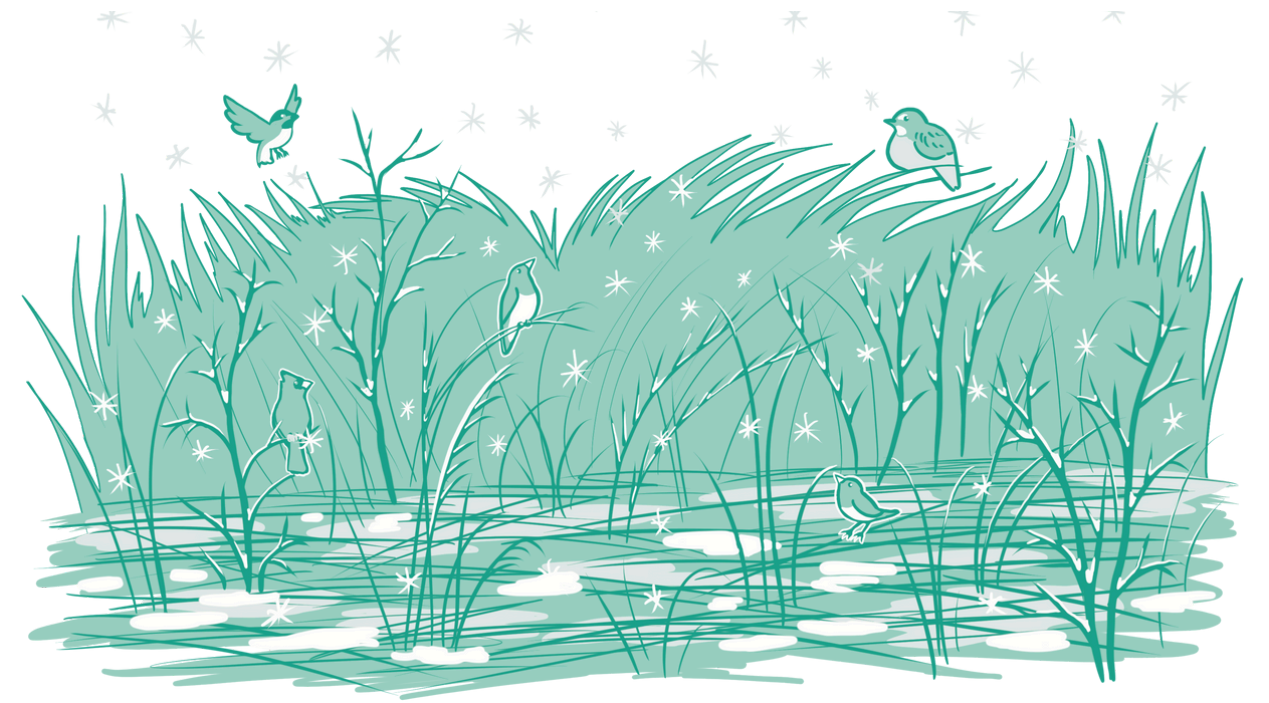


There is a lot of conversation happening around the importance of “keeping your woody stems” to serve as habitat, especially for our native cavity-nesting bees.

However, there remains some confusion as to when and how to manage those woody stems. Let’s simplify that!

Winter Months

Leave your woody stemmed plants standing throughout the winter months to provide overwintering wildlife with food (in the form of berries and seeds) and refugia against the harsh elements.



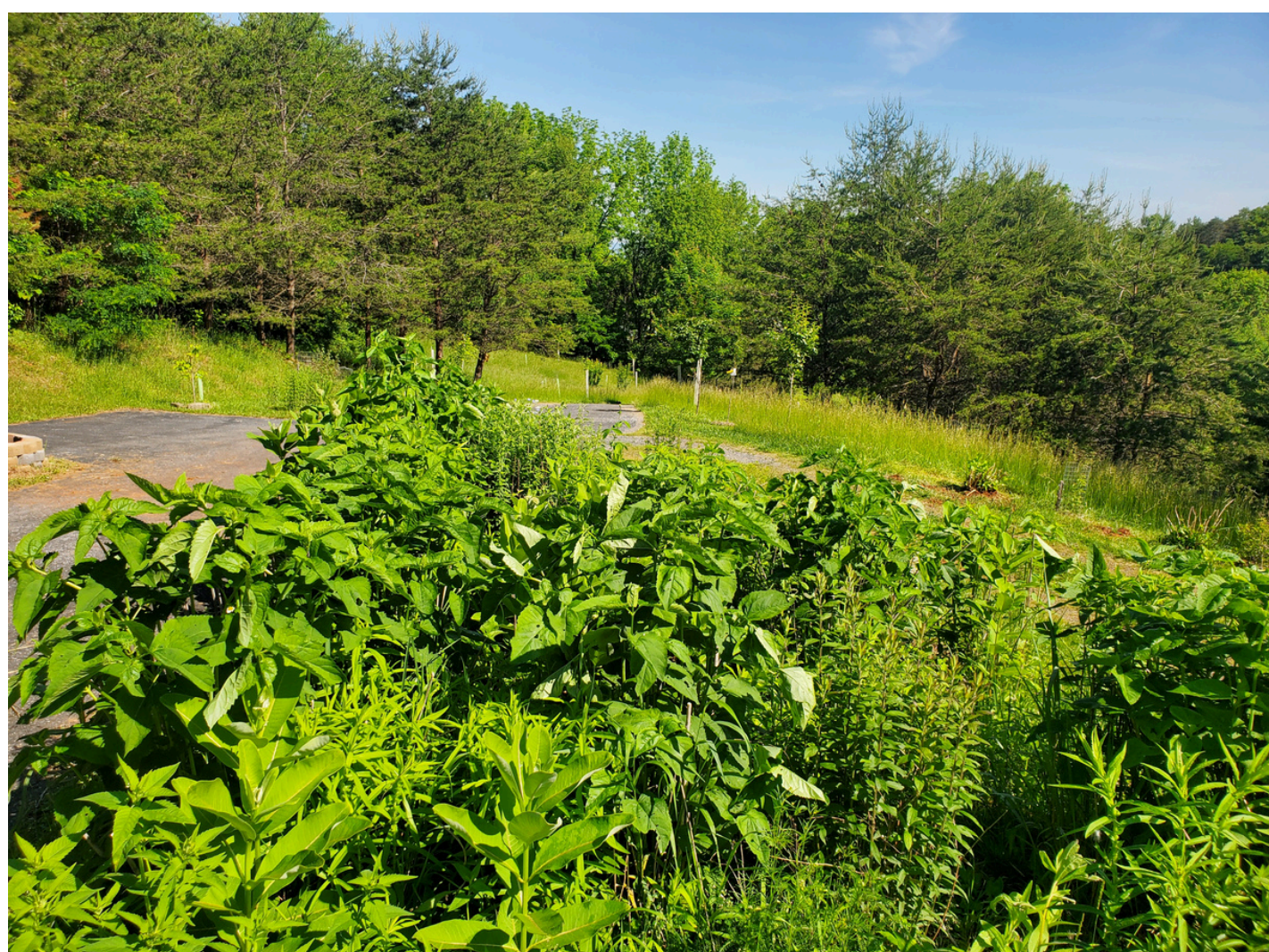
February

The old and desiccated stems that are still standing should be cut down to 12-24” in height. This can be done with garden shears or sickle bar mower and accomplishes the following:

- The cut stems are now shorter and therefore stronger; they’ll stay upright and accessible to bees longer into the season.
- More sunlight can now penetrate through, allowing this year’s growth to get underway unencumbered.
- The cut stems now have an opening where you cut them. The native cavity-nesting bees that want to nest in those stalks can now access them.

March to Autumn

New Spring growth grows up around the old cut stems, which remain standing and ready for use by cavity-nesting bees.



Below you can see a small carpenter bee occupying one of the cut stems from the garden pictured to the left. Female bees lay their eggs inside the stems, that will hatch as larvae just days later. Males, such as the one below, sometimes guard the cavity opening.

