

Thanks to David Campbell for identifying Polk County's 'Most Wanted' [pam@conservingcarolina.org](mailto:pam@conservingcarolina.org)

Please send reports with photos to



**Ten-petal Anemone** (*Anemone berlandieri*)  
Flowers (lavender, white, or pink) from late February into mid-April. Stalks are typically about 12" in height, but may be somewhat taller.

the same time during summer to fall. around the spike - only a few are in bloom at yellow and densely crowded together

are pale greenish-yellow and densely crowded together  
tall. Stalkless flowers that usually grow 4-7' woody, square stems right growth habit and nial herb with an upright growing perennial (*Agastache nepetoides*)  
**hyssop**  
**Yellow Giant-**



## Polk County's Most Wanted Plants



Spotlighting Species of Interest in Polk County, NC

For more information, visit the Conserving Carolina website at [www.conservingcarolina.org/polk-countys-most-wanted-plants-animals](http://www.conservingcarolina.org/polk-countys-most-wanted-plants-animals)



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**American Bluehearts** (*Buchnera americana*)  
With a height of 15-30" and blue/lavender petals, American Bluehearts could be mistaken as an unusual species of Phlox by a casual observer.



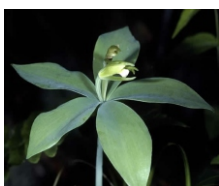
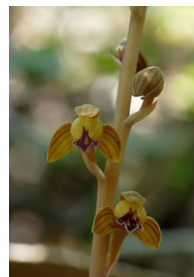
**Lobed Spleenwort**  
Lobed Spleenwort is the only fern in our area with the well-developed rounded lobes that occur on its leaves, particularly near the base of the plant.



**Spleenwort & Lobed Spleenwort** (*Asplenium bradleyi*)  
Both of these rock-loving ferns will be found growing in tiny crevices that remain relatively moist and contain small amounts of organic debris. The Bradley's Spleenwort is the only fern in our area with the well-developed rounded lobes that occur on its leaves, particularly near the base of the plant.



**Crested Coralroot** (*Hexalectris spicata*)  
A native orchid, grows in dry woodlands. Flowers are 3 yellowish brown sepals with brownish purple striations growing on a 6-32" flesh colored stalk blooming July-Aug.



**Small Whorled Pogonia** (*Isotria medeoloides*)  
Rare native orchid, about 10-14". Five or six grayish green oblong leaves 1-3.5"

form a single whorl around a greenish white stem, under the flower and/or fruit. Flowers are yellowish-green 0.5 to 1" long mid-May-early June.

**Common Juniper** (*Juniperus communis* var. *depressa*)  
The leaves are awl-shaped and needle-like, 1/4-7/8" long, almost perpendicular to the stem, and in whorls of three. The foliage is gray-green to blue-green in summer, sometimes has a yellow or brownish cast in the winter, often with a white line above and shiny dark green color beneath.



**Spring Coralroot** (*Coralorrhiza wisteriana*)  
Essentially leafless it can be identified by the 6-32" tall, flesh-colored flower stalk adorned with colorful flowers in a loose, terminal raceme during July-Aug.



**Curlyheads** (*Clematis ochroleuca*)  
An upright herbaceous plant from 10-20". Blooms white, mild to late spring. Spectacular seeds surrounded by 'hairy' appendages; seed heads often more obvious than the flowers.



**Indian Paintbrush** (*Castilleja coccinea*)  
A colorful plant adorned with red, yellow and green, Indian Paintbrush ranges from four inches in height to just over two feet. Flowers Apr.-June.

**Pale Purple Coneflower** (*Echinacea pallida*)  
It has pale pink flowers that, at maturity, are often greatly reflexed (pointing backwards). Plants range from 30-90 cm in height, and stems may be hairy or smooth. Blooms in summer.



**Pink Thoroughwort** (*Fleischmannia incarnata*)  
A member of the Aster family, it's closely allied to the 'Joe Pye Weeds' of the genus *Eupatorium*. The leaves are coarsely toothed. Flowers are

pink to purple and consist of many small 'heads.' Blooms late summer-fall.

**French Broad Heartleaf** (*Hexastylis rhombiformis*)  
The leaves are evergreen and leathery in appearance. The flowers are small and cryptically colored; sometimes obscured by the leaf litter. Locally, these flowers are sometimes referred to as 'Little Brown Jugs'. Blooms in spring.



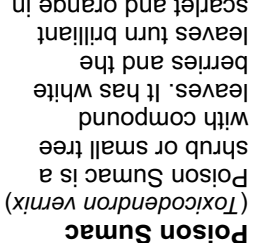





**Largeleaf Grass of Parnassus**  
(*Parnassia grandifolia*)  
Not a grass at all, *Parnassia* are wet-land plants, preferring bogs or streamside situations in sunny areas, or more wooded areas that admit a good deal of light. Flowers are beautiful and distinctive, “hovering” on the long main stem above the low-growing leaves. Flowers are white with green lines. Blooms late Aug.–Oct.




**Winter Grapefern**  
(*Sceptridium lunarioides*)  
Winter Grapefern completes its life cycle between November and very early spring. It’s very small, and extremely easy to miss. Often, the only clue to its presence is the (relatively) long spore-bearing stalk emerging from its basal leaves. Prefers dry fields, roadsides, and old cemeteries.




**Poison Sumac**  
(*Toxicodendron vernix*)  
Poison Sumac is a shrub or small tree with compound leaves. It has white berries and the leaves turn brilliant scarlet and orange in autumn. It is at this time of year that it’s the easiest to pick out amid other trees with similar leaves.




**False Hellebore**  
(*Veratrum woodii*)  
A perennial herb that prefers to grow in woodland soils. Flowers in July-August. The flower of this species occur on a 3-6' tall stalk ending in a branched cluster of flowers in which the branches contain short stalked maroon flowers.




**Sweet Betsy Trillium**  
(*Trillium cuneatum*)  
(Yellow Flower)  
The color of the petals is typically a deep burgundy or maroon with other rare variants being known. Yellow-flowered forms are not common. Along flood plains and lower slopes in rich cover forests, it blooms in early spring.




**Carolina Hemlock**  
(*Tsuga caroliniana*)  
One of the key characteristics used to tell the Carolina Hemlock is by the pattern of the leaves (needles) on the twigs. The leaves of the Carolina spread out from the twig at all angles in a whorl.




**Sweet Pinesap**  
(*Monotropsis odorata*)  
Sweet Pinesap has a sweet fragrance, like cloves. Flowers are light brown or tan, with purplish coloration. Blooms late Feb.–Mar. Habitat is dry pine-oak heaths. Often partially obscured by leaves or needles, as it barely pokes up above the leaf litter.




**Golden Club**  
(*Orontium aquaticum*)  
In the spring, long white stalks emerge that bear tiny yellow flowers near the tip of the stalk. Flowering and growth are best in wet, sunny locations during late spring and summer.




**Walter's Crownbeard**  
(*Verbesina walteri*)  
Lacking ray flowers ('petals'), it has the somewhat odd appearance of being a globular flower - in reality, many small individual flowers known as disk flowers are grouped together and thus look like a small ball. Blooms late Aug.–mid-Sep.




**Adam's Needle**  
(*Yucca filamentosa*)  
The plant can be identified by the leaves. Stiff, sword-like leaves can be up to 2½' long and are usually 1–3" wide with parallel veins. The leaf margin of younger leaves have fibrous, twisted white strands or filaments.




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**Small-headed Blazing-star**  
(*Liatris microcephala*)  
A member of the Aster family, the Small-headed Blazing-star was last seen in the county in 1921. It's best located when it's in bloom, Aug.–Oct. Multiple, erect, leafy flower stalks, about 2' in height arise from tufts of narrow, grass-like leaves.




**Barbara's Buttons**  
(*Marshallia grandiflora*)  
Perennial herb, 1–2' tall. Flowers range in color from white, pale purple, to pink, about 1–2" wide, May–Aug. Found in wet forests or meadows and on stream banks, land scoured by flooding.




**Cuthbert's Turtlehead**  
(*Chelone cuthbertii*)  
This perennial herb of meadows, sphagnum seeps, and swamp habitats grows to be 16-39" tall; leaves are 2-5" long and ¾-2" wide, lance-shaped with rounded bases, slightly toothed edges, and no leaf stalks. Leaves are hairless except along the veins and pale green on the underside. Flowers are ¾-1¼" long, pinkish-purple, tubular, inflated, two-lipped, and nearly closed at the tip; inside the flower is a tuft of yellow hairs, 4 fertile stamens, and a short, purple, sterile stamen. Flower spikes are distinctly 4-sided when viewed from above. It's best to look for this species during flowering; late July–Sep.




**Three Birds Orchid**  
(*Triphora trianthophora*)  
This terrestrial orchid's common name is an allusion to its appearance, said to resemble a bird. The flower is snow white with highlights of lavender and green. Leaves are simple and small. It's a diminutive (6" tall, max) and easily overlooked orchid that prefers shaded environs of rich woodlands. It grows in dark, damp humus and leaf litter under broad-leaved trees. Flowering occurs during Aug. and Sept., following a drop in temperature, when night temperatures fall 15-20° lower than daytime highs.




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**Fraser's Loosespice**  
(*Lysimachia fraseri*)  
Look for Fraser's Loosespice in the higher elevations of western Polk County on rich, wooded slopes, sunny roadsides, or thin soils around outcrops of mafic rock, particularly in the month of June, when its yellow flowers will make it conspicuous.



**Eastern Shooting Star**  
(*Primula meadia*)  
Eastern Shooting Star's basal rosette is amply supplied with elliptic to oblong leaves that are entire (untoothed) and can grow up to 1' in length; its scape (flowering stalk) can reach over 2' in length; flowers are starkly white with heavily reflexed ('swept back') petals exposing the united and pointed stamens. Eastern Shooting Star blooms from March until May, with fruiting taking place from May until June. Favored habitats include rich woodlands, bluffs, ridges, and occasionally bottomlands.



**Eastern Wahoo**  
(*Euonymus atropurpureus*)  
Wahoo, our native Burning Bush, is not a 'stand out' species in terms of general appearance. It has simple, opposite, and finely toothed leaves with erect-hairy lower leaf surfaces and petioles (the stalk that attaches the leaf blade to the stem). Unusual is the green coloration of the twigs, which persist even in winter. The fruits of Wahoo are bright pink and red, which enables them to be seen easily from a distance; a good clue when searching for the plant.



**Butternut**  
(*Juglans cinerea*)  
Butternut, sometimes referred to as White Walnut, is a medium-sized tree species that may attain heights of between 50-70 feet tall. Butternut leaves are compound, toothed, and alternate, with an aromatic scent if bruised. This species is deciduous, with leaves turning a pleasing yellow coloration in autumn. Butternut fruits are distinctive, with rough longitudinal texture, and pointed 'tip' at one end. Fruits of Butternut are edible and highly sought after by squirrels and humans alike.



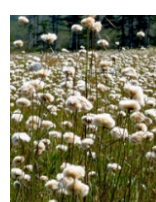
**Big Bluestem**  
(*Andropogon gerardii*)  
Big Bluestem is a distinctive grass, often reaching heights of six feet or more. Leaf blades are typically about two feet in length. As its name suggests, this species has a bluish-green aspect to its stalk and leaves when in active growth. Big Bluestem becomes very obvious when in flower, displaying a 'three prong' racemes of flowers.



**Eastern Figwort**  
(*Scrophularia marilandica*)  
Eastern Figwort can attain heights of between 3' and 8'. Stems are four-angled and grooved. Leaves are opposite, ovate, dentate (toothed), slender-petiolate (leaf stalk), and may reach lengths of over 6" with widths of almost 4". Leaves and stems are largely hairless. Flowers are borne in slender, lengthy panicles (branching cluster of flowers) up to 1' long, occurring at the top of the plant. Each tubular flower is small (not more than half an inch), with green leafy bracts subtending maroon "petals." Anthers are yellow and the mature seed capsule contains many tiny seeds. Look for Eastern Figwort in low damp woods, upslope from floodplains, or growing around seepage in areas dominated by mafic rocks.



**Tawny Cottongrass**  
(*Eriophorum virginicum*)  
Cottongrass, a sedge, is so-named due to the resemblance of the mature fruiting inflorescence (the complete flower head of a plant including stems, stalks, bracts, and flowers) to a "ball" of cotton, making it readily visible to observers, even from a distance. Although the leaf blades are very thin, Tawny Cottongrass can reach over two feet in height.



**Shingle Oak**  
(*Quercus imbricaria*)  
Shingle Oak is a medium sized tree, reaching heights between 30-60 feet. It has a rounded crown and a pleasing appearance. An unusual and distinctive characteristic of Shingle Oak is that it has a large, unlobed leaf (unlike most other Oak species in our region that do possess lobed leaves). Shingle Oak leaves are between 3.5-7 inches in length and between .75-2 inches in width. The leaf margin is smooth and untoothed. The tip of the leaf possesses a single bristle. In addition, the underside of the leaf of Shingle Oak is tomentose (hairy).



**Whiteleaf Sunflower**  
(*Helianthus glaucophyllus*)  
The Whiteleaf Sunflower is distinguished from other sunflowers due to its markedly white and glabrous (smooth) under surfaces of its leaves. This species has both ray (the 'petals') and disk (the 'center') flowers. Reaching heights of over 3', with clearly visible small, yellow flowers borne in terminal clusters, its leaves are 3" to 6" in length, dentate (toothed), greenish above, and whitish beneath (the key id feature). This plant is typically associated with mid-elevation forested areas occurring in glades, canopy openings, or powerline right-of-ways.



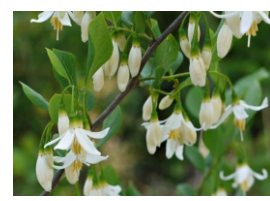
**Large Yellow Lady's Slipper Orchid**  
(*Cypripedium parviflorum* var. *pubescens*)  
Attaining heights of over 24", with prominently alternate, veined (plicate) leaves and a bright yellow flower (pouch), there is no mistaking this plant. The lateral petals are typically twisted and brownish in coloration. Leaves, and particularly stem, are noticeably hairy (pubescent). Flowering typically occurs in the month of May. Plants often occur singly or in small groups. Purposeful searching on north and northeast-facing slopes in moist hardwood forests underlain by mafic rock would be the best strategy to find this spectacular orchid.



**Thin-pod Wild White Indigo**  
(*Baptisia albescens*)  
This member of the Pea Family may give the appearance of a Lupine species, but is much larger, with total heights of some plants exceeding one meter. Flowers are white and occur in a 'spike' that surmounts a stem with numerous trifoliate ('in threes') leaves. When occurring in a group of several plants, Thin-pod White Wild Indigo forms a striking display that is not soon forgotten.



**American Snowbell**  
(*Styrax americanus*)  
This beautiful deciduous flowering shrub ranges from 1-3 meters in height. It prefers to grow in swampy or streamside locations that may experience occasional to frequent flooding. Flowering typically occurs in April and May. The twigs often appear cracked and in a zigzag pattern. The buds are located above the leaf scar and appear scurfy or scaly. Leaves are alternate and typically narrowly elliptic (oval) to ovate (egg shaped) or obovate (egg-shaped with the narrower end at the base) and are usually 2-8 cm long. The leaf margins, or edge, may be wavy or toothed. The flowers are bell-shaped, white and have five 1/2" recurved lobes (petals).





with a flowering period of Sept-Oct. mesic to dry-mesic deciduous woodlands relatively numerous. Preferred habitats are pale lavender with a yellow center and (smooth) or very weakly toothed. Flowers the leaf margin (outer edge) is usually entire 3-6 inches in length, and up to 3 feet. Leaves are that reaches heights of a rhizomatous perennial was found near Tryon. It's twentieth century where it County since the early not been reported in Polk Smooth Blue Aster (*Symphiotrichum laeve*)



Swampy sites. Sometimes, observers may be fortunate and see many individuals flowering in one place, however, seeing one or just a few plants at a site is more typical. Although there is a record of this lovely orchid from Polk County, it has not been seen or recorded in many decades. Ragged Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera lacera*) The plants typically range in size from 1' to 2' in height and have 4 to 6 alternate leaves. In our region, the Ragged Fringed Orchid blooms from late June to mid-July. Look for it in sunny openings in bogs, seepages, and other swampy sites. Sometimes, observers may be fortunate and see many individuals flowering in one place, however, seeing one or just a few plants at a site is more typical. Although there is a record of this lovely orchid from Polk County, it has not been seen or recorded in many decades.



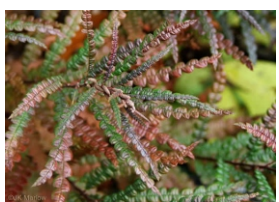
**Pitch Pine** (*Pinus rigida*) Pitch Pine is uncommon in Polk County, but there are several records of its occurrence at higher elevation sites in the western parts of the county. As we progress from autumn into winter, keep a look out on dry, south-facing, rocky slopes. Pitch Pine is unique among the Pines of our region in that it has stiff needles mainly in fascicles (bundles) of three. Tufts of needles are often seen protruding directly out of the bark on the trunk of the tree. The bark on the main trunk of mature trees is rough and divided into many deeply furrowed channels. The female cones are flat-bottomed and armed with stout prickles



**Coral Greenbrier** (*Smilax walteri*) Coral Greenbrier has bright red fruits, unlike the bluish-black fruits of other Greenbriers. It is confined to wet sites, such as bogs, swamp forests, or floodplains. Coral Greenbrier may also be separated from other members of the genus by the color of its flowers which tend to be light-brown.



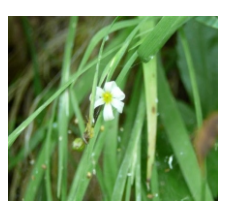
**Sweetfern** (*Comptonia peregrina*) Sweetfern is not a true fern at all, but is a member of the Wax Myrtle family. This rhizomatous shrub may attain heights of almost five feet (but commonly shorter), Sweetfern has alternate to sub-opposite leaves that are very aromatic when crushed or bruised. Leaves are dark green, long, and narrow with lobed indentations that give the plant a somewhat fern-like appearance.



**Large-tooth Aspen** (*Populus grandidentata*) Able to reach heights of over 60 feet on favored sites, the Large-tooth Aspen is often seen between 30 - 50 feet in total height. The young bark is smooth, and pale yellowish or gray, becoming darker and deeply furrowed when mature. The shape of the leaves is typically ovate with a blunt tip, and between 6 - 15 'teeth' on each side of the leaf (hence the common and scientific names). The fruits are catkins, between 3 - 5 inches in overall length.



**White Irisette** (*Sisyrinchium dichotomum*) Barely attaining over one foot in height, the diminutive and beautiful White Irisette has flat, branching stems, with white flowers that are borne on terminal stalks in late June to mid-July. A single flower has six white petals with yellow bases, each measuring up to 0.75 centimeters. White Irisette prefers to grow in dry-mesic woods with an open canopy, and it thrives in the circumneutral soils that are found in our region.



**Appalachian Loosestrife** (*Lysimachia tonsa*) Appalachian Loosestrife is a rhizomatous perennial herb with stems that range from 12-30 inches in length. Stems are typically covered in numerous, erect glandular hairs. Leaves are simple, lanceolate or ovate, and alternate with a short petiole. Flowers are yellow, with five sepals that are often reddish at their base. In our region, flowering occurs from late June to late July.



**Four-leaf Milkweed** (*Asclepias quadrifolia*) This uncommon milkweed has 4 leaves which are 2 to 5 inches in length. Most plants are between 18 and 24 inches in height. The white flowers are borne in loose terminal umbels (clusters) from mid-May to early June in our region. Preferred habitat is openings along or within mesic forests, preferably in basic soils that are underlain by mafic and other rocks. This species is uncommon in our region.



**Doll's Eyes** (*Actaea pachypoda*) This member of the Buttercup family attains a height of approximately 2 to 2 1/2 feet. The leaves are alternately compound and coarsely dentate (toothed). The small white and fragrant flowers are borne on a terminal spike and are seen in late April to mid-May in our region. Sometimes also referred to as White Baneberry, Doll's Eyes is so-named due to the appearance of its mature fruits that are white with a black/dark purple spot or 'eye' in the center of the outside of the fruit. Another important fact about Doll's Eyes - the fruit is poisonous, so do not eat them!

