs of the expanding native plant movement. They are looking for a new place to hold next year's conference and field trips, including places closer to the Tri-Cities. The Conference is a wonderful opportunity for gaining a broader perspective of native habitat activities and for being inspired to promote our WOA Chapter.

Notes from the Field

Wild Ones and Master Naturalist Host "Social Joe Group"

The Coomes Recreation Center in Abingdon invited a discussion and tour of the native garden established there last year for an active-aging "Social Joe" group that meets at the center. Monica Hoel, Master Naturalist, Gail Olson, Wild Ones, and Anne Tucker, Wild Ones, explained the planning and purpose of the project, the design of the garden and the future expansion planned for Fall 2026. Following the talk, a garden tour showed off the blooming summer plants and several individuals found about ten monarch butterfly caterpillars on swamp milkweed plants. Thank you to the Coomes Recreation Center.

Native Mason Bee versus Honey Bee

The mason bee does more for your garden than the honeybee and few people have heard of her.

- 95% of the apple blossoms the mason bee visits are successfully pollinated. The honeybee has a success rate of 5%.
- Scientists believe it takes roughly 100 honey bees to do the job of one mason bee.
- An incredible 2000 flowers may get pollinated daily thanks to the mason bee.
- She flies at 48°F. Honeybees will not leave the hive below 60°F.
- 250 female mason bees can fully pollinate one acre of apple trees - work that would require 15,000 to 20,000 honeybees.
- Mason bees are solitary and live near other mason bees. They are docile and can be approached without being stung.
- Honey bees live in colonies which they will defend and produce honey, wax, and other resources for beekeepers.

For more detailed information on comparisons, beehouses and beekeeping see the following websites. If there are WOA members who are specifically interested in native bees it might be useful to follow up with more discussions and resources if you wish to make the board aware of your interest.

[Honey Bee Vs. Mason Bee – Comparison Guide Bee Professor](#)

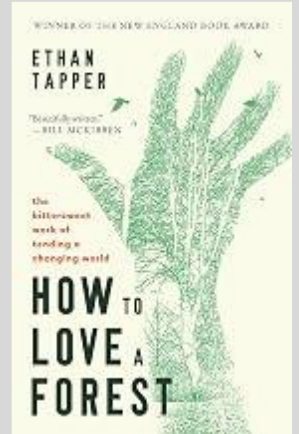
[The Honeybee Got the Marketing – CRAFTFOLK](#)

(USDA / Utah State University, 2009)

Book Review by Melanie Smith

How to Love a Forest: The Bittersweet Work of Tending a Changing World. Ethan Tapper. Broadleaf Books, 2024.

I am just beginning to read this book and I dread it. Why should I read a book I dread? Because I am the audience this book is for. Those people who think a forest should just exist. That people don't need to mess it up with their dumb ideas and cutting and arranging and all the things we do to nature. But the forest needs us! Humans have altered our planet so drastically that almost nothing can exist "as is." Forests need our help in managing them. Managing them in a thoughtful, naturally-driven way that promotes the health of a forest for the wildlife within, including the trees themselves.



Forests are both fragile and resilient, as the end pages read. "Tapper argues that the actions we must take to protect ecosystems are often counterintuitive, uncomfortable and even heartbreaking." I agree with that statement, which is why I am so uncomfortable reading this book. But I am learning so much already and hoping that it will change my attitudes toward "the bittersweet work of tending a changing world." Tapper writes from experience. He bought a chunk of forest and is managing and uses his experience as a professional forester.

Tapper has also just published another book, titled **The Forest Year: Finding Hope in a World Worth Saving**. Both are highly recommended for anyone who has a forest plot to manage.

WOAH needs your help. **Wanted – Editor for the newsletter** in 2027 and any contributions for newsletter articles. Please reply to the [WOAH Gmail address](#)

WOAH Merch



It may not feel like it but we are reaching the end of summer so get ready with sweatshirts, mugs, long and short-sleeve tees, and caps in many colors! It is the only fundraiser for our chapter. Visit [Get wild. | Bonfire](#), or scan the QR code with your smart phone's camera.

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 only. See details in the article on page 2. Bring paper bags and clippers to gather seeds to take home and grow in your own space.

We'll wrap up our visit with light snacks and good conversation. 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.

October 10: Wildlife Weekend at Steele Creek Park

This event is a family-oriented day of activities such as hikes, demonstrations, and talks. The WOAH Chapter will provide an information table describing Wild Ones and our Chapter events plus we provide activities for kids based on the weekend theme.

There will be a \$2.00 parking fee at the gate.

Time: 11:00 am to 4:00 pm

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

Upcoming Events

October 21: Free National Webinar- Bats in the Backyard with Bat Conservation International

Bats are among the most important and misunderstood wildlife in our communities. Join experts from Bat Conservation International to explore how native plants, healthy insect populations, and thoughtful landscape design can help support bats. Learn about the ecological role of bats and discover practical ways to create habitat for North America's night flyers right in your own backyard.

Time: 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Location: On-line/Virtual - Hosted by Wild Ones National Website

October 24: WOAHA Members Only Native Plant and Seed Share with Potluck Dinner

Fall is a great time to share both native plants and seeds from our gardens. Our fall swap on Saturday, October 24th, is one of the benefits of being a Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands member and it is exclusively for native plants and seeds. If you have extra native plants or seeds to share, feel free to bring them, but participation is welcome even if you come empty-handed. Please label each plant or seed packet with its common and scientific name, as well as its preferred growing conditions (such as sun/shade and moisture needs). Join us for a fun and educational event—expand your native garden, connect with fellow enthusiasts, and help support local biodiversity!

Following the Swap will be the potluck dinner and social hour. Bring a dish to share, your own beverage, and reusable plate and utensils to support sustainability. Nametags will be available for new members, please wear yours. Parking is \$2.00 at the gate.

Time: 3:30 pm to 6:00 pm

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

November 12: Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands Chapter Annual Meeting

Members Only, Chapter Election

On November 12th, 2026, we will celebrate our fifth anniversary as the Appalachian Highlands Chapter. The chapter only holds one chapter meeting a year, and the great thing is that it is an in-person meeting where we get to meet new and current members.

There will be a short business meeting to include the State of the Chapter report, as well as election of officers for 2027. This is the time the Board will present the proposed slate of officers for the coming year. This information will be mailed out 30 days in advance of

Upcoming Events

the meeting per chapter by-laws. The members can approve the slate as presented or submit nominations from the floor.

The chapter is reaching the end of the initial 3-year Strategic Plan. The Board will present a summary of our accomplishments and present our new Long-Range Plan. The members will have an opportunity to make suggestions about issues the Board should focus on for the next 3 years.

Water, coffee and light sandwiches will be provided. You are welcome to bring your favorite "small bites" and please wear your nametag. We will have name tags for new members; some unclaimed older name tags. If you have misplaced yours, please send a message to the chapter email address and we will provide a new one at the meeting.

We usually have door prizes to give away. I don't know what those are yet. If you have anything to donate, please let us know. As the outgoing President, I would consider it a personal favor if you could join us.

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 spend more time socializing and having fun than conducting business.

Time: 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

Location: The Summit - Exhibition Training Room, 1227 Volunteer Pkwy, Bristol, TN, 37620

Nature Conservancy Volunteer Opportunities

For the most current and most local information, register at this link:

<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/946902e77d3743a7a2e70f29cdf31a8f>

September 8: Improve Infrastructure (paint) with TNC at Town of Cleveland's Clinch River public access (Cleveland, VA)

October 7: Invasive Species Control Workday with DCR Natural Heritage at Cleveland Barrens Natural Area Preserve (Cleveland, VA)

October 16-18: Mount Rogers Fall Naturalist Rally at Blue Ridge Discovery Center

The October 16, Friday Night, keynote speaker is Dr. Carrie Fearer on:

“Small but Deady: How Invasive Pests and Pathogens Transform Our Forests”.

Saturday and Sunday programs include birding, edible and medicinal plants, freshwater mussels, wetlands, weather, geology, fly casting, salamanders, and more.

BRDC member \$37.50, non-member \$50. For details and to register:

[Fall Rally — Blue Ridge Discovery Center](#)