



## Early Spring Update 2024



Rue Anemone, also known as Windflower, blooming at Swiftbrook

I'm uncertain whether I'm rushing the season or the season is rushing me. We're growing accustomed to the spring ephemerals popping up much sooner than March, but seeing the Alabama Snow Wreath boldly leafing out in the third week of February was surprising. We seem to have earned our USDA reclassification to hardiness Zone 8A, and our low temperature so far this winter (18 degrees) keeps us solidly there.

Our mild weather has been perfect for that most worthy winter endeavor — removing invasive plant species. Next week is National Invasive Species Awareness Week. The [North Carolina Forest Service](#) and [City of Raleigh](#) are observing the week with a variety of events and opportunities for volunteers to assist with invasive plant removal on public land.

I got to meet some volunteers helping City of Raleigh Parks staff while working on my story for the upcoming issue of [Triangle Gardener](#). The article focuses on the recently updated list of invasive plants for our region. Our changing climate not only impacts bloom times, it also affects which exotic plants become Severe Threats.

Invasive removal has been a big part of gardening at Swiftbrook since the beginning. We inherited English Ivy planted by previous owners and Japanese Honeysuckle which has been taking over abandoned fields and invading woodlands since the early 1900s.

## Upcoming Events

February 26 - March 3 Invasive Species Awareness Week  
<https://www.nisaw.org>

March 9 Reid Garden Workday  
10:00 am-noon  
Raleigh, NC  
[NC Native Plant Society](#)

March 23 Inviting Native Plants  
1:00-3:00 pm  
Raleigh, NC  
[Workshop at Swiftbrook Gardens](#)

March 31 Reid Garden Easter Open Day  
2:00-5:00 pm  
Raleigh, NC  
[NC Native Plant Society](#)

April 13 Reid Garden Workday  
9:00 am-noon  
Raleigh, NC  
[NC Native Plant Society](#)

April 27 - 28 Oakwood Garden Club Tour  
Raleigh, NC  
[Historic Oakwood](#)

May 4 Spring Native Plant Sale  
9:00 am-1:00 pm  
Chapel Hill, NC  
[North Carolina Botanical Garden](#)

May 7 Habitat Gardens  
12:30 pm  
Raleigh, NC  
Presentation for Jewish Federation of Greater Raleigh

May 11 Reid Garden Workday  
9:00 am-noon  
Raleigh, NC  
[NC Native Plant Society](#)

May 20 Doing Less and Getting More  
4:00 pm  
Wilson, NC  
Presentation for Wilson County Master Gardeners

For updates on future events visit my [website](#) or Gardener by Nature's [facebook page](#).



Alabama Snow Wreath

The aftermath of Hurricane Fran included the incursion of Japanese Stilt Grass into our woods. Other invasive species are here by our doing. We planted Wisteria, Nandina, and Porcelainberry before we knew they posed a threat.

When I began working on the landscape at Swiftbrook, I loved any plant that didn't die. But I soon realized I didn't want a plant I could not kill. The best example of the latter is Italian Arum (*Arum italicum*), also known as Lords and Ladies. The plant's dramatically patterned wintergreen leaves resist herbicide, and its tendency to offset bulbs make it almost impossible to dig.

On a visit last winter, I was dismayed to see Italian Arum choking out spring ephemerals along a stream in a Greensboro city park. For now, it is listed as a Significant, rather than Severe threat, but I expect that status to change as Italian Arum becomes more widespread.

Our winter workdays at the Margaret Reid Wildflower Garden include weeding invasive plants from the floodplain and other parts of the garden. In recent years Amy Mackintosh, who owns the Reid Garden, began removing

some other non-native plants planted by the original owner. Lenten Roses and Poet's Laurel were popular plants for winter interest in Reid's time and remain so today. While Poet's Laurel isn't listed, and Lenten Roses are ranked a Lesser Threat, both were invading the floodplain and other parts of the Reid Garden.

Our desire for lower maintenance led us to the same decision regarding Poet's Laurel and Lenten Roses. After 20 years in our garden, Poet's Laurel had only recently started to reseed, and small plants are easily removed. Eliminating the Lenten Roses will be more time-consuming, but I'll no longer have the annual chore of weeding their seedlings from my moss paths.

I hope you'll share this newsletter and my website with others who are interested in learning about native plants. I offer consultations for those who want to create wildlife habitat in a sustainable landscape and share our experiences at Swiftbrook in my blog, [Homegrown Habitat](#).

Registration details for my spring [Inviting Natives workshop](#) are on my website.

*Happy Spring,  
Dale*



Kate Dixon (kneeling) along with other volunteers and City of Raleigh Parks staff after a successful workday removing invasive plants at Windemere Beaver Dam Park. Learn more about this group's work from my article in next month's [Triangle Gardener](#) magazine. (Photo courtesy of City of Raleigh)