

Bluestem



It's been a long hot summer at Bluestem. Just the other day a cool breeze drifted up from the back fields and tossed the leaves of the old oak in front of the cabin. We are uplifted by the change in temperature. And by the hard work of our volunteers who clear, dig, trim, sweat and imagine with us on summer Friday mornings.

We had hoped for Bluestem's opening by now but are still waiting to finalize our road restoration projects and parking areas. Until then, meander through this summer newsletter, bolstered by the images and words from Bluestem's growing community of naturalists, poets, farmers, painters, photographers, trail-builders, shepherds and stewards -- all finding a place on this beautiful land to nurture. Come along with us.

"What a blessing it must be to be a plant and be rooted, to let your tendrils mightily unfurl in the soil making winding caverns for worms to follow and new life to begin. To breathe through your feet, to bend down to see the small and critical creatures of the earth, to move like an insect over the textures of life with curiosity and wonder." - Lara Struckman

[Read more here.](#)



Volunteers preparing new trail

WHEN IS BLUESTEM OPENING?

Before we can officially open, Bluestem must have an established parking area approved by Orange County. With contractors' lives as busy as they are it has been difficult to get on their schedule. While waiting we continue to make progress building trails, expanding the hiking network, and preparing areas in the grasslands and woodlands for burial. As soon as we have an opening date secured we will announce it in this newsletter and on the website. Until then consider joining us for a [Friday workday!](#)

Get the **Trailbuilders Update**



HAPPENING AT BLUESTEM

So much has happened over the summer -- a [website refresh](#), new [trail segments](#), new [tour dates](#), [blog posts](#), and the arrival of D Bouchard, Bluestem's new intern. D is a death doula who has chosen Bluestem as a site placement for their masters degree in social work. They will help us with outreach, particularly with volunteers, families and death care providers, and support in developing Bluestem's operational systems.

D grew up in rural New England where they spent the majority of their adolescent years deep within nature and on the water. They moved to the Triangle area to pursue a graduate degree in social work at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, with a focus on macro death and dying and gerontology. D's practice is guided by Steven Jenkinson's principle that all of us are bound by the shared obligation of attaining a good death and that death offers us one of the most reflective perspectives in life. [Say hello!](#)



A biodegradable casket ready for green burial

AT NEED BURIAL

This past month we had the great privilege of providing two families with green burial services at Bluestem. Both interments were at-need burials that occurred shortly after the individuals' deaths. **At this time, Bluestem can only serve individuals and families with at-need burial.**

Standing beside Bluestem's first families was a great honor and an expression of trust. We thank them both. We learned much about taking care of each other, and ourselves. To [our burial crew](#), thank you for your generous presence and can-do spirit.

These first Bluestem burials were the embodiment of our vision: a nonprofit conservation cemetery that supports individual choice, encourages families into active participation in the sacred act of burial, and blends with the natural

landscape. A resting place for all, wherever we are in life, spirit, or natural form. Thinking about planning for a green burial? Take a read through some of the [important decisions](#) you can make ahead of time and let us know how we can help.



A new grave at Bluestem

COST OF BURIAL

[Bluestem burial costs](#) are posted in the Green Burial section of the website. They are divided between **interment rights** and **burial fees**. Interment rights are paid ahead of time. Burial fees are paid only at the time of need. At Bluestem, the purchase of a burial plot includes your choice of a gravestone selected from flagstone or natural stone we have collected onsite. No offsite stone or polished headstones are allowed. Learn more about [burial in a conservation cemetery](#).

Areas near the pond and in the natural sanctuary at Bluestem are open only for community use, and not for burial. In the fields and woods designated for the conservation cemetery, four different burial areas will be available offering experiences in either open grasslands or shaded woodlands. Bluestem also allows for pet burial. Pet burial fees will be announced in the coming weeks.

Bring your questions to our [Bluestem Conversations](#) Tuesday afternoons from 4-5PM on Zoom.



Wildflowers in bloom

RESTORATION IN THE FIELDS

[Bluestem grasses](#) made their elegant appearance in the fields last month!

When you visit, you will see their name is the perfect descriptor because the plant is a bunch of lovely blue-green stems, rising above the meadow and with inflorescences reaching skyward like spreading hands. The stems stir in the slight breeze beckoning the flocks of butterflies to have a taste of *its* tiny flowers even though it's the butterfly larvae that Bluestem supports. Bluestem hosts several other insects too. The leaf beetle's larvae eat its strong root system, varieties of ants nest at its base using the seeds, and a rust fungus makes use of its leaves. It's no surprise that this plant, like all of nature, is part of an interdependent system of life. This fact comes to life and inspires awe when you visit Bluestem. We imagine this pilgrim infused with the beauty of a different sense of belonging to and supporting nature at Bluestem.

Sign Up for a Walking Tour



Big Bluestem in the restored grassland

BLUESTEM RISING

The upright fronds of little and big Bluestem shoot slender blue green stalks into the sky and encourage us towards our grand opening! We are still fundraising for needed burial equipment, road improvement materials, information kiosks and signage. Can you make a gift to support green burial for all at Bluestem? [Learn more about building Bluestem here.](#)

Make a gift to ***Building Bluestem*** today

Wonder what green burial in a conservation cemetery is all about? Care to introduce Bluestem to your friends, family and colleagues? We offer Zoom presentations and private tours for groups of 10 or more. Let us know if we can share Bluestem with you.

Until next time, keep well *and your fingers crossed* for Bluestem's opening soon!

Heidi & Jeff
Co-founders
Bluestem

THANK YOU to our amazing volunteers and contributors this month: *Carol, Laura, Sidney, Lara, Allen, Sara, Hank, Steve, Walt, Debbie, Meg, Noah, Meredith, Claire, Lee P., Ann, Kathleen, D, Deborah, Ann R., Courtney, Erica, Emily, Kallyn, Joshua, Heather, Cora-Jean, Shawna, Jennifer, Seletha, Bryan, Mark, Shenae, Beth, Franzi, Carl, Betty, Mel, Margaux, Linda, Anna, Brenna, Hannah, Calvin, JC, and Ken.*
