



November/December 2024

ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

Lewis Garden Tour, Weed Wrangle, and End of the Year

by [Charles Pannell](#) on 8 Dec 2024

As we move past Thanksgiving and into the quieter winter months, it's a great time to reflect on gratitude, optimism, and the year ahead. I want to express my sincere thanks to each of you for your passion and patience in helping establish the first Alabama WildOnes chapter. Together, we've built a thriving native plant community and raised awareness about our shared ecological responsibility.

I'm also grateful for your understanding when I've occasionally forgotten your names, and for your continued support throughout the year. Thanks to all of you, our chapter grew to 76 members in 2024, hosted two garden tours and a weed wrangle, created a plant exchange market, formed a board and committees, and established connections with local organizations. We've truly become a dynamic network of people dedicated to native plants and ecological stewardship.

Looking ahead, we'll continue successful initiatives like weed wrangles and garden tours, while adding new activities based on member input, such as plant ID workshops, hikes, and more member-focused meetings. We're especially excited to support the reboot of the Huntsville Native Plant Symposium in June 2025 at Monte Sano Lodge—mark your calendars! Our WONA seminars will also resume in January 2025 with Sara Johnson's talk on "Gardening for Wildlife: Plant-Insect Interactions."

As we enter 2025, we need your help to keep our momentum going. Our chapter experienced rapid growth in 2024, and now, as we stabilize, I hope to better utilize your skills and enthusiasm through more distributed efforts. If you're interested in contributing further, please reach out to wildonesnorthal@gmail.com. It's been an incredible journey bringing WildOnes to Huntsville, and I look forward to building on our successes and deepening our connections in the year ahead.

Lewis Garden Tour (member only)



Herb talks about the development of their "Outback" garden, sharing pictures of the years-long project.

On November 16th, members attended the Lewis Outback garden tour hosted by Herb and Terry Lewis. Named for the extra lot they were able to purchase "out back," the Outback garden is a haven for birds and features native plants, habitats, and fountains. Herb told members about his method of collecting fall leaves from his neighbors to use as mulch and to naturally amend tough clay soil.



The bird blind on Chapman Mountain is modeled after this water feature designed by Herb!

Weed Wrangle

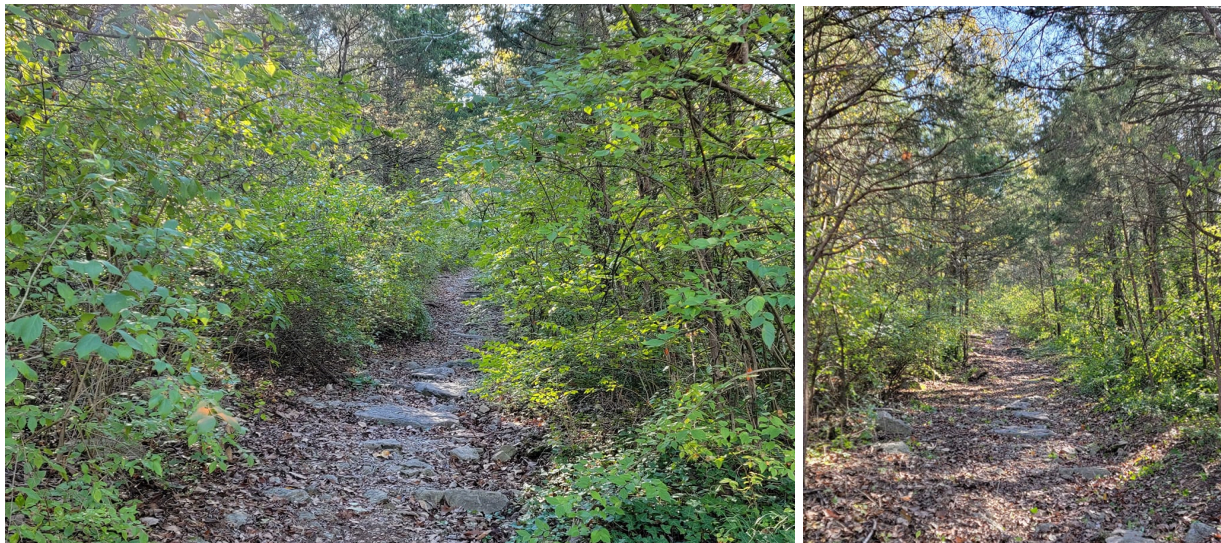


Members who attended the weed wrangle at Mountain Gap Hike.

On November 23, Wild Ones members met for the first weed wrangle! A [Weed Wrangle®](#) is a one-day, area-wide, volunteer effort to help rescue our public parks and green spaces from non-native invasive species through hands-on removal of especially harmful trees, vines, and flowering plants. The wrangle took place at Mountain Gap Hike, a little-known trail owned by the City of Huntsville, and was organized by Lynne Weninegar and Denise Woodring. We focused on the trailhead at the end of Hemlock Drive and were able to improve over 100 feet of trail! The majority of invasive species removed were bush honeysuckle, English ivy, and nandina. Invasives were cut then herbicide was applied to the cut stems using Buckthorn Blasters. After spending a few hours clearing invasives, we took a short hike to the natural cedar glade where we saw a variety of native species.



Working hard on the weed wrangle!



Mountain Gap Hike, before and after the weed wrangle.

Facebook member chat

If you'd like to join our members-only Facebook group, please search for [WildOnes North Alabama Member Chat](#), where you can post gardening and landscaping questions, coordinate with other members, request seeds or plants, or ask for help to identify native and invasive plants.



Wild Ones North AL Member Chat

Our member-only Facebook group was created to improve communication and coordination for all our educational and volunteering opportunities.

NATIVE PLANT SPOTLIGHT

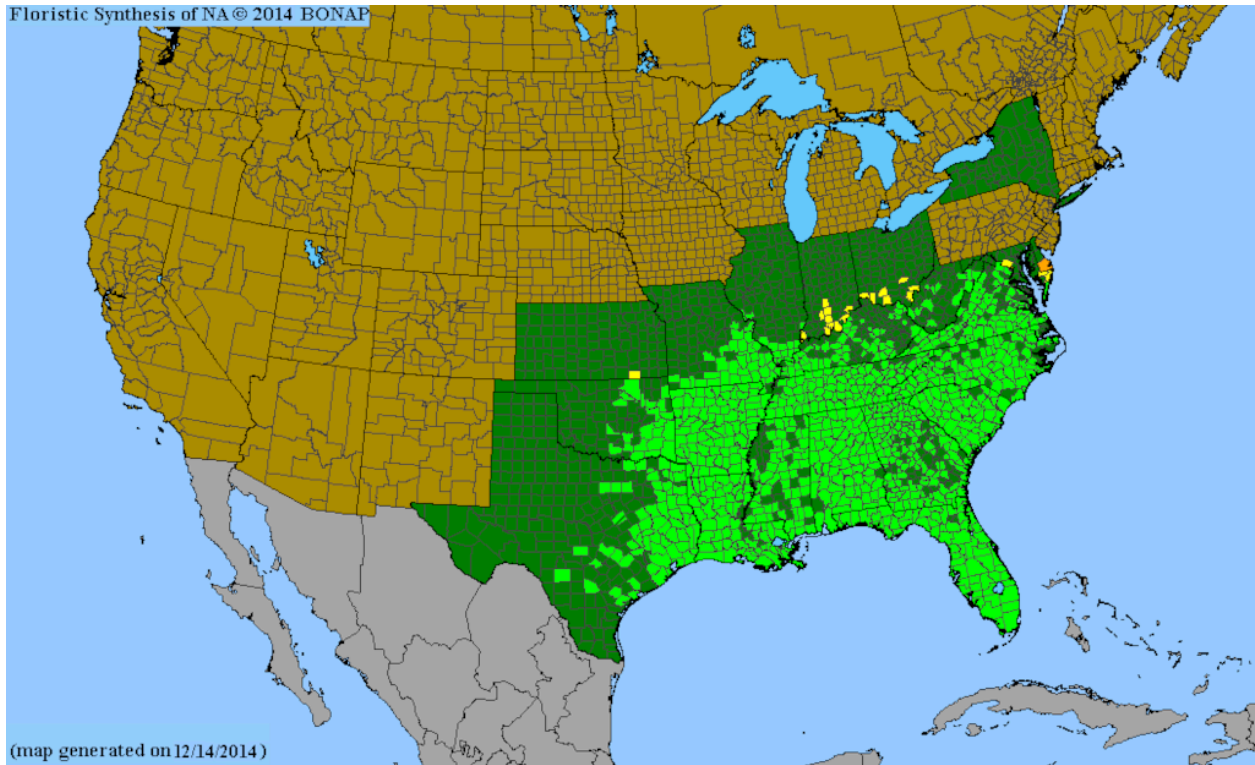


Resurrection fern looking green (left) and “dead” (right). Photos courtesy of iNaturalist contributors [amaraa1](#) and [emiluj9](#).

Resurrection fern (*Pleopeltis michauxiana*)

Resurrection fern (*Pleopeltis michauxiana*) is named for its ability to go from looking quite dead during dry spells to suddenly coming back to life within minutes when provided with water! An evergreen fern, it is an epiphyte, meaning it grows on other plants but is not a parasite. It can grow on any collected organic matter on things like trees, rocks, and even buildings. The variety of resurrection fern found in the southeastern United States used to be referred to under the umbrella of *P. polypodioides* and was considered a subspecies, *spp. michauxiana*. However, *P. polypodioides* is now reserved for the resurrection ferns of Mexico and tropical areas. *P. michauxiana* is a non-flowering plant that produces spores (this is known as sporulating). It is perennial and fronds are usually 6 to 8 inches tall. Fronds can be fertile or sterile, and sporangia (which hold spores) are released in the summer through fall.

Sources: [NCSU](#), [iNaturalist](#), [Wildflower.org](#)



BONAP's images still refer to *P. michauxiana* as *P. polypodioides*. Image courtesy of [BONAP](#).

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INVASIVE SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

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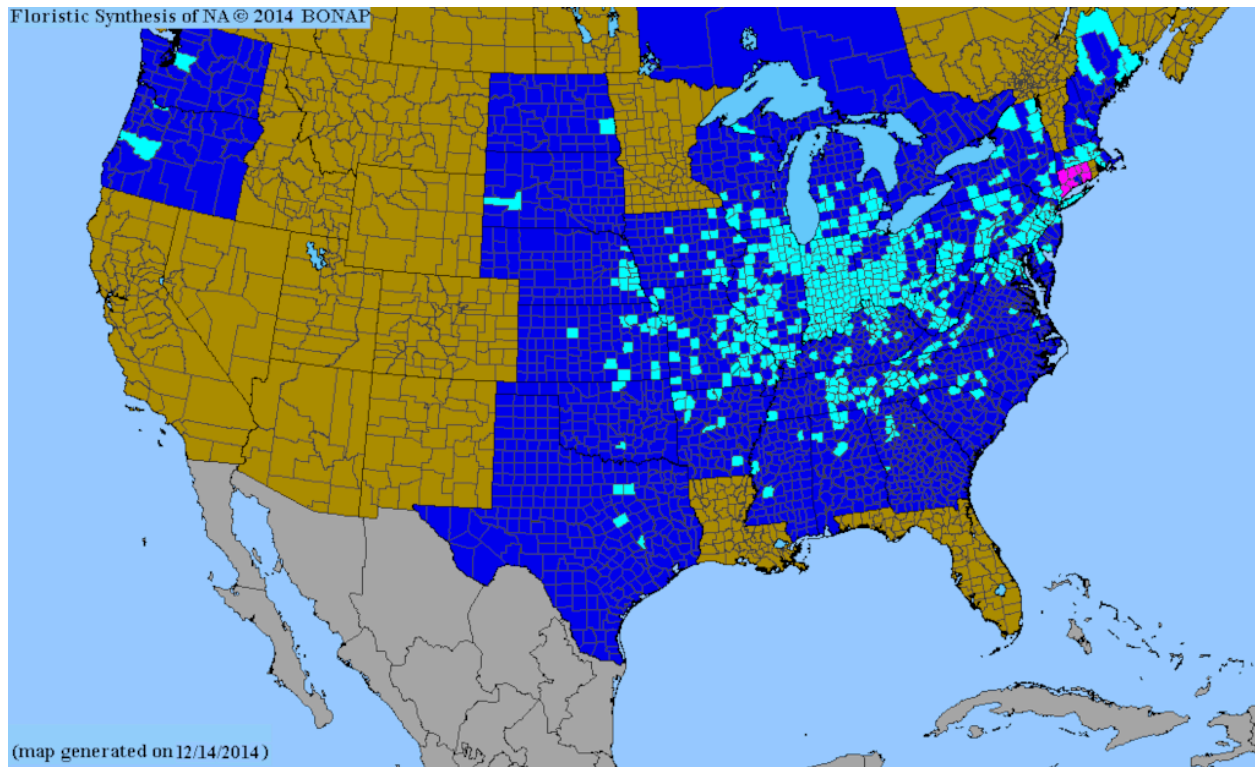
Flowers, leaves and berries of Amur honeysuckle (top left, bottom left) and of winter honeysuckle (top middle and right). Images courtesy of iNaturalist contributors [louiswalls](#), [slbringm](#), [alexeyreshchikov](#), [fossilman](#).

Bush Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.)

While there is a species of native bush honeysuckle (as opposed to honeysuckle that takes the form of a vine), there are several varieties of non-native bush honeysuckle.

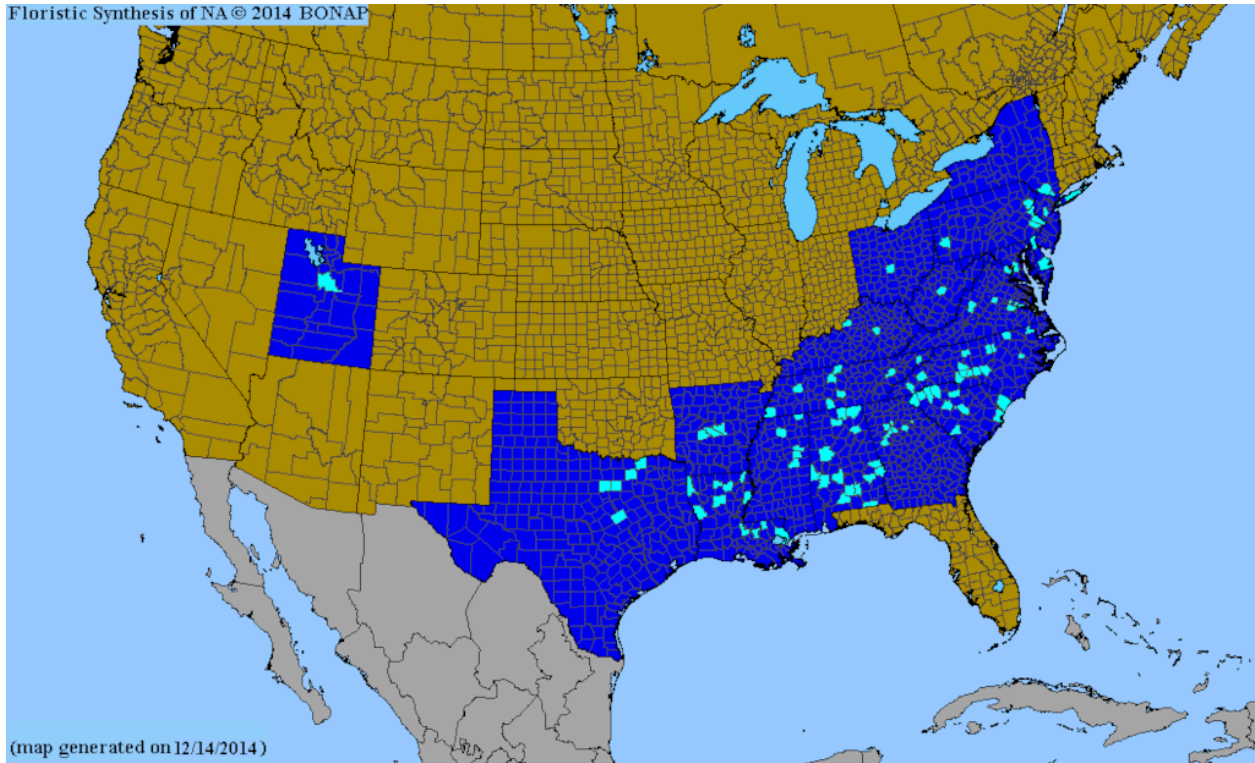
Distinguishing the particular species can be difficult. Two that are particularly prevalent in North Alabama are Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*) and winter honeysuckle / sweet breath of spring / fragrant honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*). We saw a lot of both of these at the weed wrangle on November 23rd.

Both are in the honeysuckle family, Caprifoliaceae, and are native to parts of Asia. They are upright shrubs with multiple stems that arch up and outward from the base. Both have opposite leaves that can persist into winter. These plants can quickly take over an area by crowding out natives and creating a dense shrub layer that blocks sunlight. In addition, the berries are not as nutrient-dense as native species and do not provide as much energy to birds and other animals who consume them and spread the seeds. ([Source](#))



Map showing the distribution of *Lonicera maackii*. Image courtesy of [BONAP](#).

Amur honeysuckle is particularly common and can survive in many different habitats and conditions, including forest edges, forest interiors, floodplains, old fields, pastures, and roadsides. It can get up to 20 feet tall! The structure of the plant leads to more predation on birds that have built nests in these bushes. Flowers are paired and can be white to pinkish. They become very attractive red berries that are spread by birds. ([Source](#))



Map showing the distribution of *Lonicera fragrantissima*. Image courtesy of [BONAP](#).

Winter honeysuckle can be evergreen in the South and is shorter, usually 6 to 10 feet tall. Flowers range from white to red to yellow and become orange or red berries that are often present through winter. Winter honeysuckle easily invades disturbed areas, as well as open woodlands and fields. ([Source](#))

Control:

Our very own Land Trust of North Alabama has studied the best way to remove bush honeysuckle. In 2015, Monte Sano Nature Preserve participated in a research project with U.S. Forest Service's Southern Research Station to compare methods of control of bush honeysuckle. The research compared 5 different areas that received different treatments: (1) mechanical removal, (2) mechanical removal with herbicide application on cut stumps, (3) foliar herbicide treatment (meaning herbicide was applied to the above-ground portion of the plants without removal), (4) a single prescribed fire during dormant season, and (5) a control area with no treatment. Treatment 1 removed large stems, but this more than doubled the understory stems via sprouting. Treatment 2 resulted in a decrease of large stems but an increase of smaller stems. Treatment 3 was the most effective in reducing stems overall. Treatment 4 would have required repeat application. ([Source](#))

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UPCOMING EVENTS

WILD ONES NORTH ALABAMA

Please see our [Events Calendar](#) on the website for a listing of all upcoming events.

We will take a hiatus from our Third Thursday meetings in December to make way for the holiday season before reconvening for our next seminar in January.

January 16th (6-7:30 PM): Our first monthly Seminar in 2025 will feature Sara Johnson's presentation on "Gardening for Wildlife: Plant-Insect Interactions." We hope to see you there!

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)



Native Plants, Natural Landscapes