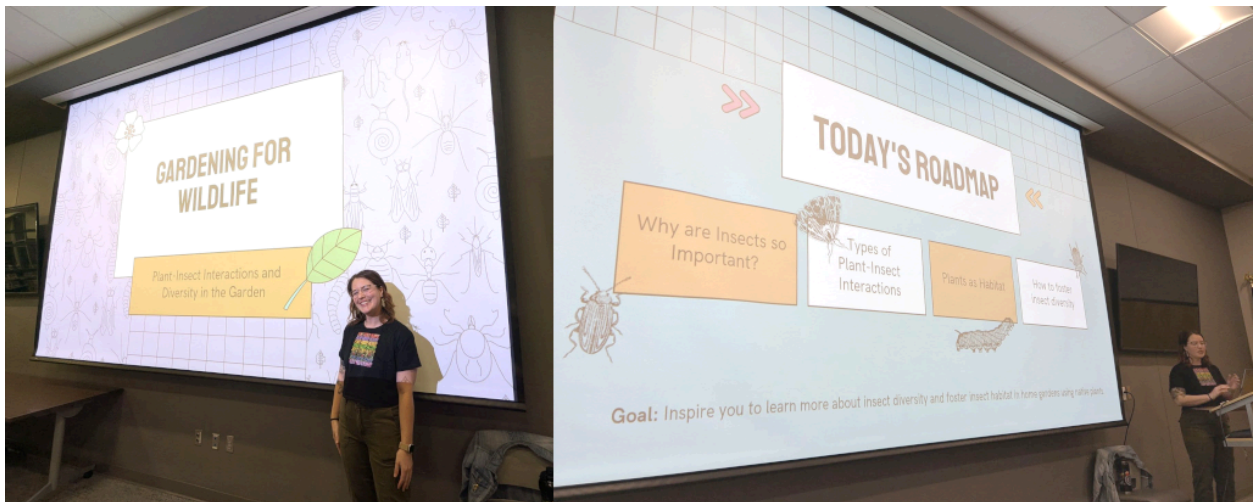




January 2025

ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES



Sara Johnson presented to WildOnes in January on “Gardening for Wildlife: Plant-Insect Interactions.”

January Seminar, Panoply, North Alabama Native Plant Conference, a Hiking Committee, etc

by Charles Pannell on 26 January 2025

I think we've made it through the worst of the polar blast. Warming our hearts and elevating our minds, Sara Johnson from the North American Land Trust spoke during our January seminar on Plant-Insect Interactions. Her lecture was a colorful tour de force, and while many of you have asked about the recording (there is one!), you'll have to wait until after North Alabama's Native Plant Symposium in June to revisit it. Sara, along with many other speakers, will be featured at the symposium. After the Symposium, Sara's talk will be posted to our YouTube channel, so if you enjoyed her talk, convince a friend to attend the symposium!



The North Alabama Native Plant Symposium will take place on Saturday, June 7th at the beautiful Monte Sano Lodge. Stay tuned for more information!

Speaking of the North Alabama Native Plant Symposium, June 7th's event at the Monte Sano Lodge will be the first native plant symposium in the region since 2019. Extension agent (and WildOnes member) Holt Akers-Campbell has been working hard to revive it, and if turnout is good, he hopes to organize the symposium annually (as was the original plan for the last symposium prior to the COVID-19 pandemic). Holt is still looking for non-profit and corporate sponsors to fund this year's speakers and venue and to build momentum for future symposia. Many employers in the region will fund sustainability-oriented events, so if you'd like to request sponsorship from your employer, a sponsorship letter is attached. Individual donations (any amount) are also welcome. Donations can be earmarked for the Symposium through WildOnes or can be sent directly to Extension. Please reach out with details and any questions about sponsorship (subject line "Symposium"). We want the Symposium to be affordable for all citizens of North Alabama, and organizational sponsorship is the way we make that happen. Registration for the Symposium will be on the website by March at the latest.



Scott Duncan, author of *Southern Wonder* and *Southern Rivers* will be one of the keynote speakers at the North Alabama Native Plant Symposium in June.

Volunteer at Panoply!

Mark your calendar: WONA is coming to Panoply! If you are passionate about educating the public about native gardens and why they are so critical, we need your help! If you enjoy creating art with children while educating them about our beautiful native plants, we need your help! WONA will have a booth at Panoply this year, **April 25-27**, and our success depends on our volunteers. Any support or design expertise you can provide is valuable. More information to follow. We need dozens of volunteers to fill the 3-day event, so if you can help, we need you. Please send a message to WildOnes with your interest (subject line “Panoply”), so we can fill the needed slots - and feel free to bring a friend who is passionate about educating children, their parents and the general public about native plants. Many hands make light work.



The Panoply planning committee would like to have an engaging wildflower display at WONA's booth at Panoply. If you have native wildflowers blooming (potted or cut) that you can donate for the display, please reach out to wildonesnorthal@gmail.com with the details.

Hiking Committee

Alexis Quinn is heading up the Hiking Committee in 2025! This was one of WONA's strategic objectives for the year, and we are happy to have her lead it. If you were contacted by Alexis recently, at some point you signed up on our volunteer roster to help with hikes or "anything." Targeted hikes will give us time to socialize outside of seminars, to share plant identification expertise, to see how native plants actually grow (and what conditions they like), to see beautiful wildflowers when they are blooming, and to figure out how to capture that beauty in our native Alabama gardens. The difficulty level of each hike will be clearly stated in the hike description. If you'd like to help Alexis lead the hiking committee or have ideas about when and where to go on hikes in the area, you can reach her at burrburruss@gmail.com.

Lawn to Prairie Flip:

If Holt weren't busy enough, he is looking for a volunteer for a lawn to prairie conversion in North Alabama for people who want to install a pocket prairie in an urban or suburban setting. Holt will document the transformation by video (and possibly publication) to educate the public about what methods are most effective in our area. Holt is looking for at least 2,000 square feet and will compare different methods for the conversion. The trial and project will incur no expense for the homeowner, but you must be willing to feature your property on video and in print. If you think you have a suitable site and would like to learn more, please email wildonesnorthal@gmail.com with the subject line "Lawn to Prairie."



A native grassland landscape at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas. Let's figure out how to do a lawn to prairie flip with the native grasses from North Alabama!

Concluding remarks:

WONA has many projects and volunteer events in the works this year and a lot more announcements to come. The key thing is: we need your help! If you are passionate about native plants and want to get more involved in our many projects, please reach out with your interest. Our next Weed Wrangle is planned for Saturday, March 8th at Chapman Mountain, so stay tuned for next month's edition to learn more. We are trying to build a Weed Wrangler corps this year in collaboration with the Land Trust, so if you'd like to get involved in the March 8th event, please send an email to wildonesnorthal@gmail.com with the subject line "Weed Wrangle."



If you are passionate about removing invasive vegetation, join our Weed Wrangle team on Saturday, March 8th as we start work at the Land Trust's Chapman Mountain preserve!

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NATIVE PLANT SPOTLIGHT

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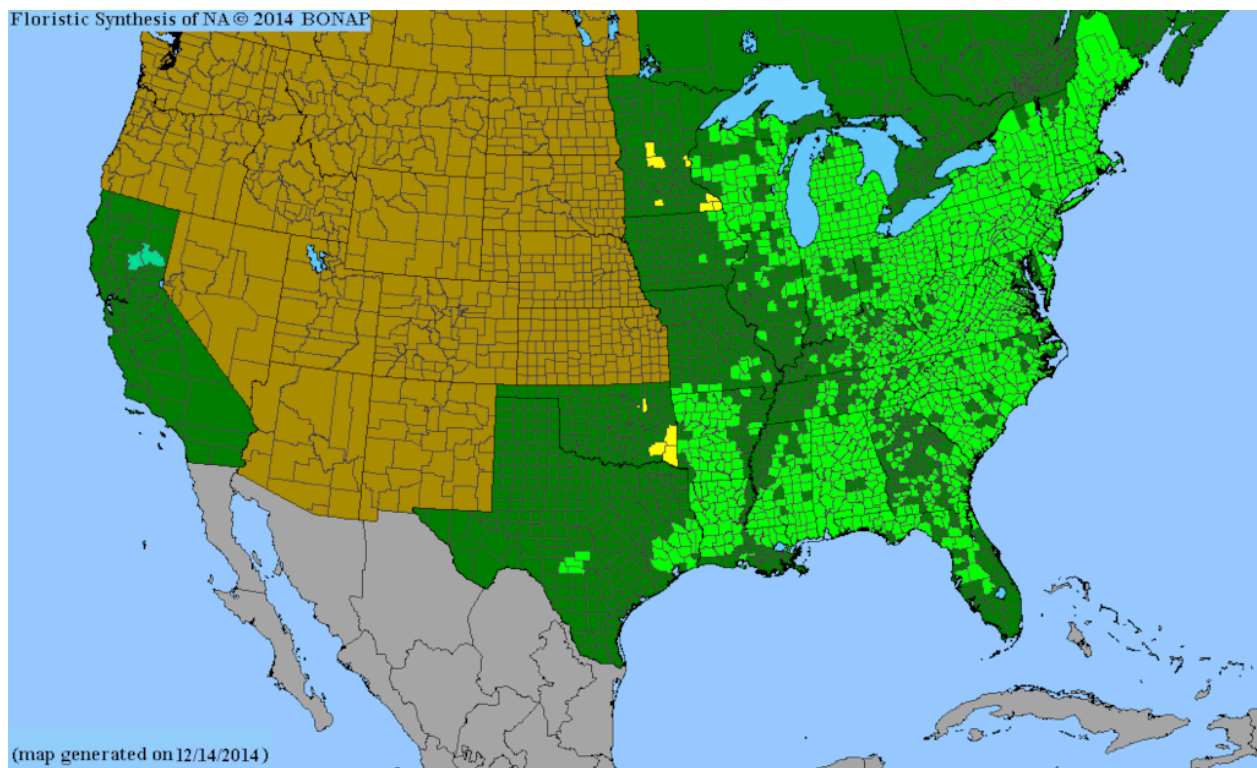
American witch-hazel in bloom (left) and leaves (right). ([Source](#))

American witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

American witch-hazel, sometimes called common witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) is a shrub or small tree that is usually 15 to 20 feet tall. Unlike most plants, it blooms in the fall or even during the winter (although later blooming is also used to distinguish *H. vernalis*,

the Ozark witch-hazel). It likes to grow along woodland margins and streams. The genus name comes from Greek root words that refer to the fact that the plant can have both flowers and fruits present at the same time. Leaves turn yellow in fall and sometimes flowering occurs along with the fall color, but it can also happen after the leaves have fallen. Flowers are located along the stem and are made up of four slender, crumpled-looking yellow petals. American witch-hazel has been used by First Nations peoples for tea and an extract is sometimes made using it to create a liniment for various ailments. Forked witch-hazel branches are the tool of choice in folktales of water-divining.

Sources: [Missouri Botanical Garden](#), [NCSU](#), [Wildflower.org](#), [eFloras.org](#)



Range of *Hamamelis virginiana*. Image courtesy of [BONAP](#).

INVASIVE SPECIES SPOTLIGHT



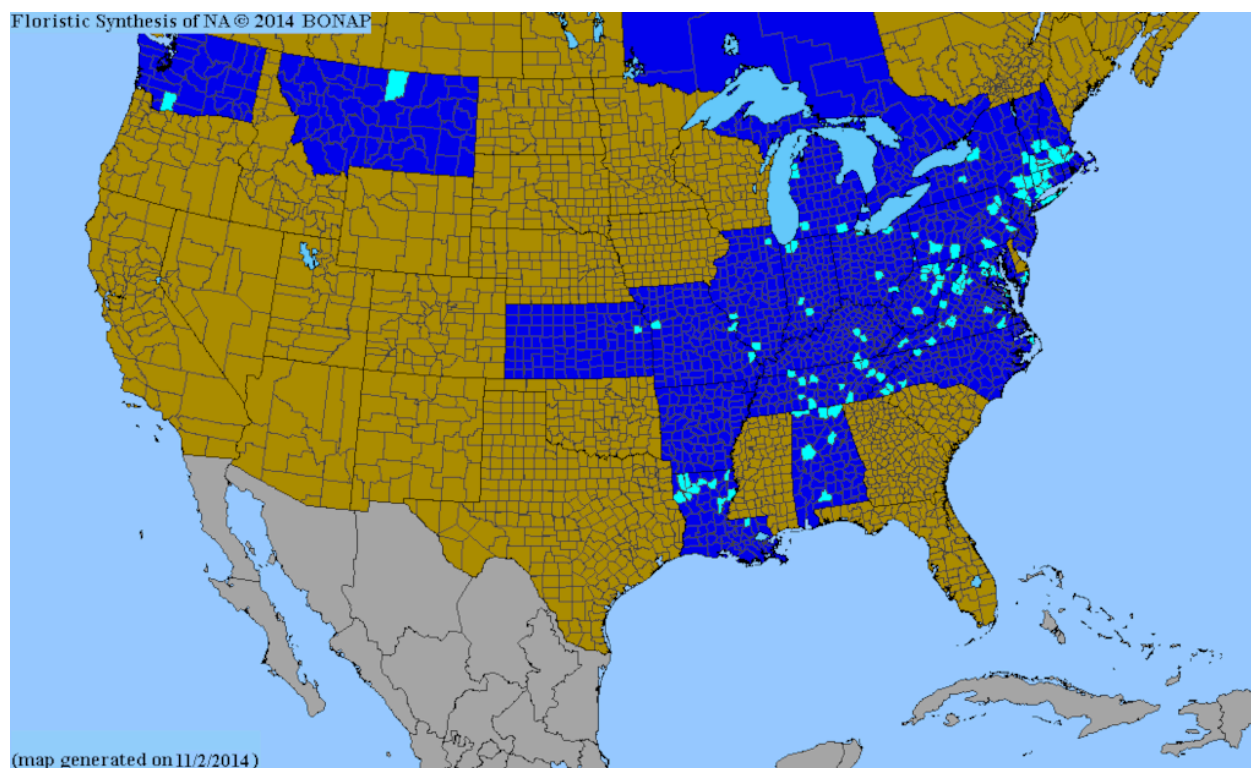
Forsythia flowers in bloom. ([Source](#))

Forsythia (*Forsythia* spp.)

As a child, I thought the name of these plants was “For Cynthia” and wondered who Cynthia was. In fact, the genus is named for Scottish botanist William Forsyth. There are almost a dozen species in the genus, all but one of which are native to Asia (the other is from Europe).

Forsythia is a common hedge plant, often planted for the early yellow blooms (that at a quick glance might be confused for witch-hazel!) and the fact that it is easy to grow, even in poor conditions. Since it can be very hard to eradicate and spreads via the root systems, many consider it invasive, although it is certainly not the worst offender. It grows as a shrub or small tree, with an open habit until it matures and fills out. The flowers emerge in spring before the leaves, associating it with early spring color. The flowers have 4 petals attached at the base of the flower. Forsythia is one of the last plants to drop its leaves in the fall, but isn't known for autumn color.

Sources: [Wisconsin Horticulture](#), [Highlands Current](#)



Map showing the distribution of the *Forsythia* genus. Image courtesy of [BONAP](#).

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CONNECT WITH US! FACEBOOK MEMBER CHAT

Facebook member chat

If you are new to WildOnes and would 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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

For the latest information on all our events, please check out WONA's [Events](#) calendar.

Thursday, February 20, 2025:

WildOnes' next Seminar will be on Botany 102. This will be a continuation of last year's Botany 101 class. To revisit Botany 101 prior to February's seminar, please visit our [YouTube channel](#).

Saturday, March 22, 2025:

Nashville will have its own Native Plant Symposium at Warner Park Nature Center. Registration opens on January 31st. Find out more information on their [website](#).

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)



Native Plants, Natural Landscapes