

Thanks to David Campbell for identifying Polk County's 'Most Wanted' plants!

Please send reports with photos to [pam@conservingcarolina.org](mailto:pam@conservingcarolina.org)

usually about 12" in height, but may be somewhat taller.



**Ten-petaled 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.

around the spike - only a few are in bloom at the same time during summer to fall.



**Yellow Giant-hyssop** (*Agastache nepetoides*)  
 A fast-growing perennial herb with an upright growth habit and woody, square stems that usually grow 4-7' tall. Stalkless flowers are pale greenish-yellow and densely crowded together around the spike - only a few are in bloom at the same time during summer to fall.

## 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.

**Bradley's 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's stem base or 'stipe' is darker, gradually becoming light green near the tip of the leaf. The 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.



**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, mid 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.



**Carolina Hemlock**  
*(Tsuga caroliniana)*  
 One of the key characteristics used to tell the Carolina from the Eastern 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 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.



**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 the easiest to pick out amid other trees with similar leaves.



**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.



**Walter's Crownbeard**  
*(Verbesina walteri)*  
 Lacking ray flowers ('petals'), it has the somewhat odd appearance of being a globe-lar 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.



**False Hellebore**  
*(Veratum 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.



**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.



**Cuthbert's Turtlehead**  
*(Chelone cuthbertii)*  
 This perennial herb of mountain bogs, wet 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.



**Largeleaf Grass of Parnassia**  
*(Parnassia grandifolia)*  
 Not a grass at all, *Parnassia* are wetland 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.



**Sweet Pinesap**  
*(Monotropis 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.



**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.



**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.



**Spotted Bee Balm**  
*(Monarda punctata var. arkansana)*  
 Of the mint family, it has aromatic leaves & flowers, likes dry forests & open, sunny, well-drained areas. Flowers July-Aug., a beautiful blend of purples & yellows. Square stems have coarse bristles and fine hairs.



**Allegheny Spurge**  
*(Pachysandra procumbens)*  
 Prefers moist, rich woods. The white spike bloom appears in Mar.-Apr., but the plant can also be identified by the 3" alternate, toothed, egg-shaped leaves, slightly covered with short hairs, mottled with milky white splotches.





seen or recorded in many decades. orchid from Polk County, it has not been Although there is a record of this lovely plants at a site is more typical. place, however, seeing one or just a few and see many individuals flowering in one Sometimes, observers may be fortunate other swampy sites.



**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

coloration makes it easy to miss. not typically large and the plant's *Rhododendron maximum*. Populations are stream or other water source and under Look carefully in deep shade, close to a two divided and spreading rounded lobes. green. Flowers are 1/4" – 3/8" long with combinations of white, brown, purple, or flowers that are up to 15 unique-looking wider than long. It produces green leaves that are inches in height, this orchid has two opposite, dark Always under twice (Listera smallii) **Kidneyleaf Twayblade**



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 do not eat them!



**Doll's Eyes**  
(*Actaea pachypoda*)  
This member of the Buttercup family attains a height of approximately two to two and a half feet. The leaves are alternately dentate (toothed). The small white and fragrant flowers are borne on a

**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.



**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.



**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.



**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.



**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.



**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.



the stem are alternate and clasping. Flowers are pale lavender with a yellow center and relatively numerous. Preferred habitats are mesic to dry-mesic deciduous woodlands with a flowering period of Sept-Oct.



reaches heights of up to 3'. Stems are round and smooth. Leaves on found near Tryon. It century where it was reported in Polk County since the early 20th This Aster has not been (Symphyotrichum laeve) **Smooth Blue Aster**



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 do not eat them!