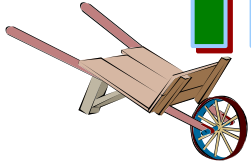


The Wheelbarrow



www.saps.us

Southern Appalachian Plant Society

February 2026

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On Beyond Monarchs and Honeybees –

The Case for Diversity

Randi Eckel, PhD

Entomologist, naturalist,

Founder of Toadshade Wildflower Farm native plant nursery

Thursday, February 19, 2026, at 7 pm

This is a ZOOM presentation.

Monarch butterflies and honeybees have been getting a lot of press and concerned people have stepped up to help them. This is good but more than 10,000 species of native butterflies, moths and bees in the US, as well as many other creatures, depend upon native plants. It is critical that we look beyond just two species! This presentation will look at communities, specialists and the critical role of diversity in our environment.

Dr. Randi Eckel has been working with native plants for over 40 years. She founded the mail-order native plant nursery Toadshade Wildflower Farm in 1996 to further public awareness and availability of native plants. A life-long naturalist, lover of nature, entomologist, and confirmed plant and ecology nerd, Randi specializes in the interactions between plants and other living things. She is known for her lively and engaging lectures and workshops on growing and propagating native plants and offers interesting, nuanced information on the complex issues facing native plants and native plant communities.

Randi studied at the University of Delaware, the University of Maryland, and earned her PhD at North Carolina State University before continuing to research plant and insect interactions through her work at the USDA. She now follows her passion as the owner of Toadshade Wildflower Farm exclusively using plants propagated and grown on-site at the farm. Randi is more than happy to address any native plant related topic with her accumulated knowledge and infectious excitement for the subject. She is the past president and current vice president of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey.

This is the information needed to join the Zoom presentation.

A recording of the meeting will be available to members afterward.

A reminder will be sent to members the weekend before the presentation.

SAPS is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Randi Eckel: Beyond Monarchs and Honey Bees - The case for Diversity

Time: Feb 19, 2026 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83351535407?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83351535407?pwd=avXZ1MjrOUpaxzswzIET3vcOH0GKX5.1)

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Meeting ID: 833 5153 5407

Passcode: 097530

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Upcoming Events

February 1

Stabilizing Eroding Stream Banks with Native Plants with Sarah Noah. 2 – 3:30 pm. Asheville Botanical Gardens. Free. Register: <https://ashevillebotanicalgardens.square.site/classes>

February 5

Herb Saplings meeting. 7 pm at Exchange Place. Kat Hayes, owner and director of Herbalachia, will speak on Herbal Support for Stress and Resilience. Bring a herb snack to share if you have time. Herb Saplings is a SAPS focus group. All SAPS members are invited to attend Herb Saplings meetings.

February 6-8

Dogwood Arts House & Garden Show. Knoxville Convention Center. <https://www.dogwoodarts.com/houseandgardenshow>

February 12

Virginia's Grasslands: Past, Present, and Future. 7 pm. Zoom. Free. Register at: https://appalachianhighlands.wildones.org/past-events/?wo_event_id=10774

February 14

Maple Syrup Festival and Pancake Breakfast. Tipton-Haynes State Historic Site, Johnson City. 8 am – 3 pm. Watch as sap gathered from maple trees is boiled down to sweet maple syrup. Maple sap will be cooked down all day. From 8 to 11 am a pancake breakfast with delicious maple syrup from Maple Grove Farm, Afton, TN. Admission with breakfast is \$10 adult/\$5 kids under 12. Without breakfast: adults \$8/kids \$4. <http://www.tipton-haynes.org/events/maple-syrup-festival-021426>

February 17

Old Growth Forest Network with Ciera Wilbur. 7:30 pm. Free Webinar sponsored by TN Native Plant Society. <https://tnps.org/event/seminar-ciera-wilbur-information-coming-soon/>

February 18

From Wasteland to Wonder with Basil Camu. 7 pm. Free Wild Ones National webinar explores practical, evidence based ways to heal suburban and urban landscapes by working with trees, soil, and natural systems. <https://wildones.org/category/wild-ones-presents/>

February 19

SAPS meeting. 7 pm. Randi Eckel. On Beyond Monarchs and Honey bees - The Case for Diversity. Zoom.

February 21

Gardening Seminar Series: Composting & Vegetable Gardening with Master Gardener Ben Hunter. 9 am – noon. Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park Visitor Center. Free. Sponsored by the Northeast TN Master Gardeners. https://tnstateparks.com/parks/event_details/sycamore-shoals/#/?event=gardening-seminar-series--composting--vegetable-gardening

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February 21

Adopt a Tree. Warriors Path State Park. 10 am - noon. Help plant hundreds of new trees at the Park. For every tree seedling you plant, you get one to take home to plant in your own neighborhood. Come early; supplies of trees are limited! Some digging tools available, but bring your own if you'd like. 423-239-6786, marty.silver@tn.gov. For details see: https://tnstateparks.com/parks/event_details/warriors-path/#/?event=adopt-a-tree-feb-2026

February 21

Roan Mountain Winter Naturalist Rally. Roan Mountain State Park. Hikes, speakers. https://www.friendsofroanmtn.org/_files/ugd/3cc564_ffebb51df8b5407980a7e9859acb8bfc.pdf

February 21

Mount Rogers Winter Naturalist Rally. Blue Ridge Discovery Center, Troutdale, VA. Speakers, hikes. <https://blueridgediscoverycenter.org/mmrn-winter>

March 1

Propagating Native Woody Plants from Cuttings. 2 – 3:30 pm. Asheville Botanical Gardens. \$45. <https://ashevillebotanicalgardens.square.site/classes>

March 5

Herb Saplings meeting. 7 pm at Exchange Place.

March 6 - 8

Organic Growers School Annual Spring Conference. Mars Hill University, Mars Hill, NC. Supports, inspires, and educates people to farm, garden, and live organically by providing affordable, practical, and hands-on education. <https://www.organicgrowersschool.org/spring-conference>

March 19

SAPS Meeting. Lucas Holman, Vegetable Gardening - Cool Season Vegetables. 7 pm.

March 23

Grafting Workshop. 4 - 7 pm at Ron Ramsey Ag Center, 140 Spurgeon Lane Blountville, TN 37616. Scion wood, rootstock, and all the necessary tools, supplies, and information to get you growing a successful apple graft provided! \$35 includes five grafts to take home. <https://sullivan.tennessee.edu/grafting/>

March 28

SAPS Spring Plant Swap. VO Dobbins Complex, Kingsport. 9:30 am - noon

Classes and Trolls at NC Arboretum

The North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville offers a wide variety of classes throughout the year. February's classes include Birding for Beginners, Winter Buds & Bark Tree ID, Beginning Botany, and Introduction to Appalachian Ecology. <https://www.ncarboretum.org/education-programs/adult-education-classes/>

You can also enjoy Trolls: A Field Study now through February 17, featuring twelve fanciful outdoor sculptures crafted from materials like fallen branches, wooden pallets and twigs. Standing 7– 9 feet tall these creatures were produced by Imagine in collaboration with Danish artist Thomas Dambo.

25 Poisonous Garden Plants

Contributed by Hugh Conlon

Some of the beautiful plants we grow in our gardens are poisonous. They contain toxins that are harmful or even deadly to humans, household pets, and livestock. Skin contact or ingestion of plant sap may result in a mild rash or indigestion. Other symptoms of poisoning include thirst, vomiting, and swelling of the lips and tongue. More severe symptoms may include internal bleeding, difficulty swallowing, cardiac problems and coma.

You will find many of these plants in local garden centers or growing in your own garden. Many are so common that they fly under the radar and are not widely recognized as dangerous. These 25 plants are potentially harmful. Some are very dangerous and others less so. Enjoy their stunning beauty, but keep your distance and wear gloves when pruning and handling seeds. Educate and protect children and pets.

Big Leaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) - contains hydrocyanides in leaves, stems and flowers; can cause severe digestive upset

Rhododendron (*Rhododendron spp.*) - produces stunningly beautiful flowers in spring; contains dangerous grayanotoxins in leaves and stems

Yew (*Taxus spp.*) - popular hedging evergreen; flesh of berries is non-poisonous; contains the toxic alkaloid Taxine in seeds and needle foliage

Cherry (*Prunus spp.*) - toxic leaves and bark; cyanide-laden pits in fruit; plums, peaches, nectarines, and apricots also fall into *Prunus* group

Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) - a shade-loving shrub with broad evergreen foliage and clusters of sweet, pink flowers; contains diterpene that effects digestion if ingested

Daphne (*Daphne mezereum*) - all plant parts contain the poisonous compounds daphnin and mezerin

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp.*) - edible blooms; poisonous berries

Calla Lily (*Zantedeschia*) - contains calcium oxalate crystals which damage the digestive tract

Castor Bean (*Ricinus communis*) - deadly ricin poison in all parts of the shrub, especially the seeds; nonpoisonous castor seed oil used in beauty products

Angel's Trumpet (*Brugmansia spp.*) - poisonous flowers, leaves, and seeds; contains dangerous compounds such as hyoscyamine, scopolamine, and atropine

Jimsonweed (*Datura stramonium*) – poisonous leaves and flowers; sometimes known as moonflower, bears large white or violet trumpet-shaped flowers, produces a large spiky seed pod attractive to children; a silent hazard in rural fields causing hallucinations, fever, or paralysis when ingested

Hyacinth (*Hyacinthus orientalis*) – contains some alkaloid compounds and calcium oxalate crystals; can cause extreme oral and digestive pain and dermatitis

Daffodil (*Narcissus spp.*) – contains a chemical called lycorine; can cause nausea, vomiting, and other digestive troubles

Autumn Crocus (*Colchicum autumnale*) - not a true crocus; contains the highly poisonous alkaloid colchicine

Lily-of-the-Valley (*Convallaria majalis*) - contains cardiac glycosides and saponins; can adversely affect the heart

Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra spp.*) - contains dangerous alkaloids; possible skin irritation upon contact with any part of the plant, especially the leaves

Lenten Roses (*Helleborus spp.*) – toxic leaves, stems and roots; poisonous to humans if ingested

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) - contains the dangerous drug digitalis in all parts of the plant; causes cardiac problems

Iris (*Iris spp.*) - toxic flowers, foliage, and roots; contains noxious compounds that include irisin, irisine, and iridin

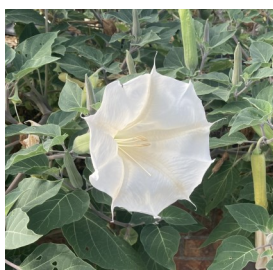
Lantana (*Lantana camara*) - a top-tier pollinator plant; can cause gastrointestinal problems to humans and livestock

Larkspur (*Delphinium*) - contains highly poisonous alkaloid compounds; no known treatment for larkspur poisoning

Flowering Tobacco (*Nicotiana spp.*) - contains nicotinic alkaloids which can cause abdominal pain, hypertension, and severe reactions such as coma and respiratory failure

Monkshood (*Aconitum*) - poisonous when ingested; can also be absorbed through the skin

Wisteria (*Wisteria spp.*) - highly toxic velvety seed pods and seeds



Datura



Castor Bean

Across the President's Desk

By Earl Hockin

Gardeners are in early planning mode for spring and summer gardening. Three of the things we often consider are pollinators, disease resistance, and starting plants for transplanting. Included in this article is information about mountain mint, mildew resistant varieties of basil and starting tomato and pepper plants now to transplant in early to mid-April.

During her January SAPS presentation Nancy Lawson suggested a specific native perennial flowering plant as a first step when planning a landscape for pollinators. Mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*), which was designated perennial of the year in 2025 by the Perennial Plant Association, emits a strong minty fragrance that is unpleasant to deer and rabbits. They generally avoid eating it. All types of mountain mint attract a wide variety of pollinators including butterflies, bees, wasps, and beetles as well as the occasional hummingbird. In Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia (zones 6 and 7) the best varieties include (*P. muticum*) also called broad-leaved, blunt, or short toothed mountain mint, (*P. tenuifolium*) called narrowleaf, and (*P. incanum*) called hoary. These three varieties prefer full sun, tolerate clay and once established are drought resistant.

Mountain mint is aggressive and will spread out 3 - 4 feet so plant it where there is lots of space or with other aggressive plants like echinacea. Its bloom time is two months or longer starting in early summer. Hoary mountain mint is an attractive plant in the garden. With its silvery-green leaves and silvery bracts it is still colorful even when not in bloom. It can grow in poor quality soil but will be shorter and less productive than if grown in better conditions.

During humid summer months, many varieties of basil become infected with downy mildew. Fortunately there are resistant varieties that are less susceptible to this disease. Typically, these varieties will be labeled DMR (Downy Mildew Resistant) on the seed package. Some resistant varieties are the Prospera Series, Amazel Basil, Emerald Towers, and Rutgers Passion. The Prospera Series includes Mia (semi-compact), Noga (tall), Lihi (compact) and Italian Large Leaf. I find it beneficial to plant basil adjacent to my tomato plants because it repels pests like tomato hornworms, aphids, whiteflies and spider mites while attracting pollinators. This improves pollination while decreasing the need for pesticides in my vegetable garden.

In typical conditions tomato and pepper plants can be started indoors between late February and mid-March to be transplanted in late April. If not started indoors, the seeds are sown outdoors after the risk of overnight frost has passed with nighttime temperatures above 50°F - usually late April. I start mine indoors early in February and then transplant them late March. I am able to do this because I plant them in black fabric containers which absorb sunlight and heat up much faster than in-ground soil. I use containers that are 5 gallon or larger. If the weather forecast is below 46°F, I put a plastic "Wall o' Water" structure around them which protects them from frost and temperatures as low as 24°F. Kozy Coats, Season Starter Plant Insulator, or water teepees for plant protectors are similar season extenders. These can be found at some online retailers like Amazon and Walmart as well as some seed companies.

Virginia's Grasslands: Past, Present, and Future

Thursday, February 12th, 2026, 7:00 to 8:00 pm. Online/Virtual Free Event
Hosted by Wild Ones Appalachian Chapter

Grassland loss is one of the greatest conservation issues currently facing the Southeastern United States. Of the nearly 6,000 plant species native to the Southeast, 60% of these require or prefer grasslands. Despite this, grasslands across this region are being lost at an alarming rate. The Southeastern Grasslands Institute (SGI) is an organization dedicated to studying, conserving, and restoring grasslands in the Southeastern United States. Alaina Krakowiak serves as SGI's Central Appalachian Grasslands Coordinator. In this presentation, she will discuss the history of grasslands in Virginia: what these might have looked like and where they would have been found. She will also discuss the current state of Virginia's grasslands: what we have left and what is threatening them. Lastly, she will talk about what SGI is doing to restore grasslands including some actions you can take at your own home.

Zoom Link:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://wildones-org.zoom.us/j/82964381488?pwd=b1SbEXfbLR2W3VYE298bFd2gUydOY.1>

Plan now for 2026 Plant Swaps

The dates for the 2026 Plant Swaps and Potluck Brunches are Saturday, March 28 and Saturday, October 3. Mark your calendars today! Both will be at the V.O. Dobbins Center, 301 Louis Street, Kingsport, TN 37660. There is plenty of parking and a very easy entrance. The swap in March will be a great time for early season vegetables and perennials and you may bring garden items to swap as well.

More information will follow in the March Wheelbarrow.

Philadelphia Flower Show Gallivant

Garden Gallivants has another garden trip planned and is offering interested SAPS members the opportunity to join them. The trip is to the Philadelphia Flower show. In addition to the flower show the trip includes visits to Longwood Gardens, Mercer Museum, and David Culp's Galanthus Gala.

The bus will pick up and return passengers to Kingsport and perhaps Abingdon.

Information and forms are in the compressed file attached to the email.

Join us for a Grand GALLIVANT to the Philadelphia Flower Show!

February 26th through March 3rd

Ever Imagined a Place Where Flowers Outnumber People?

Don't miss this colorful adventure - it's going to be blooming amazing!

Register now, don't delay * Deadline is February 7th * This Gallivant will be limited to 20 Gallivanterers



Have you ALWAYS wanted to go to the Philadelphia Flower Show?

Well, now's your chance! We're making it easier than ever to cross this one off your FLOWERY bucket list! Get ready for an unforgettable journey filled with breathtaking blooms, vibrant sights, and exciting experiences!
From iconic landmarks to hidden gems - and of course, the world-renowned Philadelphia Flower Show we'll see it all and do even more!

Southern Appalachian Plant Society 2026 Membership

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____

Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

For new and renewing members: I am paying \$20.00 for annual membership.
This can be an individual or family membership.

With an additional donation of \$_____ I am providing gift membership(s) to the person(s) whose membership data is attached to this form. Each gift membership is \$20.00. Include complete membership information for each gift membership.

I am further supporting SAPS programs and activities with an additional tax-deductible donation of \$_____

I choose to receive the online Wheelbarrow. (The preferred method of providing The Wheelbarrow is digitally. Those who are unable to receive it by email may have a paper copy mailed to them.)

Please send your check made payable to SAPS for the total of your membership, donation and gifts along with this form to:

Shawn Dougherty
911 V I Ranch Road
Bristol, TN 37620