



**Garden Mountain
Proposed Wilderness Area
Bland County**

This proposed wilderness is a tract of 3,291 acres lying on the southern flank of Garden Mountain in Bland County. Together with the Beartown Wilderness and a proposed addition to the west, and the Hunting Camp Creek/Little Wolf Creek Proposed Wilderness to the east, it offers the opportunity for a block of almost continuous wilderness extending for more than 15 miles around the unique geological structure of Burkes Garden.

The Burkes Garden geological feature began as a dome of Clinch sandstone. Its center has been eroded away to form the bowl of Burkes Garden, while the resulting scarp forms a backbone from which the proposed wilderness extends. Fossil worm burrows of *Arthropycus* are a notable feature of this sandstone. The Garden Mountain Proposed Wilderness surrounds the headwaters of Lick Creek, a native trout stream which also harbors the endangered Tennessee dace, and extends to the summit ridge of Brushy Mountain to the south.

The forest varies by elevation and aspect. The beaver workings and alluvial soils along Lick Creek have developed dense thickets of rose-bay rhododendron below a canopy of tulip tree, red and white oak, red maple, basswood and cucumber tree. The drier ridges are home to Catawba rhododendron, flame azalea and the xeric oaks and hickories. The area has 839 acres of possible old growth.

Much of the terrain is rugged and steep in this roadless area, which provides 2,284 acres of premier backcountry at its core. There are two developed trails, totaling eight miles, associated with the Garden Mountain Proposed Wilderness. The Appalachian Trail parallels the northern boundary of the area along the summit of Garden Mountain, while the Lick Creek Trail provides access to the valley bottom. Both attract moderate to heavy use, since this is a prime destination for hikers, hunters and campers.

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