

Bluestem

COMMUNITY · CONSERVATION · CEMETERY



Friend,

The winter solstice has now come and gone and the days have begun their slow lengthening. As the year comes to a close, we are taking our cues from the quiet world. We are resting in the season's stillness. We are reflecting and giving thanks. And, we are looking ahead with wonder for what is to come. We look forward to getting out on the trails and experiencing the restoration of this place with you again in 2026. For now, we send our warmest holiday wishes with a few reflections from this meaningful year...

First and foremost, we reflect with gratitude on the lives and legacies of the 54 residents who were buried at Bluestem this year. Every one of their stories holds a special place in our hearts and a sacred place on this land. Every person choosing conservation burial here makes an indelible contribution to the protection and care of this natural place, forever becoming part of its restoration.



Three graves side by side in the Restoration Burial area.

We offer thanks to the volunteers who give of their time, sweat, and care to make natural burial in a conservation cemetery not only possible, but a deeply personal experience. This year, 45 individuals served on the Bluestem burial crews, offering silent, compassionate witness and physical support through the hands-on process of burial. Their presence reminds us and Bluestem families of the wide ecosystems of support, in nature and in community, that surround us at all times.



New burial crew volunteers gather at a training.

We also celebrate the incredible work of the land stewards who come to care for this special place every Friday morning. Together over the course of the year, we improved the trails and added a new woodland sanctuary, planted around 2800 new plants and trees (including around 45 new species!), sowed about 50 pounds of wildflower and grass seed, and removed countless invasives from the fields and woodlands.



Walter keeping watch during a fall planting workday.

We are especially glad to announce that, in recent months, our land stewards have helped prepare a new burial area, Woodlands 3. Come for a hike this winter and find Woodlands 3 near the northwest-most corner of Bluestem, beautifully dotted with beech trees and sourwoods. This new area is the most remote of the available burial areas and will be open for plot reservations beginning in January.



The new Sourwood Sanctuary in Woodland 3.

With the support of so many of you who have generously shared your Bluestem experiences with others, we are amazed at the wide outreach and education we've accomplished together this year—we count 52 events and 75 tours this year alone. Thank you for inviting us to your places of work and worship, for leading tours and field trips, for serving as Bluestem ambassadors at events and conferences. Your dedication convinces others to visit and to consider natural burial in a conservation cemetery. If you'd like to bring a group to Bluestem or have us come to you in 2026, please get in touch with us.



An intergenerational community group gathers for a picnic in the barn.

For all there is to give thanks for in our memories of 2025, there are, of course, the losses, uncertainties, and grief too large for words, let alone a newsletter. We don't pretend to know the salve for all that aches and hurts in our world, but we trust in the steadiness of nature to hold it all. We lean into its quiet, the constancy of its trees and resilient grasses, and we open ourselves to learning how we—strangers, volunteers, neighbors, families, friends—can become more like those deeply rooted ecosystems: steady, connected, and ever-growing.



An early winter sunset over the First Field.

We invite you to wander and embrace the winter stillness at Bluestem. The property is open from dawn to dusk to the public every day, even as our staff takes some restful time away over the holidays. Stop by the barn for a map and a self-guided winter walking meditation, or some holiday greens to lay at a loved one's grave. You can also find [a self-guided walking tour route here](#).

The office will be closed for appointments and burials from December 24th through January 1st. If you are interested in

advance planning for burial, please complete [a burial interest form here](#) to receive some next steps. If you need assistance with an immediate burial, please call us at (919) 300-4925.

As we close this full year and approach a new one together, may our roots grow deeper, our community grow wider, and may nature again be our guide in 2026.

Warmest wishes from your Bluestem Stewards,
Katie, Lionel, Jeff and Heidi

Support Bluestem's Work

Bluestem is a community supported nonprofit dedicated to nourishing ecological stewardship, community service, and spiritual practice in shared fellowship. Donations are tax deductible EIN: 86-2188559. We are grateful for the creative minds and muscle of these important community members:

Carol, Laura, Tom, Karen, James, Jenny, Jackie, Dave, Al, Lynn, Andy R., Lionel, Betty, Mel, Noah, Ken, Kristin, Don, Angie, Ben, Michaela, Renee, Courtney, Anne A., 2 Dorothy Gs, Katie M., RJ, D, Lara, Caleb, Landon, Allen, Jennifer, Franzi, Seletha, Kathleen, Carl, Beth, Shenae, Ms. Carnetta, Stan, Meredith, Heather, Rebecca, Annie, Claire, Grace B., Walter, Lee P., Lee W., 2 Ann Rs, Erica, Emily, Brenna, Cheko, Dorothy B., Hannah, Caitie, Andy H. Emily-Kate, Liz, JC, Hannah, Liz, Sarah, Leo, John, Carolyn, Jeff P., Sunshine, Hunter, Veronica, Sara, Hank, Ann W., Geri, Tom, Aimee, Kelly, Bill, Dana, Katherine, Kari, Robin, Xaris, Ina, David, Marcia, Michele, Catherine, Ed, Steven, Jon, KR, Kendall, Mary, Kallyn, Rachel W., Rachel C. and Stacey, Nora, Melissa, Laura, Maisie, Edith, Jordan, Jo, Marie, Lydia, Margot, Steve, Kara, Betsy, Dan, Stan, Elliott, John, Cameron, Melinda, Sean, Danielle, Laura, Rebekah, Martin, Cameron, David, Cris, André, Holly, Rich, Sharon, Gaby, Loren, Linda, Jeff P., Margaret, Kim, Aurora, David, Cynthia and Grace H, Tuck, Marisa, and Monica, Kara, Priscilla, Holly, Susan Jacks and Rebekah.



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