

Bluestem

COMMUNITY · CONSERVATION · CEMETERY



Friend,

Spring and false-spring temperatures are keeping us on our toes, shedding layers and taking them back up as Bluestem makes its transition to a new season. Recent weeks have brought much-needed rain and the long-awaited multitude of trout lilies that dot the forest floor each spring. We watch and wait as Redbud trees and hints of green begin their resurgence. Whether donning raincoats or sunscreen, we gather every Friday to care for these changing ecosystems. In rain or shine, we accompany the families who lay their loved ones to rest in the grasslands or the woods. Amidst grief and loss, we watch the buds and new sprouts with a measure of awe. New life abounds.

A special welcome to new Bluestem Families who are receiving this newsletter for the first time. We are so grateful for [your loved one's](#) decision to become a part of this place. Their legacy supports the perpetual care and protection of this living, generative landscape where pollinators, wildlife, and people can find refuge. We hope you gain comfort from Bluestem and from the community that cares for it.



Last year's controlled burn moving across a portion of First Field.

MANAGING OUR GRASSLANDS

If you visit Bluestem in the upcoming days and weeks, you may notice some changes in the grasslands as we prepare for and conduct our annual prescribed burn. Prescribed fire is an ancient and effective strategy for revitalizing native grassland habitat. It helps seeds germinate, reduces competition from invasive plants, and recycles nutrients into the soils. While we wait for weather conditions to be *just right*, we prepare the fields by mowing extra “fire lanes.” These create a barrier between the areas that have been intentionally selected for burning and those areas reserved for habitat protection. **On the day of the burn, Bluestem will be closed to the public.** Afterwards, families are invited to return to the burned fields where gravesites will be more visible, and within a week, fresh, green shoots will begin to reappear. Stay tuned to our [Instagram](#) and website for closure and reopening information.

Prescribed Fire at Bluestem



Burial crew training for new volunteers.

BURIAL AT BLUESTEM

At each [Bluestem burial service](#), families are supported not only by peaceful, waving grasses and stately, twisting trees, but also by a discreet team of Bluestem staff and trained volunteers. Burial crew volunteers stand at the ready in many ways: lending an arm to someone navigating the woodland trails, offering a golf cart ride, shoveling to complete the closing of a grave, or quietly witnessing the sacred act of a family's final farewell. Burial crew service is a deeply meaningful way we come together to support grieving families. **Interested in serving on a burial crew?** [Join us for our next burial crew training on March 27th.](#)

Interested in making arrangements for burial? Check out our newly updated [Bluestem Burial Guide here](#), and complete [an interest form](#) to request more information or an appointment with staff.

[Join the Burial Crew](#)



Even in snow, Bluestem's landscape regenerates.

REMEMBERING AT BLUESTEM

Over the winter, we welcomed more families and watched as residents' graves settled into the earth. In the fields, dying grasses and wildflower stalks toppled over graves, and in the woods, fallen leaves concealed grave mounds and gravestones. Each resident's choice of returning simply to the earth contributing to the restoration of this resilient landscape. **[A reminder that Bluestem does not permit any planting on graves nor manicuring of gravesites.](#)** However, **we do invite family and friends to join us in planting around the property every year** - come remember your loved one at our [Family Planting Day](#) on Friday, April 24th. We'll be planting new native species in memory of all those buried here and provide all the tools for working together. Can't make it? Feel welcome to [make a gift in your loved one's name](#) as every Bluestem resident will be recognized at this important event.

[Join us for Family Planting Day](#)



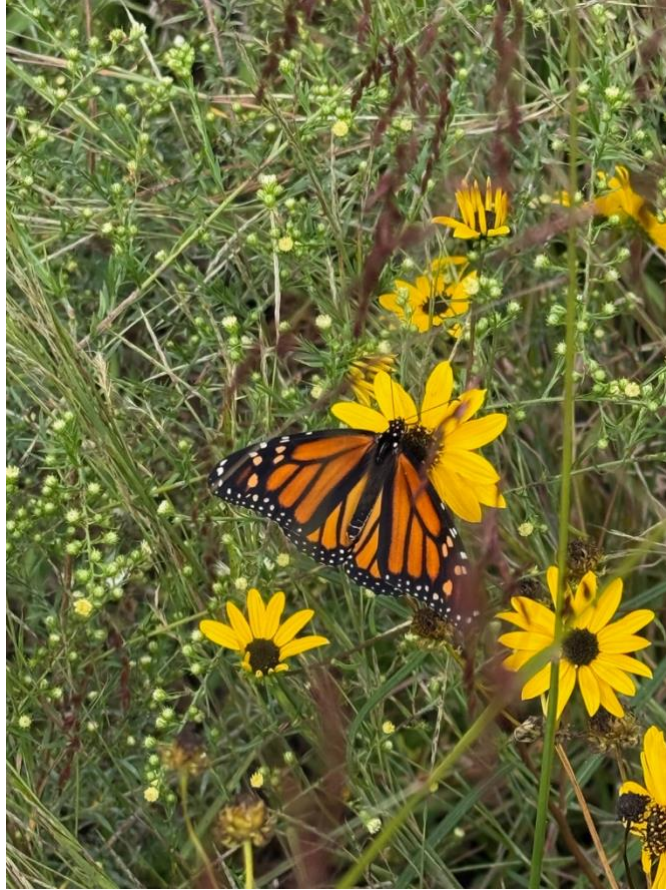
Taking a break from invasives removal!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Land stewards, tour guides, hike leaders, and Ambassador volunteers are constantly sharing their learnings at Bluestem, each and every one contributing to *community conservation*. This past year, [NC Master Naturalist](#) students Carol Klein and Kelly Wooten dedicated countless hours to tracking, recording, and researching the primary invasive plants at Bluestem. Check out the [helpful definitions](#) and [abatement strategies](#) they developed, that are now posted in the barn. Thank you, Carol and Kelly, for all your leadership and guidance toward educating us about balanced ecosystems!

Care to make a difference on the land and in the good company of others? Join us for a [volunteer workday](#) to help tackle these kinds of projects and more.

[Volunteer at Bluestem](#)



A monarch visits the summer blooms.

BUTTERFLIES AT BLUESTEM

This month, the [Carolinas Butterfly Monitoring Program](#) begins another monitoring season, and we're so glad that Bluestem's pollinator-friendly fields can support this important work. Say hello to Jeff Pippen and fellow scientists if you see them out walking their survey routes at Bluestem. Or, [contact Jeff directly](#) if you'd like to adopt a surveying route yourself! Butterfly surveying takes place weekly from March to November across both North and South Carolina, and provides important data to researchers who evaluate insect populations and the health of habitats in our region. Thank you, Butterflies, for your pollinating work, and thank you, Jeff & Team, for your important documentation!

[Carolinas Butterfly Monitoring](#)



Bluestem grasses store carbon below ground.

CONSIDERING CLIMATE CHANGE

At Bluestem, deep roots stabilize soil, healthy forests withstand storms, and these restored landscapes store carbon and provide wildlife refuge for generations to come. In the face of our changing climate, where summers burn hotter, ticks arrive sooner, and once-in-a-lifetime weather events don't seem so rare, resilient landscapes like those at Bluestem are important [climate change refugia](#) for humans and wildlife alike. During the month of April — “Earth Month” — follow along as we participate in the [Hillsborough Climate Challenge](#) and consider the climate benefits of simply returning our bodies to the earth in a conservation cemetery. Choosing Bluestem not only reduces wasteful funerary practices, but ensures the perpetual protection of resilient ecosystems, making natural burial a deeply meaningful final act of care for the planet.

Conservation at Bluestem

Our mantra, ***where nature is enough*** is posted on the wall in the barn and read by visitors every day. It serves as our reminder too, that this place we love and attend to is a special place for every new family member. We work hard to ***hold the quiet*** at Bluestem for our families, for the wildlife, and for ourselves.

Occasionally, when you visit, you may find a gathering of a private group or a community offering in full swing. Bookmark our [Events at Bluestem page](#) for periodic hikes, birdwalks, meditations and more, led by Bluestem staff, volunteers, and community members. [Please get in touch](#) if you have a group program or gathering you'd like to bring out our way.

And don't miss our [Moon Walk on March 31st](#), our [Workshop for Faith Leaders on May 1st](#), or the opportunity to watch the wildflowers emerge again this spring.

We look forward to seeing you!

Your Bluestem Stewards,
Katie, Lionel, Jeff and Heidi

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, Jennifer, Jacks, Jane, Ace and Bethany.



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