



May 2024

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**ORGANIZATIONAL  
UPDATES**



WildOnes North Alabama members visited the Paint Rock Forest Research Center on May 5th.

## **Paint Rock Tour and Gardening for the Birds**

by **Charles Pannell** on 31 May

In May, WildOnes members had the privilege to tour the Paint Rock Forest Research Center, which is normally closed to the public. We learned about the importance of Alabama as a [center](#) of North American biodiversity as well as the conservation and research of [shortleaf pine](#) (*Pinus echinata*) on the Cumberland Plateau and Highland Rim. Bill Finch, the director of the Paint Rock Forest Research Center discussed the importance of planting local ecotypes, using the lesson of Shortleaf Pine as a case study. Foresters introduced shortleaf pine varieties from west of the Mississippi River to Alabama in the 20th century, and those genotypes from west of the Mississippi now threaten to genetically swamp the local population of shortleaf pines historically present in Alabama. Although the Spring ephemerals were long gone, we had a great time hiking the area around the research station and learning about the 50-year mission of the Research Center to catalog and monitor all woody vegetation on its research plots. To learn more about Paint Rock and support their mission, please see Paint Rock's [website](#).

During May's educational seminar, WildOnes was delighted to host local gardener and retired engineer Herb Lewis to learn about his and wife Terry's journey to transform their backyard into a bird habitat. It was fascinating to learn the principles of gardening for the birds using water features, native plants, structural diversity and leaf mulch. Herb shared

his incredible photography from his garden and told of his many trials to turn an empty backyard lot into a thriving bird sanctuary. Herb discussed the resource [BirdCast](#), which helps birders track the migrations of birds across the U.S., and discussed how the work of Doug Tallamy sparked his passion and appreciation for native plants. You can learn more about Herb and his passion for birds and wildlife on his website [Creative Birding](#). For those of you who tried unsuccessfully to join Herb's talk via zoom, please persevere; we will try to resolve audio issues next month!



WildOnes North Alabama members return from a short hike to a cave behind the Paint Rock Forest Research Center.

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## NATIVE PLANT SPOTLIGHT

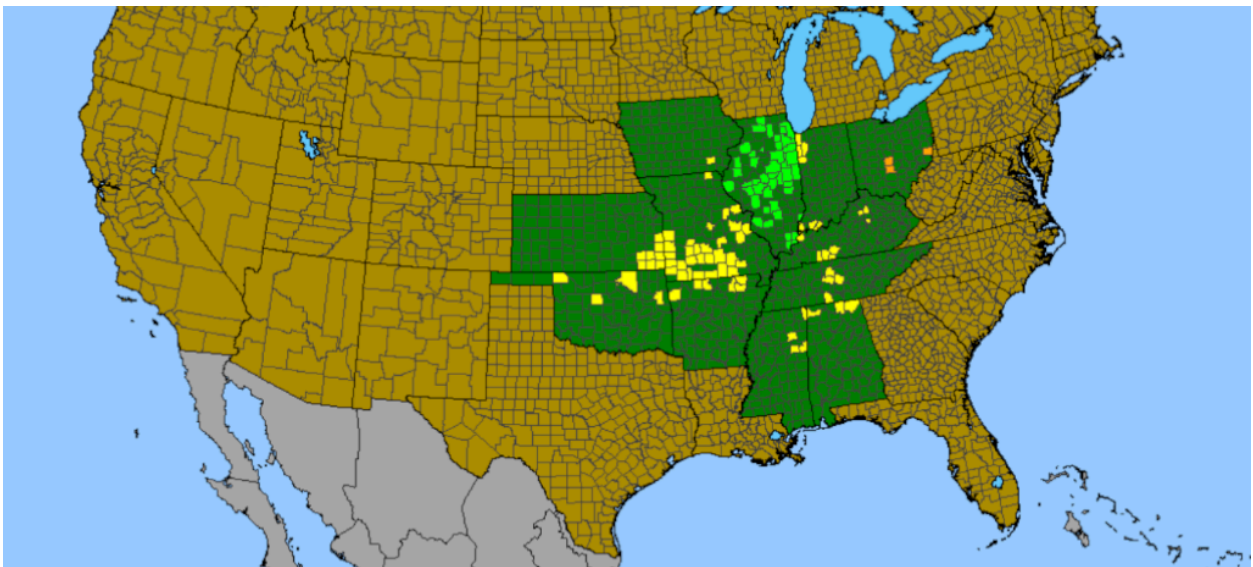
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**Eastern Yampah (*Perideridia americana*)**



Eastern Yampah growing in South Huntsville in a native calcareous landscape on a gentle slope.

Eastern yampah is a member of the carrot family that grows uncommonly in Alabama. While there are 12 species from this genus in North America, *Periderida americana* is the only yampah that grows East of the Mississippi. Plants from this genus were formerly in the genus *Carum* - hence one of its common names “Wild Caraway.”



The native range of Eastern Yampah. Image from [BONAP](#) - a useful tool for identifying species occurrences.

Native Americans made ample use of western species of Yampah, and virtually all parts of the plant are edible - roots, shoots, flower clusters and seeds. Western Yampah species

were offered by Sacagawea to Lewis and Clarke during their expedition of the western states, and fields of it once grew wild and cultivated across the vast meadows of the Mountain West. Reportedly, the Eastern Yampah is also edible with stalks similar to celery, leaves similar to parsley, roots like turnips and seeds reminiscent of caraway. It is one of many native North American species that has been identified with potential for domestication.



Pictures showing some of the distinct characteristics of *Perideridia americana* - including its compound white flowered umbels with umbellets, deeply dissected, spatulate, lobed, delphinium-like foliage and smooth, solid green, rarely branching, thin stalks. It has a very slender, graceful appearance and can grow 2-4' tall.

Eastern Yampah is extremely uncommon in Alabama with [documented occurrences](#) in only 4 counties in North Alabama and grows in open limestone woods, on rocky bluffs and in cedar glades. It is a G4 globally imperiled species, meaning it is vulnerable to extinction throughout its range. Imagine, then, my surprise when I stumbled upon it while walking by a neighbor's suburban yard on Weatherly Mountain - no more than 1000 yards from my own house. The neighbor is a WildOnes North Alabama member who has been clearing bush honeysuckle and privet from her yard since she moved into her house a few years ago. Her hard work is paying off, and this observation illustrates the power of what we ALL doing as we attempt to restore balance to our landscapes by removing invasive species.

This plant was probably already in the seedbank waiting to germinate when the invasive privet was removed.

Aside from its rarity in Alabama (which is reason enough never to collect or consume it), **extreme caution** must be exercised whenever handling or consuming any wild member of the carrot family. More on this topic in the invasive species spotlight.

You can learn more about the fascinating cultural history of Yampah [here](#) and [here](#)..

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## INVASIVE SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

### Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)



Poison hemlock has ferny (compound) foliage that made it a “desirable” garden plant in the 1800s. This first year plant was found under a bird feeder in the author’s landscape. Other undesirable species like millet have also sprouted in this area, which is a good reminder that cheap bird mixes are a poor option and that black oil sunflower seeds are a better option for North American bird feeders.

As was mentioned in both the March and April newsletters, the carrot family is full of both edible and deadly poisonous species, and one I would like to highlight in May is poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). I recently stumbled across this plant growing in my backyard underneath a bird feeder (perhaps introduced with bird seed); at the time I noticed it, I recognized it only as a carrot family member, so I was careful not to touch it and instead pushed the leaves aside with a stick to see what identifying characteristics I

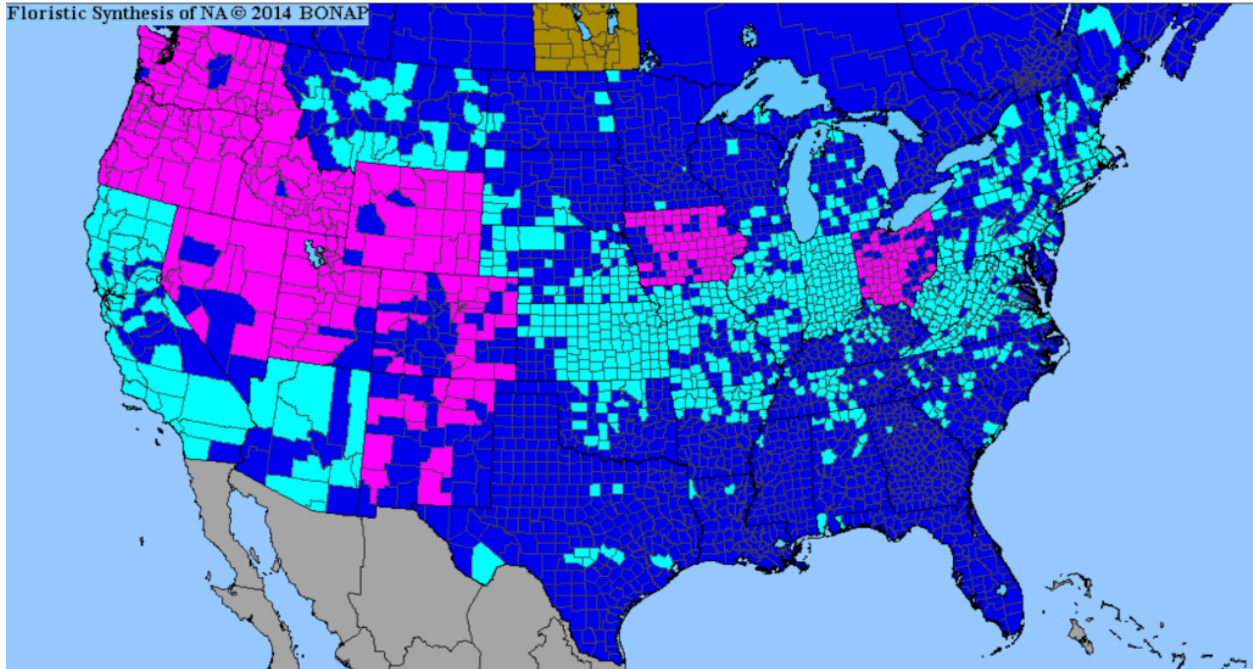
could find. After the excitement of finding rare Eastern Yampah in my neighbor's yard a few weeks earlier, I was eager to identify the species.



The stem of poison hemlock has distinct maroon spots on hairless green stems. These splotches will eventually cover much of the stem giving them a purplish appearance.

Unfortunately, the mystery plant in my backyard turned out to be the invasive poison hemlock - the same hemlock that was brewed into a tea and thrust upon Socrates when he was convicted of "corrupting the Youth of Athens." It killed Socrates and will kill you too, if you are not mindful of its deadly potency.

The plant has distinctive purple or maroon spots on its smooth green stems, loose umbellets (similar to Eastern Yampah) and grows 1-3 m tall. Poison hemlock is native to Europe, North Africa and the Middle East and was **intentionally** introduced to North America as an ornamental garden plant in the 19th century. It now grows throughout much of the continent, particularly near roadsides, in fields and other disturbed areas and poses a risk to people (particularly children and inexperienced foragers) and livestock. The highest concentrations of the toxins are found in the seeds, and the toxins remain in the dried plants for up to **3 years**. It produces copious amounts of toxic sap, so be especially careful while cutting the plant and always wear PPE, including long pants and sleeves, closed-toed shoes, disposable gloves and **eye protection** (as the eyes can easily absorb the toxins). Do not burn this plant, as the volatilized alkaloids are also deadly toxic.



Invasive poison hemlock grows across the entire continental U.S. Light blue shows documented occurrences of poison hemlock, dark blue shows states where it is present and purple indicates states where it is classified as a noxious weed. Map courtesy of [BONAP](#).

Watch the videos below to learn how to identify and control this deadly invasive species.

[Poison Hemlock Identification](#)

[How to Control Poison Hemlock on Any Property!](#)

Many species in the carrot family (Apiaceae) are dangerous to touch causing severe and potentially permanent disfigurement, so **always** be cautious when identifying members of this plant family.





Example of phototoxicity from handling a plant that produces furanocoumarins - a common toxic chemical produced by many members of the carrot family (Apiaceae). Picture from the Wikimedia commons.

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## CLASSIFIEDS

Because local ecotype plants are still difficult to find in the nursery trade, the classifieds section will include requests for plants and offers for plants. Please send responses to [wildonesnorthal@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesnorthal@gmail.com). There are currently no requests for native plants, but please be encouraged to bring the native bounty of your land to the monthly WildOnes seminars at the South Huntsville Public Library (Third Thursday of each month at 6 PM).

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## UPCOMING EVENTS WILD ONES NORTH ALABAMA

### **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, 6:00-7:30 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, 6:00-7:30 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, 6:00-7:30 PM

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

**Wild Ones North AL September Seminar: Foraging Ahead: Native Habitats for the Urban Setting**

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

What: My name is Aaron Stiles and I run Foraging Ahead, a landscape design service dedicated to reintroducing native habitats to the urban setting. Habitats are more than just gardens that use native plants- they are dynamic ecosystems that support a wide variety of life. By utilizing native ecosystems as a model, we can create small sanctuaries for the plants and animals that make Alabama so beautiful.

When: Thursday, September 19th, 6:00-7:30 PM

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

**Wild Ones North AL October Annual Members meeting (members only)**

Who: Members of Wild Ones

What: The organization will have an open event to elect new officers, reflect on the year behind us, discuss what worked and didn't, review strategic objectives, plan for the new year ahead, and discuss opportunities for one or more winter weed wrangles.

When: Thursday, October 17th, 6:00-7:30 PM

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



**UPCOMING EVENTS  
IN THE COMMUNITY**

**Native fruit: growing and foraging Pawpaw, American persimmon, blueberry, and elderberry (partly sponsored by WildOnes)**

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 & Register:

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

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[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)



Native Plants, Natural Landscapes