



October 2025

ORGANIZATIONAL
UPDATES



Denise Woodring hosted a Member Garden Tour on October 4th to showcase the evolution of her landscape through the seasons. In May, Denise also hosted a garden tour to showcase the plants in bloom at the start of the year.

Autumn Updates

by **Charles Pannell** on 31 October 2025

It's been a long time since our last newsletter, but I hope you are staying informed about upcoming events with timely emails. The WildOnes North Alabama election and member meeting is coming up on November 6th, and all our current officers are seeking re-election. Our member meeting this year will take place virtually on zoom because the library is unavailable (see zoom link at the end of this email). Strategically, we plan to expand our Board this year to recruit some new blood (🎃👤), so if you'd like to help organize our activities, please email us with your interest. Several of you have asked about a strategic plan, and we are working on one for our chapter, which I hope will help you plug into the organization more effectively in the coming years. The winter hiatus is a great time to step back and refocus on the strategy that will move our plans (and plants!) forward.

Speaking of elections, I'm pleased to provide you all with introductions to our current slate of candidates for the 2026 WONA executive board. All candidates are running uncontested.



President Charles Pannell admires the Pacific Ocean from Big Sur while learning about California's native and invasive plants..

President: Charles Pannell

I'm originally from Middle Tennessee, and I first became interested in plants while a teenager. I became curious about the plants that grew in my neighborhood and was shocked to discover (via the newfangled invention called the internet) that most of the common plants growing at ground level near my house were invasive species! That was the first time the sea of green parted and began to yield to specific plants with their own special Latin names. In college, I studied botany (interest in ethnobotany) and started a small environmental club to promote campus sustainability; my colleagues and I campaigned for over 2 years with students at other Tennessee universities to create sustainable campus committees to better conserve our resources. I also campaigned (unsuccessfully) as a student senator to have the "Bradford" pear eliminated from our campus (circa 2006). After moving to Huntsville in 2020 (during COVID), and after a decade working as an engineer, I wanted to get back to my plant passion, so I read Doug Tallamy and was inspired to start a local chapter of WildOnes and connect with other native plant fanatics. Perhaps unknowingly, you have all been helping me restore my understory into a wild garden that now needs some serious editing. It's been a pleasure to serve as your President for the last 2 years and do what I can to help this movement grow.

Vice-President: Kelly Cody

I've been a gardener since childhood, and like many gardeners, find joy in watching birds and butterflies visit my flowers. What started as a mission to attract more garden visitors quickly grew into a passion for the ecological role our gardens and greenspaces play. We know that by choosing the right plants, we can support wildlife and restore habitats in our own yards, which is why I love working with WildOnes. The opportunity to educate our community about landscaping choices that protect and restore nature, especially as so much of our remaining wild land is developed, is invaluable.



Secretary Lauren Linder with Estela in a pitcher plant (*Saracenia*) savanna at the Splinter Hill Bog Preserve.

Secretary: Lauren Linder

While I knew a little bit about some species, I didn't really understand the difference between native and non-native until about 3 years ago, when my nextdoor neighbor cut down her 3 mature trees. It made me want to create the yard I wanted, not the yard I had. I've never considered myself a *gardener* so I initially became interested in native plants because I figured they would need less help from me since they are meant to be here anyway. As I learned more about different species, I became frustrated with the dominance of species from other continents in traditional gardening culture. This automatic removal of the plants that are meant to be here, along with the additional habitat destruction that happens with development, is what made me want to do what I could to improve our local ecosystems and teach people about the awesome plants we have here. I became one of the main administrators of the North Alabama Native Plants Society facebook group, then was asked to join the WildOnes North Alabama board, where I became the secretary in 2024. I am constantly learning more, especially as I meet others who are also passionate about native plants!



Treasurer Lyn Weir manages WONA's finances with alacrity and enjoys the wild places remaining near Huntsville.

Treasurer: Lyn Weir

As a lifelong resident of Huntsville, with a keen appreciation of trees, I have been dismayed to see the reckless destruction that development causes and the steadfast efforts of residents to squelch all of the wildness from their land. I believe WildOnes is the best-positioned advocate in our community for ecologically responsible landscaping, and I have been honored to serve as treasurer for the past two years.

Membership chair: Rhonda Zook

I have been involved with the local WildOnes chapter since its inception. My love for native plants began as a child growing up in rural southern West Virginia. The infatuation continued when I moved to Brevard County, Florida, and worked with native landscapers to implement a landscape plan on my scrub habitat property. When I relocated to my current property in Huntsville five years ago, I added many native plants and am striving to become a certified native habitat. Currently, I am a certified Master Gardener and Alabama Master Naturalist. My goals for WildOnes are to continue educating the public about the importance of adding native landscaping and identifying and eradicating invasives.



American Asters in the genus *Symphyotrichum* stole the show at Denise's Fall Garden Tour. Denise specifically mentioned the 'October Skies' cultivar as one she likes to use.

A lot has happened since our last update. Denise hosted a Fall Garden tour to the delight of our members; we are glad to have her and her business among our members! WildOnes has also been working closely with the Land Trust of North Alabama to develop a Weed Wrangler Volunteer Corps to help manage invasive plants on their 10,000 public acres. Additionally, WONA has been talking with the City of Huntsville Green Team about supporting their efforts to tackle invasive species in our parks and preserves.



Holt's Lawn to Prairie trial treatments were underway this fall, and a few WildOnes members volunteered to plant plugs. Holt is evaluating different treatments to kill turf grass and methods for replanting with native grass and forb species, including *Eragrostis spectabilis*, *Monarda bradburiana*, *Zizia aurea*, *Echinacea purpurea*, *Symphyotrichum*, *Asclepias tuberosa*, *Phlox glaberrima*, *Conoclinium coelestinum* and *Sisyrinchium nashii*.

WildOnes members Sam Sikes and Marilyn Porter worked with Aaron Stiles from Foraging Ahead to redesign their neighborhood traffic circle with native plants. Please connect with them if you have a similar project in mind for a public space in your neighborhood.

Extension Agent Holt Akers-Campbell organized a volunteer plug planting and seeding event on his "Lawn to Prairie" trials in Madison, AL. Holt has also been busy planning the 2026 North Alabama Native Plant Symposium with a small committee of supporters.

WildOnes Vice President Kelly Cody designed "The Leafkeeper" scarecrow for the Botanical Gardens' scarecrow competition to promote the idea of leaving the leaves to support the wider ecosystem. Finally, on October 25th, the North Alabama Native Plant Society organized a very successful native plant exchange at the Land Trust's Blevins Gap Preserve! It's been a busy few months for many of our members! Keep up the great work!



WildOnes members Sam Sikes and Marilyn Porter beautify their neighborhood with an overhaul of the tired, exotic landscape in their neighborhood's traffic circle. Aaron Stiles at Foraging Ahead designed the new native landscape.



WildOnes Vice President Kelly Cody, who has a passion for crafts, entered “The Leafkeeper” into the Huntsville Botanical Gardens’ scarecrow competition to remind local residents of the importance of “leaving the leaves.” to create firefly and butterfly habitat.

Panoply

Planning for Panoply is currently underway, but we need you to support this annual youth outreach event. Kelly Cody, who led last year’s activity, is seeking a co-chair who can help plan and manage this event April 24-26, 2026. If you’d like to volunteer again this year or help co-chair our activities, please email WONA with the subject line “Panoply.” Panoply was our biggest education outreach activity last year for the general public, and we talked to hundreds of children and their parents about native plants. Each year, we have to choose a new craft idea to captivate the attention of North Alabama’s youth, so if you have any brilliant ideas for crafts that can spur conversation, Kelly would like to hear them.



Volunteers, including a few members from WildOnes, helped wrangle privet at the Hays Preserve in October.

Weed Wrangles

Weed Wrangles are spreading throughout North Alabama, and we cannot plan them fast enough (the weeds are spreading faster!). One of our members asked about doing a barn-raising style weed wrangle at her house removing English Ivy. I’d love to know what our members think about that idea; we’ll talk about this and many other topics at the upcoming member meeting on November 6th. If you are passionate about invasive species

removal and would like to join our Weed Wrangler corps (but haven't yet participated in one), please email widlonesnorthal@gmail.com with the subject line "Weed Wrangler" to be added to our contact list for upcoming events. Furthermore, the Land Trust of North Alabama is planning an Invasive Plant training session at Chapman Mountain Nature Preserve on Saturday, November 8th from 9 AM - 12 PM. Find out more about this event on [Facebook](#) and the Land Trust's [website](#).

WONA Social Hikes



WildOnes members enjoy a social outing at Nature's Ridge Trail near Huntsville.

Alexis Quinn has organized WONA's social hikes for the year. Social hikes are free for members and kids 12 and under, and \$5 (suggested donation) for non-members. This is a great way to meet other native plant enthusiasts and learn about the wildflowers of our region. Please be sure to register for the hikes, so Alexis knows whom to expect. The next hike is planned for Sunday, November 9th at Goldsmith-Schiffman Preserve at 10 AM. Please [register](#) in advance so Alexis knows who will be there. I will be there, and I hope you will too! Maybe we'll try our hands at keying out some plants we see along the way.

NATIVE PLANT SPOTLIGHT

by [Lauren Linder](#)

NATIVE PLANT SPOTLIGHT

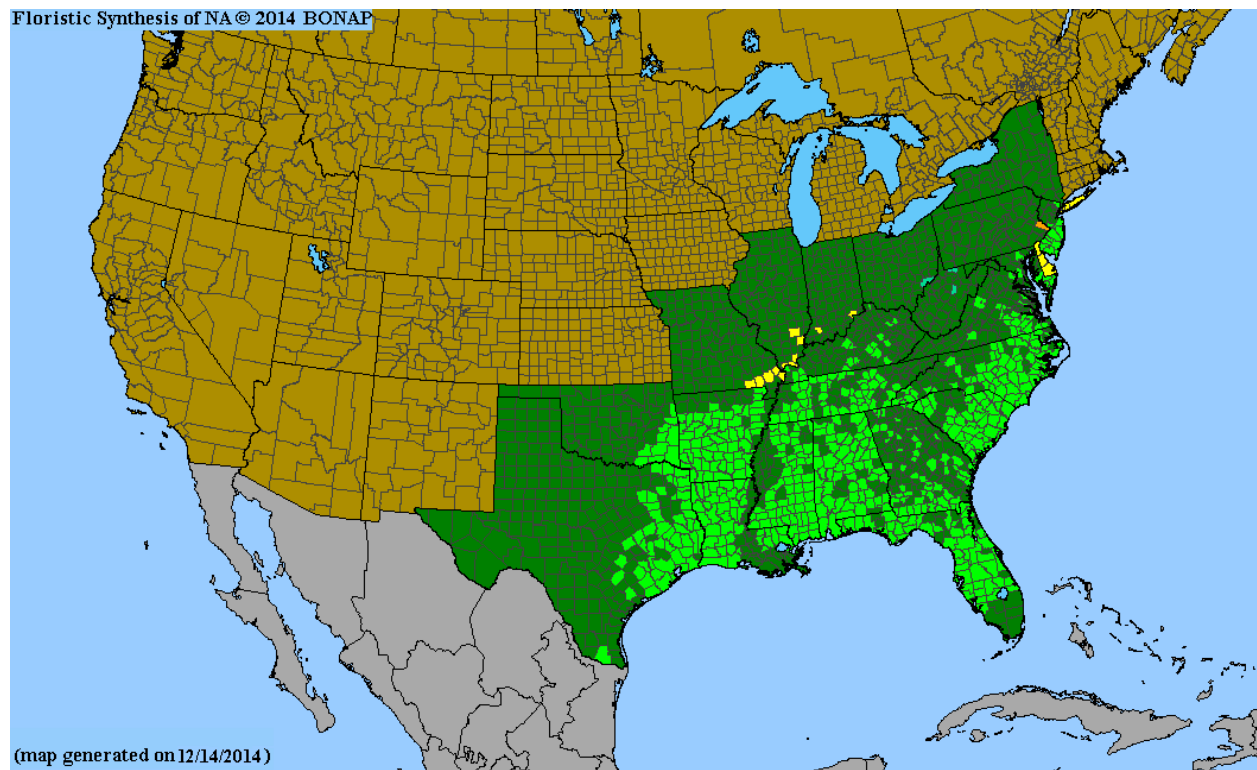


A carpenter bee enjoys some blooming swamp sunflowers.

Swamp sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*)

Swamp sunflower is one of my favorite native species! Sometimes called narrowleaf sunflower, it is a gorgeous fall bloomer that is very popular with pollinators. One of the “damn yellow composites” of Asteraceae (the Aster family), it is recognizable by its profusion of October blooms, its narrow leaves, and its dark disc flowers. As a perennial it comes back each year, but the slender stems are often unable to stand straight so it tends to droop or flop. While it prefers wetter soil, it can also do well in drier sites. It is a host plant for the Silvery Checkerspot (*Chlosyne nycteis*) as well as a few other butterfly caterpillars, and provides late season nectar for a variety of pollinators including many native bees.

Sources: [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#), [North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox](#), [United States Department of Agriculture](#)



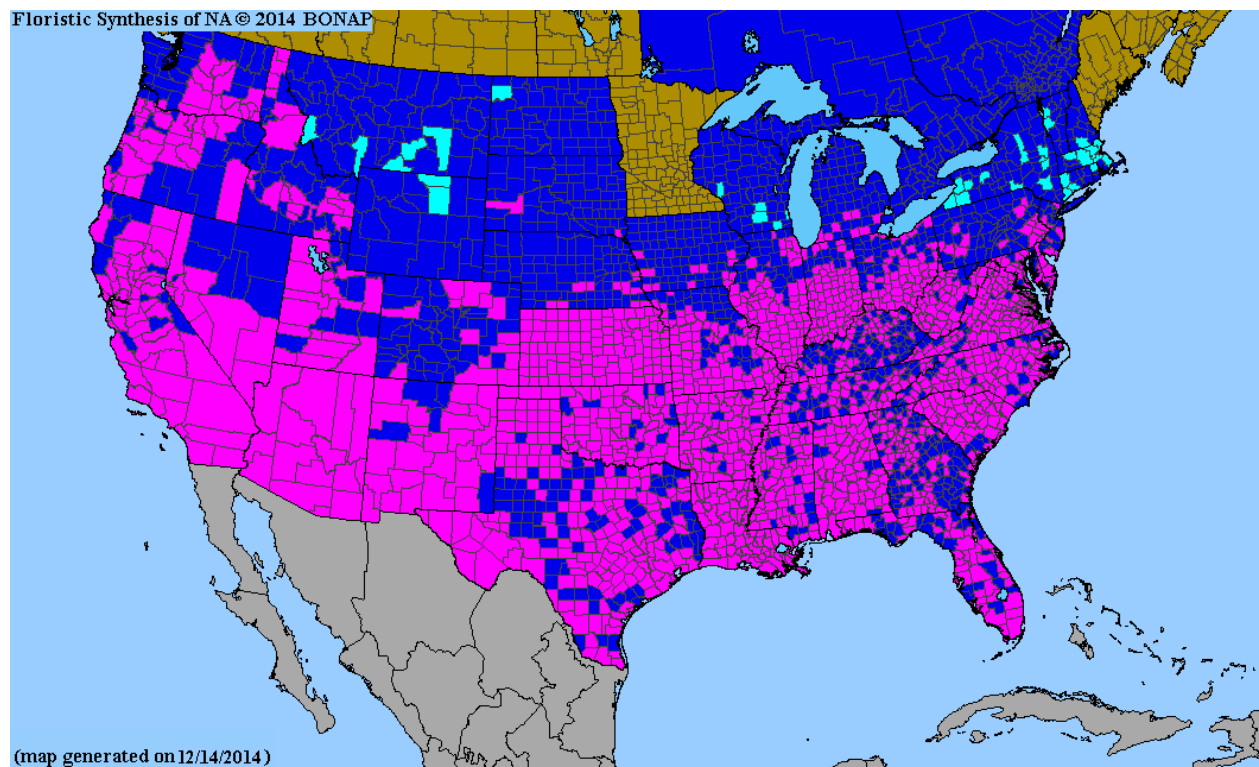
Range of *Helianthus angustifolius* ([Source](#))

Invasive Species Highlight



A stand of Johnson grass in bloom ([Source](#))

Johnson grass (*Sorghum halepense*)



Map of *Sorghum halepense* range ([Source](#))

Johnson grass, *Sorghum halepense*, is a warm-season perennial grass found on every continent except Antarctica. It is thought to be native to the Mediterranean area, but was introduced to America as a forage crop and is still used for cattle grazing, despite the fact that in certain conditions it can be toxic. It can grow up to 8 feet tall and spreads via seeds and rhizomes. It is found in open fields, roadsides, rights of way, disturbed areas, and more. Leaves can be up to 2 feet long and are sharp, potentially causing papercuts. The midvein is white and at the base of the leaf blade are soft hairs. The summertime flowers are held on purplish or reddish panicles that can be over a foot tall.



A close up of the ligule of Johnsongras reveals dense, velvety hairs at the base of the leaf blade.

([Source](#))

Due to its aggressive spread, it displaces natives and agriculture and can quickly take over an area. Control often requires multiple methods. For initial control in an area with an

infestation, repeated and close mowing will help kill seedlings and prevent seed production. Tilling can spread rhizomes in the early season especially, so should only be used at appropriate times when it can be repeated so the rhizomes cannot be developed or roots can be exposed and killed over winter. For lighter infestations, seedheads can be removed and glyphosate can be applied, with best results if applied when the plants are at least 18-inches tall until they begin flowering. This should be continued for a few years. There are no biological controls, although grazing can reduce populations.

Sources: [Illinois Extension](#), [Missouri Invasive Plant Council](#), [Alabama Extension Farming](#), [Missouri Department of Conservation](#)

Lookalike resource: [Johnson grass and native species lookalikes](#)

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CLASSIFIEDS

Request for volunteers/projects

If there is a particular skill set you'd like to offer in our outreach or organizational activities or if there's a project you'd like to spearhead, please contact us to determine the best ways you can contribute your knowledge and expertise! We'd love to improve the organization and distribution of our volunteer efforts, and we'd love to leverage your individual expertise.

Huntsville Environmental Coalition (HEC) Matching Grants

WONA is a member of the Huntsville Environmental Coalition. HEC is actively supporting efforts to bring more native gardens to public spaces in Huntsville as well as supporting WONA's initiative to change development ordinances to favor native plants (and ban invasive plants) in new development landscapes. If you are passionate about native plants in our community, then you're also likely passionate about sustainability broadly, and HEC is a wonderful organization to support as it propels our community's sustainability efforts forward. **HEC** has been selected by the **Community Foundation of Huntsville** for its impact in our community.

From helping establish the Huntsville Sustainability Commission to working with the city on greener urban development, HEC is committed to building a more sustainable Huntsville as the city grows — but HEC needs your help to keep it going. You can watch HEC's [story of impact here](#).

Donations made by November 30 will be matched by city donors — doubling your impact!

If you can, please consider donating and sharing HEC's link with others who care about a cleaner, more sustainable Huntsville. Every bit truly helps!

HEC's direct donation link:

https://cfgh.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/grant?grant_id=25974

Full catalog: <https://givehsv.org/share-your-story-grant-catalog/>

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.

November 6, 6pm: WONA Annual Member Meeting and Election (virtual)

November 8, 9am: LTNA Invasive Species Workshop

November 9, 10am: WONA Social Hike - Goldsmith-Schiffman

December 14, 2pm: WONA Social Hike - Piney Loop

January 15, 6pm: WONA seminar "Sewanee Purple Phacelia" (virtual presenter)

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ZOOM LINK TO MEMBER MEETING

If you do not want to download zoom, when you join the meeting, click "join from your browser."

NOTE: The agenda for this meeting will be sent separately

Zoom 5 is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: North AL Annual Member Meeting

Time: Nov 6, 2025 06:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://wildones-org.zoom.us/j/81153810226?pwd=o9ubrFuKdINcM3uD4dycwVyKL7g7bo.1>

Meeting ID: 811 5381 0226

Passcode: 3Kq+ej

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,81153810226# US (Washington DC)

+13126266799,,81153810226# US (Chicago)

Join instructions

https://wildones-org.zoom.us/join/81153810226?signature=avYjonEJC3S70JaDsYnzNTko_2fynGTGsYCCgz8KYYK

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)



Native Plants, Natural Landscapes