Newsletter

November-December 2026

Since Last Time...November 1, 2026

The holidays are fast approaching. It's not too late to finish fall plantings and think about winter sowing plans. If anyone needs seeds, feel free to contact me. I have a lot!

We are nearing the end of 2026. After the November 12th annual meeting, we will have a new slate of officers and some changes to committee chairpersons. It's very exciting to me that we have so many members willing to volunteer for new responsibilities. The current leadership has been very successful, and it is time for new ideas. Join us at the annual meeting November 12th (see upcoming events for details) to hear a State of the Chapter Report, as well as an intro to the newly developed Long-Range Plan for the chapter.

Speaking of the annual meeting, we are celebrating our 5-year anniversary. Mel Smith, Chapter Vice-President, has a fun evening planned for our anniversary party. Hope you can come.

The Events Committee already has many programs scheduled for 2027. See details on the Upcoming Events, available on our webpage.

I would like to thank Stan Tucker for the great job compiling and editing newsletters for the past 2 years. Starting next year, Max and Bria Hofmeister (aka August-Ray) have graciously offered to become the new Editors. The next official newsletter will be coming out in January. Thank you Max and Bria!

Looking forward to the annual meeting. Hope to see many of you there.

Looking ahead to 2027…

Paula Reynolds, President

Calendar At A Glance

(Details on Pages 8-10)

Nov. 12: WOAH Annual Meeting

Nov. 18: Habitat Check-up with Wildr Places

Dec. 8: Guide to Legal & Ethical Plant Collecting

Jan. 20: Native Plants for Small Spaces

Jan. 23: Reconnect with Nature- Steele Creek Park

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PLANTS FOR THE WINTER LANDSCAPE

By Ken Moore

When choosing plants for winter landscapes, a consideration of Climate Change is necessary; flowering and fruiting may be earlier or later than generally described.



One of my favorite winter trees, Witch Hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*, flowers from November into March. It is barely noticed in the forest until you become aware of a pleasant fragrance which causes a stall in your walk. Looking around you will spot one or more Witch Hazels. For heavier flowering, grow Witch Hazel under very sparse tree canopy or along a shady edge.
Witch Hazel is recommended in "A Guide to Gardening with Southwest Virginia Native Plants."
Witch hazel roots and bark have an extensive history of medicinal use, and an astringent is made from the bark and roots.

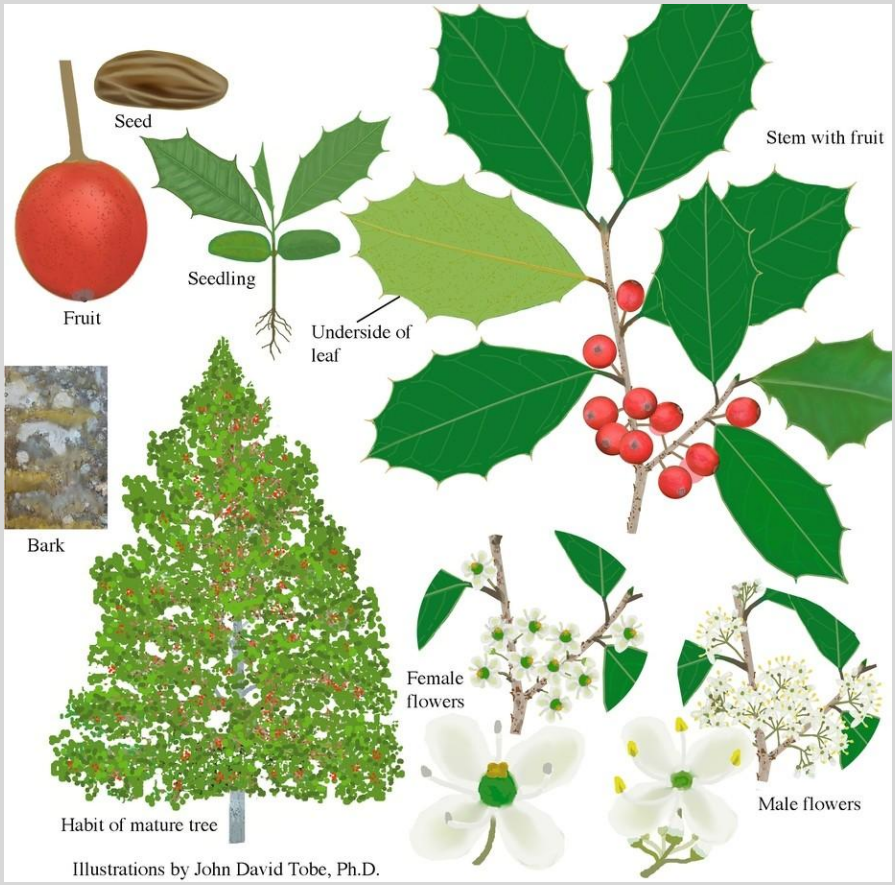


Also recommended by the above publication is Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*, a deciduous holly with red berries that lasts from late fall to late winter when the berries have aged enough to be tasty to many species of birds and mammals. Common throughout Virginia, this multi-branched shrub prefers acidic, damp to wet growing conditions and may reach as tall as 20ft. Though the true native species is ecologically preferable, there are many cultivars for gardeners who have less space. A popular short cultivar is 'Red Sprite,' requiring a male plant for pollination and the most commonly available is 'Jim Dandy.'
Hollies are deer-resistant!

A taller, 20-30ft, deciduous holly is Mountain Holly, *Ilex montana* also called Mountain Winterberry. It is common in acidic moist-dry mixed oak and northern red oak forests

at mid-high elevations. You may have to search several nurseries to locate this one and you will also need a companion male for the berry-producing female.

The favorite holly is the American Holly, *Ilex opaca*, common in local forests on acidic soils. It makes a beautiful specimen tree grown in an open landscape and probably will be pollinated from hollies in nearby forests. It is a favorite for holiday decorations.



Ilex opaca illustration by John Tobe, North Carolina Extension Gardener [Plant Toolbox]

An "invasive" imposter, Chinese Holly, *Ilex cornuta*, may be observed in regional forests and landscapes. The dwarf form of this holly is frequently planted as spiny buffers along urban walkways.



In sharp contrast with the American Holly, Chinese Holly leaves are square to rectangular and leaf margins are rolled downward, with very sharp spines at the tips.

Ilex cornuta var. burfordii, Burford Holly, is most commonly grown as a high hedge. It can easily be pruned to various shapes or left to grow to a 15-25 ft., tree. It is easily identified by a rounded egg-shape leaf with one apical spine. Unlike other hollies, it is self-fertile and produces many berries without requiring a male!



A final consideration is to choose locally native species and avoid invasive plants from elsewhere!

The Summer We Lost Wendell Berry and Annie Dillard
By Beth Merz

For a lot of years, four books were on my bedside table:

Wendell Berry's The Unsettling of America

Annie Dillard's Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

Aldo Leopold's A Sand County Almanac

Edward Abbey's Desert Solitaire

Today I had to search through multiple bookshelves to pull them out, and noticed that of all four, only Wendell Berry's was actually my original dogeared copy. There's a bit of sadness about losing track of the other three which I began to accumulate in college. I remember my introduction to each, though.

An English professor at Auburn, reading my essay about working for the Forest Service in the Sierras, suggested I might check out Desert Solitaire. Whoa—Edward Abbey's version of being a summer Park Service ranger intent on "monkey-wrenching" new construction in Arches was NOT much like my dutiful wilderness rangering on the Inyo! Where we did connect was in shared disgust with mindless crowds that trampled and trashed the pristine places we both were hired to care for.

Next, because it was required reading in my wildlife management course, I delved into A Sand County Almanac. Leopold's passage from a young game biologist "full of trigger-itch" to become known reverently as the father of modern wildlife management, deeply moved me fifty years ago. It still does. The Almanac seasonal essays are usually published with Sketches Here and There which is where you'll find the compelling account of Leopold's sudden understanding of the value of wilderness and wildness, especially in "Thinking Like a Mountain." I found Pilgrim at Tinker Creek in the campus bookstore and bought it largely because the cover photo showed a young longhaired woman in hiking boots leaning against a boulder, and also prominently, "Winner of the Pulitzer Prize." She wasn't a wilderness writer. "I am no scientist. I explore the neighborhood," she said. But her explorations! Here's such a one: "The newts were back. In the small forest pond, they swam bright and quivering, or hung alertly near the water's surface. I discovered that if I poked my finger into the water and wagged it slowly, a newt would investigate …. This is salamander metropolis. If you want to find a species wholly new to science and have your name inscribed Latinly … then come to the southern Appalachians, climb some obscure and snakey mountain where, as the saying goes, 'the hand of man has never set foot,' and start turning over rocks." Dillard's Tinker Creek and Tinker Mountain outside Roanoke are probably profoundly different now from her days of wandering that neighborhood. What she saw and wrote about there, though, inspires us to recognize what we can and do lose as human development demands more and more space. Pilgrim stands alone in Dillard's writings as

nature reading, but her power over prose and poetry shows up in every work. Try The Living, her novel of settling the Pacific Northwest. The news that she had died on September 15 this year shook me, especially after losing Wendell Berry on August 31.

Does anyone reading this not know of Wendell Berry? James Baker Still wrote in his poem "The Mad Farmer Stands Up in Kentucky for What He Thinks Is Right" that Berry (the mad farmer) was "…a writer, teacher, naturalist, and family man." But that list covers only a few roles that Wendell Berry filled during his 92 years. I picked up The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture in a Nashville bookstore the summer of 1977, the year I graduated from college. Maybe it was the "unsettling" that piqued my interest, having been exposed to Edward Abbey's far from settled relations with the world and society. But Unsettling proved to be a very unsettling read indeed. Berry was far from Abbey's "hands off the wilderness." He was a farmer who chose to return to being a farmer after years of an academic career that took his family from Kentucky to California to Europe and back. He worked a small farm on the hills above the Kentucky River with a horse and plow and plenty of personal sweat and toil. He was passionate about caring for the soil on which all our lives depend, and he did not dismiss the fact that we humans belong on the planet—just that we have as a dominant species badly neglected care for our home. His fiction shares stories of the earlier farming communities around the Kentucky River, and how interdependence between neighbors makes possible the hard work day in and out, season in and out. That sounds dry, but his characters are so finely developed that you believe they are real. Berry's books take up an entire shelf here at home. His passing was deeply moving to us. Please look up his poem, "The Peace of Wild Things."

So today, who occupies my bedside table? What about yours? I recommend Robin Wall Kimmerer, Terry Tempest Williams, Margaret Renkl, Doug Tallamy, Jamaica Kincaid, Piet Oudolf, Suzanne Simard, just to name a few. You might be challenged, comforted, or affirmed, and that's how we learn.

Members Native Plant Swap

The October Swap Included over 80 Native Species !

Members gathered on a beautiful fall day to share plants, seeds, food, and fellowship. To expand the swaps, the Long-Range Planning Committee proposed compiling lists of species members planned to bring and species they hoped to take home. Before the swap, Jani compiled a list of more than 60 species submitted by eight members, along with thirteen requested species. She added 20 more as members described the plants and seed packets that they brought. Cecilia recorded more species mentioned during the event and added them to Jani's list. The final list contained 87 species! The Chapter will repeat this process before the Spring Swap, listing available plants and seeds alongside species members want for their gardens. Most plants found new homes, and members enjoyed varied, delicious food and lively conversations about native gardens, the weather, and grandkids and families.

The Abingdon Coomes Center Native Plant Garden:

Growing for Wildlife

By Gail Olson

The Abingdon Coomes Center Garden was established in June 2025 through a collaborative effort among the Washington County Virginia Master Gardeners, the Master Naturalists of the Holston Rivers Chapter, Wild Ones Appalachian Chapter, and the Town of Abingdon.

The original garden covered 144 square feet and featured 16 native plant species. In its first year, the garden was a success, providing habitat for more than 30 monarch caterpillars!

In 2026, the Town of Abingdon demonstrated its continued support by approving an additional 272 square feet of garden space, bringing the total to 416 square feet—nearly three times the original size! The town also donated and installed an educational sign featuring information about native plants and QR codes for visitors interested in learning more.

With plans in place and plants acquired, 17 volunteers gathered on October 17, 2026, to plant more than 200 plants in the expanded garden.

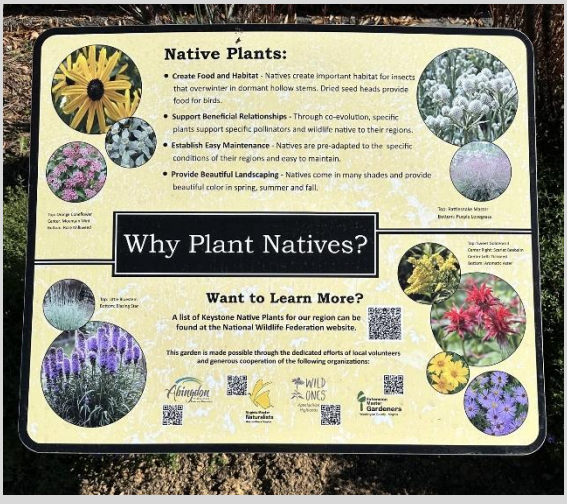
To create a cohesive appearance, many of the original plant species were repeated throughout the new areas, while new species were incorporated into the overall design. The expanded garden now features 20 plant species, all native to Virginia.

Providing food and habitat for wildlife was a priority. Attention to the number of species each plant supports as a host, nectar value, pollinator value or as a food source to other wildlife(seed/berries) are all important considerations in understanding the value of each plant. The Coomes Center also requested that the garden remain relatively low-growing, making plant height another important factor in selecting species.

The following list presents the plant species in order of the number of species they support as host plants.

Plant list:

1. *Solidago speciosa*/Showy Goldenrod (114)
2. *Fragaria virginiana*/Wild Strawberry (73)
3. *Rudbeckia fulgida*/Orange Coneflower (20)
4. *Symphyotrichum oblongifolium* /Aromatic Aster (12)
5. *Monarda didyma*/Bee Balm (12)
6. *Monarda fistulosa*/Wild Bergamot (12)



7.*Asclepias incarnata*/ Swamp Milkweed (12)

8. *Asclepias tuberosa*/ Butterfly Weed (12)

9. *Verbena hastata*/ Blue Vervain (10)

10. *Euphorbia corollate*/ Flowering Spurge (9)

11.*Schizachyrium scoparium*/Little Bluestem (7)

12.*Coreopsis pubescens*/Tick Seed (7)

13.*Coreopsis verticillata*/ Threadleaf Coreopsis (7)

14.*Lobelia siphilitica*/Great Blue Lobelia (6)

15. *Liatis spicata*/ Blazing Star (4)

16.*Pycnanthemum muticum*/Mountain Mint (4)

17.*Bouteloua curtipendula*/Side-oats Gramma(2)

18.*Erngium yuccifolim*/ Rattlesnake Master (2)

19. *Packera anonyma*/ Appalachian Ragwort (2)

20. *Veronicastrum virginicum*/ Culver's Root (1)





Thanks to the many volunteers from Wild Ones, Master Gardeners and Master Naturalist and to the City of Abingdon who made this expansion of the Coomes Native Garden a success.

WOAH Merch

WINTER IS COMING !

Get ready with sweatshirts, mugs, long and short-sleeve tees, and caps in many colors! It's not too early to shop for Christmas. 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

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 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.

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

Upcoming Events

November 18: Free National Webinar- The Habitat Check-up with Wildr Places

Planting native species is an important step toward creating habitat, but how can you tell what's working, what's missing, and where to focus your efforts next?

Join Wild Ones and Wildr Places for The Habitat Check-up, a free webinar exploring a practical, science-informed approach to evaluating your home landscape. Presenter Zoe Evans will introduce five key areas to consider when assessing habitat and share how thoughtful observations can help guide your next steps.

Whether you're just getting started with native plants or have been gardening for years, this webinar will help you look at your landscape through a new lens.

Click here to register and to read more details: **The Habitat Check-up with Wildr Places - Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes**

Time: 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

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

December 8: Can I Take That? A Guide to Legal and Ethical Wild Plant Collecting in the Appalachian Highlands

Have you longingly gazed at native seeds along a roadside, admired a plant on public land, or wondered if you could take just a little cutting home to propagate? The rules around collecting native plants and seeds can be complicated, hard to find, and variable.

Join environmental biologist Cecilia Boyd with Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands for a practical look at wild collecting across Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina. We will explain how to stay on the side of the law when gathering from private property, roadsides, parks, national forests, and other public lands, and demystify when permission or permits may be required. We will also discuss ethical collecting practices to protect wild plant populations so that we may responsibly propagate and share regionally adapted native plants.

What You'll Learn

By the end of this webinar, participants will be able to:

Find and apply appropriate laws, regulations, and agency resources for collecting around Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina. Determine when permission, permits, or other authorization may be required before collecting. Identify special considerations for rare,

threatened, or protected plant species. Practice responsible collecting from wild plant populations.

Click Here to Learn More and Find the Link: Can I Take That? A Guide to Legal and Ethical Wild Plant Collecting in the Appalachian Highlands

Time: 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

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

January 20: Free National Webinar- Bringing Nature Home: Native Plants for Patios, Balconies, and Small Spaces with Homegrown National Park

No yard required. Learn how native plants can turn patios, balconies, containers, and other small spaces into meaningful habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. This practical panel will cover plant selection, container design, seasonal care, and realistic ways to support biodiversity in limited spaces.

Registration link coming soon.

Time: 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

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

January 23: Slow Down, Look Closer, and Reconnect with Nature!

Join design educator and naturalist Kelly Celeste Porter at Steele Creek Nature Center Saturday, January 23, from 1-3 PM for an engaging introduction to **nature journaling**—a creative, beginner-friendly practice that combines observation, sketching, writing, and curiosity. Discover how to see the natural world with fresh eyes, spark your creativity, and enjoy a mindful break from your phone.

We'll have a brief presentation to discuss the benefits of nature journaling followed by a hands-on workshop filled with fun activities, fresh inspiration, and ideas to take your journaling journey anywhere! No artistic experience or expertise needed—just bring your curiosity.

Participation in this event will be limited to maintain a high-quality experience for all attendees. Register by email to: wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com
There will be a $2.00 parking fee.

Time: 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Location: Steele Creek Park, Nature Center, 4 Little Ln, Bristol, TN, **37620** **Map**

January 30: Randy Smith Seed Swap -Details to come