

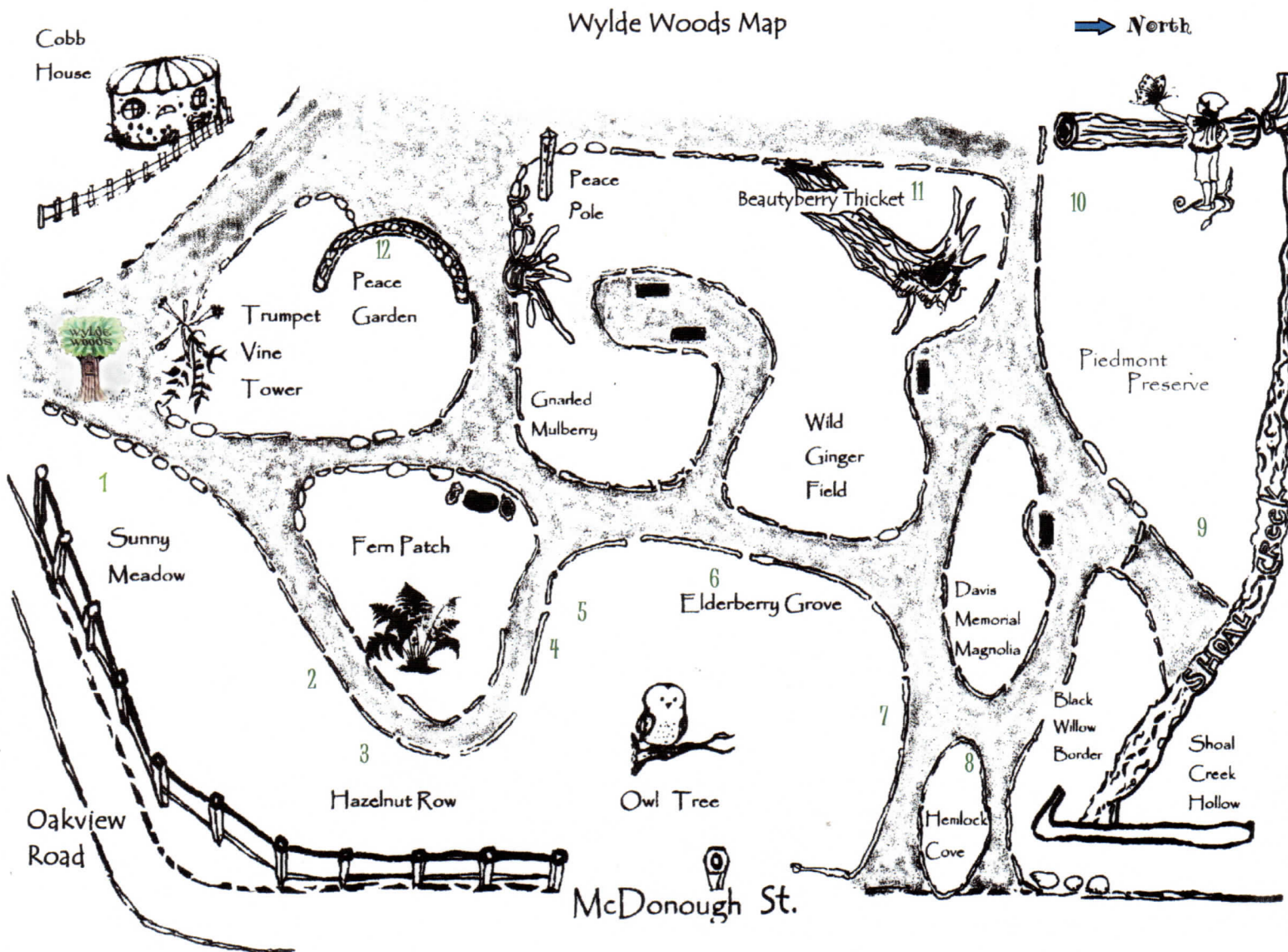
A Tour of the Wylde Woods



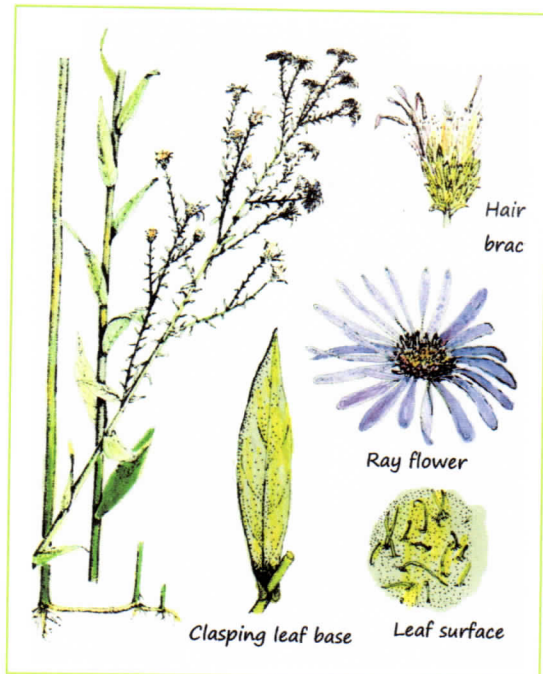
The Wylde Woods is a native plant garden at the eastern edge of the Wylde Center's Oakhurst Garden. It is cared for by a group of DeKalb County Master Gardener volunteers in order to educate the community about the benefit and beauty of a Piedmont native plant ecosystem.

Below is a map of the fourteen planting areas that reflect the amount of sun, soil, and moisture in that particular area of the garden. Each of these conditions favors certain native plants. There are twelve numbered signs at different areas of the garden with information describing plants or features of interest in that location. Entering on Oakview Road at the Wylde Woods tree sign follow the path on the right to "sign 1" in green on this map.

Continue on the right to "sign 2" ... finishing at "sign 12" in front of the "peace garden". Even though the garden is small, when you take time to look, there is much to see and learn.



Sign 1 The Sunny Meadow



The sunny meadow in the spring and fall is filled with flowers, bees, butterflies and birds.

In March and April columbine, fothergilla, and Dogwood are blooming. In October the asters are blooming and one of the most beautiful is the Georgia aster pictured here. At one time this aster was rare but it thrives here and forms a colony of rhizomes that are genetically similar. The leaf feels hairy and clasps its stem.

By November dried seed heads of flowers provide food for the birds and food and shelter for insects.

Sign 2 How Mushrooms Grow



This ceramic sculpture is one of several done by Emory University students to describe what happens in plants and the soil. The shapes here are revealing the invisible.

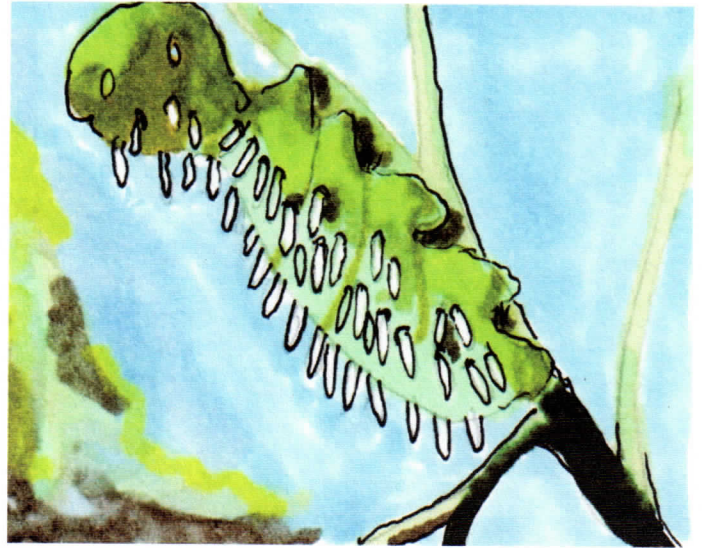
The squiggly figures on the pot represent the microorganisms that are in the soil. Healthy soil is full of living things that create food for plants and animals living here.

This sculpture emphasizes the moisture needed by mushrooms to grow. When mushroom spores are blown by the wind and settle on a log they produce a thread-like mycelium. The mycelium can eat the sugar produced by the fresh log then grow and reproduce the mushroom.

Sign 3 Caterpillar Invasion

The ceramic sculpture here illustrates, the unwilling host, a cabbage white butterfly caterpillar. The projections are the larvae of a parasitic wasp that have emerged from the body of the caterpillar. The wasp larvae are careful not to harm the important organs of the caterpillar since they rely on it for nutrition. When the larvae have grown to full size they will use their teeth to slice their way out of the caterpillar. The caterpillar is helpless once the larvae release a chemical to paralyze the caterpillar. As the larvae emerge the caterpillar will defend them from predators.

The relationship in the garden between many living things creates connection that supports the ecosystem as a whole.



Sign 4 Making the Invisible Visible

The clay sculpture here is a metaphor for the invisible processes that occur in a community garden. Things appear simple until you take a closer look. We need to get on the ground and in the dirt to really see the complexity.

This piece represents plant decay. The bowls are covered in patterns and textures that represent the wide variety of organisms known as saprophytes, which cause trees and leaves to decay into dust. Bacteria, fungi (molds and mushrooms), and worms help in this important part of the cycle of life from emerging seed, to growth, death, and then decay. This huge tree is dying and will one day be dust.



Sign 5 The Old Snag



This tree has shed its bark and lost all its leaves but can contribute more to habitat than when it was alive.

Look up at the top and see the hole in the tree that is a home for owls. They sleep in the day but you might hear them calling just before the sun sets. Insects breakdown the wood in this dead tree while providing a food source for woodpeckers.

Two arborists inspected this tree and indicated that when it fell it would be caught by the two beside it and not injure people visiting the woods. Because this tulip tree is surrounded by its own species there is an exchange of water and nutrients within this grove of tulip trees.

Sign 6 Food Forest

A large Elderberry used to fill this area but increasing shade has caused it to die back. When it thrived birds ate the berries and planted them around the woods. Now elderberry seedlings are coming up throughout the Wylde Woods and still a few are growing here. An elderberry has more protein, Vitamin A and calories than a blueberry.

Behind the elderberry is a line of three small beaked hazelnut trees. Dry and rocky soil here helps this tree grow well. The thick mat of roots from this tree prevents other plants from growing under them. The slender spring blooms are wind pollinated in the spring and the nuts are ripe in August. They are sweeter and smaller than the hazelnuts sold in stores.



Sign 7 Sphinx Moth Home

Landscaping with native plants provides a food source for native wildlife and can be beautiful. The *Hydrangea aborescens* seen here is the favorite food for the Hydrangea Sphinx moth.

The other shade tolerant shrub with blue-green leaves is a *Fothergilla major*, Mt. Airy cultivar. The leaves are as lovely as the flower and in the fall they are red-orange. The honey-like fragrance of the white flowers attracts a lot of pollinators. But neither deer nor rabbits will eat this shrub.

Both of these plants are drought tolerant and resistant to disease.



Sign 8 Hemlock Cove



The land here slopes towards the creek and provides this planting bed with increased moisture and deeper soil. This forest cove-like ecosystem makes this a perfect spot to grow wild geranium and hemlock.

Geranium maculatum is an easy plant to grow and blooms for about a month. Birds and small mammals eat the seeds. Bees and butterflies love the nectar of the flowers.

This hemlock grows slowly but can live 600 years. The woolly adelgid is killing the large groves of hemlocks in rural areas but is not able to move through the less dense groves in urban areas.

Sign 9 Piedmont Preserve

Two of the plants in this area were rescued from a site on the Yellow River with the Georgia Native Plant Society.

In front is Pale Indian Plantain which starts out as a flat rosette of basal leaves but can grow up to six feet tall over the summer. The leaves were crushed and used as a seasoning by Native Americans.

On the left is *Asimina parviflora*, commonly called dwarf pawpaw. It produces a fruit that tastes like a papaya. The pawpaw's leaves are food for the Zebra Swallowtail butterfly larvae.

River cane, *Arundinaria gigantea*, growing behind these plants is the only native bamboo in Georgia. The leaves feed several Piedmont species of butterfly larvae.



Sign 10 Moss Magic



Here is another sculpture that makes visible the magic of the life cycle of moss. A moss does not form flowers, roots, or seeds. It forms a thin stem covered with leaves. Moss is the oldest plant genus in the Georgia Piedmont.

The shapes in this sculpture represent the inner composition of a moss. The top of the sculpture represents the DNA of the moss. Below that is a chloroplast where a moss conducts photosynthesis, which is the process of turning sunlight into food.

The beautiful green velvet of moss can break down rocks and soil to help other plants grow. It also soaks up water like a sponge and prevents erosion on a slope in hard rain.

Sign 11 Beautyberry Thicket



A beautyberry has pink flowers full of nectar that bees love. The purple berries in late summer through fall are an important food for migrating birds. The dense thicket of foliage provides shelter for all kinds of animals.

Climbing through this vigorous shrub are vines of *Passiflora lutea* with small cream colored flowers. Fritillary butterflies lay their eggs on the leaves so when the larvae hatch they can eat the leaves.

A small Sassafras tree sits in the center of this area. This tree does not grow well when ozone levels are high.

Sign 12 Peace Garden

The Peace Garden has plants from all over the world. The *Salvia elegans* is native to Mexico and Guatemala and is a favorite food of the ruby throated hummingbird. In folk medicine it is used to treat anxiety and high blood pressure. Butterflies also like the nectar and in the fall it can be covered by all kinds of insects. This salvia blooms when the daylight is less starting in September. It will not bloom if artificial light from a street lamp is nearby. Both the leaves and flowers can be eaten by people and the young leaves taste best.



Favorites from the Wylde Woods



Passion flower



Fruit of the passion flower



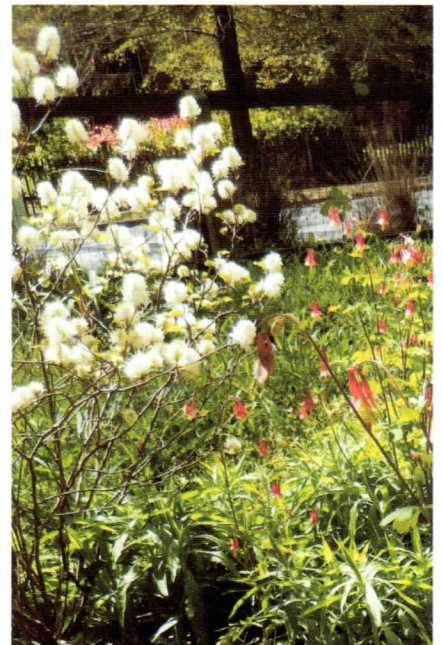
Shoal Creek



August Wylde Wood flowers



Stokesia and Coneflowers



Fothergilla and Columbine