



January 2024



Possumhaw holly (*Ilex decidua*) is laden with fruit this time of year. This specimen was photographed on a wet, roadside ditch in Madison, AL. Possumhaw is a host plant for many lepidoptera, including Henry's elfin butterfly *Callophrys henrici*, and its flowers support the

solitary, specialist ground nesting bee *Colletes banksi*. The berries are retained late into winter, when birds and mammals will eventually eat them. This 15' tall shrub is dioecious, meaning there are male and female plants; plants with berries are female and require a nearby male plant for pollination and berry production.

ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

Wild Ones North Alabama Charters

by **Charles Pannell** on Jan 30

Wild Ones North Alabama has made organizational strides in 2024, and we have an exciting speaker lineup planned for the year. Our North Alabama chapter filed 501c3 paperwork with the State of Alabama in January, and we will soon become the first chartered Wild Ones chapter in the state! Achieving state nonprofit status is an important first step to spreading our message about native plants to a wider regional audience and is a prerequisite for opening a bank account. We are paving the way for other seedling chapters in the state, and our non-profit status and bank account will help us cover speaker fees, workshop costs and tools/technology needed to increase engagement (eg conference call hardware).

The Wild Ones Middle Tennessee chapter has generously offered a \$250 seed grant to help our chapter launch. Many thanks to the Wild Ones Middle Tennessee members and Board of Directors for their generosity and vote of confidence! We still have much to learn from Middle Tennessee and the other mature chapters about how to run an effective organization, but they are eager to help us on our journey.

As always, if any member would like to contribute his/her knowledge or energy to a particular project, or if a member has a specialized skill (or speaking topic) that you'd like to share with the wider public, or can recommend a guest speaker, please reach out to us at wildonesnorthal@gmail.com with your recommendations.

NOTE ABOUT FEB MEETING: There will be **NO** 6 PM Third Thursday meeting in February at the S Huntsville Public Library. Instead we will have a member-only tour of

HudsonAlpha's greenhouse at 3:30 PM on 22nd Feb (the Third Thursday). The Board of Directors will also have our first virtual meeting on the same night. For the HudsonAlpha Tour, we will meet at HudsonAlpha (HudsonAlpha, 1000 Hudson Way, Huntsville, AL 35806). **Please RSVP for the HudsonAlpha tour if you plan to attend.**

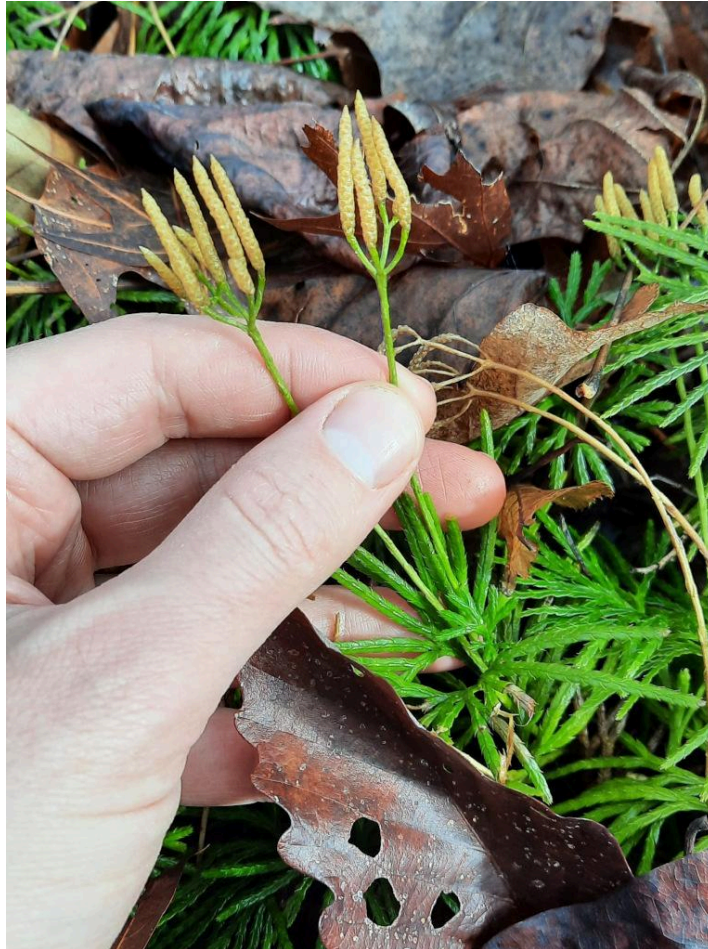
NATIVE PLANT SPOTLIGHT



Ground Cedar (*Diphasiastrum digitatum*)

Diphasiastrum digitatum, AKA “running ground cedar,” is a 3-8” tall evergreen ground cover from a primitive lineage of vascular plants called Lycopods. Lycopods emerged about 400 million years ago and were particularly abundant during the Carboniferous Period, when tree-form Lycopods (still visible in coal deposits) existed. Lycopods have life histories that alternate between sporophyte and gametophyte generations; the form in the picture is a sporophyte which *bears spores* in candelabra-like stroboli. The spores, which are very high in oil content, were historically used to make Lycopodium powder; this powder ignites explosively and was used in Native American ceremonies, flash photography, fireworks and as fingerprinting powder. In historical times Lycopods were over harvested for use as Christmas greenery and while populations have started the long road to recovery, these plants are reportedly very difficult to transplant, can take 20 years(!) to grow from spores

and require specialized fungi and acidic soils in order to survive; therefore, they are best enjoyed with a camera. If you already have these plants on your property, consider yourself lucky!



Strobili tipped with spore-producing sporangia in the author's hand. Lycopodium powder was derived from these brownish structures.

INVASIVE PLANT EDUCATION

Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*)

Mid-winter is a great time of year to identify and control invasive Chinese privet. This 15-30' tall shrub was widely sold in the horticultural industry and is readily identifiable by

its opposite 1" oval, entire evergreen leaves; twigs (and sometimes leaves) are covered in short, fine hairs that are visible under magnification and with proper lighting conditions. Privet produces small white flowers, blue-black drupes (eaten by birds), and has smooth gray bark. There is no other native species that looks remotely similar in winter, which makes positive identification easy. Aside from Chinese privet, there are a few other exotic privets (*Ligustrum spp.*), which are also invasive and currently sold in the horticultural industry. Privet has traditionally been valued as an evergreen hedge, but native, evergreen alternatives such as *Prunus caroliniana*, *Ilex vomitoria*, or *Myrica cerifera* occupy similar niches and should be considered in a native garden. The removal of invasive privet from riparian forests in Georgia [increased](#) the diversity and abundance of native bees by 4x and 10-20x, respectively, so if you have this invasive in your yard, now is the time to get rid of it!



Pictures showing the form, flower, bark and fruit of invasive Chinese privet. All photos courtesy of [iNaturalist](#).



Magnification of Chinese privet branch showing the leaf arrangement and fine pubescence visible on the leaves and twigs.

Native glade privet (*Forestiera ligustrina*)

There are 2 species of “native privet” belonging to the genus *Forestiera* to lookout for in [North Alabama](#). *Forestiera acuminata* (swamp privet) grows in wetlands and near streams and *Forestiera ligustrina* (glade privet) grows in calcareous (limestone) woodlands and glades. While *Forestiera* share some general characteristics (small tree or shrub form, smooth, mottled gray bark, opposite leaves, small blue-black drupe) with the invasive true privets in the genus *Ligustrum*, they also differ in distinct ways. [Also note the similarity of the genus name “*Ligustrum*” to the specific epithet of glade privet “*ligustrina*”] Species in the genus *Forestiera* produce yellow flowers, have leaves with toothed margins, and are deciduous - leaves turn golden yellow in autumn.



Photos courtesy of [iNaturalist](#) and the author. This picture shows *Forestiera ligustrina* leaf arrangement, fruit, fall color, bark and flower.

Native alternatives to privet

In addition to the native privets in the genus *Forestiera*, Carolina cherry laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*) is a native alternative to invasive privet with many of the same characteristics (evergreen leaves, white flowers, amenability to pruning) that additionally competes effectively with privet. It grows slightly larger than privet, but dwarf forms are available. The crushed leaves of Carolina cherry laurel smell like maraschino cherries. While the fruit and twigs of Cherry laurel are toxic to humans, this plant is from the keystone genus *Prunus*, and its leaves and fruit support a wide variety of lepidoptera, birds and small

mammals. While this plant does spread, in the author's experience, it is not difficult to control.

Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) is another evergreen shrub 15-30' tall that historically occupied the same habitat as Chinese privet. Despite its "vomitoria" epithet, yaupon holly has a fascinating ethnobotanical history as a caffeine-containing tea plant in both Native American and colonial cultures. It is a close relative of the South American Yerba mate (*Ilex paraguariensis*), and in recent years there has been interest in commercially reviving the cultivation of Yaupon holly (google it for details and to find vendors). Yaupon holly grows naturally on sandy soils along the Coastal plain in association with pines but can also occasionally be found growing in North Alabama both in gardens and in the wild.

ALABAMA MASTER NATURALIST

Alabama is the most diverse state East of the Mississippi River, but it's also one of the most imperiled as it is second only to Hawaii in extinctions. As Wild Ones members these facts both intrigue and alarm us. Certainly, they are a call to action. The newly created Alabama Master Naturalist program seeks to train volunteers to take stewardship over the remaining wild lands and to educate future naturalists. This statewide program is administered by the Alabama Extension Service, and it consists of 22 self-paced lectures, 2 field days, reading assignments, and 30 hours of volunteer work. Learn [more](#) or [register](#) to become an Alabama Master naturalist. The registration fee to enroll in the Alabama Master Naturalist program is \$135, and participation supports the public education mission of the Cooperative Extension.



UPCOMING EVENTS

WILD ONES NORTH ALABAMA

Wild Ones North AL member-only tour of HudsonAlpha

Who: Wild Ones North AL members (only)

What: Tour of HudsonAlpha greenhouse

When: Thursday, Feb 15, 3:30 PM (please arrive 5-10 mins before the tour begins)

Where: HudsonAlpha, 1000 Hudson Way, Huntsville, AL 35806. Park outside the greenhouse

Special NOTE: We will forego the normal Feb meeting because of this event on the same date. **Please RSVP** if you plan to attend, so I will have a head-count.

Wild Ones North AL Feb Board Meeting

Who: Wild Ones North AL Board of Directors

What: First meeting of the Wild Ones North Alabama Board of Directors to plan the year's events and strategic objectives

When: Thursday, Feb 15, 6:00-7:00 PM

Where: Zoom

Wild Ones North AL March Seminar: Plants Native to North Alabama

Who: Wild Ones North AL members and the general public

What: For her Advanced Master Gardener project titled Homesteading on the Prairie Flower Farm; Using Right Plant-Right Place to Create Sustainable Landscapes Soozie Conner Pline documents how she is creating a sustainable landscape by reducing runoff and erosion, restoring native plant and animal habitats, developing edible and esthetic gardens and introducing pollinators and farm animals all while building land value through conservation practices. Soozie's presentation titled Plants Native to North Alabama was developed through observations and trial and error as she and her husband Dan began planting native plants on their 5-acre farm in Limestone County in 2021. This is an ongoing venture that she loves to share and, in the process, hopes her talk will encourage, inspire, and educate you!

When: Thursday, Mar 21st, 6:00-7:00 PM

Where: South Huntsville Public Library (7901 Bailey Cove Rd, Huntsville, AL 35802)

Wild Ones North AL April Seminar: Foraging for native and invasive plants

Who: Wild Ones North AL members and the North Alabama general public

What: Jesse Akozbek, AKA the Feral Forager, will lead Wild Ones on an ethnobotanical journey to explain the principles of foraging and cooking wild plants, including native and invasive species and what plants to forage in early spring.

When: Thursday, April 18th, 6:00-7:00 PM

Where: South Huntsville Public Library (7901 Bailey Cove Rd, Huntsville, AL 35802)

Wild Ones member-only May event: Tour of Paint Rock Forest Research Center

Who: Wild Ones North AL members

What: Join us for a tour of the famous Paint Rock Research Center where Bill Finch will explain the exciting research the Center is doing on the flora of North Alabama. Be sure to bring water, a hat, bug spray, and appropriate outdoor attire.

When: Sunday, May 5th, 1:00-2:30 PM

Where: 3400 CR-10, Trenton, AL 35774

Wild Ones North AL June Seminar: Why Plant Native Plants

Who: Wild Ones North AL members and the North Alabama general public

What: Why should you plant native plants? Planting native plants provides food for many insects, which in turn feeds our birds. Additionally, native plants provide natural pest control and soil management. This presentation focuses on which native plants attract which insects and how to plant and maintain a native garden. Join us for a special guest lecture from Wild Ones Middle Tennessee membership chair Alicia Allen who will guide us on a journey.

When: Thursday, June 20th, 6:00-7:00 PM

Where: South Huntsville Public Library (7901 Bailey Cove Rd, Huntsville, AL 35802)

Wild Ones North AL July Seminar: Cultivating Native Fruit

Who: Wild Ones North AL members and the North Alabama general public

What: Alabama Cooperative Extension System commercial horticulture agent Holt Akers-Campbell will offer best practices in the propagation, planting, and management of some of our most cherished native fruits including pawpaw, American persimmon, blueberry and elderberry. We will discuss planting for wildlife value, managing for fruit yield, and how these fruits can fit into residential landscaping.

When: Thursday, July 18th, 6:00-7:00 PM

Where: South Huntsville Public Library (7901 Bailey Cove Rd, Huntsville, AL 35802)

Wild Ones North AL August Seminar: Year-Round Gardening with Native Plants to Support Pollinators and Wildlife

Who: Wild Ones North AL members and the North Alabama general public

What: Donnie is Vice-President of Middle Tennessee Wild Ones, and a member of The Tennessee Native Plant Society. Since retiring from teaching high school arts in 2018, Donnie has dedicated his time to building an award winning native plant garden in his backyard and becoming a champion seed germinator. Donnie grows over 250 plants for his Wild Ones Chapter plant sales every spring and fall. He works to rescue native plants from local build sites in Nashville. He presents to garden long groups around the Middle Tennessee area. Donnie and his native garden were featured on Nashville Public Television's Volunteer Gardener.

When: Thursday, August 15th, 6:00-7:00 PM

Where: South Huntsville Public Library (7901 Bailey Cove Rd, Huntsville, AL 35802)

UPCOMING EVENTS

WILD ONES WEBINARS & ALLIED REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Georgia Native Plant Society Annual Symposium

Who: Members of GNPS and the general public

What: Our GNPS 2024 Symposium event will be virtual again this year. To make the event more manageable, it will be spread across two days and each session will be recorded for future playback. GNPS is partnering with Birds Georgia to present this program. The cost for GNPS and Birds Georgia members is \$12 per day (or \$20 total if you register for both days); the cost for non-members is \$15 per day (or \$25 if you register for both days). [You can register here](#), but note that registration is being handled by Birds Georgia. When you get to the registration site, dismiss the pop-up asking you to login in if you are not also a Birds Georgia member.

When: Sat-Sun, Feb 24th-25th

Where: Online

Learn more: <https://gnps.org/2024-georgia-native-plant-society-symposium/>

Restoration and Reciprocity: Healing Relationships with the Natural World

Who: Wild Ones North AL members and the general public

What: Ecological restoration can be understood as an act of reciprocity, in return for the gifts of the earth. This talk explores the ecological and ethical imperatives of healing the damage we have inflicted on our land and waters. We trace the evolution of restoration philosophy and practice and consider how integration of indigenous knowledge can expand our understanding of restoration from the biophysical to the biocultural. Reciprocal restoration includes not only healing the land, but our relationship to land. In healing the land, we are healing ourselves.

When: Tuesday, Mar 19th, 5:00-7:00 PM

Where: Live Stream will be available

Trails & Trilliums

Who: Friends of the South Cumberlands & Tennessee Naturalists

What: Three days of guided hikes, workshops and talks by 50 top naturalists from across the state. Visit Stone Door, Savage Gulf, Greeter Falls, Collins Gulf. The trails, waterfalls, overlooks and wildflowers are unparalleled. 20th Annual Naturalist Rally sponsored by the [Friends of South Cumberland State Parks](#) with proceeds benefiting South Cumberland and Savage Gulf State Parks. We **welcome Tennessee naturalists from across the state as we celebrate Earth Day!**

When: Fri-Sat, Apr 19th-21st

Where: Beersheba Springs Conference Center, 58 Hege Ave, Beersheba Springs, TN 37305

Learn more: <https://www.trailsandtrilliums.org/>

Native fruit: growing and foraging Pawpaw, American persimmon, blueberry, and elderberry

Who: Anyone interested

What: A collaborative event on native fruit between Extension and Feral Foraging: Alabama Cooperative Extension System commercial horticulture agent Holt Akers-Campbell will offer best practices in the propagation, planting, and management of some of our most cherished native fruits including pawpaw, American persimmon, blueberry and elderberry. We will discuss planting for ecological value, managing for fruit yield, and how these fruits can fit into landscaping or small farm systems. Additionally, Jesse of Feral Foraging will show you how to forage these wild fruits safely and responsibly! You will learn how to scout and positively identify them as well as how to process and preserve what you've gathered! A lot of these fruit trees can be found in many places at different times, but Jesse will share some secrets with you on when they are easiest to find and where to go looking! Online registration reserves your seat.

When: Thu, Aug 1st, 5-7 PM

Where: Limestone County Extension Office, 1109 Market St W Suite A, Athens, AL 35611

Learn more:

<https://www.aces.edu/event/native-fruit-growing-and-foraging-pawpaw-american-persimmon-blueberry-and-elderberry/>

Mushrooms & Woodland Medicinals: growing & foraging high-value fungi, ginseng, and other forest botanicals

Who: Anyone interested

What: Alabama Cooperative Extension System commercial horticulture agent Holt Akers-Campbell will offer an introduction to “forest farming”: producing wild-simulated ginseng, gourmet mushrooms, and other high-value woodland crops. There will be a live demonstration of inoculating a shiitake mushroom log. Additionally, Jesse of Feral Foraging will show you some of the important species that can be found and gathered and the forest

types they are associated with. Many deep-forest herbs are sensitive to over-harvesting, so we'll also learn about how to interact with these species responsibly and even how foraging them can be beneficial to their populations! Register online to reserve a space.

When: Sat, Dec 7th, 2-4 PM

Where: Morgan County Extension Office, 3120 Hwy. 36 West Suite B, Hartselle, AL 35640

Learn more:

<https://www.aces.edu/event/mushrooms-and-woodland-medicinals-growing-foraging-high-value-fungi-ginseng-and-other-forest-botanicals/>

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)



Native Plants, Natural Landscapes