

2026

Alabama Phenology Calendar

“I will argue that every scrap of biological diversity is priceless, to be learned and cherished, and never to be surrendered without a struggle.”

E. O. Wilson



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Alabama Phenology Calendar

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is pleased to share the 2026 Alabama Phenology Calendar. Phenology is the study of the timing of seasonal events in nature, such as the blooming of dogwood trees and the mating of whitetail deer. Wildlife emerging from hibernation, birds nesting and migrating, and flowers blooming are just a few of the phenological events that happen all around us every year. For many, phenological events are important markers of the changing seasons.

Most phenological records, including those that form the basis for this calendar, reflect the dates on which observers recorded the year's first occurrence of events in nature. Those records alert us to when events are expected to occur, and over time, they help us understand how organisms are adapting to environmental shifts.

Variables, such as temperature, clearly affect when an event actually occurs, but other variables affect when an event is detected by observers. Hence, there can be—and often is—a time lag between when an event occurs and when it is detected. Both the environment and observers' behavior affect phenological records.

Environmental variables that influence the actual date on which the first events of the year occur include latitude, elevation, exposure, temperature, and unique local climatic conditions. Seasonal events tend to occur earlier at lower latitudes and elevations as explained by Hopkins Law. Furthermore, events typically happen earlier on southern versus northern exposures and in warmer urban "heat islands" versus cooler rural areas. Most of these patterns relate, in one way or another, to temperature. Therefore, it is important to understand that the general dates predicted in this calendar may vary somewhat depending on prevailing environmental conditions each year and on specific environmental conditions at the location where you are.

The behavior of observers also influences when events are first noted, and it can be important to consider observer bias when interpreting phenological records.

Among the variables that influence when events get detected are earlier detections by active observers than by casual observers; earlier detections when observers anticipate the event than when observers do not anticipate the event; earlier detections when searching daily than when searching less frequently; earlier detections when more observers search than when fewer observers search; and earlier detections when larger areas are searched than when smaller areas are searched.

Today, phenological recordkeeping has become increasingly popular among citizen scientists, who make most of their field observations on weekends. Researchers now acknowledge the resulting "weekend bias" and take it into account when interpreting data. Fortunately, the increasing number of individuals now recording phenological observations has improved our ability to attribute changes in dates over time to environmental factors such as climate change.

About the Dates

Recognizing that the dates for some events have been advancing in response to ongoing climate change, this calendar presents the earliest date on which you might reasonably expect an event to occur in 2026 in central Alabama. However, seasonal temperatures for the coming year cannot be predicted. So, be aware that if Alabama's climate is unusually warm or cold in 2026, the dates on which some events actually happen could vary by days or even weeks.

Guide for Using Hopkins' Bioclimatic Law in Various Alabama Cities

Location	Coordinates			Approximate Phenological Date Adjustment
	Latitude	Longitude	Altitude	
Montgomery	32.3792° N, 86.3077° W		240 feet	0 days (baseline)
Tuscaloosa	33.2098° N, 87.5692° W		222 feet	+3 days
Auburn	32.6099° N, 85.4808° W		702 feet	+6 days
Birmingham	33.5186° N, 86.8104° W		643 feet	+8 days
Anniston	33.6598° N, 85.8316° W		719 feet	+10 days
Florence	34.7998° N, 87.6773° W		548 feet	+11 days
Gadsden	34.0143° N, 86.0066° W		541 feet	+12 days
Huntsville	34.7304° N, 86.5861° W		600 feet	+12 days
Dothan	31.2232° N, 85.3905° W		322 feet	-4 days
Mobile	30.6954° N, 88.0399° W		10 feet	-11 days

For more information, see Extension publication "Estimating Alabama Bloom Times Using Hopkins' Bioclimatic Law" (FOR-2102) online at www.aces.edu.

2026



Hopkins Law

In 1889, Andrew D. Hopkins, an American entomologist, described how changes in elevation, latitude, and longitude influenced the timing of these seasonal events. Hopkins Law states, "... the time of occurrence of a given periodical event in life activity in temperate North America is at the general average rate of 4 days for each 1 degree of latitude, 5 degrees of longitude, 400 feet of altitude, later northward, eastward, and upward in the spring and early summer, and the reverse in late summer and autumn." That means spring arrives later as you go farther north, higher in elevation, or farther west from the Atlantic coast. For example, if you use Montgomery, Alabama, as a baseline and want to estimate the difference in bloom time for the same plant in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, when using Hopkins Law, you can estimate that bloom time to be approximately 3 days later in Tuscaloosa than in Montgomery. That same plant might also bloom 11 days earlier in Mobile than in Montgomery.

Alabama Cooperative Extension

Created by an Act of Congress in 1914, the Alabama Extension Service was formed in 1915 to teach practical and technical skills to farmers and generally improve the lives of rural residents. Today, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System is the primary outreach and engagement organization for the land-grant mission of Alabama A&M University and Auburn University, in cooperation with Tuskegee University. You will find an Extension office in all 67 Alabama counties, supported by Extension agents across the state and specialists at partner universities.







White-Tailed Deer

Throughout most of Alabama, the peak of the white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) breeding season, commonly referred to as the "rut," occurs in January. During this time, male white-tailed deer (bucks) are actively searching for female deer (does) to mate with. Deer are much more active during this time of year, so be cautious when driving. This is also an exciting time for hunters to be in the woods, hoping to harvest a deer for food. Approximately 300,000 deer are harvested each year by hunters, contributing to numerous meals of highly nutritious, tasty venison. Moreover, deer hunting has an economic impact of more than \$2 billion annually in Alabama.



January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 New Year's Day	2 Coyote mating season begins
4	5	6	7 Raccoon mating season begins	8	9	10
11	12 Black bear cub birthing season begins	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.	20	21	22 Bobcat mating season begins	23	24
25 Prune dormant trees	26	27	28	29 Chipmunks begin to emerge from hibernation	30 Begin grafting pecan trees	31



2026

February



Groundhog

The groundhog (*Marmota monax*), sometimes referred to as a woodchuck, whistle pig, or marmot, is a rodent and member of the squirrel family, Sciuridae. Groundhogs are a type of tunneling rodent that occurs mostly in the northern two-thirds of Alabama. They are also a true hibernating mammal, spending the coldest parts of winter underground. They primarily feed on vegetation and can, at times, be a nuisance due to their burrowing and consumption of crops and garden plants. The most notable groundhog of all, Punxsutawney Phil, is said to have the uncanny ability to predict the coming of spring.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Groundhog Day			Fertilize fruit trees		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	Wood duck mating season begins					
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
		Washington's Birthday				
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	White-tailed deer begin shedding antlers		Turkey breeding season begins			





2026

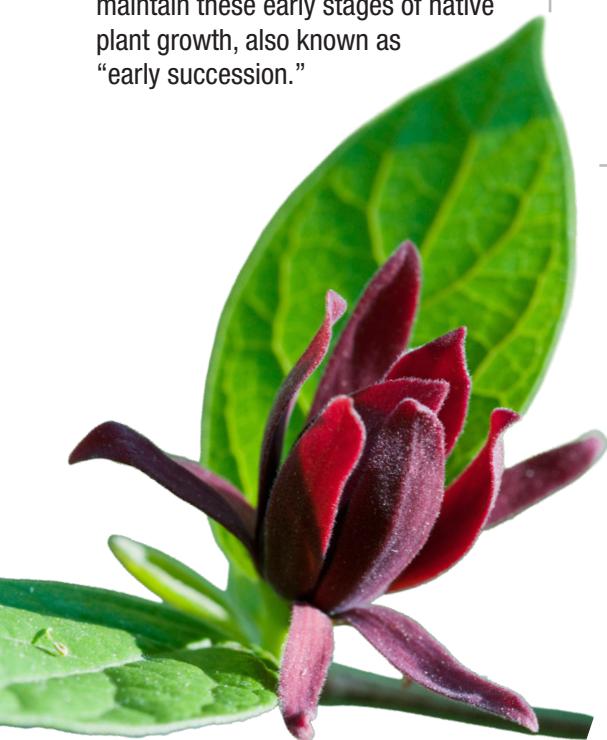
March



Wild Turkey

Wild turkey are most limited by the availability of nesting and brooding cover. These cover types are necessary to elude predation, reproduce and raise young, survive the elements, and feed. Nesting cover consists of an 18-to-36-inch high cover, which protects nesting hens and their eggs from predation and weather. Whereas brooding cover consists of early grasses and forbs (broadleaf, flowering plants) that range from 12 to 28 inches in height and protects poult and the insects they require in their diets. Active management techniques, such as thinning timber to less than 30 percent canopy opening, daylighting roads, clearing openings, applying herbicides, using prescribed fire, and timely disking are used to foster and maintain these early stages of native plant growth, also known as "early succession."

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
			Copperhead mating season begins			Gopher tortoise mating season begins
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Daylight saving time begins		Dogwood trees begin blooming in south Alabama		Carolina yellow jessamine begins blooming		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	Begin checking pine trees for southern pine beetles		Little brown bats emerge from hibernation		First day of spring	Eastern redbud begins blooming
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	Hawk mating season begins		Carolina allspice begins blooming			Wood duck eggs begin hatching
29	30	31				
	Turkey gobbling peaks					

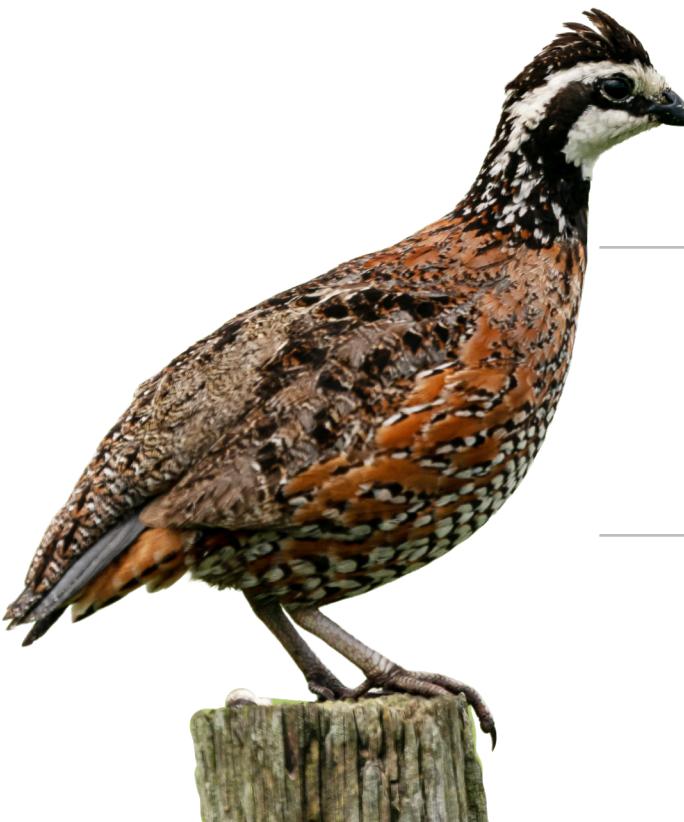






Agroforestry

Agroforestry is a land management system that integrates both forestry and farming practices into agricultural landscapes. Unlike conventional farming or forestry practices, which often keep forested areas and cropland or livestock separate, agroforestry blends them in a deliberate manner. Agroforestry provides numerous benefits, including a diversified source of income. It includes revenue from farming practices and from timber harvesting. Agroforestry can also help improve soil health, conserve water, and boost biodiversity. This resilient land practice also helps mitigate the impacts of drought, pests, and climate change. While agroforestry has many benefits, it also presents several challenges. It requires specific knowledge of both farming and forestry practices.



April

2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Neotropical birds begin to migrate				Gopher Tortoise Day	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
			Red-cockaded woodpecker mating begins			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
			Earth Day			White-tailed bucks begin growing antlers
26	27	28	29	30		
	Turkeys begin nesting		Bobwhite quail breeding season begins			



2026

May



Pollination

Pollination is a vital component of plant growth and food production. Pollination is the transfer of pollen from the male to the female parts of a plant. This movement enables fertilization to occur. Because plants cannot pollinate themselves, they have flowers that help attract pollinating insects, such as bees and butterflies. Several insects provide pollination, but the most well-known is the honeybee.

Planting pollinator fields and gardens helps increase the population of pollinators, which in turn aids in food production. Pollinators require food, water, and shelter. To attract pollinators to your property, choose a location that offers suitable nesting sites and access to water. Nesting sites vary according to the insect. A brush pile is perfect for bees such as the bumblebee. Ground nesting bees only need a bare area that is in full sun and not covered by mulch or pine straw. Once you have selected a location, add desirable flowering plants such as wildflowers and flowering shrubs and trees. These plants will provide pollen and nectar for a range of insects. When selecting your plants, choose ones that have different bloom times. The goal is to select plants that flower during the spring, summer, and fall.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			Gray squirrel mating season begins			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
			Alligator eggs begin hatching			Turkey eggs begin hatching
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
		Magnolia trees begin to bloom				Cahaba lilies begin to bloom
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Persimmon trees begin to bloom						
31	Memorial Day		Cicadas emerge into flying forms			





2026

June



Biodiversity

The southeastern United States boasts an incredible amount of plant biodiversity. Not only do we have a vast number of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants, but we also have many species of native vines that are bold in color and rival non-native vining species sold in nurseries.

The early spring bloomer, Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), stands out with its beautiful yellow flowers when many plants are just coming out of dormancy. Throughout the spring, from March through May, you can also find the striking native coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) and cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*). The delicate netleaf leather flower (*Clematis reticulata*) and whiteleaf leather flower (*Clematis glaucophylla*) show off their pinkish-purple bell-shaped flowers mostly in late spring to early summer. As the weather warms into summer, the American trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*) blooms into an orange-magenta showpiece, and the purple passionflower offers an otherworldly like bloom. Virgin's-Bower (*Clematis virginiana*) is a showy fall-blooming vine that produces equally as showy feathery seed heads.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Female timber rattlesnakes begin shedding their skin	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 Put up bat houses	9	10	11	12	13 Black bear breeding season begins
14	15	16	17	18	19 Juneteenth National Independence Day	20
21	22	23 Begin harvesting figs	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



2026

July



Mourning Dove

The mourning dove is arguably one of the most popular game birds in the United States. It is the second most hunted small game species, second only to squirrels. Mourning doves have an erratic, fast flight movement that hunters find challenging. Many landowners find managing mourning dove fields an attractive opportunity due to the small financial investment necessary to get started. Offering mourning dove hunting can be a good source of additional income for landowners.

Mourning doves generally produce three to four broods per year. Their nesting cycle is brief, approximately 33 days. They primarily consume seeds, plants, and occasionally insects. They generally feed on grain-producing agricultural fields, weeds, and natural grasses. They require fresh water, so landowners with a water source, such as a pond or stream, on their property are well suited to creating a mourning dove habitat. They prefer nesting in trees or shrubs that provide good cover from predators and protection from various types of weather.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
				Timber rattlesnake mating season begins		4 Independence Day
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Copperhead live birthing season begins					
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	





Wild Pigs

Wild hogs are not native to the United States, but were introduced by European settlers. They are considered an invasive species that is rapidly spreading across the country. These wild hogs cause economic losses to landowners and farmers. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, wild pigs cause approximately \$1.5 billion in economic losses each year. Wild hogs often thrive due to the lack of natural predators as well as their ability to reproduce at a young age, typically around 6 months old. The only management option for controlling wild pigs is to trap and dispatch them. To effectively trap pigs on your property, first identify the area they are occupying or damaging. You can monitor this with game cameras. Once you have determined where the damage is occurring, you can then begin erecting a corral-type trap with a gate. Bait the trap with corn or other feed and let the hogs wander in and out of the trap for several days, allowing them to become comfortable walking into the corral. Once they are relaxed, you can begin trapping them. While trapping, ensure the entire sounder is in the trap before lowering the gate. Once they are successfully trapped, you can dispatch and dispose of them.

August

2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Little brown bat mating season begins
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 Cottonmouth live births begin	12	13	14	15 Eastern diamondback rattlesnake live births begin
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31 Sunflowers begin blooming		White-tailed bucks begin shedding velvet			







Longleaf Pine

Longleaf pine forests (*Pinus palustris*, meaning “of the marsh”) are among the most biologically diverse ecosystems in North America, home to hundreds of plant and animal species. The imperiled red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, and Eastern indigo snake all depend on these forests for survival.

Unlike most pines, longleaf pine seedlings undergo a distinctive “grass” stage, during which remains close to the ground for several years. This stage allows it to develop a deep taproot, making longleaf drought resistant and resilient to fire. During this stage, prescribed fire plays a critical role in the reduction of competition from other vegetation. Without fire, hardwoods and invasive plants can overtake young pines, stunting their growth or outcompeting them.

Prescribed fire is a vital tool for maintaining healthy longleaf pine ecosystems. Historically, these forests evolved with frequent, low-intensity fires, making fire an essential part of their life cycle. Frequent fire maintains the open, park-like structure of longleaf pine forests, providing ideal habitat for species that depend on the diverse groundcover that fire encourages.

2026

September

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
			White-tailed deer antler hardening begins			
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Labor Day	Conduct soil testing for food plots				
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
			Monarch butterfly southern migration to Mexico begins			Alligator snapping turtle egg hatching begins
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	Evening bat mating season begins					
27	28	29	30			
Little brown bat birthing season begins						







Sandhill Crane

One of the largest migratory birds in Alabama today is the sandhill crane (*Antigone canadensis*). These birds stand 3 to 4 feet tall and travel in the thousands from their northern summer breeding grounds to warmer climates for the winter. While these cranes are a fairly common species to find across many states today, they were almost hunted to extinction in the United States by 1940. As populations recovered, Alabama has seen a successful resurgence of the species in recent years.

Late November through early February offers the best chance to see the cranes in Alabama. They are most commonly found along the Tennessee River Valley, but infrequent observations can also be made traveling along the Alabama River corridor and in coastal areas. Sandhill cranes feed on fruits, grains, macroinvertebrates and insects, amphibians, reptiles, and even small mammals. Croplands, marshes, and other wetland areas provide forage and suitable habitats and are where sightings often occur.

The Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is an important wintering spot for this species and, in recent years, it has hosted an average of 15,000 to 20,000 cranes. Each year, the refuge hosts the Festival of the Cranes, inviting the public to observe this migratory species brought back from the brink.



October 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			Evening bat southern migration begins		1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	Columbus Day					
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	Beaver dam building begins					
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
		Sandhill crane southern migration begins				





Planting Trees

When planting trees, choose the right time and the right place. The ideal time to plant trees is in the autumn in most regions of the United States. In Alabama, landscaping trees are usually between late September and early November. The cooler temperatures help reduce stress on young trees, and the still-warm soil encourages root growth. If you cannot plant in the fall, the second option is to plant in late winter or early spring, allowing young trees the entire growing season to establish a root system. However, when planting in the spring, consistently water the trees throughout the summer.

When selecting a planting site, consider the tree species you are planting and the soil nutrients, water availability, and sunlight it requires. Planting the right tree in the right place is crucial to successful growth. Have a soil test done to ensure that the plant site meets the nutrient requirements for the specific tree type.

When planting, prepare the site by digging a hole 2 to 3 times wider than the root ball but only as deep as the root ball height. Loosen the surrounding soil to encourage root expansion. Once the tree is placed, backfill with the original soil and immediately soak the tree with water. Water deeply 1 or 2 times a week, depending on rainfall and tree type.



November

2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Hardwood leaves begin turning color and daylight saving time ends	2	3 White-tailed deer begin making scrapes and rubs	4	5	6	7 Wood ducks form pair bonds
8	9	10	11	12 Chipmunk hibernation begins	13	14
15 Songbird singing begins to decline	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Beaver mating season begins	26 Thanksgiving Day	27	28 Timber rattlesnake hibernation begins
29	30					





Oak Trees

From feeding our foraging ancestors to providing ship-building materials, early inks, and whiskey barrels, oaks have played an important role in human survival, transportation, industry, and culture. More than 500 species of oaks grow worldwide, with 90 native to the United States. In Alabama, there are at least 39 species in the *Quercus* (oak) family, with several more hybrid varieties.

The two main categories are red oak and white oak. Red oaks are distinguished by the leaf lobe or apex that ends in a slender and stiff bristle. White oaks usually have rounded leaf tips and lobes and lack bristle tips (with a few exceptions having a mucronate bristle-like tip). Leaf sizes and shapes vary widely within each category.

Some of the most common red oak species in Alabama are the water oak (*Quercus nigra*), willow oak (*Quercus phellos*), and southern red oak (*Quercus falcata*). Common white oak species include white oak (*Quercus alba*), chestnut oak (*Quercus montana*), and post oak (*Quercus stellata*). The iconic southern live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) is a white oak as well as the Boynton oak (*Quercus boyntonii*), which is Alabama's only known endemic oak, meaning it is no longer found anywhere outside of the state.

December

2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
		Opossum mating season begins				
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Copperhead snake hibernation begins					Gray squirrel mating season begins
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
					Christmas Day	
27	28	29	30	31		
		Opossum birthing season begins				





January 2026



February 2026



March 2026



April 2026



May 2026



June 2026



July

2026



August

2026



September 2026



October

2026



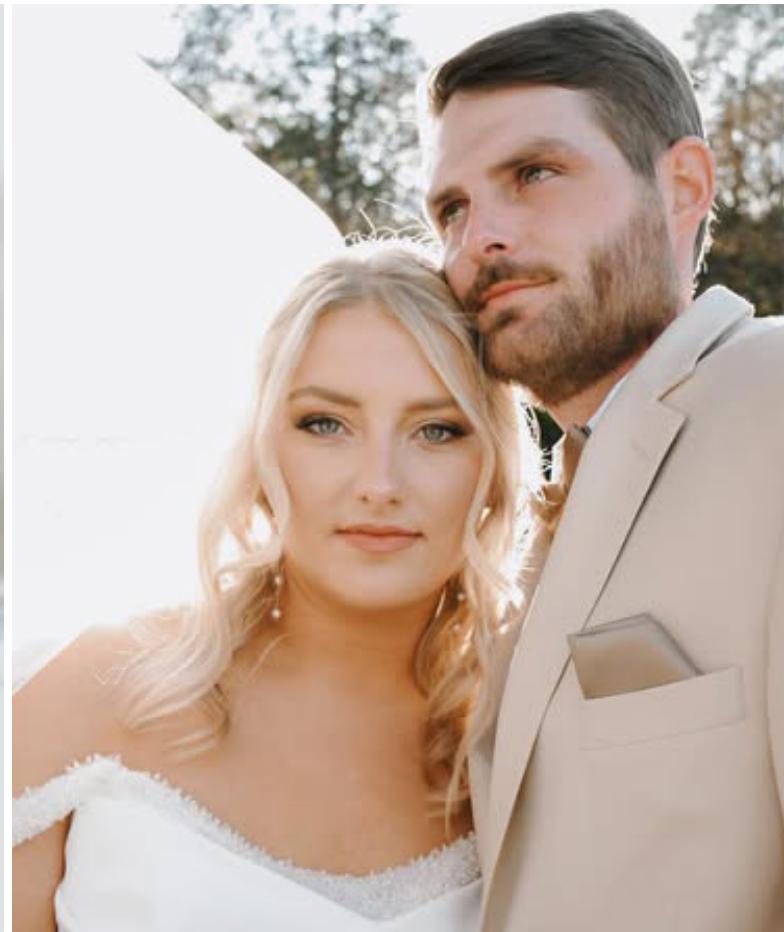
November

2026



December

2026



Graham Farm and Nature Center

Conservation, Preservation, Education

At Graham Farm and Nature Center, we recreate and educate.

Nestled in the pristine Paint Rock Valley Region of northeast Alabama, this 491-acre facility is an educational outreach of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Graham Farm and Nature Center helps conserve our natural resources, preserve the region's rich agricultural history, and provide educational opportunities and outdoor recreation for all ages.

Enjoy a walk along the Creekside Trail to immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of nature. With approximately 8.5 miles of trails on the property, you will indeed find one that suits you. If you are drawn to the serenity of water, a kayak float is a perfect choice. A peaceful flat-water paddle on the enticing blue-green waters of the Paint Rock River will soothe your soul.

For an extended outdoor adventure, Graham Farm and Nature Center offers three distinct camping experiences: traditional tent camping, pampered camping, and covered wagon camping. For traditional tent camping, reserve your spot and bring your favorite tent and cooler to enjoy a few days immersed in nature. If you prefer more comfort, the pampered camping and covered wagon camping packages provide all the amenities, including real beds, heating or air conditioning, running water, and flushing toilets. Choose to spend the night in a cozy canvas bell tent or a charming Conestoga wagon—the choice is yours!

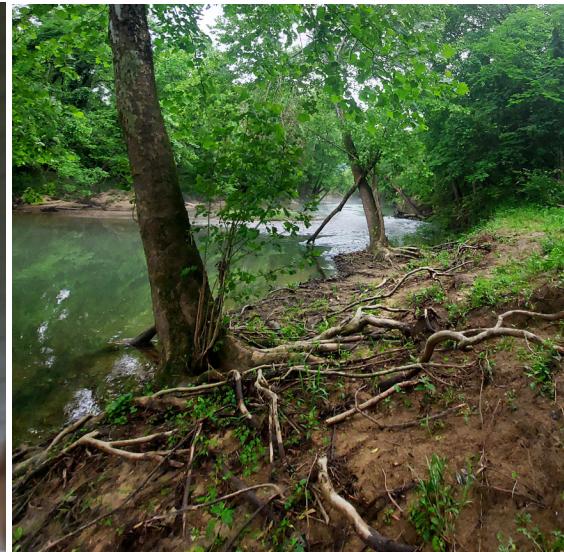
In 2024, Graham Farm and Nature Center opened the pavilion, offering 4,000 square feet of unparalleled nature indulgence. Its amenities include a covered outdoor space with tables, chairs, and lounge areas; a large gas fireplace; Wi-Fi; an indoor meeting space; a commercial kitchen; and accessible restrooms with showers. The pavilion is an inviting space to host your next corporate meeting, family retreat, class reunion, or the wedding of your dreams.

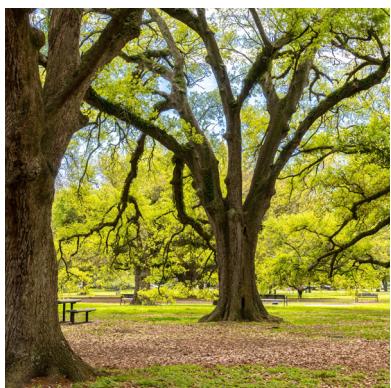
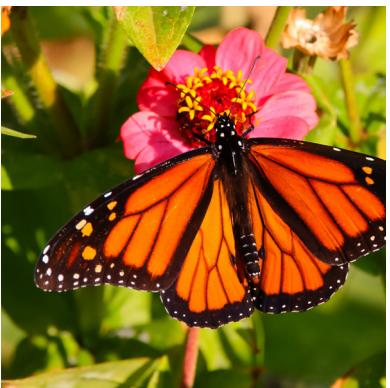
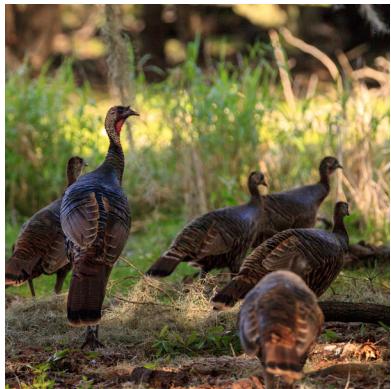
Whether a day visit or an overnight experience, Graham Farm and Nature Center will leave you with an appreciation for nature and a glimpse of days gone by. Contact us today to schedule a visit or let our staff craft a specific program to meet your needs:

Themika L. Sims (256) 599-6612, simsthe@auburn.edu

Donna Sands (256) 453-0716, djs0005@auburn.edu

Learn more on the Alabama Extension website at www.aces.edu and Find, Like, and Follow Graham Farm on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Grahamfarmandnaturecenter.





2026 Alabama Phenology Calendar

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is pleased to present the 2026 Alabama Phenology Calendar. Phenology is the study of the timing of seasonal events in nature, such as the blooming of dogwood trees and the mating of white-tailed deer. Wildlife emerging from hibernation, birds nesting and migrating, and flowers blooming are some of the phenological events happening yearly. For many, phenological events are important markers of the changing seasons.

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